PSIR & GS 1,2,3 & 4

Daily Brief

Issue 182 · 12 November 2026

Five readings from the day's newspapers, journals and think tanks, read in full and marked up: context, facts, the author's argument and the UPSC questions.



Amit Pratap Singh
PSIR Optional · ForumIAS

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ThePrint

OPINION

Is CM Vijay making Tamil Nadu do a U-turn on federalism and state autonomy?

M.G. Devasahayam · 12 November 2026

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THE DIPLOMAT

READ THE DIPLOMAT, KNOW THE ASIA-PACIFIC

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THE PULSE | POLITICS | SOUTH ASIA

How India's Courts Became So Entangled With Religion

Judgments and laws that violate the spirit of religious freedom often lead to bitter resentment, especially when core religious beliefs are defined by judges.

By Akhilesh Pillalamarri
November 11, 2026

ON YOUTUBE TODAY
POLITICS & GEOPOLITICS
CLASSROOM

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The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

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EXPRESS OPINION

In Gadi Eisenkot's coalition challenge, new tensions and Israel's founding contradictions

Eisenkot faces an uphill task forming Israel's next government. While the coalition's potential agenda may appear straightforward, the acceptance of all four items is a Herculean task

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Sheikh Hasina must return to Bangladesh to face her sentence

Delhi should ensure that its territory is not used to incite violence in Bangladesh or threaten its people.

By Mushfiqul Fazal Ansarey
...mat, analyst and former journalist in Washington.

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ARTICLE | CARNEGIE INDIA

Will a UN Treaty on Autonomous Weapons Arrive Too Late?

The final report by the Group of Governmental Experts is a key milestone toward a potential instrument regulating Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and has garnered both accolades and criticism.

By Charukeshi Bhatt
Published on Nov 12, 2026



← the sources we sweep every morning

1 **Tamil Nadu's U-turn on federalism** *ThePrint*

2 **When courts define religion** *The Diplomat* ▶ video today

3 **Israel's coalition and its founding contradictions** *The Indian Express*

4 **Sheikh Hasina and India's shelter** *Al Jazeera*

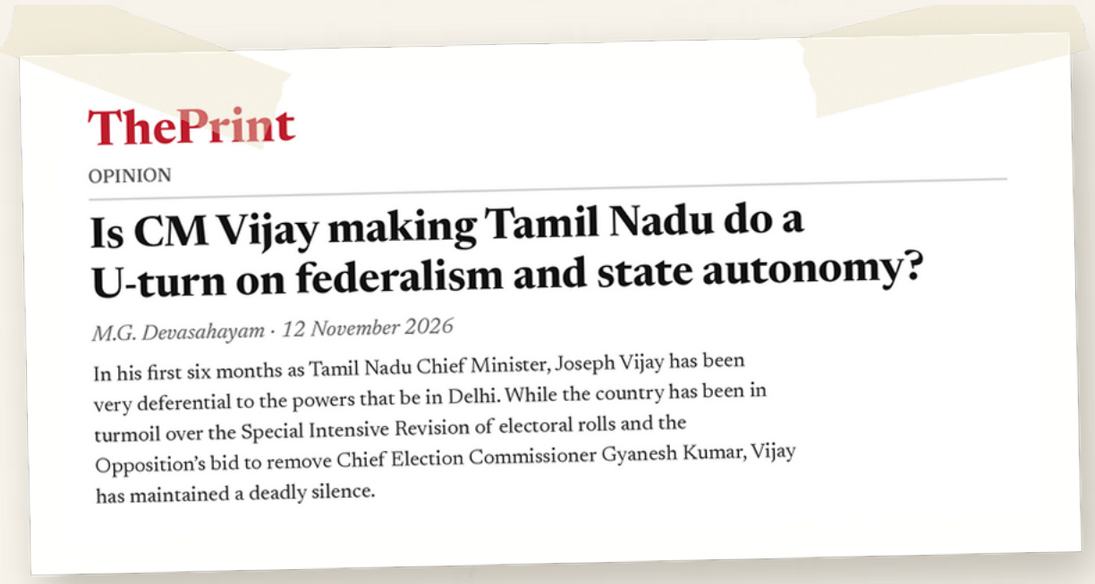
5 **A UN treaty on autonomous weapons, too late?** *Carnegie India*

Article (1) of 5

Tamil Nadu's U-turn on federalism

ThePrint · *M.G. Devasahayam*
12 November 2026

PSIR Paper I, Part B
Federalism: Constitutional provisions; changing nature of centre-state relations; integrationist tendencies and regional aspirations; inter-state disputes
GS Paper II


ThePrint

OPINION

Is CM Vijay making Tamil Nadu do a U-turn on federalism and state autonomy?

