DATE 17 october 2026

BRIEF ISSUE 169

PSIR & GS-2
DAILY BRIEF

ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

Briefs, scans the best academic platforms, national newspapers & leading think tanks to pick the most relevant articles & research. It converts them into crisp, high-impact points you can directly use in your mains answers.



PSIR OPTIONAL BY
Amit Pratap Singh
| ForumIAS |

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Daily Brief · Source Plan (Monday to Saturday)

Common Daily

The Hindu · The Indian Express · Deccan Herald · The Statesman

read every day, alongside the day's sources below

Day-wise Sources

Monday	**ORF** (Observer Research Foundation) · **Foreign Affairs** · **The Diplomat**
Tuesday	**MP-IDSA** · **EPW** (Economic & Political Weekly) · **Gateway House**
Wednesday	**Firstpost** · **South Asia Monitor** · **ICWA** (Indian Council of World Affairs)
Thursday	**ORF** · **Frontline** · **Bar & Bench** · **World Focus**
Friday	**MP-IDSA** · **Carnegie Endowment** · **VIF** (Vivekananda International Foundation)
Saturday	**Firstpost** · **Project Syndicate** · **The Economist**

As per relevance, articles from other relevant sources such as NatStrat, ThePrint and The Telegraph (India) will also be included.

How religious conversion affects eligibility for caste-based reservation

How religious conversion affects eligibility for caste-based reservation

The Supreme Court has upheld Madras High Court's decision to strike down a 2024 Tamil Nadu government order that allowed people converting from Hinduism to Islam to claim Backward Class (Muslim) quota.

Written by: **Amaal Sheikh**

8 min read **New Delhi** Oct 16, 2026 04:01 PM IST



Context

Reservation in India is given to classes the Constitution itself identifies – Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes – and each State keeps its own notified list of those communities.

Tamil Nadu's Backward Class (Muslim) list has seven communities. In 2024 the State issued an order saying that a person from a backward community who converted to Islam could be certified as belonging to one of those seven, so that the benefit already held would not be lost on conversion.

The Madras High Court struck that order down on 25 June. On 15 October 2026 the Supreme Court upheld the High Court, and in doing so set out when a caste-based claim survives a change of religion and when it does not.

How religious conversion affects eligibility for caste-based reservation

Facts

- **The ruling :** A bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and S Chandrashekhar upheld the Madras High Court's decision striking down the 2024 Tamil Nadu government order, holding that conversion from Hinduism to Islam cannot by itself confer Backward Class (Muslim) status.

- **The bar on Scheduled Caste status :** Paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, issued under Article 341, states that no person professing a religion different from the Hindu, the Sikh or the Buddhist religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste.

- **The seven notified communities :** Tamil Nadu's Backward Class (Muslim) list covers Dekkani Muslims, Dudekula, Labbais including Rawthar and Marakayar, Mapilla, Sheik, Syed and Ansar, who share 3.5 per cent reservation under the 2007 State Act.

Analytical Crux

1. The backwardness suffered in the antecedent social order cannot, by itself, be carried forward so as to confer upon him the status of a backward class in the religion to which he has converted. There is a difference between continuing to face social disadvantage and belonging to a legally recognised backward class: poverty, lack of education and lack of opportunities persist, but these would not allow the antecedent social backwardness into the new religion.

2. Conversion establishes religious affiliation and it does not establish membership of a particular socio-historical community within that religion. The seven Muslim communities notified as backward in TN are not denominations of Islam in the theological sense comparable to Sunni, Shia, or other schools of religious doctrine, but arise as social communities formed because of their common ancestry, occupation and shared history.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. The State cannot abdicate the statutory determination to a private body like Jamath: while a Jamath could certify that someone had converted to Islam, it could not, through a certificate alone, establish their backward class status. An expert recommendation is not legislation, and any advice that violates the Constitution and does not meet the requirements of Articles 14, 15(4) and 16(4) cannot stand. The constitutional bench in Indra Sawhney had not addressed how conversion affected a claim rooted in caste-based backwardness within a Hindu society.

