

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

INDIA'S STAND ON ACID ATTACKS: PROGRESS AND PITFALLS

- An acid attack involves throwing a **corrosive substance**—most commonly sulphuric, hydrochloric, or nitric acid—on a person with the intent to cause harm.
- Such attacks can melt skin and flesh, expose or dissolve bones, and result in severe burns, blindness, disfigurement, permanent disability, or even a vegetative state.
- Beyond physical injuries, survivors suffer deep psychological trauma and long-term socio-economic harm.
- Acid attacks remain a grave, underreported crime in India, rooted in **gendered violence**, easy access to corrosives, and systemic enforcement gaps, with devastating consequences for survivors' lives and livelihoods.
- **Who Are the Victims and Why Do Attacks Occur?**
 - Acid attacks in India predominantly target **women and young girls**, with perpetrators almost always men, making it a form of gender-based violence.
 - Children may also be harmed when present near the intended victim.
 - A 2024 analysis of 55 Indian cases by Acid Survivors Trust International found that in cases involving women, three-fourths were driven by **personal relationship** issues—often revenge for rejecting romantic or sexual advances.
 - Other motives include **dowry disputes**, **suspensions of infidelity**, and **domestic abuse**.
 - For male victims, **property disputes**, **professional jealousy**, and **political rivalry** were more common.

Legal Framework Against Acid Attacks in India

- Following the Supreme Court of India's landmark judgment in **Laxmi vs Union of India**, acid attacks were recognised as a distinct criminal offence, separate from general injury provisions.
- **Current Law and Punishments**

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

- With the replacement of the IPC by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, acid attacks are covered under **Section 124**:
 - **Acid attack**: Minimum 10 years' imprisonment, extendable to life imprisonment, plus a "just and reasonable" fine to cover medical expenses
 - **Attempt to acid attack**: 5–7 years' imprisonment
- All public and private hospitals are legally required to provide **free first aid** and **medical treatment** to acid attack victims. Failure to comply is punishable with up to one year imprisonment and/or a fine.
- **Regulation of Acid Sale**
 - The Supreme Court also directed strict regulation of acid sales:
 - Buyers must produce photo identification
 - Sellers must maintain a register of acid purchases
 - However, these rules are poorly enforced in most States.

Ending Acid Attacks: What More Needs to Be Done

- Accountability of local authorities is crucial, with penalties for illegal sales to deter misuse.
 - **Ensure Timely Compensation and Care**- Compensation must be disbursed within months, enabling prompt medical treatment and rehabilitation. Delays undermine recovery and access to justice.
 - **Implement Comprehensive Rehabilitation** - The Justice J S Verma Committee recommended a national fund to cover survivors' lifelong medical, psychological, educational, and skilling needs.
 - **Strengthen the Justice Delivery System**
 - Improving convictions requires:
 - Sensitisation of police, prosecutors, and judges
 - Fast-track courts for acid attack cases
 - Legal aid and counselling for survivors
 - Penalising judicial delays to ensure timely trials
-

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

US STRIKE ON VENEZUELA: THE MADURO FACTOR

- The United States has cited migration, drugs, and “narco-terrorism” as the primary reasons for its action against Venezuela and President Nicolás Maduro.
- **Migration Crisis Narrative**
 - US President Donald Trump has repeatedly linked Venezuela to rising migration at the US southern border.
 - Since 2013, an estimated eight million Venezuelans have fled economic collapse and political repression, mostly to other Latin American countries.
 - Trump has accused the Maduro government of “emptying prisons and asylums” and forcing inmates to migrate to the US—claims rejected by Caracas as baseless.
- **Drugs and ‘Narco-Terrorism’ Claims**
 - Washington argues that Venezuela is a key **transit route** for cocaine and contributes to the **US fentanyl crisis**.
 - The US designated Tren de Aragua and Cartel de los Soles as Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs).
 - Trump has alleged that the Cartel de los Soles is led by Maduro himself.
- **Venezuela’s Response** - The Venezuelan government denies all allegations, arguing that the US is **weaponising the “war on drugs”** to justify regime change rather than addressing migration or narcotics trafficking.

India’s Diplomatic Dilemma After US Action in Venezuela

- The announcement by Donald Trump about the US attack in Venezuela has placed India between Washington’s unilateral move and New Delhi’s long-standing support for a rules-based international order and non-intervention.
- India typically avoids commenting on distant conflicts. However, as a leading voice of the **Global South**, many countries expect India to underscore international law and sovereignty—creating pressure to respond, even as Delhi remains cautious.

