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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
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| ForumIAS |

SOURCES SCANNED TODAY



ARTICLE 01

Constitutional lawfare and political interest litigation : Bar & Bench

ARTICLE 02

Peace bonds: the colonial tool in 2026 : Bar & Bench

ARTICLE 03

Reservation for converts and substantive equality : Bar & Bench

ARTICLE 04

Moscow Format exposes the limits of consensus : ORF

ARTICLE 05

China’s bid to shape the global AI rules : ORF

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.

Constitutional lawfare and why courts must stay away from political interest litigation

Columns

Constitutional lawfare and why courts must stay away from political interest litigation

Judicial powers should be exercised to protect and augment fundamental rights, not to impinge upon federalism and defeat the people's electoral mandate.

Supreme Court and Political Parties

Murali Krishnan

Published on: 24 Oct 2026, 11:22 am · 6 min read

Context

Lawfare means using courts and legal institutions to reach a political objective. In its older sense the powerful used it against the weak; this piece argues that in India it has taken another form.

The sequence it describes runs: the Enforcement Directorate writes to a State agency under Section 66 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, a public interest litigation follows, the court orders an FIR, and the ED then has the predicate offence it needs to enter.

The author is a journalist at Bar & Bench. He sets the recent orders against the constitutional position that law and order is a State subject, and asks what PILs against elected governments are doing to federalism.

Constitutional lawfare and why courts must stay away from political interest litigation

Facts

- **The Punjab order :** On 5 October the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the CBI to register a criminal case over corruption allegations involving the office of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, on a public interest litigation filed by advocate Nikhil Saraf after the Punjab Police did not act on letters written by the Enforcement Directorate.

- **What the Supreme Court said :** Hearing the Kerala matter, Justice Joymalya Bagchi said that Vijay Madanlal Choudhary "has now been conflated to become a mandate on the State to the agency under Section 66(2)", and the Court told the ED not to "use the process of statutory powers to meddle into the statutory domain of other entities", maintaining the FIR but staying investigation.

- **The West Bengal SIR order :** Asked to stay the Special Intensive Revision in West Bengal, the Court refused, and then went further and roped in more than 500 judges from West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand to conduct the exercise itself, at a time when 5.23 crore cases remain pending in courts across the country.

Analytical Crux

1. Under our Constitutional scheme, law and order is a State subject handled by the State Police, and the ED comes into the picture only if there is a predicate offence, usually registered by the concerned State agency; when the political dispensation at the Centre and the State level are different, it is not easy for the ED to assume jurisdiction, and that is where the courts come in.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. On the one hand various courts, including the Supreme Court, have voiced concerns that the ED has been violating the federal structure and targeting political opponents; on the other hand the courts have also enabled this targeting, by interpreting Section 66 as a mandate on a State agency to act.

3. The excessive interference by courts in political matters is not limited to money laundering or corruption cases: the Court decided that to ensure neutrality in the SIR exercise the judiciary itself has to conduct it, so the Indian judiciary found it fit to depute judges to do the executive work of election authorities.

Verbatim Quotes

"Judicial powers should be exercised to protect and augment fundamental rights, not to impinge upon federalism and defeat the people's electoral mandate by entertaining politically motivated petitions."

- Murali Krishnan

Peace bonds: The colonial tool rearing its head amid protests in 2026

Columns

Peace bonds: The colonial tool rearing its head amid protests in 2026

As long as the relationship between the State and the citizens remains unchanged, the question remains whether "swadeshi" laws can help the common Bharatiya nagarik.

Protests and peace bond

Giti Pratap, Prashant Jha

Published on: 25 Oct 2026, 4:50 pm · 9 min read

Context

A peace bond is an undertaking to keep the peace, taken from a person thought likely to breach it. Section 126 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita carries the power forward from Section 110 of the 1973 Code of Criminal Procedure, and before that from the Code of 1861.

Detained protesters in Delhi have been made to sign these bonds for fixed periods. The piece traces the instrument back to Edward III's Justices of the Peace Act of 1361 and through its use by the Raj against the freedom struggle.

