

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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What is Theyyam?

- Theyyam is a ritualistic performance art and worship form practiced in Northern Kerala, especially in Kannur and Kasaragod districts.
- The word "Theyyam" is derived from "Daivam" (meaning God in Malayalam).
- Performers are believed to be possessed by the deity and are worshipped during the performance.

Kaliyattam nights



Divine and the mortal: The Kathiranan Veeran Theyyam performing at the Chulayadu Aduvapuram Vyail Kavu kaliyattam (festival) in Kannur on Sunday. In northern Kerala, the Theyyam season starts from October and ends by late May or June. S.K. MOHAN

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Key Features of Theyyam:

Feature	Details
Type of Tradition	Intangible Cultural Heritage (Oral tradition + Ritual + Folk art)
Communities Involved	Mainly Dalit and backward communities like Vannan, Malayan, Pulayan
Deities Performed	Local heroes, guardian spirits, deified ancestors (e.g., Kathiranur Veeran)
Performance Sites	Kaavus (sacred groves), ancestral shrines
Season	October to May/June (known as the Theyyam season)
Elements	Dance, music, dramatic facial painting, headgear, body art, storytelling

What is Kaliyattam?

- Kaliyattam is the annual festival or ritual cycle of Theyyam performances conducted in village shrines.
- It is a form of public worship, community bonding, and invoking local deities for protection and prosperity.

Important Deity: Kathiranur Veeran

- A prominent figure in Theyyam, Kathiranur Veeran represents a folk hero.
- Symbolizes bravery and justice in the regional folklore of North Kerala.

Cultural & Environmental Importance:

- Kaavus (sacred groves) where Theyyam is performed are also biodiversity hotspots and examples of community-led conservation.
- Theyyam performances often highlight social justice, folk memory, and oral history.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques :With reference to Theyyam, consider the following statements:

1. It is performed mainly in the southern districts of Kerala.

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2. It is both a ritual and a form of folk theatre.
3. Theyyam is performed only by Brahmin priests.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : b)



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A recent study published in *Cell* has highlighted that West African chimpanzees in Côte d'Ivoire's Tai National Park are losing unique mating dialects, primarily due to human-induced disruptions. This presents a nuanced perspective on how biodiversity conservation must now include cultural preservation among animals.

West Africa chimps are losing their culture, in another human legacy

In new research, scientists reported four dialects that male wild chimpanzees use in the Tai National Park to find mates. But after documenting the chimpanzees' lives for more than a generation, the scientists also reported these apes are 'forgetting' parts of the dialect thanks to human influences

Madhurima Pattanayak

Culture is what we learn from others and pass on to successive generations by practising it over and over. Scientists have found cultural traditions among humans as well as animals, the latter in the way they forage, socialise, use tools, care for themselves, and mate.

Among these traditions, the characteristic patterns of behaviour that involve communication are called dialects.

In new research published in the journal *Cell*, scientists with the Tai Chimpanzee Project in West Africa reported four dialects that male wild chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) use in the Tai National Park to find mates to copulate with.

Unfortunately, after documenting the chimpanzees' lives for more than a generation, the scientists also reported these apes are 'forgetting' parts of the dialect thanks to human influences. "Cultural behaviours are crucial for survival," Catherine Crockett, a scientist leading the project and researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Germany, and ISC Marc Jeannerod, France, said.

"Illegal hunting or logging may not only be killing individual chimpanzees but also destroying their cultures, which could threaten the survival of the remaining chimpanzees." Chimpanzees are also poached for use as pets or for bushmeat.

'Secretly ask females for sex'
Researchers once believed culture separated humans from other animals. But in the last seven decades, research has revealed cultural practices in many animals. Even so, community-specific dialects in non-human primates such as chimpanzees, orangutans, and bonobos have been rare.

The scientists with the Tai Chimpanzee Project reported four distinct types of dialects that male West Africa chimpanzees used to find mates: heel-kick, knuckle-knock, leaf-clip, and branch-shake.

In a heel-kick, the chimpanzees lifted their feet and kicked against a hard surface to make noise. The knuckle-knock involved repeatedly, but somewhat quietly, knocking their knuckles against hard surfaces.

Likewise, in the leaf-clip, chimpanzees bite a leaf and strip it into pieces without eating it, creating a ripping sound. The branch-shake is self-explanatory.

"It is amusing to watch how young subordinate males try to secretly ask



A female chimpanzee grooms an adult male in Loango National Park, Gabon. West African chimpanzees are a subspecies found in western Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, and Ghana. AFP

females for sex without the dominant males knowing," Ms. Crockett said. "This is the main function of these more subtle gestures".

