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SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS HANGING AS A CONSTITUTIONAL MODE OF EXECUTION

Recently, the Supreme Court upheld the **constitutional validity of hanging** as a mode of executing a death sentence, dismissing a PIL that argued the method violates the right to a dignified death under Article 21.

The Ruling

- A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta dismissed the petition challenging hanging.
- The Court affirmed that constitutional protections continue for prisoners on death row, stating: "this constitutional protection does not cease to exist at the gallows."

How Hanging Is Designed to Work?

- Hanging uses a calculated "drop" based on the convict's height and weight, intended to cause a **fracture-dislocation at the C2-C3 vertebrae**, producing near-instant unconsciousness.

Grounds of the Challenge

- The petitioners argued that scientific understanding and constitutional doctrine have evolved since 1983. They sought a declaration that hanging is unconstitutional, arguing Article 21 includes a right to a dignified death procedure.
- They cited a 1992 study of **34 people hanged in England (1882–1945)**: while C2-C3 fractures were common, the "hangman's fracture" causing near-instant death occurred in only 3 of 34 cases, while 6 died of asphyxiation.
- Based on this, they argued hanging is unpredictable — too short a drop causes death by strangulation, too long a drop can cause decapitation — making it neither quick nor controllable.
- **Government's Counter:** Since 2003, India has conducted only eight executions, with no botched hanging on record — unlike lethal injection in the US, which has a well-documented history of failures.

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Constitutional and Legal Framework

- The right to die with dignity flows from Article 21 (Right to Life). In **Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab (1996)**, the Supreme Court held that the right to life includes the right to live and die with dignity.
- **Section 393(5)** of the BNSS mandates that a person sentenced to death "shall be hanged by the neck till he is dead" — a provision largely unchanged since it first appeared in the CrPC in 1861.

The Law Commission's Recommendation

- The **187th Law Commission Report (2003)**, chaired by Justice M. Jagannadha Rao, had recommended amending the law to provide lethal injection as an alternative method of execution.
- It also noted that military courts-martial permit execution by shooting, which petitioners cited to argue hanging need not be the sole legal method.

Modern Execution Methods: A Global Snapshot

- **Global Trend:** Over two-thirds of nations (113) have ended the death penalty in law or practice, though executions rose 12% in 2025 (Amnesty International).
- **Prevalent Methods**
 - **Hanging:** Widely used in Common Law countries (India, Singapore, Japan); authorised in 60 nations per a 2012 Cornell study.
 - **Lethal Injection:** Primary method in several US states and China; uses anaesthetic, paralytic, and potassium chloride, but prone to botched venous access.
 - **Shooting:** Used in China, North Korea, Somalia, and parts of West Asia; visually violent despite claims of near-instant death.
 - **Beheading:** Practised in Saudi Arabia, dependent on executioner precision.
 - **Nitrogen Hypoxia:** A new US method causing asphyxiation without panic response, though criticised as unvetted and experimental.

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WHAT IS THE NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION (NMC)?



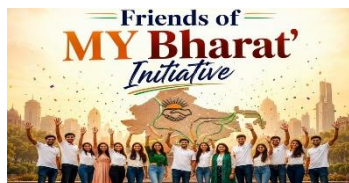
National Medical Commission (NMC)

- It is a **statutory body** constituted by the **National Medical Commission Act, 2019**, which came into force in 2020.
- It replaced the **Medical Council of India (MCI)** and serves as the **top regulatory authority** for medical education, medical professionals, and medical institutions in India.
- It **grants recognition of medical qualifications**, gives **accreditation to medical schools**, grants **registration to medical practitioners**, monitors medical practice, and assesses the medical infrastructure in India.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Functions:**
 - **Establish Policies and Regulations:** Laying down policies to maintain high quality and standards in medical education and making necessary regulations.
 - **Assess Healthcare Needs:** Assessing the requirements in healthcare, including human resources and healthcare infrastructure, and developing a roadmap to meet these needs.
 - **Coordinate Autonomous Boards:** Promoting, coordinating, and framing guidelines for the proper functioning of the Commission, Autonomous Boards, and State Medical Councils.
 - **Ensure Compliance:** Ensuring that State Medical Councils comply with the guidelines and regulations framed by the NMC.
 - **Promote Ethical Conduct:** Laying down policies and codes to ensure observance of professional ethics in the medical profession.
 - **Fee Guidelines:** Framing guidelines for determining fees & other charges for **50% of seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities.**

Composition: It consists of **33 members**, including the **Chairperson** (medical professionals only), **10 ex-officio members** and **22 part-time members**.