The authors write for Bar & Bench and put the question to four senior advocates, who do not agree with one another. The disagreement, not a verdict, is the substance of the piece.

Peace bonds: The colonial tool rearing its head amid protests in 2026

Facts

- ***What the section allows :*** Under Section 126 BNSS a person may be required to furnish an undertaking to maintain peace for a period of up to one year, with a personal bond and a cash or local surety; violating the bond can lead to detention or forfeiture of the surety, and signing one gives no immunity from a fresh preventive arrest under Section 170 BNSS.

- ***The Delhi sequence :*** On 10 October three Cockroach Janata Party leaders were detained on landing in Delhi and released on sureties of ₹50,000 each with one-year peace bonds; on 19 October an Assistant Commissioner of Police acting as special executive magistrate refused to release two of them, holding them habitual offenders, and Neha Bora's challenge to her own show cause notice was dismissed by the Delhi High Court.

- ***Where the lawyers divide :*** Senior Advocate Maninder Singh called the recent events overreach by the police and the special executive magistrate; Senior Advocate Pramod Kumar Dubey said the arrangement is provided by statute and binds until a constitutional court sets it aside; Senior Advocate N Hariharan called peace bonds a vestige of British colonial rule.

Analytical Crux

1. Every monarch and government used the Justices for two main tasks, the enforcement of the new order and the repression of dissent; when the British Raj laid down its roots in India it brought this apparatus with it, and the Code of Criminal Procedure of the 1861 empowered executive magistrates to demand bonds and sureties from persons suspected of breaching the peace.

2. In 2023 the Central government, in a widely advertised effort to shed the colonial vestiges of penal laws, overhauled the CrPC and replaced it with the purportedly Indianised BNSS, but the power of the modern-day Justices of the Peace remain firmly in place in the new BNSS, under Section 126, through executive magistrates.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. It is all too easy to assume that what Section 126 lays down is just routine procedure, but recent events make it impossible to ignore that in practice peace bonds are a potent tool in the hands of the executive, and lawyers and activists have argued that they are frequently misused by the authorities who treat them as a voluntary surrender of the right to protest.

Verbatim Quotes

"As long as the relationship between the State and the citizens remains unchanged, the question remains whether "swadeshi" laws can help the common Bharatiya nagarik navigate colonial-era tools of quelling dissent."

– Giti Pratap and Prashant Jha

Reservation for converts: The unsettled question of substantive equality

Columns

Reservation for converts: The unsettled question of substantive equality

A religious convert should not acquire reservation benefits based on previous social identity or by joining the new community, but on well-founded evidence that they still face social disadvantage.

Supreme Court of India

Mohamed Sajid Nadwi

Published on: 24 Oct 2026, 12:09 pm · 6 min read

Context

Upholding a Madras High Court verdict, the Supreme Court held that conversion to Islam alone does not entitle a person to a seat in any of the seven Muslim communities declared backward classes by the Tamil Nadu government.

A Bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Sri Chandrasekhar framed the question as whether a person who belonged to a BC, MBC, DC or SC before conversion can, after embracing Islam, claim the status and benefits of a BC Muslim.

The author is a practising advocate at the High Court of Madras. He reads the judgment against Indra Sawhney, Soosai, CM Arumugam, S Anbalagan and G Michael, and argues that the Court recognised the petitioner's religious identity while declining to recognise his social identity.

Reservation for converts: The unsettled question of substantive equality

Facts

- **The reasoning :** The Court held that a person converting from the Hindu social order to a non-Hindu social order cannot claim affirmative action under Article 16(4) merely because of the social backwardness attached to their pre-conversion status, because a community certificate is issued on established lineage and social status within the specified backward classes.

- **The shift from earlier cases :** The Court went a step further than earlier decisions and acknowledged that past social disadvantage can follow a person across conversion, yet held that even so it cannot be a ground for reservation, because social backwardness is treated as arising from membership of a social structure whose foundational basis is caste.