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

- **US–India Context: Trade Tensions Persist**

- India and the US are negotiating a bilateral trade deal amid strains following 50% US tariffs, including a 25% penalty linked to India’s purchase of Russian oil.
- India has been tapering imports but feels singled out, as similar actions were not taken against China or Europe.

- **MEA Advisory to Indians**

- The Ministry of External Affairs issued an advisory urging Indians to avoid non-essential travel, exercise caution, restrict movement, and stay in touch with the Embassy of India in Caracas.
- Given muted reactions from major G-20 countries and ongoing US–India negotiations, New Delhi is not rushing a statement.

Global Reactions: Mixed Signals

- Russia condemned the US move as an “act of armed aggression.”
- The European Union called for respect for international law and the UN Charter, urging restraint.
- Chile President Gabriel Boric expressed “concern and condemnation” of the “military actions of the US” and Colombian President Gustavo Petro expressed “deep concern”.

What Lies Ahead for Venezuela After US Intervention?

- US President Donald Trump said Washington would **run Venezuela temporarily** until a “safe, proper and judicious transition” is achieved.
 - He dismissed opposition leader María Corina Machado as lacking support, despite her earlier call for Edmundo González Urrutia—whom her party claims won the 2024 election—to assume power.
 - Trump indicated a strong economic dimension to the US role, saying American oil companies would move in to repair infrastructure, extract oil, sell it internationally, and recoup US costs, sharing revenues with Venezuelans.
 - He did not rule out deploying US troops, signaling the possibility of a prolonged and force-backed transition.
-

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

AIRPORT PRIVATISATION IN INDIA: PROCESS, RATIONALE AND CONCERNS

- Airport privatisation in India is part of a broader strategy to improve infrastructure efficiency, mobilise private capital, and reduce the financial burden on the public exchequer.
- Airports in India are largely owned and operated by the **Airports Authority of India (AAI)**, which manages both aeronautical services (runways, terminals) and non-aeronautical assets (retail, parking, real estate).
- The process began in the early 2000s with the privatisation of Delhi and Mumbai airports, followed by greenfield PPP airports such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad.
- In 2019, six more airports were privatised, marking a shift from a revenue-share model to a per-passenger fee model.
- The current round represents a new phase, as it introduces **bundling of metro and non-metro airports** for the first time.

Objectives of Airport Privatisation

- The core objectives of airport privatisation include improving service quality, modernising infrastructure, and increasing operational efficiency.
- Private operators are expected to bring in investment, adopt global best practices, and expand non-aeronautical revenue streams to cross-subsidise passenger costs.
- Airport privatisation is also linked to India's long-term aviation growth strategy.
- With **only about 6% of Indians currently using air travel**, there is significant untapped demand.
- Expanding airport capacity and improving connectivity are seen as essential for economic growth, regional integration, and tourism.

Revenue Models and Regulatory Framework

- A major issue in airport privatisation is the **shift from revenue-sharing to per-passenger fee models**.



CROSS & CLIMB
MAKING THE ELIGIBLE ENTITLED

CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK

School of Research Based Learning & Competition



CROSS & CLIMB
MAKING THE ELIGIBLE ENTITLED

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

- Under this system, private operators pay AAI a fixed amount per passenger, indexed annually. While this provides revenue certainty to AAI, it raises concerns about higher user charges.
- Airport tariffs are regulated by the **Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA)**, which approves user development fees, landing charges, and other tariffs.
- Non-aeronautical revenues are intended to offset passenger costs, but disputes have arisen over the under-reporting of such revenues by private operators.

Emerging Concerns and Criticisms

- One of the biggest concerns is **market concentration**.
- Over the past few years, a single corporate group has acquired control over a large number of major airports, raising fears of monopoly or duopoly in the aviation ecosystem.
- This weakens the bargaining power of airlines and leaves passengers with limited choices.
- There are also concerns over rising costs for passengers. In some privatised airports, user development fees and ancillary charges have increased significantly after tariff revisions.
- Additional issues reported by passengers include congestion, high taxi charges, limited accessibility services, and declining service quality.
- To address this, the regulator has begun moving towards **service-linked tariff regulation**, proposing penalties for airports that fail to meet benchmarks such as security wait times, check-in duration, and passenger assistance.

