

NAVIGATING THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL CRISIS IN HIGHER JUDICIARY

- There is the need to discuss the **constitutional, legal, and ethical dimensions of judicial accountability in India** in light of recent allegations against sitting High Court judges, especially the case of **Justice Yashwant Varma**.
- The procedures, legal precedents, and tensions between judicial independence and accountability, is a subject of **increasing relevance to governance, polity, ethics, and law**.

Constitutional Safeguards Ensuring Judicial Independence:

- **Supreme Court judgments establishing supremacy of the Constitution:**
 - Keshav Singh vs Speaker (1965)
 - PUCL vs Union of India (2005)
- **Key safeguards:**
 - **Articles 124, 217:** Provisions for the -
 - **Removal** of high court (Article 217) and SC judges (Article 124) by Parliament on grounds of “proven misbehaviour” or “incapacity”.
 - Fixed tenure and salaries.
 - Immunity from legislative discussion.
 - **Protection under Judges (Protection) Act, 1985:** Enacted (by the Parliament) under **Article 124(5)**, it provides the **procedures** to investigate judicial misconduct.
- **In-House procedure:**
 - In the C. Ravichandran Iyer vs Justice A.M. Bhattacharjee (1995) case, the SC **validated peer-review model**.
 - In 1997, SC adopted the “**Restatement of Values of Judicial Life**” for internal inquiry, authorizing the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** to constitute an in-house committee to investigate allegations against judges of the higher judiciary.

Frameworks for Judicial Accountability - Indian and Global:

- **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968:**
 - Motion to remove the judges **must originate in Parliament**, and be submitted to the Speaker or Chairman.
 - **If accepted**, a three-member judicial committee would investigate the charges.
 - **Only if the committee finds the judge guilty** may Parliament initiate a debate. Otherwise, the motion is dropped.
- **Global references:**
 - This framework was upheld in the **Sub-Committee on Judicial Accountability vs Union of India (1991)**, wherein the Court highlighted practices from countries like the **US, Canada, and Australia**.
 - In these countries also initial investigations are conducted by a judicial body, with legislative involvement occurring later.
- **The Law Commission of India** (in its 195th Report) recommended the Judicial (Inquiry) Bill 2005, establishing the **National Judicial Council**, which was to consist of five judges, with the CJI as chairman.
 - The Commission noted that this practice of inquiry finds its roots in various international principles like
 - The **Siracusa Principles** (1981) and
 - The **Latimer** guidelines for the Commonwealth (1998).

Conclusion:

- The judiciary's strength lies in both its **independence** from political interference and its **responsiveness** to constitutional accountability.
- Recent incidents have exposed **procedural gaps** that must be addressed through **legislative reform, administrative clarity, and ethical resolve**, all while safeguarding the sanctity of India's justice system.

AIR INDIA FLIGHT CRASH

- Boeing introduced the 787 in 2007 as a next-generation, long-haul jet, building on the success of its 777 predecessor to offer a more fuel-efficient variant.
- The first commercial Boeing 787 took flight in 2012. The aircraft involved in recent crash entered Air India's fleet in 2014.
- The crash intensifies scrutiny on Boeing, which has faced global criticism since the two 737 Max crashes in 2018 and 2019.

Features of Boeing 787



- **Structure:** Made from carbon fibre composite, lighter than traditional aluminium bodies.
 - **Fuel Efficiency:** Consumes 25% less fuel than older models.
 - **Comfort:** Spacious cabins, large windows, improved cabin pressure and humidity.
- **Variants:** 787-8, 787-9, and 787-10.
- Takeoff and Landing Are the Riskiest Phases**
 - **Low and Slow Factor**
 - Aircraft fly at low altitude and speed during these phases, leaving little time for corrective action.
 - At cruising altitude, even with engine failure, planes can glide for minutes. On the ground or just after takeoff, pilots have seconds.
 - **Increased Stress on Engines**
 - Engines work hardest during takeoff, increasing the likelihood of failure.

