

2024

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS





**ACS**  
**Dibrugarh**

**Daily Current Affairs from *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* & *The Assam Tribune***

**27<sup>th</sup> Mar 2025**

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### 1. The CBSE's 'two-exam scheme' overcomplicates things

**Context:** The CBSE's draft plan proposes that, starting in 2026, Class 10 students can take their board exams twice in a school year—once around February/March and again in May. This change, aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, aims to reduce student stress, give them a chance to improve their scores, and promote a more well-rounded evaluation system. While it seems like a positive step, a deeper look reveals challenges in execution, costs, and teaching methods, which could make the system more complicated rather than truly beneficial

#### Key points

- **Overview:** The CBSE's proposed plan for Class 10 students appears forward-thinking, but a deeper analysis reveals challenges related to implementation, cost, and teaching methods.
- **Conceptual Learning vs. Logistical Focus:** NEP 2020 promotes conceptual learning and competency-based assessment. CBSE's draft policy mainly emphasizes scheduling and logistics. Though board exams aim to test core competencies instead of rote learning, the implementation remains unclear.
- **Challenges of Multiple Examinations:** *High Number of Students* - 26.6 lakh students expected for Class 10 exams in 2026. With two cycles, answer scripts will exceed 1.72 crore.  
*Evaluation Challenges* - Many evaluators needed. Uniform grading standards must be ensured.  
*Overlap with Class 12 Exams* - 20 lakh Class 12 students in 2026 will also take exams. Schools must manage multiple test dates, secure papers, and ensure fairness.
- **Financial Burden on Economically Weaker Students:** *Increased Examination Fees* - Policy mandates non-refundable fees covering both attempts. Even students attempting only one exam must pay for both.  
*Impact on Marginalised Students* - Higher costs may become a barrier to education. Contradicts NEP 2020's goal of equitable access.  
*Coaching Centre Influence* - Private institutes may offer specialised coaching for the second attempt. This could widen the gap between affluent and underprivileged students.
- **Impact on School Calendars:** *Delayed Results* - If second attempt results are declared by June-end, admission cycles may be compressed.  
*Challenges for Students & Schools* - Could lead to uncertainty in subject choices. Poses difficulties in States with competitive admissions.
- **Way ahead:** *Need for Effective Implementation of Competency-Based Assessment* - Beyond logistical changes, CBSE should focus on actual learning improvement rather than just restructuring exams.  
*Revised Examination Fee Structure* - Students opting for only one attempt should not be penalised financially.  
*Importance of Pilot Studies and Phased Implementation* - Ongoing Pilot in 30 Schools covers Science and Social Science subjects. Students assessed internally at two levels based on choice.  
*Phased Implementation Strategy* - Policymakers should analyse pilot outcomes before full-scale implementation. A gradual rollout prevents disruptions in the examination system.

## 2. Court must revisit NJAC

**Context:** Article 124 of the Constitution deals with the establishment and constitution of the Supreme Court. It states that the President, acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers, shall appoint Supreme Court judges after consulting the Chief Justice of India (CJI). However, during the drafting of the Constitution, a proposal to replace “consultation” with “concurrence” was rejected by B.R. Ambedkar. He argued that giving the Chief Justice veto power would transfer authority from the President to the judiciary, which was deemed a dangerous proposition.

### Key points

- **Overview:** The article examines the evolution of judicial appointments in India, focusing on the shift from executive-led appointments to the collegium system and the failed attempt to reform it through the NJAC.
- **Shift to the Collegium System:** The Supreme Court reinterpreted consultation as concurrence, transferring appointment power to the judiciary.
  - *Introduction of Collegium System* - A body of the CJI and four senior-most judges proposes judicial appointments.
- **NJAC Amendment and Judicial Response:** *Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014* - Created the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC). Composes CJI, two senior SC judges, Union Law Minister, two eminent persons. Objective is to balance judicial and executive roles in appointments. *Supreme Court Strikes Down NJAC (2015)* - 4:1 Majority Judgment declared NJAC unconstitutional under the Basic Structure Doctrine, because inclusion of non-judicial members (Law Minister, eminent persons) threatened judicial independence.
- **Criticisms of the Collegium System:** *Judicial Self-Interest* - Justice Kurian Joseph concurred with the majority but acknowledged the collegium's trust deficit and opacity. *Regret from the Bench* - Justice Kurian Joseph publicly expressed regret for striking down NJAC in 2020, citing the collegium's poor performance post-2015.
- **Way Forward:** *Call for Reconsideration* - A larger Supreme Court bench should revisit the NJAC verdict, like how the Second Judges Case overturned S.P. Gupta. *Need for Reform* - Address collegium's opacity, reduce judicial overreach, and restore balanced stakeholder involvement in appointments.

Q. Discuss the evolution of judicial appointments in India with reference to Article 124 of the Constitution. Critically analyse the impact of the collegium system and the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC). Do you think the NJAC should be reconsidered? Justify your answer. (সংবিধানৰ 124 নং অনুচ্ছেদৰ সন্দৰ্ভত ভাৰতত ন্যায়িক নিযুক্তিৰ বিকাশৰ বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰক। কলেজিয়াম ব্যৱস্থাৰ প্ৰভাৱ আৰু ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় ন্যায়িক নিযুক্তি আয়োগ (এনজেএচি) বাতিল কৰাৰ উচ্চতম ন্যায়ালয়ৰ সিদ্ধান্তক সমালোচনামূলকভাৱে বিশ্লেষণ কৰক। আপুনি ভাবেনে যে এন. জে. এ. চি.-ক পুনৰ বিবেচনা কৰা উচিত? আপোনাৰ উত্তৰটো ন্যায্য কৰক।)

**3. The issue is about the 'quality' of India's publications**

**Context:** The Union Minister for Science and Technology stated that India is expected to surpass the United States in scientific publications by 2029. China leads in research output with 8,98,949 publications, followed by the United States with 4,57,335 and India with 2,07,390 papers. China's research success is attributed to heavy investments in education and science, supported by a long-term development plan since 2006. For India to make significant progress, large-scale investments in research and education are essential.