The team documented heel-kicks among the North, South, Northeast, and East chimpanzee communities; knuckle-knocking in the Northeast community; and leaf-clip and branch-shake among the North, South, and Northeast communities.

A dangerous demographic shift
The knuckle-knock gesture is restricted to the Northeast community. It was previously among adult males of the North community as well, but since 1999, it has suffered significant population loss.

The problem became so bad that between 2004 and 2011, the North group didn't have two adult males existing at the same time. Put another way, any adult male didn't have to compete with other adult males and thus had no use for the knuckle-knock dialect.

Researchers understand that demography plays a crucial role in shaping culture and keeping it alive across generations. A systematic data collection effort concluded in 2019 that no members of the North group had used knuckle-knocking in 20 years.

Significant changes in a population, in this case the near-complete loss of an entire demographic (adult males), can



Cultures emerge over generations. Cultural behaviours – such as the use of specialised toolkits, nut-cracking with stone hammers or digging out underground bee nests with different-sized sticks – are crucial for survival

thus have a long-lasting impact on the preservation or loss of cultural traditions. Restoring them isn't easy. For example, with the help of ecologists and the Côte d'Ivoire government, the North group has had four adult males since 2016 but the knuckle-knock gesture hasn't reemerged among them.

"While establishing absence is challenging, our observations demonstrate a shift away from knuckle-knock gesture usage," the researchers wrote in their paper.

Their own language

To further understand the origins of the chimpanzees' culture, the team compared mating solicitation gestures involving the use of tools between Tai chimpanzees and Sonso chimpanzees at the Budongo Forest Reserve in Uganda.

Whereas the Tai chimpanzees preferred

the knuckle-knock, the Sonso chimpanzees used the object-slap: moving the arm from the shoulder to slap an object with an open palm.

Likewise, the Sonso chimpanzees frequently used leaf-clipping to express their interest in mating but the Tai chimpanzees didn't.

Chimpanzees have genetically inherited certain gestures across subspecies but individuals have been known to express only a subset. But within a closed group, multiple individuals use the same set of gestures over time and can even differ from the gestures used in a neighbouring group.

The Budongo Forest Reserve is about 4,160 km from the habitat of the Tai chimpanzees of Côte d'Ivoire. "We can rule out that the different signals used in each community have a genetic origin. Given they live in a similar forest environment, we can also rule out environmental influences on culture," Ms. Crockett said.

"This leaves us with the most likely option: that different signals in neighbouring communities arise through social learning."

Bringing conservation to culture

"Cultures emerge over generations. Cultural behaviours – such as the use of specialised toolkits, nut-cracking with stone hammers or digging out underground bee nests with different-sized sticks – are crucial for survival," Ms. Crockett said.

According to her, the preservation of animal culture is a relatively new concept. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recently included it among the metrics it uses to prepare its 'Red List of Endangered Species'. The message seems to be that chimpanzees should be protected as well as their cultures.

But the IUCN's job isn't done. In a November 2024 paper in *Science*, researchers reported that the deaths of a species' elders are disproportionately more harmful than the deaths of other members.

This is because the elders possess important cultural knowledge: where to find the best watering holes in particular weather, the ways to respond to different predators, caring for the young when the parents can't, and so on.

One of the authors of this study wrote then that the "loss of old individuals is not yet recognised by the IUCN as a means of listing threatened species."

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THE GIST

Cultural behaviours are crucial for survival. Illegal hunting or logging may not only be killing chimpanzees but also destroying their cultures, which could threaten the survival of the remaining chimpanzees

Researchers once believed culture separated humans from other animals. But research has revealed cultural practices in many animals. Even so, community-specific dialects in non-human primates such as chimpanzees, orangutans, and bonobos have been rare

A study concluded in 2019 that no members of a chimpanzee group being studied had used knuckle-knocking – a typical mating behaviour in 20 years. This was due to the near-complete loss of adult males in the community

What the Study Found:

- Male chimpanzees use four dialects for mating: heel-kick, knuckle-knock, leaf-clip, and branch-shake.

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- These are learned behavioural traditions passed down generations — a form of animal culture.
- Human activities like poaching, logging, and habitat fragmentation are not only causing physical harm to chimpanzee populations but also erasing their cultural knowledge.
- For example, the knuckle-knock dialect has vanished from the North group due to the demographic collapse of adult males between 2004–2011.

Chimpanzee Culture – A Broader Understanding:

- Culture was once thought to be uniquely human, but studies now confirm it in animals, including primates, cetaceans, and elephants.
- Culture among animals includes tool use, grooming rituals, social learning, and communication styles.
- Different groups of chimpanzees use community-specific gestures, developed through social learning, not genes or environmental pressures.