- **Pilot Workload**
 - Landings are technically demanding, involving complex real-time decisions based on aircraft weight, wind, and speed.
- **Stall Risk**
 - Wing stalls are more likely during takeoff due to excessive nose-up angles, leading to lift loss.
 - A wing stall occurs when an aircraft's wing suddenly loses lift, which is the force that keeps it flying.
 - This happens when the angle of attack — the angle between the wing and the oncoming air — becomes too steep.
 - When a pilot pulls the aircraft's nose up too sharply (like during a steep takeoff), the angle of attack increases.
 - If this angle becomes too large (usually more than 15–20 degrees), the airflow over the wing becomes turbulent and detaches.
 - As a result, lift drops suddenly, and the plane can lose altitude or even fall.
- **Environmental Hazards**
 - Bird strikes, turbulence, and adverse weather are more common at low altitudes.

Flying Is Still the Safest Mode of Transport

- **ICAO Data:** Accidents per million departures dropped from 4.9 (2005) to 1.9 (2023).
- **Fatalities Declining:** Fatal accident numbers fluctuate annually but trend downward due to safer aircraft, better-trained pilots, and advanced simulators.
- **Improved Safety Protocols:** Modern aviation benefits from better materials, engineering, weather forecasting, and strict safety regulations.

WHAT IS A BLACK BOX?



- It is a small machine that records **information about an aircraft during its flight**.
- This bright orange or yellow rectangular box is crafted to withstand explosions, fire, water pressure, and high-speed crashes.
- It was discovered by Australian **scientist David Warren**. it is used to discover the cause of a plane crash.
- Most aircraft are required to be equipped with **two black boxes** — the **cockpit voice recorder (CVR)** and the **flight data recorder (FDR)** — that record the information about a flight and help reconstruct the events leading to an aircraft accident.
 - The CVR **records radio transmissions** and other sounds in the cockpit, such as conversations between the pilots and engine noises.
 - The **flight data recorder** records more than **80 different types of information**, such as **altitude, airspeed, flight heading, vertical acceleration, pitch, roll, autopilot status**, etc.
- The recording devices are stored inside a unit that is generally made out of strong substances such as **steel or titanium** and are also insulated from factors such as extreme heat, cold or wetness.
- To protect these black boxes, they are equipped towards the tail end of the aircraft, where the impact of a crash is usually the least.

PASSAGE EXERCISE



- It was conducted by the **Indian Navy and the United Kingdom**.
- It featured Indian naval assets including the **stealth frigate INS Tabar**, a **submarine**, and the long-range maritime patrol aircraft P-8I. The UK's naval contingent included HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Richmond.

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- The exercise highlighted **advanced operational coordination** and interoperability between the two forces.
- With **synchronised tactical manoeuvres** and unified helicopter control operations, both navies demonstrated their readiness and high-end combat capabilities.
- The exercise served as a testament to the operational strength and combat preparedness of Indian naval units, both surface and underwater.
- Indian **submarines and warships** were instrumental in executing complex maritime tasks during the operation, earning them recognition as some of the most capable units globally.
- The joint PASSEX carries strategic significance due to its location.
- The **North Arabian Sea** remains a **critical maritime corridor for global trade**, including essential energy shipments.
- Conducting joint drills in this region reflects a shared commitment by India and the United Kingdom to maintaining maritime stability, safeguarding sea lines of communication, and projecting a credible naval presence in the Indo-Pacific.