**Key points**

- **Overview:** Currently concerns remain over research quality, low R&D investment (0.67% of GDP), and unethical practices.
- **International Comparison of Research Investments:** A comparison of spending on civilian research as a percentage of GDP highlights India's low investment. Israel – 6.3%, South Korea – 4.9%, Japan – 3.3%, United States – 3.46%, Germany – 3.13%, China – 2.4%, India – 0.67%.
- **India's Research Output:** According to Clarivate data (February 2025), India's total publications in science and engineering for 2024 stood at 1,91,703, while the U.S. had 6,48,905. Out of 30 ranked countries, India ranks 28th in research quality.
- **Quality vs. Quantity in Research Publications:** The impact of scientific work is measured by citations and its contribution to the global scientific community. Indian research publications do not meet global benchmarks like the H-Index (Hirsch Index) and Impact Factor (IF) of reputed journals. The Indian contribution increases in lower-ranked journals, indicating a quality gap.
  - *H-Index (Hirsch Index)* - The h-index is a metric that measures a researcher's scientific output and impact. It's calculated by counting the number of publications that have been cited at least as many times as the h-index number.
- **India's Science and Technology Infrastructure:** China's Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) has 444 publications in JACS, whereas all CSIR laboratories in India have only 29. All IITs combined have only 68 publications in JACS, five times less than a single second-tier Chinese university.
- **Challenges in Indian Scientific Research:** Misleading claims about India's scientific progress create a false sense of achievement. Unethical practices in research have led to fraudulent publications and low-quality output. A study in 2018 estimated that 62% of all standalone fake journals in the world originate from India. Around 10% of India's total research output may be fake or unverified.
  - *Case study* – In 2019, a Hyderabad-based publishing group was fined \$50 million by a U.S. court for deceptive practices, impacting India's global research reputation.
- **Way ahead:** India must prioritize research quality over quantity by investing in education, training, and ethical research practices. Strengthening university research programs and ensuring strict peer-review standards will help improve India's global scientific standing.

Q. Discuss the challenges faced by India's scientific research sector in terms of investment, quality, and ethics. Suggest measures to enhance research output and credibility. (বিনিয়োগ, মানদণ্ড আৰু নৈতিকতাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ভাৰতৰ বৈজ্ঞানিক গৱেষণা খণ্ডই সন্মুখীন হোৱা প্ৰত্যাহ্বানসমূহ আলোচনা কৰক। গৱেষণাৰ ফলাফল আৰু বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা বৃদ্ধিৰ বাবে ব্যৱস্থাৰ পৰামৰ্শ দিয়া।)

#### 4. The role of communities in conserving water

**Context:** On March 22, World Water Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed the need to save water for both the present and future generations through collective efforts. On the same day, the Ministry of Jal Shakti launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain 2025, highlighting the importance of community involvement in water conservation.

#### Key points

- **Overview:** Water policies should prioritize community input in decision-making.
- **Panoramic View of India's Rural Water Policies:** Emerging environmental challenges and evolving understandings of ecosystems highlight the necessity for revising rural water policies. Policymakers must address critical gaps to ensure effective water management in rural areas.
- **Community Participation and Ecological Practices:** Policies must actively engage local communities in water management. Indigenous communities possess extensive knowledge of their ecosystems. Current policies allow limited participation, primarily in managing water sources.
- **Challenges in Existing Participatory Mechanisms:** Water User Associations (WUAs) were introduced in various states in the 1990s for participatory irrigation management. Farmers, as members, manage irrigation sources but lack decision-making authority. The limited scope of their role contradicts the goal of effective community participation.
- **Addressing Vulnerability in Water Policies:** *Disproportionate Impact* - Certain social groups are more vulnerable to environmental crises.  
*Marginalised Groups* - Economically disadvantaged individuals face greater risks. Those at the intersection of social and economic marginalisation are most vulnerable.  
*Policy Considerations* - Must prioritise the interests of vulnerable groups. Recognise their role in water management. Ensure active participation in decision-making.
- **Overcoming Fragmentation in Water Management:** *Current Issues* - Different ecosystem components (forests, water, land, biodiversity) are governed by separate policies.  
*Need for Integration* - A holistic approach is essential for sustainable water management.  
*Example* – Orans in western India Serve both religious and environmental purposes, Enhance water conservation through tree and grass cover.
- **Climate Change and Water Security:** *Impact of Climate Change* - Rising global temperatures will worsen India's water crisis. Water shortages are expected to increase.  
*Policy Recommendations* - Develop climate-resilient water systems. Strengthen resilience of existing water infrastructure. Adaptation policies should focus on ecosystem resilience to water scarcity.
- **Conclusion:** A key takeaway from these suggestions is that local and indigenous communities, along with their practices, play a vital role in effective water management. Therefore, rural water policies should actively involve communities in meaningful ways. This requires going beyond mere promises of engagement and truly incorporating their voices in decision-making. However, it is also important to recognize that some traditional practices may have limitations, which should be addressed through awareness programs and capacity building when necessary.