- **What Indra Sawhney said :** The nine-judge bench in Indra Sawhney observed that "among non-Hindus, several occupational groups, sects, and denominations are, for historical reasons, socially backward", and that they too represent backward social collectivities for the purposes of Article 16(4); that case also emphasised that identifying backwardness must be left to the authority appointed to do it.

Analytical Crux

1. When the Court acknowledges that social disadvantage follows a converted person, it becomes a social reality, and that social reality need not necessarily emanate from caste or be backed by theological scriptures: caste is a socially constructed reality in its mechanism and a theologically backed social structure in its continuation and enforcement.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. There is a strong friction between social reality and the legal framework of constitutional reservation; the courts can interpret constitutional provisions, examine the validity of classifications and evaluate state actions, but cannot create a new reservation category, and that is a matter of state policy.

3. Reservation should never protect one's past identity; rather it should lift those disadvantaged in education and employment because of societal inequalities, and if past social disadvantage continues even after conversion then benefits should be extended to lift those in deprived status.

Verbatim Quotes

"A religious convert should not acquire reservation benefits based on previous social identity or by joining the new community, but on well-founded evidence that they still face social disadvantage."

- Mohamed Sajid Nadwi

Moscow Format on Afghanistan Exposes Limits of Regional Consensus

AUTHOR : ALEKSEI ZAKHAROV

Expert Speak Raisina Debates

Published on *Oct 24, 2026*

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The Moscow Format's failure to reach consensus on Afghanistan highlights the limits of regional cooperation, even as Russia deepens its bilateral engagement with the Taliban

Context

The Moscow Format is a Russian-convened platform on Afghanistan that began as a trilateral with China and Pakistan in 2016 and widened in 2017 after criticism from Afghanistan and India. It now brings in Iran, India, Pakistan, China and the Central Asian states.

On 5 October 2026 the eighth round met in Russia, with the Afghan delegation led by Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and Belarus and Egypt attending as guests. It ended without a joint statement.

The author is a Fellow with ORF's Strategic Studies Programme. He reads the failure as evidence that Russia's bilateral relationship with the Taliban has run far ahead of the Taliban's relations with its neighbours.

Moscow Format on Afghanistan Exposes Limits of Regional Consensus

Facts

- ***Why the statement failed :*** According to Zamir Kabulov, Russia's special presidential representative for Afghanistan, the stumbling block was the rift between Kabul and Islamabad: the Taliban delegation objected that the draft referred to Afghanistan in a terrorism-related context too often, though, as Kabulov admitted, "the very same words and phrases were in last year's text".

- ***The exchange at the table :*** Pakistan's Special Representative Mohammad Sadiq said terrorism remains at the core of Afghanistan's problems, with roots in a nexus between the Taliban regime and terrorist groups; Amir Khan Muttaqi replied that the military regime that dominates Pakistani politics is not a legitimate political actor, and blamed Islamabad for using Islamic State Khorasan Province members against Afghanistan.

- ***How far Russia has moved :*** Moscow has passed from conditional contact to de-listing to official recognition of the Taliban government, signed a military-technical agreement with Kabul in May 2026 covering the repair of Soviet- and Russian-made equipment, and saw bilateral trade grow nearly two and a half times in the first seven months of 2026.

Analytical Crux

1. Few forums bring neighbours and rivals to the same table to discuss a single country, and that is precisely the idea behind the Moscow Format, a platform where regional players try to turn shared concerns about Afghanistan into coordinated policy; for years it has papered over deep divisions among its participants, notably between India and Pakistan.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. By removing the Taliban from its list of terrorist organisations and recognising its government, Moscow has handed over nearly all the carrots it had, and what it has received in return remains a big question mark.

3. Although mired in regional divisions and modest in deliverables, the format is likely to endure as a rare venue where partners and rivals can meet to discuss their convergences and divergences, alongside important, often little-publicised bilateral and minilateral interactions.