Demographic Shifts and Cultural Erosion:

- The case of the North group demonstrates how loss of specific age-sex classes, particularly adult males or elders, leads to cultural extinction.
- Despite demographic recovery post-2016, knuckle-knock has not re-emerged — showing how difficult it is to revive lost traditions once transmission chains are broken.

Human Footprint and Animal Culture:

- Logging roads, bushmeat hunting, and pet trafficking have disrupted chimpanzee habitats and social groups.
- Behavioural adaptations tied to survival—like tool use for food or gestures for mating—are being forgotten.
- This represents a silent dimension of extinction — not just of species, but of their learned knowledge systems.

Policy Implications:

- In a landmark move, the IUCN has started including animal culture as a factor in its Red List criteria.
- However, current conservation metrics still do not account for the disproportionate loss of elders, who hold critical cultural knowledge.

Broader Conservation Lessons:

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- Conservation must expand beyond preserving numbers and genetics, to protecting behavioural diversity and knowledge systems.
- This aligns with the Ecosystem Approach under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which calls for inclusive, multi-dimensional conservation.
- Indigenous and local community knowledge in human societies is protected by UNESCO — a parallel approach is now emerging in animal populations.

Indian Relevance and Way Forward:

- India, too, faces similar issues: elephants and langurs exhibit culturally learned behaviours like crop-raiding techniques or urban adaptation.
- The Wildlife Protection Act (1972) and conservation strategies should begin to consider behavioural and social structures of animal groups.
- Protecting habitat connectivity, community structure, and culturally important individuals (elders, matriarchs) can improve long-term conservation outcomes.

Conclusion:

- The loss of animal cultures is an underexplored but significant consequence of human impact. As scientific understanding deepens, biodiversity conservation must evolve to include cultural preservation—ensuring that species not only survive but retain the knowledge essential for their identity and resilience.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques :“Conservation must not only protect species, but also their cultures.” Discuss the significance of cultural behaviours in animal species with reference to recent findings on chimpanzee dialects in West Africa. (250 words)

A 400-acre land parcel called Kancha Gachibowli, located on the University of Hyderabad (UoH) campus, is at the centre of a growing legal, environmental, and student-led political controversy. The Telangana government's move to auction the land for revenue generation has sparked widespread protests and raised questions about land ownership, environmental conservation, and public policy priorities.

Why were students protesting over Kancha Gachibowli?

What is the ownership status of the 400-acre land parcel known as Kancha Gachibowli? Why did the government decide to auction the land? Why were environmentalists worried?

Swathi Vadlamudi

The story so far:

The students of the University of Hyderabad at Gachibowli have been protesting ever since the news of the auction of a 400-acre land parcel known as Kancha Gachibowli within campus premises broke. The battle has now reached the Supreme Court, which has acknowledged the destruction of greenery and the existence of wildlife in the area, before taking it up *suo motu*. Three PILs have already been filed in the Telangana High Court against the auction.

Why were there protests?

Students state that the land is part of the university, a claim which has been vehemently denied by the government. The land was part of the 2,324 acres granted to the University of Hyderabad at

the time of its establishment in 1974, as part of the six-point formula proposed by the then Congress government to assuage regional sentiments stoked by the Telangana movement of 1969. However, the land allocation was not formalised through title transfer. Subsequently, large tracts of land, unused by the university, were taken up by the government for various purposes including establishing the Indian Institute of Information Technology, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, and the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh to name a few. By 2010, more than 800 acres of land was taken away in 22 such instances.

What do documents say?

The 400 acres of land which is now under conflict was part of such diversions in 2004, under the then Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government. An MoU was signed with the University of Hyderabad, for the

transfer of 534 acres, in lieu of 396 acres allocated at another location. The land formed part of 850 acres allocated to IMG Academies Bharata for developing sports facilities. A sale deed was subsequently signed, just before Legislative Assembly elections in which the TDP was routed by the Congress. After winning the elections, the then Chief Minister cancelled the land transfer, leading to a long drawn out legal battle. The top court dismissed the Special Leave Petition, allowing the present government under Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy to take up the land.

What are environmentalists saying?

Undisturbed for more than 20 years, the land has become home to a rich variety of native flora and fauna. Several migratory birds also visit the area. A recent compendium of biodiversity collated from the campus mentions 233 bird species, which is higher than the avian numbers in

the KBR National Park and the Mrugavani National Park. It also cited *Murricia hyderabadensis*, a unique spider, which is endemic to the Kancha Gachibowli forest, and found nowhere else. The document also lists at least three reptiles, and 27 bird species which are mentioned in Schedule-I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, indicating their vulnerability and need for highest protection, besides 72 species of tree diversity.

Why did the govt. decide to auction?

The Congress government in the joint State of Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy was the first to begin the monetisation of government lands through open auctions, which was decried and denounced by many concerned citizens and political parties. However, such auctions have become the unstated State policy of all subsequent governments in Telangana, irrespective of the party in power.