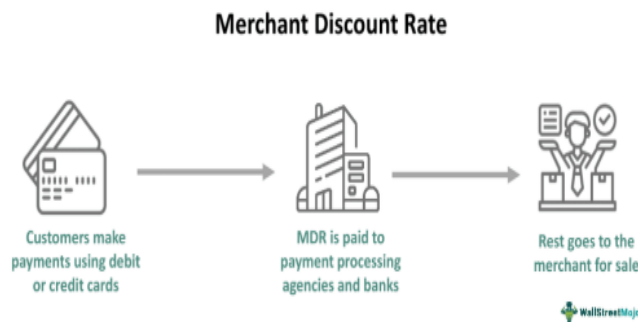
SHIPKI LA PASS



- It is a **motorable mountain pass** situated at an **altitude of 3,930 meters**, bordering India and China in tribal district of Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh.
- It also serves as **the boundary post** on the frontier between **China and India**.
- It is one of **the highest motorable passes**.
- Through this pass **the Sutlej River** (known as Langqen Zangbo in Tibet) **enters India**, and has long served as a vital trade corridor between India and Tibet.
- The old name of Shipki La was **Pema La**, or Shared Gate, also known as Shared Pass.
- It was declared the Line of Actual Control post-1962, and later, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police named it Shipki La.

- **Significance:** The opening of Shipki La to tourists is part of a broader strategy to **stimulate economic growth** in Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti, which share a 240-km border with China.

MERCHANT DISCOUNT RATE



• It is a fee that merchants and other businesses must pay to a **payment processing company** for **accepting payments** from customers via digital modes like **credit cards, debit cards, UPI, etc.**

- MDR compensates the bank issuing the card, the bank which installs the PoS (Point of Sale) terminal and network providers, and payment gateways for their services.
- The MDR sums up all the charges and taxes that electronic or digital payments entail.
- The MDR typically comes in the form of a percentage of the transaction amount. It is **typically between 1% and 3%**.
- The rates are dependent on the **level of business transactions being processed**, the types of cards (debit or credit) used by customers, and the value of the average transaction (also known as average tickets or average sales).
- Before accepting debit and credit cards, merchants must set up this service and agree to the rate.
- Merchants must consider these fees as part of managing their business costs and setting their prices.
- MDR charges are **automatically deducted from the merchant's account** at the time of settling the transaction batch.
- Under the **rules laid down by RBI**, business owners **cannot pass** on the MDR charges to **their customers**.

EXERCISE SHAKTI



- It is a **joint military exercise** between India and France
- It is a biennial event conducted alternatively in **India and France**.

- It is the 8th edition of Exercise Shakti and last time it was held in India.
- The aim of the exercise is to enhance **joint military capability** of both sides to undertake Multi Domain Operations in a Sub Conventional scenario.
- The joint exercise will facilitate **developing interoperability**, bonhomie and camaraderie between armies of both the nations.
- The exercise will enable the two sides to **share their best practices** in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting joint operations.
- Other Joint Exercises between France and India are Exercise Desert Knight, Exercise Varuna and Exercise Garuda.

GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT



- It is an **annual index** designed to measure gender equality.
- It benchmarks gender-based **gaps in four areas**: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment.
- It is released by the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
- It is the longest-standing index tracking the progress of numerous countries' efforts towards closing these gaps over time since its inception in 2006.
- **Highlights of 2024 Report**
 - India's gender parity score stands at just 64.1 per cent, placing it among the lowest-ranked countries in the South Asian region.

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- In **educational attainment**, India scored 97.1%, reflecting **gains in female literacy** and tertiary education enrolment.
- One dimension where India increases parity is in Economic Participation and Opportunity, where its score improves by 0.9 per cent to 40.7 percent.
- India also records **higher parity in health and survival**, driven by improved scores in sex ratio at birth and in healthy life expectancy.
- India recorded a **slight drop in political empowerment**, with parity dropping by 0.6 points since the previous edition. Female representation in Parliament fell from 14.7 percent to 13.8 percent in 2025
- Iceland retains the **world's most gender-equal economy** for the 16th consecutive year, closing 92.6% of the gender gap – the only economy to reach 90% parity.
- European countries account for **eight of the top ten rankings**; Iceland, Finland, Norway, and Sweden have all been in the top ten since 2006.
- The bottom 10 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025—led by Pakistan, Sudan, Chad, and Iran—continue to show the widest gender disparities globally.