Verbatim Quotes

"In its decade of existence, the platform has not achieved its central aim of building a regional consensus on an Afghan settlement, and such a consensus remains out of reach."

– Aleksei Zakharov

Beyond the AI Race: China's Bid to Shape Global Rules

AUTHORS : SOUMYA AWASTHI | ANUBHUTI JAIN

Expert Speak Digital Frontiers

Published on *Oct 26, 2026*

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China is shaping global AI governance through institutions and partnerships, leaving India to offer the Global South a credible alternative that combines capacity-building with meaningful constraints on military AI

Context

On 16 July 2026, 35 states signed the founding agreement for the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation, a China-headquartered body built outside the Western-led AI governance architecture, with no leading Western democracy among its signatories.

Two months later Xi Jinping met Donald Trump in Washington, where the two sides formalised a USA-China AI Dialogues track built around an incident hotline while disagreeing on everything above it.

The authors write for ORF's Centre for Security, Strategy and Technology. They read the two tracks together and ask what is left for India, which declined to sign the WAICO agreement.

Beyond the AI Race: China's Bid to Shape Global Rules

Facts

- **Who is in WAICO :** WAICO offers open participation without political or value-based conditions, includes virtually every BRICS member except India, and overlaps heavily with China's Belt and Road Initiative and Digital Silk Road partners; Xi pledged 5,000 training places for developing countries and cooperation centres with ASEAN, the African Union and BRICS.

- **What the language leaves out :** China's submissions to the UN on military AI emphasise prudence, human control and "AI for good", but avoid numerical caps, bans on specific applications or intrusive verification; at the 2026 REAIM Summit in Spain neither China nor the United States signed the final declaration, and the only top-level US-China commitment on military AI remains the 2024 pledge to keep humans in control of nuclear-use decisions.

- **Where India stands :** India joined Pax Silica and hosted the AI Impact Summit in February 2026, and chose not to sign the WAICO agreement, declining to lend its weight to an institution whose terms it did not help write.

Analytical Crux

1. WAICO seems less a new departure than a way of turning existing infrastructural dependence into institutional endorsement: by bringing Global South states into a treaty-backed body, Beijing has converted bilateral technological reliance into multilateral support for its governance model.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. WAICO's most important feature may be what it leaves out, since military AI has moved from experimental to operational and yet the security dimension is largely unaddressed, even though battlefield ethics, international humanitarian law and the conduct of future wars will increasingly depend on which set of rules gains the widest acceptance.

3. The emerging AI order is being shaped by competing governance projects rather than a single global framework: the US relies on an exclusive supply-chain club, Pax Silica and domestic law, China offers an inclusive institution grounded in sovereignty, development and flexibility, and the UN track is inclusive but lacks binding force.

Verbatim Quotes

"The result is not restraint but structured influence."

– Soumya Awasthi and Anubhuti Jain

UPSC LINK

- **PSIR Paper I, 2026:** Highlight any five constitutional provisions that restrain the powers of the executive, and evaluate their effectiveness in current times.

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** What strategic options can India exercise as a response to the tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan?

- **GS Paper II, 2026:** Examine how the separation of powers is practised in India compared to the rigid presidential model of the United States of America. In this context, compare the actual authority of the Indian Prime Minister with that of the President of the USA.

- **GS Paper II, 2026:** Do constitutional bodies like the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) possess adequate enforcement powers to secure substantive social equality? Suggest measures to enhance their institutional effectiveness.

- **GS Paper II, 2026:** “BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South.” Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other groupings.

- **PSIR Paper I, 2025:** The recent developments in Indian Politics has not eroded the true spirit of federalism in India. Critically examine this statement with the help of appropriate examples.

- **GS Paper II, 2024:** Explain the reasons for the growth of public interest litigation in India. As a result of it, has the Indian Supreme Court emerged as the world’s most powerful judiciary?

- **GS Paper I, 2024:** Despite comprehensive policies for equity and social justice, underprivileged sections are not yet getting the full benefits of affirmative action envisaged by the Constitution. Comment.

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