The Congress party, which won the 2023 assembly elections inherited a State debt of nearly ₹4 lakh crore, which is set to cross ₹5 lakh crore by the end of FY 2025-26. Mr. Reddy's recent admission that he had no funds for capital expenditure reflects the true state of State coffers. The judgment about the ownership Kancha Gachibowli came just in time as a respite for the government, which decided to garner funds for welfare measures through auctioning the land.

THE GIST

▼ The students of the University of Hyderabad at Gachibowli have been protesting ever since the news of the auction of a 400-acre land parcel known as Kancha Gachibowli within campus premises broke.

▼ Students state that the land is part of the university, a claim which has been vehemently denied by the government.

▼ Undisturbed for more than 20 years, the land has become home to a rich variety of native flora and fauna. Several migratory birds also visit the area.

Why Are Students Protesting?

- Students argue that the 400-acre parcel was part of the original 2,324 acres granted to the university in 1974, under the Six-Point Formula meant to appease regional demands post the Telangana movement.
- However, this land grant was never formalized through a title deed.
- Over the years, more than 800 acres of university land have been diverted for other institutions like IIIT, TIFR, and the Sports Authority, leading to further mistrust.

What Is the Government's Stand?

- The Telangana government claims ownership of the land based on:
- A 2004 MoU that reallocated 534 acres in exchange for 396 acres elsewhere.
- A cancelled sale to IMG Academies, later revived after a Supreme Court ruling.

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- With a state debt nearing ₹5 lakh crore, the government aims to monetise idle land assets to fund welfare and capital expenditure.

Environmental Concerns:

- The land has been undisturbed for over two decades, evolving into a biodiversity hotspot.
- Documented presence of:
 - 233 bird species (more than in Hyderabad's major parks like KBR and Mrugavani),
 - 27 Schedule-I species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972,
- Endemic species such as *Murricia hyderabadensis*, a spider found nowhere else.
- Environmentalists fear the auction will lead to urbanisation and irreversible ecological loss.

Key Issues Involved:

- Legal Ambiguity:
 - The dispute highlights the complexity of land ownership where MoUs, sale deeds, and Supreme Court judgments create competing claims.
 - Absence of clear land titling and formal transfer continues to affect public institutions.
- Environmental vs. Economic Priorities:
 - The auction reflects a conflict between ecological preservation and fiscal needs.
 - Governments increasingly use land monetisation to plug budget deficits, sidelining sustainability considerations.
- Institutional Autonomy:
 - Repeated land diversions weaken public universities and research institutions by limiting their space for expansion, thereby eroding their academic vision.

Broader Policy Implications:

- Need for Comprehensive Land Records Reform:
 - The Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) must ensure that institutional lands are digitally recorded, protected, and exempt from arbitrary acquisition.
- Ecological Zoning in Urban Planning:
 - Urban forests and biodiverse spaces like Kancha Gachibowli must be recognised as urban conservation reserves.
 - Use of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) must be mandated before land auctions.
- Reimagining State Revenue Models:
 - Relying on land monetisation signals weak state capacity.
 - Alternatives like public-private partnerships, green bonds, and climate finance could be explored instead of asset stripping.

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Conclusion:

- The Kancha Gachibowli controversy exemplifies the need for a balanced development model that respects institutional integrity, environmental protection, and transparency in governance. The incident also underscores how short-term fiscal decisions can undermine long-term national assets - ecological or educational. A policy shift toward sustainable urban planning and better land governance is crucial.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : "The Kancha Gachibowli land dispute reflects the growing tension between institutional autonomy and state ownership of land." Examine the legal and administrative dimensions of land allocation to public institutions in India. (250 words)



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In March 2025, former U.S. President Donald Trump publicly hinted at the possibility of serving a third term in office, invoking debates around constitutional limits and legal loopholes. This raises pertinent questions on term limits in democracies, constitutional interpretation, and executive power.

Can the U.S. President serve a third term?

What does 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution state? How is U.S. President Donald Trump trying to circumvent the 22nd Amendment and serve one more term as President? Are there circumstances through which the U.S. Speaker could become U.S. President? What are the rules in other nations?

EXPLAINER

Kartikey Singh

The story so far:

In March 30, the 78-year-old U.S. President Donald Trump said he's "not joking" about serving a third term in the White House. He further claimed that a legal loophole could make it possible.

Does the U.S. Constitution allow it?

The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified on February 27, 1951, limits U.S. Presidents to two elected terms. It was brought in response to Franklin D. Roosevelt's unprecedented 'four-term' Presidency (1933-1945), which broke the 'two-term' unwritten precedent set by the nation's first President, George Washington, who voluntarily declined a third term in 1796.