M.G. Devasahayam · 12 November 2026

In his first six months as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Joseph Vijay has been very deferential to the powers that be in Delhi. While the country has been in turmoil over the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and the Opposition's bid to remove Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, Vijay has maintained a deadly silence.

Context

On 6 November, Tamil Nadu's government under Chief Minister Joseph Vijay wound up the High-Level Committee on Union–State Relations, chaired by former Supreme Court judge Kurian Joseph, and passed its unfinished work to the State Law Commission, calling the committee a non-statutory body. The previous government set it up in April 2025; Part I of its report came out in February 2026.

M.G. Devasahayam, a retired IAS officer, argues that the decision abandons the State's long fight for autonomy.

Facts

1. Earlier reviews of Union–State relations: Rajamannar Committee (1969–71), Sarkaria Commission (1983–88), Punchhi Commission (2007–10).
2. Kurian Joseph Committee, Part I (February 2026): the President to appoint the Governor from three names approved by the State Assembly, for a single fixed five-year term, removable only by the Assembly.

Article (1) of 5

Tamil Nadu's U-turn on federalism

Analytical crux

This committee and its strong recommendations come in the middle of the BJP-led Union government recentralising political, fiscal and administrative power in India, thereby reversing the decentralising trends of the coalition era (1989-2014). The key mechanisms of recentralisation include the weakening of federal safeguards, fiscal centralisation and the erosion of state autonomy. Any U-turn on these goes against the grain of Tamil Nadu and India's constitutional scheme of things.

Worth quoting

> *"In an era when States are expected to remain quietly grateful for whatever autonomy the Centre permits, this act of constitutional assertion is itself a form of public service."*
>
> — Sanjay Hegde, quoted by the author

Asked in UPSC

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.

— APS

Article (2) of 5

When courts define religion

The Diplomat · *Akhilesh Pillalamarri*
11 November 2026

PSIR Paper I, Part B
Salient Features of the Indian Constitution: Fundamental Rights and Duties; Judicial Review
Caste, Religion and Ethnicity in Indian Politics
GS Paper II



Context

Article 25 guarantees freedom of conscience and religion, but also lets the state regulate the secular side of religious practice and legislate for social welfare and reform. Under the 'essential religious practices' test, courts decide which practices the Constitution protects; the Supreme Court is now reconsidering that test.

Akhilesh Pillalamarri, a writer and attorney, argues that it has drawn Indian judges into defining religious doctrine.

Facts

1. Essential religious practices doctrine: emerged in the Shirur Mutt case (1954) and was developed in Durgah Committee, Ajmer v Syed Hussain Ali (1961).
2. The Secretary To Government vs Sameer Ahamed N. (October 2026): a person who converts out of the Hindu social order cannot claim affirmative action merely on the basis of pre-conversion backwardness.

Article (2) of 5

When courts define religion

Analytical crux

However well-intentioned the essential religious practices doctrine is, the result has been the extensive entanglement of the Indian state with religious beliefs and practices. In the United States, judges are precluded from making decisions that require evaluating the substance of religious doctrine; in India, judges take it upon themselves to weigh in on questions of religious practice and belief. Laws should be framed in secular terms, not as judge-driven reformation of sacred tenets.

Worth quoting

> *"In India, courts have become entangled with questions of religious doctrine and belief."*
>
> — Akhilesh Pillalamarri

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper I, 2026: The Constitution of India was secular even before the word was included in the Preamble. Comment.

GS Paper II, 2024: Discuss India as a secular state and compare with the secular principles of the US constitution.