Verbatim Quotes

"reservation is attached to a constitutionally identified class and not to an individual as a transferable personal entitlement"

- Supreme Court of India, as quoted in The Indian Express

Ladakh still waits for the Article 371(K) draft

Ladakh still waits for the Article 371(K) draft

A year after four protesters were shot dead in Leh, the Centre has yet to share a draft of its offer, and Ladakh's leaders say distrust is growing.

Published : Oct 16, 2026 19:14 IST - 14 MINS READ

ZAID BIN SHABIR

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Context

When Jammu and Kashmir's special status was removed in 2019, Ladakh was separated from it and made a Union Territory with no legislature of its own, so it has no elected body that can make law.

Since 2020 two bodies – the Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance – have negotiated with the Centre for statehood, protection under the Sixth Schedule, and safeguards on land, jobs and demography. The talks stalled, and on 24 September 2025 security forces shot dead four protesters in Leh.

In September 2026 the Centre offered an elected governing body and local administrative autonomy under Article 371(K) instead. This piece reports why both Leh and Kargil have rejected that offer as inadequate, and why the two sides parted again without agreement on 15 October.

Ladakh still waits for the Article 371(K) draft

Facts

- **The offer :** The Centre proposed a Union Territory-level elected body with legislative powers over land, culture, language, forests, environment and natural resources, described by Ladakh's Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra as neither a State nor a conventional Union Territory with a legislature but a blended structure; Article 371 already gives 12 States special safeguards and administrative arrangements.

- **What preceded it :** On 24 September 2025 security forces fired on a shutdown call by the Leh Apex Body and killed four protesters; 87 people were booked, Sonam Wangchuk was detained under the National Security Act for nearly six months, and the judicial inquiry's findings have still not been made public.

- **Where it now stands :** The two sides met again on 15 October 2026 and the sub-committee rejected the proposal as inadequate, with the next round scheduled for 22 October; meanwhile the Nautor Regularisation Rules, 2026 allow eligible occupants proprietary rights up to 10 acres, and five new districts were created in April.

Analytical Crux

1. In the absence of the draft for proposed Article 371(K), it remains unclear how much authority the elected body would eventually have over land, finances, administration, and law and order. Ladakh's Chief Secretary described the proposed arrangement as neither a state nor a conventional Union Territory with a legislature but a blended structure, but the meeting ended without a breakthrough, with the Ladakh sub-committee rejecting the government's proposal as inadequate.

2. Donthi observed that New Delhi has been reluctant to grant the region greater political autonomy and likely favours maintaining direct control because of the border dispute with China, and that it could also trigger similar requests in other parts of the country, such as Manipur. The killing of protesters last year has hurt the sensitivities of people who have always seen themselves as patriotic and a bulwark against China.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. Kumar said the Centre is not willing to go as far as an assembly with meaningful powers: it says it is willing to create one, but at the same time it is creating new districts, proposing district councils and introducing other administrative structures that could limit the powers of any assembly that is eventually created. The negotiations, she said, are marked by a lethal combination of ignorance, incompetence and political ambition.

Verbatim Quotes

"The prolonged negotiations, coupled with the government's reluctance to devolve greater political powers, gradually fanned a sense of uncertainty and mistrust in Ladakh."

- Zaid Bin Shabir

The ECI Software Deleted 5.38 Lakh Bengal Voters With Auto-Generated Rejections Without Citing a Reason



The ECI Software Deleted 5.38 Lakh Bengal Voters With Auto-Generated Rejections Without Citing a Reason

Aparna Bhattacharya
6 hours ago · 5 min read

Moreover, these forms were filed in the name of the same election officer who was deciding the voter's case. In effect, the officer was both raising the objection and ruling on it.

Context

A Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls has been running across States. In it, voters whose records could not be matched to an earlier roll are called to a hearing to prove their eligibility.

Two forms govern changes to a roll. Form 6 is used to add a name; Form 7 is used by one elector to object to another elector's name, and an electoral registration officer decides the objection before any deletion is entered in a public register.

This report examines West Bengal's Form 10 registers and finds that more than five lakh names were removed through Form 7 objections that no person ever filed – the Commission's own software generated them – and that not one recorded a reason.