The Amendment prohibits anyone from being elected President more than twice, and if someone has served as President for more than two years of another's term (for example, a Vice President who became President due to the President's death or resignation), they can only be elected once. Thus, effectively, the maximum U.S. Presidential tenure can be 10 years (two years as a successor plus two full terms). For Mr. Trump, elected in 2016 and 2024, the 22nd Amendment unequivocally bars a third term, due to his two elected tenures (2017-2021 and 2025-2029), regardless of their 'non-consecutive' nature.

What is the 'VP loophole'?

Despite the 22nd Amendment's clarity, Mr. Trump has suggested ways to circumvent it. One idea he proposed involves J.D. Vance running for President in 2028 with Mr. Trump as Vice President (VP). If elected, Mr. Vance would resign, allowing Trump to assume the Presidency. However, the 12th Amendment blocks this strategy, stating: "No person constitutionally ineligible to



New rules: A protest against the policies of U.S. President Donald Trump in California, on April 5. AFP

the office of President shall be eligible to that of Vice-President of the United States." Since the 22nd Amendment bars Mr. Trump from another term, he cannot serve as VP either.

While the VP route is blocked, another theoretical path exists through 'succession', as explained by Professor Bruce G. Peabody in his paper. The 22nd Amendment prohibits a person from being "elected" to the Presidency more than twice but does not bar "serving" beyond two terms. In other words, a twice-elected President could ascend to the Oval Office via the line of succession, such as by becoming Speaker of the House, who is elected by members of the House and need not himself be a member of Congress, if the President and VP become unavailable.

A third pathway – repealing the 22nd

Amendment – is highly unlikely. Under Article V, this requires either a two-thirds vote in both the House and the Senate or a 'constitutional convention' – a process never used – called for by two-thirds (34) of State legislatures, followed by ratification by three-fourths (38) of the 50 States. Given the current U.S. political landscape, the likelihood of Mr. Trump securing a constitutional amendment, which has not been done in the past 33 years, is virtually non-existent.

Which world leaders have extended their tenure?

Leaders all over the world have skillfully extended their rule by reshaping constitutional limits. For instance, Vladimir Putin, after two terms as Russia's President (2000-2008), hit the 'consecutive' two-term limit under Article

81(3) of the 1993 Constitution. To circumvent this limit, he then became Prime Minister (2008-2012) as his ally Dmitry Medvedev took the Presidency and extended the Presidential term from four to six years. Returning as President in 2012 and 2018, Mr. Putin, with a 2020 amendment backed by a loyal Duma and judiciary, reset his term count, potentially holding power until 2036.

Türkiye's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister (2003-2014), turned President, axed term limits via a 2017 referendum, and reshaped Türkiye's system into a Presidential one. Similarly, China's Xi Jinping eliminated the two-term cap in 2018. This change allowed Mr. Xi to rule indefinitely, cementing his hold over the party and the State.

Yet, some leaders thrive without rewriting the rules. In Germany, where chancellors face no 'term limits' but need 'Parliamentary support', Angela Merkel ruled for 16 years. Similarly, Prime Ministers in Canada and Britain, unbound by fixed terms, can lead indefinitely, sustained by 'party confidence'.

Why doesn't India have term limits?

Unlike the U.S. Presidential framework, India's Parliamentary system imposes no term limits on its Prime Minister, as tenure depends on retaining the Lok Sabha's confidence (Article 75(3)). This design ensures 'voter sovereignty', 'democratic flexibility', and 'parliamentary accountability', allowing leaders who sustain public trust to serve extended periods. For instance, current Prime Minister Narendra Modi could serve 15 years by 2029. However, the system also includes checks like the "no-confidence" motion, which has historically ended tenures – such as those of V.P. Singh (1990), H.D. Deve Gowda (1997) and Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1999). Moreover, regular elections, coalition dynamics, floor debates, judicial oversight, and a free press ensure a robust democratic balance.

Kartikey Singh is a final year student at RGNUL, Patiala, Punjab.

THE GIST

➤ The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified on February 27, 1951, limits U.S. Presidents to two elected terms.

➤ The 22nd Amendment prohibits a person from being "elected" to the Presidency more than twice but does not bar "serving" beyond two terms.

➤ Unlike the U.S. Presidential framework, India's Parliamentary system imposes no term limits on its Prime Minister, as tenure depends on retaining the Lok Sabha's confidence.

Constitutional Provisions in the U.S.:

- The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1951, was enacted in the aftermath of Franklin D. Roosevelt's four-term presidency.

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- It limits the President to two elected terms, and at most 10 years in office if one has succeeded mid-term due to resignation or death.
- The 12th Amendment further blocks anyone ineligible for the presidency from holding the Vice Presidency, closing off the "backdoor" route via Vice Presidential succession.