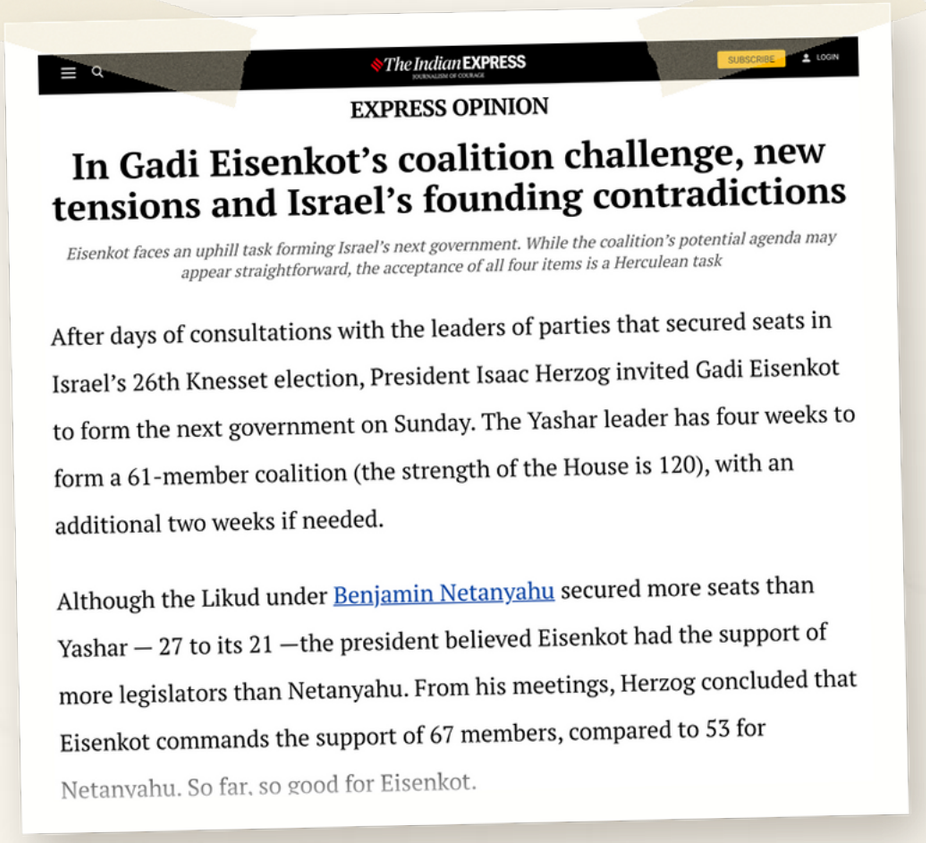
— APS

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Israel's coalition and its founding contradictions

The Indian Express · *P.R. Kumaraswamy*
11 November 2026

PSIR Paper II, Part A
Politics of Representation and Participation: Political parties, pressure groups and social movements in advanced industrial and developing societies
GS Paper II


The Indian EXPRESS

EXPRESS OPINION

In Gadi Eisenkot's coalition challenge, new tensions and Israel's founding contradictions

Eisenkot faces an uphill task forming Israel's next government. While the coalition's potential agenda may appear straightforward, the acceptance of all four items is a Herculean task

After days of consultations with the leaders of parties that secured seats in Israel's 26th Knesset election, President Isaac Herzog invited Gadi Eisenkot to form the next government on Sunday. The Yashar leader has four weeks to form a 61-member coalition (the strength of the House is 120), with an additional two weeks if needed.

Although the Likud under Benjamin Netanyahu secured more seats than Yashar — 27 to its 21 —the president believed Eisenkot had the support of more legislators than Netanyahu. From his meetings, Herzog concluded that Eisenkot commands the support of 67 members, compared to 53 for Netanyahu. So far, so good for Eisenkot.

Context

After Israel's election to its 26th Knesset, Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud holds the most seats, 27, but President Isaac Herzog has invited Gadi Eisenkot, a former army chief whose Yashar party won 21, to form the government, judging that 67 of the 120 members back him. Eisenkot has four weeks, and two more if needed, to build a 61-seat majority.

P.R. Kumaraswamy, Professor Emeritus at JNU, reads Eisenkot's four conditions for partners as a test of Israel's founding contradictions.

Facts

1. Eisenkot's four-point coalition agenda: Israel as a Jewish and democratic state; the values of the Declaration of Independence; mandatory service for all; dismantling Hamas's military and governing power.
2. Knesset seats: religious parties 19; the Arab Joint List 11 and Raam 8. Coalition agreements must be disclosed 48 hours before the confidence vote.

Article (3) of 5

Israel's coalition and its founding contradictions

Analytical crux

The first demand highlights the perennial problem facing Israel: Reconciling being a Jewish and a democratic state. As absolutist identities, they make compromise inevitable, yet elusive. Israel does not have a written constitution that is binding and inclusive. Conscription is a red flag for the religious parties, and the demand about Hamas could be a deal-breaker for the Arab parties. Compromise is essential; but on what basis, with whom, and how much?

Worth quoting

> *"Can a state be Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, or even communist while being democratic?"*
>
> — P.R. Kumaraswamy

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper II, 2025: Of late, centrist and centre-left political parties have been facing setbacks while centre-right parties have been in ascendency the world over. Comment.

PSIR Paper II, 2024: Critically examine the continuity and change in India's Palestine policy in the wake of the ongoing Israel-Hamas War.