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FRIENDS OF MY BHARAT' INITIATIVE



- It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.
- It strengthens **engagement with Indian-origin youth living across the world** and provides them opportunities to participate in **India's nation-building and youth-led programmes**.
- It is developed through **Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat) platform**.
- **Features of Friends of MY Bharat' Initiative:**
 - **Global Youth Engagement:** It will enable **Indian-origin students, young professionals and other youth residing outside India** to access information about nation-building activities, volunteering opportunities and youth programmes hosted on the MY Bharat platform.
 - **Volunteering opportunities:** It will also provide information on **volunteering opportunities** in areas such as education, environmental protection, health awareness, disaster relief and cultural preservation.
 - A dedicated '**Know Your India**' section will offer **curated information on India's culture**, heritage, history, tourism, travel and prominent leaders.
 - The initiative **seeks to channel the ideas, skills, experiences and aspirations** of global Indian youth towards India's development journey.

What is MY Bharat Platform?

- MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat) was launched in **2023 under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.
- The initiative aims to **place youth at the centre of nation-building** by providing opportunities for volunteering, skill development, leadership and civic participation.
- It serves as a digital platform that connects the **Government, educational institutions, non-profit organisations** and industry to create meaningful youth engagement.

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CASTE CENSUS 2026 - WHY OPEN-ENDED CASTE ENUMERATION POSES DATA CHALLENGES

- The Registrar General of India has decided to use an open-ended question rather than a predetermined list of castes for the ongoing census, raising concerns that the exercise could produce unwieldy and unusable data.

How Caste Will Be Counted This Time?

- The ongoing census will have no pre-given list of castes. It will be up to the respondent to state their caste, which the enumerator will record as given.
- This is expected to generate a large number of entries for what may effectively be a single caste.
- As one senior official explained, if a person identifies their caste by surname, the enumerator is duty-bound to record it as their caste.
- If the surname is misspelt, that misspelling too becomes an entry in the caste column.

The Problem of Multiple Names

- A single caste may be known by many different names, and the same name may mean different castes in different regions.
- Rajput, Thakur, Singh, and Kshatriya may be used interchangeably by respondents.
- However, "Rajput" in the Bundelkhand region, cutting across Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, may also refer to the **Other Backwards Class** Lodh community. "Singh" is a surname that cuts across castes and categories entirely.
- Similarly, the surname Verma can indicate a Kayasth, a Kurmi, a Jat, or even a Sonar, depending on the region and family.
- Without a standardised list, all these variations enter the dataset as separate categories.

Lessons from the 1931 Census

- The colonial state used a similar open-ended method until 1931, and the census report from that year documents the difficulties that arose when caste became a highly subjective category.

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- **Assertion of New Identities**

- Sections of the leather-working caste among Dalits in Punjab adopted a new religious identity as Aad Dharmis, meaning people belonging to the "original" or "pre-Aryan" religion of India.
- As many as 418,789 people enumerated themselves as Aad Dharmis, a category that did not exist in 1921.
- Similar trends appeared elsewhere, with identities such as Adi Dravida, Adi Andhras, and Adi Karnatakas emerging.

Suggested Solutions

- Experts have proposed practical alternatives to open-ended enumeration.
 - Former Indian Council of Social Science Research chairman S.K. Thorat, who served on the expert committee reviewing caste data in Telangana, argued that a predetermined list is necessary.
 - He noted that SC, ST, and OBC lists already exist and are recognised by the government. What is needed is a similar list of castes in the general category, which would produce an exhaustive list.
 - He acknowledged this may still carry a small margin of error of 2-3%, but argued this would minimise error rather than the far larger distortions of open-ended enumeration.
 - Thorat also suggested including columns for "no caste" and "no religion" for people who do not identify with these categories.
 - He recommended separate questionnaires for SCs and STs, since the exclusions they face differ: untouchability in the case of SCs, and physical and geographical isolation in the case of STs.
 - He noted that a separate questionnaire for OBCs was not required, as social and educational backwardness would be captured by the census in any case.
 - Activists working on sub-categorisation have argued for questions on hierarchies and exclusions within SCs and STs, since some castes within these categories are considerably more deprived than others.
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MATCH AI MODELS TO WORKLOADS, NOT LEADERBOARDS