Loopholes and the 'Speaker Route':

- Some legal scholars point to a narrow theoretical gap: the 22nd Amendment bans being elected more than twice, not "serving" again.
- Under Presidential succession laws, if the President and Vice President are unable to serve, the Speaker of the House may assume the presidency.
- A former President could theoretically become Speaker, and if the top two offices were vacated, ascend to the presidency.
- However, this remains highly speculative and politically controversial, with uncertain legal standing.

Repealing the Amendment – A Near Impossibility:

- The process under Article V of the Constitution requires a two-thirds majority in Congress and ratification by 38 states, making repeal extremely unlikely in a polarized political environment.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: HOW OTHER NATIONS HANDLE EXECUTIVE TERM LIMITS:

COUNTRY	TERM LIMIT APPROACH
RUSSIA	Reset limits through constitutional amendments (2020), allowing rule till 2036 .
CHINA	Abolished term limits in 2018 , enabling Xi Jinping's indefinite rule .
TÜRKIYE	Changed system via 2017 referendum ; Erdogan reset presidential term count.
GERMANY	No term limit for Chancellor; Merkel served 16 years based on parliamentary majority .
INDIA	No constitutional term limit ; Prime Ministers remain as long as they retain Lok Sabha's confidence .

Indian Context:

- India follows a Parliamentary system, where the Prime Minister's tenure is not time-bound but based on parliamentary majority (Article 75).
- Democratic checks include no-confidence motions, judicial review, media scrutiny, and electoral accountability.
- Examples: Leaders like Nehru (17 years) and Modi (potential 15 years by 2029) illustrate sustained public trust without altering the Constitution.

Implications and Analysis:

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- Trump's claim exposes how constitutional ambiguities can be exploited to challenge democratic norms.
- Democracies with rigid constitutional frameworks may ensure stability but also face challenges in adapting to political ambitions.
- Countries with weaker institutions may witness constitutional manipulation to centralize power, threatening democratic longevity.
- India's parliamentary flexibility, backed by electoral legitimacy and checks-and-balances, ensures both continuity and accountability.

Conclusion:

- The Trump episode serves as a cautionary tale about the limits of written laws without strong democratic culture. While term limits seek to prevent authoritarianism, political will, institutional integrity, and civic vigilance are the real bulwarks of democracy. India's framework, while flexible, continues to depend on vibrant political discourse and institutional robustness.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : "Term limits on executive power are essential to uphold democratic accountability." Examine this statement in the context of the 22nd Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the Indian parliamentary framework. **(250 words)**

Daily News Analysis

In News : River Blindness

ZSI study on blackflies offers hope for river blindness control, Researchers worked on four species collected from eight locations in the central Himalayan region.



Why in the News?

- A new study by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has introduced DNA barcoding to accurately identify blackfly species—the carriers of *Onchocerca volvulus*, the parasitic worm that causes river blindness (onchocerciasis).
- This innovation is expected to enhance disease control and vector management, especially in vulnerable ecological zones like the central Himalayas.

What is River Blindness (Onchocerciasis)?

- River blindness is a neglected tropical disease (NTD) caused by the parasitic worm *Onchocerca volvulus*.
- The disease is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blackflies belonging to the genus *Simulium*, which breed in fast-flowing rivers and streams.
- Symptoms include intense skin itching, disfiguring skin changes, and in advanced cases, permanent vision loss or blindness.
- Globally, it is second only to trachoma in causing infection-related blindness, especially affecting rural populations in sub-Saharan Africa, Yemen, and parts of Latin America.
- Treatment relies on mass drug administration (MDA) using ivermectin, with a minimum 80% therapeutic coverage required for effective control.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), river blindness remains one of the most neglected tropical diseases, especially in remote and rural areas.
- Five countries have been officially declared free of the disease by WHO:
 1. Colombia (2013)
 2. Ecuador (2014)
 3. Mexico (2015)
 4. Guatemala (2016)
 5. Niger (2025) – the first African country to achieve this milestone.

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UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques :With reference to Onchocerciasis or River Blindness, consider the following statements:

1. It is caused by a bacterial pathogen transmitted by mosquitoes.
2. It is classified as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) by WHO.
3. Blackflies of the genus Simulium are the vectors responsible for its transmission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : b)

Prescribe preventive medicine for a healthy India

India stands at the cusp of economic glory, aspiring to become a \$5 trillion economy and a global powerhouse. However, there is a "silent epidemic" of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) that threatens our economic and developmental ambitions. Today, NCDs are the leading cause of death in the country, accounting for roughly two-thirds of all deaths. To secure a healthy and prosperous future, India must urgently embrace a preventive health-care mindset – one that can heal before there is a need to heal.