Way Forward

- India's aviation market is expected to grow rapidly, with airport capacity projected to increase from about 550 million passengers per annum to nearly 850 million in the next five years.
- Meeting this demand will require not just new airports but also effective regulation, competition safeguards, and consumer protection.
- Balancing private investment with public interest will be critical.

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

INDIA'S SOFT POWER - REPATRIATION OF PIPRAHWA RELICS AND THE DIPLOMACY OF PEACE

- The Prime Minister of India inaugurated “The Light and The Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One”, an international exposition of the sacred Piprahwa relics associated with Lord Buddha in New Delhi.
- The event coincided with the recent repatriation of priceless Buddhist relics that had been taken out of India during the colonial period and were nearly auctioned abroad.
- The episode highlights India’s approach to **cultural diplomacy, heritage protection, repatriation of antiquities, and Buddhist soft power.**

Significance of the PM’s Message:

- **Strength with humanity:**
 - The PM emphasised that strength is necessary against “enemies of humanity”, but dialogue and peace are essential where disputes exist.
 - This reflects India’s foreign policy doctrine of **strategic restraint** combined with moral leadership.
- **Buddha’s philosophy as India’s core worldview:**
 - Buddha’s idea of “walking together instead of conflict and dominance” was described as India’s guiding philosophy in the 21st century.
 - The principle of “**Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya**” (welfare and happiness of all) was reiterated as India’s civilisational ethos.

Piprahwa Relics - Historical Background:

- **What are the Piprahwa gems:** Excavated in 1898 by William Claxton Peppé from a Buddhist stupa at Piprahwa (Siddharthnagar district, Uttar Pradesh), near Nepal.
- **Include:** 349 gemstones (pearls, rubies, sapphires, topaz, gold sheets). Bone fragments and ash believed to be of Lord Buddha. Reliquaries, sandstone coffers, soapstone and crystal caskets.
- **Colonial-era dispossession:**

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

- Under the Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878, the British Crown claimed most relics.
- A portion remained with the Peppé family and was held privately for over 127 years.

Rescue from Auction and Repatriation (2025):

- **Threat of auction:**
 - Sotheby's Hong Kong listed the relics for auction in 2025, with an estimated value of over \$100 million.
 - The relics were treated as “antique collectibles”, ignoring their religious and civilisational value.
- **India's response:**
 - The Ministry of Culture issued a legal notice demanding cessation of the auction.
 - Asserted that the relics are inalienable religious and cultural heritage protected under Indian law and international conventions.
 - Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and diplomatic channels were activated.
- **Innovative resolution:**
 - Godrej Group purchased the collection. Relics were returned to India, and loaned to the National Museum for five years.
 - This avoided ethical issues of the State commercially purchasing sacred antiquities.

Challenges and Way Ahead:

- **Colonial-era legal ambiguities over ownership:** Strengthen international cooperation on cultural property protection.
 - **Grey areas in international law:** Proactively use soft power and diplomacy for heritage repatriation.
 - **Commercialisation of sacred objects by auction houses:** Balance legal, ethical, and spiritual considerations in recovery efforts.
-



CROSS & CLIMB
MAKING THE ELIGIBLE ENTITLED

CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK

School of Research Based Learning & Competition



CROSS & CLIMB
MAKING THE ELIGIBLE ENTITLED

Current Affairs - 04 January 2026

RANI VELU NACHIYAR



- Rani Velu Nachiyar (1730–1796) was an 18th-century **queen of Sivaganga** in present-day Tamil Nadu.
 - She was the **princess of Ramanathapuram** and the only child of **Raja Chellamuthu vijayaragunatha Sethupathy** and Rani Sakandhimuthal of the Ramnad kingdom.
 - She is also known as
 - **Skills:** She was trained in handling various weapons, horse riding, archery, and traditional martial arts such as **Silambam and Valari**.
 - She was also a distinguished scholar. She was proficient in **multiple languages**, including Tamil, English, French, and Urdu.
 - **Contributions of Rani Velu Nachiyar:**
 - **Strategic Alliances:** She forged strategic alliances with **Hyder Ali** of Mysore and **Gopala Nayaker**.
 - She raised a **formidable army** that included a **dedicated women's battalion** and the queen named her **women's army "Udaiyaal"** in her adopted daughter's honour.
 - Her army **commander Kuyili**, participated is considered the "first woman martyr" and the first suicide bomber in Indian history.
 - She was the first queen to fight for freedom from the British in India. She granted powers to the **Marudu brothers to administer the country in 1780**.
-