The ECI Software Deleted 5.38 Lakh Bengal Voters With Auto-Generated Rejections Without Citing a Reason

Facts

- **The figure :** 5,38,320 voters were struck off West Bengal's final roll through Form 7 objections between the draft roll of 14 December 2025 and the final roll of 28 February 2026; the Chief Electoral Officer's statement of 6 March confirmed these included auto-generated forms, and only 7,733 arose from a form a person actually filed.

- **The record :** In the Form 10 registers for 284 of the State's 294 constituencies, 5,23,998 of the 5,24,420 verifiable deletions name the electoral registration officer as the objector with the reason column blank in every one, leaving only 422 with an individual objector.

- **The rule it breaks :** Form 7 permits only six grounds — death, being underage, absence, having shifted, being enrolled already, or not being a citizen — and "not found eligible at hearing" is not among them, while the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 provide that an objection not made in the prescribed manner should be rejected.

Analytical Crux

1. When an officer did not approve a voter at a hearing, the software generated a Form 7 in that officer's name. These forms were filed in the name of the same election officer who was deciding the voter's case. In effect, the officer was both raising the objection and ruling on it.

2. The reason column is blank in every one of the 5,23,998 rows attributed to the electoral registration officer. A person who finds their name gone cannot tell from the record why it happened, which makes it much harder to fight.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. Form 7 allows only six grounds for removing a voter: death, being underage, absence, having shifted, being already enrolled, or not being a citizen. Not found eligible at hearing is not one of them, and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, say an objection not made in the prescribed manner should be rejected. This does not mean every one of these voters was wrongly removed; many may well have been ineligible. The problem is that the official record does not provide any reason whatsoever. This is a story about process and accountability, not the outcome.

Verbatim Quotes

"More than five lakh people were taken off the voter rolls through forms that did not give them a reason, at a scale far beyond what was found in any other state."

- Aparna Bhattacharya

China’s Strategic Reassessment of India

China’s Strategic Reassessment of India

YUN SUN

October 16, 2026



Context

For most of the past decade the United States treated India as a central partner in its Indo-Pacific strategy, and that American backing raised China's estimate of how powerful India might become.

That backing has now been withdrawn, with tariffs, visa restrictions and pressure over Russian oil. The author, who directs the China Program at the Stimson Center, has drawn on ten research trips to China and exchanges with Chinese experts since January 2025.

Her finding is that Beijing has quietly revised India downward – from an aspiring great power back towards a middle power – and that the reasoning behind that revision tells India something uncomfortable about how it is read abroad.

China's Strategic Reassessment of India

Facts

- **The trade asymmetry :** Bilateral trade reached 151.1 billion US dollars in financial year 2025 to 2026 with India running a 112.1 billion US dollar deficit, meaning 87 per cent of the trade consisted of Chinese exports to India.

- **The visa contrast :** Chinese officials cite the 280,000 visas China issued to Indian nationals in 2025 against the 2,000 visas India issued to Chinese nationals in the same period, offered as evidence of Beijing's accommodation.

- **The missing element :** Empowerment – the technology transfer, infrastructure and industrial cooperation China extends through the Belt and Road Initiative to Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh – is absent from its economic engagement with India.

Analytical Crux

1. Chinese strategists are returning to the view that perhaps, after all, India is just a middle power. It has great potential, but elements in the Indian strategic culture pose irremovable obstacles and consistently sabotage its ascension. America's willingness to elevate India to a global great power had changed China's original view that only real comprehensive national power mattered, and India's great-power status has now become much less persuasive.

2. Despite the amount of support the United States was willing to supply, India has adhered to its strategic autonomy and refuses to alienate Russia or support a U.S. military campaign against China. Despite the amount of accommodation China sees itself as willing to provide, India also adheres to its longstanding position and refuses to forge closer ties. That substantially reduces the strategic value of India as a U.S. partner in strategic competition with China, and consequently, China's anxiety about India's alignment with the United States; it also considerably decreases India's strategic appeal for China to pursue.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. China is most confident in the supply chain dependence it has built up vis-à-vis India. India primarily imports from China materials, parts, and equipment that Indian companies use to make finished products for export to developed-country markets, so decreasing India's dependence on China will create significant economic pain for Indian industries and companies. Meanwhile empowerment, the infrastructure development and industrial cooperation that empower local economies from within in Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh, is not an element in China's economic engagement with India, which raises the question of whether China deliberately avoids economic engagement that could elevate India's technological productivity, industrial upgrading, or high-tech development.