The rising tide of NCDs, their economic toll

Over the past few decades, India has undergone an epidemiological transition. Communicable diseases such as infections have come under control but have been overtaken by NCDs. Chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, cancers, chronic lung diseases, and stroke kill an estimated five million to six million Indians each year. What is particularly alarming is that NCDs are striking Indians at younger ages.

India's working-age population is increasingly affected – a disturbing trend when its GDP target relies on the youthful demographic dividend. In fact, 22% of Indians over 30 years are at risk of dying from an NCD before they hit the age of 70. We see this mirror in our hospitals every month with 30- to 40-year olds with heart ailments or in need of dialysis due to diabetic complications.

Beyond the human cost, the economic impact of NCDs is staggering due to the resulting loss of productivity and reduced workforce participation. Studies estimate that NCDs may already be costing India around 5%-10% of its GDP. A World Economic Forum (and Harvard School of Public Health) study projected that between 2012 and 2030, NCDs would inflict a loss of around \$3.5 trillion-\$4 trillion on the Indian economy. Hence, an investment in preventive health care is not an expense but an economic strategy. Prevention is our best insurance policy for sustainable development.

The good news is that most NCDs are largely preventable. Sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy diets, tobacco and alcohol use, pollution, and genetic predisposition are some of the key culprits. By modifying these, we can significantly reduce NCD risk. It is estimated that about 80% of



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With India facing a growing epidemic of non-communicable diseases, there needs to be awareness that 'one can heal before there is a need to heal'

premature heart disease, stroke, and diabetes cases can be prevented by addressing lifestyle factors.

Today, around 22%-23% of adults are overweight, and there is an urgent need to tackle obesity. We must make physical activity a part of one's daily routine with at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day, be it in the form of walking, yoga, or sports. A healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and proteins, and lower in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats is a must.

Air pollution is a health emergency directly impacting rates of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer, and even heart attacks. We must view pollution control as part of preventive medicine.

Finally, the most important measure is regular health screenings. Detecting these conditions early, through screenings starting at the age of 40 years or earlier if there is family history, can literally be a lifesaver. Early detection means timely intervention – controlling blood pressure before it causes a stroke, or removing a precancerous polyp before it turns into colon cancer. Screening such as mammograms for breast cancer or HPV tests for cervical cancer can find early, curable stages of disease.

Technology can transform prevention

Digital health technology – from smartphone apps and wearables to big data analytics – is a game changer. India has over 750 million smartphone users, which means we have the ability to deliver health advice, reminders, and risk assessments in the palm of everyone's hand. Wearable devices and health trackers allow individuals to keep an eye on their health stats. The integration of such real-time data into preventive care plans is an exciting new frontier.

Most transformative is the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in predictive health modelling. AI algorithms can analyse vast datasets to predict an individual's risk for various NCDs with remarkable accuracy. AI tools can analyse an individual's profile and generate a "health risk score" that forecasts the likelihood of, say, a cardiac event or developing diabetes over the next decade. AI also helps in early diagnostics –

for instance, machine learning models can scan chest X-rays or computed tomography (CT) scans to detect early lung nodules or early signs of fatty liver that a human might miss, enabling pre-emptive action.

However, preventive medicine, augmented by AI, should always remain humane, compassionate, and patient-centric. Used responsibly, digital health and AI will be our greatest allies in making preventive care more proactive, precise, and accessible.



Fostering a 'preventive mindset'

Preventive medicine is not just a set of services but a mindset. I envision a future where every individual, community, corporate and government

thinks "health-first" in every action and policy. Individuals must become the champions of their own health. I urge every reader to schedule that check-up you have been postponing and make small daily changes such as taking the stairs or cutting down on sugar to protect your well-being. Corporates and workplaces play a pivotal role by investing in employee wellness programmes – from annual health checks to in-house counsellors and fitness sessions.

Health-care providers must pivot from a reactive cure model to a preventive care model. The government's role is extremely important and initiatives such as the National Programme for Prevention and Control of NCDs and the establishment of Health and Wellness Centres that focus on screening and prevention are stellar steps. Beyond this, public policies should also be health-oriented: urban planning should create green spaces for exercise; education curricula should include health and nutrition, and food industry regulations should encourage reduced salt and sugar.

In the years that I have striven to make preventive care accessible and impactful, I have seen thousands of lives transformed because a disease was caught early or a risk factor was managed in time. Every individual has the power to make choices that guard their health. And those choices, scaled across 1.4 billion Indians, can help define our nation's health and happiness and ensure we reach our economic goals too.

