



## Trump vows to take over Gaza Strip and resettle Palestinians

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

U.S. President Donald Trump vowed on Tuesday that the U.S. would take over the war-ravaged Gaza Strip after Palestinians are resettled elsewhere and develop it economically, a move that would shatter decades of U.S. policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Mr. Trump unveiled his surprise plan, without providing specifics, at a joint press conference with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The announcement followed Mr. Trump's shock proposal earlier on Tuesday for the permanent resettlement of Palestinians from Gaza to neighbouring countries, calling the enclave — where the first phase of a fragile ceasefire is in effect — a "demolition site".

### Israel's boundaries today

■ Palestinian territories



### Present Conflict - Hamas Attack (2023)

The genesis of the present conflict lies in the attack of militants from Hamas on Israeli forces and citizens and the subsequent capture of numerous civilians, leading to an emergency in the nation.

- **Motives:** Hamas described the assault as retaliation for Israel's military operations in the West Bank and incidents at the **al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem**.
- **Losses:** Over 5,000 missiles were fired from Gaza, which is under Hamas' control. The skirmish resulted in casualties **on both sides of the border**.
- **Operation Iron Swords:** In response to an unexpected assault by Hamas, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) initiated Operation 'Iron Swords'. Under the operation, the IDF is **striking Hamas targets in Gaza**.
  - The Israeli government had decided to make ground incursions in Gaza, destroy Hamas and hand over Gaza to international authorities.

### • Possible outcomes

- Regional repercussions
  - Potential for broader regional war especially with Hezbollah in Lebanon.
  - Endangerment of Israel's diplomatic relations with Arab neighbours, threatening Abraham Accords and I2U2.
  - Possibility of reinforcements for Gaza from neighbouring countries.

### Hostage Issue

- Hamas's threat regarding hostages complicates the potential invasion. Hostages' fate remains uncertain during any ground incursion.
- Post-Invasion Implications
- Uncertainty of a lasting political solution following the military action.
- Historical challenges faced by Israel during its previous occupation of Gaza.



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# Six States resolve against UGC's new draft regulation

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

On Wednesday, Ministers for Higher Education and their representatives from six States passed a joint resolution opposing the draft of the University Grants Commission Regulations, 2025, and grading of higher education institutions based on the New Education Policy, 2020. This was the outcome of the conclave of State Higher Education Ministers, 2025, hosted by Karnataka. Representatives from Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Karnataka participated and came out with a 15-point resolution, urging the Centre to withdraw the new draft regulations. In their resolution, the States said that the BJP led Union government is trying to push its ideology through the new regulations.



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education across India.

- Its functions include advising governments, regulating fees, determining teaching standards, and allocating funds.
- However, the Act does not explicitly authorise the UGC to regulate the selection or appointment of vice-chancellors.
- Critics argue that this overreach undermines the legislative autonomy of States, which typically establish universities and prescribe the qualifications and appointment processes for their leadership.

### Key Provisions of the Draft Regulation and the Mandate of the UGC

#### Key Provisions of the Draft Regulation

- The proposed amendment to the UGC Regulation 2010 aims to widen the eligibility criteria for the appointment of vice-chancellors.
- The current regulation mandates that only academicians with at least 10 years of experience as professors are eligible.
- The draft proposes to include professionals with equivalent experience in industry, public administration, or public policy.
- Proponents argue this broadens the talent pool, while detractors claim it deviates from the UGC's primary mandate and encroaches on the States' jurisdiction over higher education.

#### The Mandate of the UGC

- Established under the University Grants Commission Act of 1956, the UGC was tasked with coordinating and maintaining standards in university

### Implications on Federalism and the Principle of Repugnancy

- The UGC draft regulation also raises questions about its compatibility with the constitutional framework of federalism.
- Education is a subject in the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution, meaning both the Union and the States can legislate on it.
- However, the Constitution ensures that State legislatures retain significant autonomy in matters of higher education governance, particularly concerning universities established under State statutes.
- Article 254 of the Constitution addresses situations where a state law conflicts with a Central law.
- If such a conflict exists, the Central law prevails, and the State law is void to the extent of the inconsistency.
- However, this principle applies primarily to laws enacted by legislatures, not to subordinate legislation like UGC regulations.
- Consequently, a regulation made by the UGC cannot override a state statute unless the State law is explicitly repugnant to a Central law.

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## SECs to discuss challenges of local bodies elections at meet

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The 31st annual conference of the State Election Commissioners (SEC) will be held at PENCH town in the Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh from March 1-4, a top poll official said on Wednesday. Poll body chiefs of about 25 States will participate in the event, MP State Election Commissioner Manoj Shrivastava said in a statement. During the four-day conference, Mr. Shrivastava said, the participants would discuss the challenges faced during local bodies elections and the measures to deal with them. They will also discuss ways to make people aware of innovations, especially the use of new technologies in polls, he added.

#### About State Election Commission

The State Election Commissions (SECs) were established to ensure free, fair, and impartial elections at the grassroots level in India's federal structure:

- **About State Election Commissions:** The State Election Commission of India is an independent constitutional authority responsible for administering elections to local bodies within states, including municipalities, panchayats, and other local government institutions.
- **Before 1992:** Elections to these bodies were conducted by the respective State Governments.
- **Establishment:** The Constitution was amended in 1992 through the 73rd and 74th amendments in order to provide legal sanctity to the Local Self-Governments (LSGs), giving LSGs their rightful place in the process of nation building.
  - Article 243 K & Article 243 ZA: They were inserted to establish a State Election Commission in every state as a constitutional body
- **Appointment:** It consists of a state election commissioner to be appointed by the governor.
- **Tenure & Condition of Service:** His conditions of service and tenure of office shall also be determined by the governor.
  - His conditions of service shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.
- **Removal:** He shall not be removed from office except in the manner and on the grounds prescribed for the removal of a judge of the state high court.
- **Significance of State Election Commission:** It ensures a level playing field for the political parties in the election fray, through strict observance by them of a Model Code of Conduct evolved with the consensus of political parties
- **Powers & Functions:**

They have powers of 'superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats and Municipalities in the State.