Verbatim Quotes

"That means India's strategic choice is predictable and cannot be shaped by the enticement of rewards or the threat of punishments."

- Yun Sun

Attack on Navi Pillay's Peace Nobel is really an attack on international law

Attack on Navi Pillay's Peace Nobel is really an attack on international law

By casting the South African jurist's legal findings as anti-Israel bias, states can evade the obligations those findings create

Written by:
Shashank Ranjan

6 min read
Oct 16, 2026 07:15 PM IST

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Context

Navi Pillay is a South African jurist and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. She chaired the UN Commission of Inquiry on the occupied Palestinian territory, which in September 2025 concluded that Israeli authorities had committed acts of genocide in Gaza.

On 9 October 2026 the Nobel Committee awarded her the Peace Prize for her efforts to promote peace and international law. Parts of the international press, Israel and the United States President responded by attacking her personally.

The author, an Army veteran teaching at OP Jindal Global University, argues the attack is not really about Pillay. He reads it as a method by which states avoid obligations they have not formally rejected.

Attack on Navi Pillay's Peace Nobel is really an attack on international law

Facts

- **The findings :** In September 2025 the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry chaired by Pillay concluded Israeli authorities had committed four of the five acts of genocide defined under the 1948 Genocide Convention, naming President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant as having incited the commission of genocide.

- **The enforcement gap :** Under the Rome Statute its 125 member states are obliged to arrest Netanyahu on entry, yet Hungary, Argentina and Poland have said they will not, while France and Italy argue he is immune as head of a non-member state and the United Kingdom maintains visiting heads of government have complete immunity from criminal jurisdiction.

- **The record at the Council and the Court :** The United States has vetoed 49 Security Council resolutions related to Israel, six of them since October 2023; the International Court of Justice has set 22 November 2027 for South Africa's reply and 22 May 2029 for Israel's rejoinder.

Analytical Crux

1. The accusations against Pillay provide an escape hatch. By reframing the legal findings as the product of bias rather than evidence, it transforms the question from is this legally sound to is the accuser trustworthy. This shift allows states to avoid the legal obligation without appearing to reject the law itself: the states are not refusing to enforce a valid warrant; they are declining to act based on a politically motivated accusation.

2. Despite the legal clarity, enforcement has been systematically hollowed out. The US added the ICC itself to its Specially Designated Nationals list; the US has vetoed 49 Security Council resolutions related to Israel, and since October 2023 has vetoed six separate UNSC resolutions that sought to halt Israel's war on Gaza; and Hungary, Argentina, and Poland have said they will not arrest Netanyahu, while France and Italy have taken the middle ground, arguing that Netanyahu was immune as the head of a non-member state. These refusals directly contradict the binding ICC Appeals Chamber decision on head of state immunity.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. The legal process itself moves at snail's pace. The ICJ has set a deadline of November 22, 2027 for South Africa's reply, and May 22, 2029 for Israel's rejoinder, and by the time the case reaches oral arguments, the facts on the ground would have substantially changed. The result is a system in which international law produces findings but not consequences. The campaign against Pillay's recognition does not defeat the legal findings on their merits; it makes their enforcement politically impossible.

Verbatim Quotes

"This is not an absence of international law — it is the systematic stripping of enforcement."

- Shashank Ranjan

UPSC LINK

- **GS Paper II, 2026:** Is the right to vote a fundamental right? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters?

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** International Human Rights frameworks are hostage to politics among nations. Comment.

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** Accelerating of Chinese influence across South Asia is fundamentally reshaping the region's geopolitical landscape. This is a big foreign policy challenge for India. Analyse.

- **PSIR Paper I, 2025:** Delineate the key factors that have shaped the evolving political landscape in Jammu and Kashmir post 2019.

- **PSIR Paper I, 2025:** Caste remains a vital axis for political mobilisation in India. How would the caste census address the aspirations of people? Discuss.

- **PSIR Paper I, 2025:** There is a debate on the procedure for appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners to the Election Commission of India. Analyse its various aspects.

- **PSIR Paper II, 2024:** Does the idea of the 21st century as 'Asian century' continue to remain feasible given the growing friction between India and China?

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