- The **AI industry** has become heavily focused on model rankings, with new systems frequently claiming leadership on benchmarks.
- Yet enterprise AI success increasingly depends not on selecting the most powerful model, but on choosing the **right model and deployment strategy** for each workload.
- Alongside capability, cost, governance, data residency, security, intellectual-property protection and operational complexity are now critical factors.

The Equation Has Changed

- The **rise of open-weight models** has significantly expanded enterprise choices.
- Unlike closed models accessed through external APIs, open-weight models allow organisations to run trained weights themselves, subject to licensing conditions.
- This enables **sensitive data** to remain within approved environments, facilitates proprietary fine-tuning, improves portability and reduces dependence on a single vendor. It can also lower per-token costs.
- Total cost therefore depends heavily on utilisation and scale. While large organisations may justify self-hosting, smaller enterprises can find its technical and financial demands difficult to manage.

One Organisation, Multiple AI Strategies

- Enterprises rarely have a single AI workload. A bank processing confidential customer information has different requirements from a marketing team generating content.
- Likewise, manufacturing customer service and cybersecurity investigations demand different priorities.
- Some applications prioritise reasoning and speed, while regulated or security-sensitive workloads require confidentiality, data residency and governance.
- Therefore, a single model or deployment strategy is unlikely to suit every use case.
- The **emerging principle is workload-specific AI deployment** rather than organisation-wide adoption of one model.

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The Emerging Third Option

- Between closed APIs and fully self-hosted systems lies **managed inference for open-weight models**.
- These platforms host open-weight models on managed infrastructure and provide production-ready endpoints, combining greater model control with the convenience of a managed service.
- **Sarvam's** launch of Sarvam Inference illustrates this emerging category in India.
- Managed inference can make advanced open-weight AI accessible to organisations without specialised AI operations teams.

Conclusion

- The future of enterprise AI lies beyond the pursuit of benchmark leadership. Model performance alone does not determine business value.
- Organisations must balance capability with cost, control, security, governance, portability and operational complexity.
- The most successful organisations will ask not which model is universally best, but which model and deployment architecture best fit each specific workload.

BRICS ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION - TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRIC AND RESILIENT GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

- India hosted the **12th** BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on August 18 under its BRICS chairship.
- The BRICS grouping represents nearly 49.5% of the world's population, 40% of global GDP and 26% of international trade, giving it significant influence over global development and **environmental governance**.
- India's approach seeks to reconcile economic development, climate action, ecological conservation and inclusive growth, while ensuring that the concerns of developing countries and the Global South remain central.

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Four Priorities of the BRICS Environment Working Group:

- **Promoting sustainable lifestyles:**

- Building on Mission LiFE, BRICS seeks to promote responsible consumption and production, behavioural change, environmental awareness and knowledge-sharing among citizens and communities.

- **Afforestation, forest fire management and disaster resilience:**

- BRICS cooperation focuses on -

Forest-fire preparedness and response;

Early-warning systems;

Integrated landscape management;

Ecosystem restoration and resilience;

Use of remote sensing and Artificial Intelligence; and

Sharing scientific and technological best practices.

- **Circular economy:**

- BRICS therefore recognises the circular economy as an important pathway for reducing resource consumption and environmental pressures.
- Greater cooperation in research, innovation, technology transfer and capacity building can promote resource efficiency while **generating green jobs** and inclusive economic opportunities.

- **Climate adaptation and community-based resilience:**

- With climate impacts intensifying, adaptation has become particularly important for developing countries, which often face **disproportionate vulnerabilities** despite having contributed less to historical emissions.

BRICS emphasises the integration of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge with modern science and technology.

Conclusion: India's BRICS environmental agenda reflects a broader shift from environmental protection as a stand-alone objective towards integrated, people-centric and development-oriented environmental governance.

- The real test of BRICS cooperation will be whether it can convert **consensus into on-ground resilience**, sustainable livelihoods and equitable climate action.