Daily News Analysis

Paper 02: Social Justice : Health

UPSC Mains Practice Question: India is facing a silent epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) that threatens its public health and economic ambitions. Examine the role of preventive healthcare in addressing this crisis and discuss the challenges in its implementation. (250 words).

Context :

- India is poised at a critical juncture in its development journey, with the ambitious vision of becoming a \$5 trillion economy and an influential global force.
- Yet, this aspiration faces a grave, silent threat, the escalating burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).
- While the nation continues to make strides in various sectors, the growing prevalence of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and respiratory disorders poses a substantial challenge to both public health and economic growth.

The Alarming Rise of NCDs and Their Economic Consequences

- While the country has made considerable progress in controlling communicable diseases, this success has been offset by a sharp rise in NCDs.
- These chronic conditions now account for nearly two-thirds of all deaths in the country, with five to six million Indians succumbing annually.
- What makes this trend particularly concerning is its impact on younger populations.
- A significant portion of India's working-age citizens, a demographic that the country relies on for its economic engine, are increasingly affected by lifestyle-related diseases.
- Approximately 22% of Indians over the age of 30 face the risk of dying from an NCD before turning 70.
- The economic toll of NCDs is equally daunting. Reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and premature mortality result in an estimated loss of 5%-10% of India's GDP annually.
- Projections from the World Economic Forum and the Harvard School of Public Health estimate a staggering \$3.5-\$4 trillion loss to the Indian economy between 2012 and 2030 due to NCDs.
- This underscores a vital truth: investing in preventive healthcare is not merely a health imperative but a strategic economic policy.
- Lifestyle Factors, the Power of Prevention the Role of Technology and AI in Transformative Health Care

Lifestyle Factors and the Power of Prevention

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Daily News Analysis

- Despite the bleak statistics, the silver lining lies in the fact that most NCDs are largely preventable.
- Sedentary habits, unhealthy diets, tobacco and alcohol consumption, air pollution, and genetic predispositions are some of the key contributors.
- Addressing these modifiable risk factors could prevent up to 80% of premature cases of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.
- A critical starting point is addressing obesity, with 22%-23% of Indian adults now classified as overweight.
- Encouraging daily physical activity, through walking, yoga, or sports, and promoting a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins can significantly reduce health risks.
- Additionally, pollution control must be seen not just as an environmental issue, but as a form of public health intervention, given its direct link to respiratory diseases and cardiovascular complications.
- Another cornerstone of prevention is early detection. Regular health screenings from the age of 40, or earlier in the case of familial risk, are vital for timely intervention.
- Early identification of high blood pressure, prediabetes, or early-stage cancers can enable treatment before conditions become life-threatening.

The Role of Technology and AI in Transformative Health Care

- With over 750 million smartphone users, the potential for widespread dissemination of health-related information is unprecedented.
- Digital health tools, including wearable fitness trackers, mobile apps, and telemedicine, empower individuals to monitor their health and make informed choices.
- Even more transformative is the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in predictive modelling and diagnostics.
- AI can analyse complex health data to predict an individual's risk for specific NCDs, generating personalized health risk scores.
- It can also enhance diagnostics by identifying anomalies in scans, such as early lung nodules or signs of fatty liver, that may be missed by human eyes.
- However, while AI augments care delivery, the human touch must remain central. Preventive care must be compassionate, accessible, and centred on the patient.

The Way Forward: Cultivating a Preventive Health Mindset Across Society

- Ultimately, preventive care is not merely a clinical protocol but a cultural shift.
- It requires every individual, institution, and policymaker to adopt a "health-first" philosophy.
- Personal responsibility plays a key role, from attending regular check-ups to making small but meaningful lifestyle adjustments like reducing sugar intake or choosing stairs over elevators.
- Workplaces must champion employee wellness, offering annual screenings, in-house counsellors, and fitness initiatives.
- Healthcare providers need to pivot from reactive models that focus on treating illness to proactive systems that emphasize disease prevention.

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- Public policy must align with health objectives: urban planning should prioritise green spaces, educational syllabi must include nutrition and fitness, and food regulations should mandate lower levels of sugar and salt in processed foods.
- Government efforts like the National Programme for Prevention and Control of NCDs and the establishment of Health and Wellness Centres are commendable steps in this direction.
- But these must be scaled up and integrated with a broader national strategy that puts prevention at the forefront of healthcare.

Conclusion

- As the nation aspires for global stature and sustainable development, it must confront the NCD epidemic with urgency and foresight.
- A shift towards preventive healthcare is not only desirable but essential. The power to bring about this transformation lies within individuals, communities, corporations, and governments alike.
- By developing a culture of prevention, embracing technology responsibly, and aligning public policies with health objectives, India can protect its demographic dividend, reduce economic losses, and enhance the well-being of its citizens.