— APS

Article (4) of 5

Sheikh Hasina and India's shelter

Al Jazeera · *Mushfiqul Fazal Ansarey*
12 November 2026

PSIR Paper II, Part B
India and South Asia
Indian Foreign Policy: Determinants of foreign policy
GS Paper II



OPINION

Opinion | Sheikh Hasina

Sheikh Hasina must return to Bangladesh to face her sentence

Delhi should ensure that its territory is not used to incite violence in Bangladesh or threaten its people.

By **Mushfiqul Fazal Ansarey**
Bangladeshi diplomat, analyst and former journalist in Washington.

12 Nov 2026

For families who lost relatives in Bangladesh's July-August 2024 uprising, Sheikh Hasina's presence in India is far more than just a question of political refuge. Some are caring for injured relatives, while others have been left devastated by their losses. Parents have rooms that are now empty. When the ousted prime minister speaks to Bangladeshis from India, the question arises: Why should those who paid the price for democracy have to watch the very person they hold responsible for their suffering continue to intervene in Bangladesh's politics from abroad?

Context

Sheikh Hasina, ousted as Bangladesh's Prime Minister in the July–August 2024 uprising, has lived in India since. In November 2025, Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal convicted her in absentia of crimes against humanity and sentenced her to death; she calls the trial politically motivated. Dhaka has asked New Delhi to extradite her.

Writing in Al Jazeera, Mushfiqul Fazal Ansarey, a Bangladeshi diplomat and analyst, argues that her addresses to Bangladeshis from Indian soil strain the democratic transition under Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

Facts

1. UN Human Rights Office, February 2025: as many as 1,400 people may have been killed during the 2024 uprising.
2. India–Bangladesh extradition treaty, Article 6: murder, incitement to murder and related offences are excluded from the political offence exception.

Article (4) of 5

Sheikh Hasina and India's shelter

Analytical crux

Bangladesh's extradition request must be assessed on its legal merits. A person's political status does not automatically prevent extradition. Dhaka wants constructive relations with India on the basis of sovereign equality. If India is serious about resetting its relationship with Bangladesh, it has to respect the democratic mandate of that country and acknowledge the suffering of its people. Protecting a former dictator from accountability will only serve to increase mistrust.

Worth quoting

> *"India's decision to shelter Hasina is one issue; allowing her to continue intervening in Bangladesh's politics from Indian territory is another."*
>
> — Mushfiqul Fazal Ansarey

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper II, 2025: China's growing footprint and a tangible shift in power dynamics in Bangladesh has weakened India's leverage in Dhaka. Comment.

— APS

Article (5) of 5

A UN treaty on autonomous weapons, too late?

Carnegie India · *Charukeshi Bhatt*
12 November 2026

PSIR Paper II, Part A
Key concepts in International Relations: National interest, Security and power
United Nations: Envisaged role and actual record
GS Paper III


ARTICLE CARNEGIE INDIA

Will a UN Treaty on Autonomous Weapons Arrive Too Late?

The final report by the Group of Governmental Experts is a key milestone toward a potential instrument regulating Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and has garnered both accolades and criticism.

By Charukeshi Bhatt
Published on Nov 12, 2026

On September 4, 2026, the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), constituted under the United Nations' Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), concluded discussions under its three-year mandate. The group has met twice every year since 2017, deliberating one of the most consequential and topical issues at the intersection of technology and security: the regulation of weapons that can identify and engage targets, and use lethal force, without human intervention.

Context

Weapons that can identify, select and engage targets without a human decision are already used in war. A UN Group of Governmental Experts under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) ended its three-year mandate in September with a final report on the elements of an instrument to regulate lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS);
the CCW's Seventh Review Conference takes it up this month.

Charukeshi Bhatt of Carnegie India compares the report with the December 2025 draft.

Facts

1. UN General Assembly: 163 states voted for a resolution to advance to negotiations on an instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems.
2. Group of Governmental Experts' final report (September 2026): endorsed by 76 members, 70 of them parties to the CCW.

Article (5) of 5

A UN treaty on autonomous weapons, too late?

Analytical crux

The September 2026 report defined LAWS as systems that result in loss of life, which could narrow the scope of what constitutes LAWS. It removes the restrictions placed on states with regards to manufacturing and stockpiling, and does away with predictability, reliability, explainability and traceability as a requirement. Longer negotiations will increase the risk of the final instrument reflecting the lowest common denominator among states.

Worth quoting

> *"As these weapons are increasingly used in combat, the risk is that an international instrument seeking to regulate their use might arrive too late."*
>
> — Charukeshi Bhatt

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper II, 2024: The changing global order and ongoing regional conflicts, with the global powers taking sides, have jeopardised the progress made towards disarmament in the past. Comment.

— APS

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