**Do Not Prepare voters List:** As per the provisions of the different Local Body Acts of the State, State Election Commission does not prepare a separate voter's list for the local body elections

But uses the voter's lists prepared by the Election Commission of India under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, by bifurcating the same to represent the relevant wards of the local bodies concerned.

## Amid a delay in holding Census, vital reports on births and deaths pending since 2020

### ADMINISTRATION

With the decadal Census exercise pending since 2021 and unlikely to be conducted this year, at least two other key reports on births and deaths had not been released by the Union Home Ministry for the past five years. The "Vital Statistics of India Based on the Civil Registration System" and "The Report on Medical Certification of Cause of Death" were last released for the year 2020. The annual "Crime in India" report by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) for the year 2023 is also yet to be released.

#### What is the Census?

##### Definition:

Population Census is the total process of collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specific time, of all persons in a country or a well-defined part of a country.

Census is the basis for reviewing the country's progress in the past decade, monitoring the ongoing schemes of the government and plan for the future.

It provides an instantaneous photographic picture of a community, which is valid at a particular moment of time.

- **Phases:** The Census Operations in India are carried out in two phases:
- **Houselisting/Housing Census** under which details of all buildings, permanent or temporary, are noted with their type, amenities, and assets.
- **Population Enumeration** where more detailed information on each individual residing in the country, Indian national or otherwise is noted.

It is carried out after making a list of all households that are surveyed.

#### Frequency:

- The first synchronous census was taken in 1881, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
- The Census of India Act of 1948 provides the legal framework for carrying out the Census however, it does not mention its timing or periodicity.
- Hence, a Census is Constitutionally mandated in India but there is no Constitutional or legal requirement that it needs to be conducted decennially.
- The 10-year frequency is followed in many countries (Ex. the US and the UK) but some countries like Australia, Canada, Japan conduct it every five years.

#### Nodal Ministry:

- The decennial Census is conducted by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Until 1951, the Census Organisation was set up on an ad-hoc basis for each Census.

## Amid interest rate cut hopes, RBI begins policy review

### ECONOMY

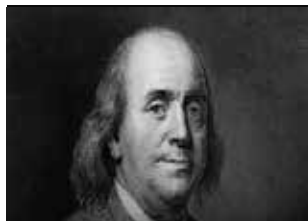
Soon after the Union Budget, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday began deliberations on the monetary policy review to be concluded on Friday, amid hopes of a 25 basis points' rate cut, the first in five years. One basis point equals 0.01%. While inflation is still to hit the RBI's 4% median target, the declining rupee also poses a challenge. This is the first meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee under the stewardship of RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra.

#### About is Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

- The MPC was setup after a Memorandum of Understanding between the government and the RBI about the conduct of the new inflation-targeting monetary policy framework.
- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (RBI Act) has been amended by the Finance Act, 2016 to provide for a statutory and institutionalized framework for an MPC.
- Under Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act, 1934, the central government is empowered to constitute a six-member MPC.
- **Function:** The MPC is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy rate (repo rate) required to contain inflation within the specified target level.
- The MPC replaced the previous arrangement of Technical Advisory Committee.

#### Composition:

- MPC will have six members: the RBI Governor (Chairperson), the RBI Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy, one official nominated by the RBI Board, and the remaining three members would represent the Government of India.
- The external members hold office for a period of four years.
- The quorum for a meeting shall be four Members, at least one of whom shall be the Governor and, in his absence, the Deputy Governor, who is the Member of the MPC.
- The MPC takes decisions based on a majority vote. In case of a tie, the RBI governor will have the second or casting vote.
- The decision of the MPC would be binding on the RBI.
- RBI's Monetary Policy Department (MPD) assists the MPC in formulating the monetary policy.



*"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."*

*–Benjamin Franklin*

## Argentina to follow U.S. in quitting WHO, says President's office

### ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Argentina will pull out of the WHO, President Javier Milei's office said, following in the footsteps of the U.S. Mr. Milei's decision was based on "deep differences regarding health management especially during the pandemic," adding Argentina would not "allow an international body to interfere in our sovereignty."



## World Health Organization

### What is the role of WHO in global health governance?

Key roles of the World Health Organization (WHO) in global health governance:

- **Setting global health standards and guidelines:** To help countries to address health challenges effectively.
- **Monitoring and assessing global health trends:** To provide updates on emerging health issues and

disease outbreaks to help countries prepare and respond.

- **Coordinating international health responses:** Working with governments, other UN agencies, and international partners to coordinate global health responses to epidemics, disasters, and other health emergencies.
- **Building health systems:** The WHO supports countries in strengthening their health systems, which includes improving access to essential medicines, training health workers, and developing health infrastructure.
- **Conducting research and development:** The WHO conducts and promotes research into global health issues, with a focus on finding solutions to health challenges affecting low- and middle-income countries
- **Advocating for better health policies and funding:** The WHO advocates for policies and funding that prioritize global health issues and ensure that health is a central component of development agendas.
- **Providing technical assistance and capacity building:** The WHO provides technical assistance and capacity building to countries, to help them develop and implement effective health policies and programs.



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