

CURRENT AFFAIRS: 04.05.2026

Should the PIL jurisdiction be reconsidered?

“There have been instances where courts, while hearing such matters, have had to respond to executive inaction. This then raises a recurring question: do they possess the institutional competence to navigate such issues?”

Source: The Hindu

Recalibrating Public Interest Litigation

Why in News?

The Union government has urged the **Supreme Court of India** to fundamentally reconsider the framework of **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)**, citing the growing menace of “**agenda-driven litigation.**”

This has reignited the debate on whether PIL jurisdiction, once a tool for social justice, now requires recalibration to prevent misuse while preserving access to justice.

Key Concerns Regarding PILs (Public Interest Litigations)

1. Dilution of Locus Standi

- Shift from genuine representation of marginalized groups to open access for all.
- Leads to misuse and deviation from original purpose.

2. Misuse via “Three Ps”

- **Private Interest Litigation:** Personal or corporate rivalries disguised as public issues.
- **Publicity Interest Litigation:** Filed for media attention.
- **Political Interest Litigation:** Used as a tool for political agendas.

3. Judicial Overreach (Constitutional Friction)

- Courts increasingly intervene in policy matters.
- Blurs separation of powers between judiciary, executive, and legislature.
- Judiciary lacks expertise and accountability for policymaking.

4. Polycentric Nature of Disputes

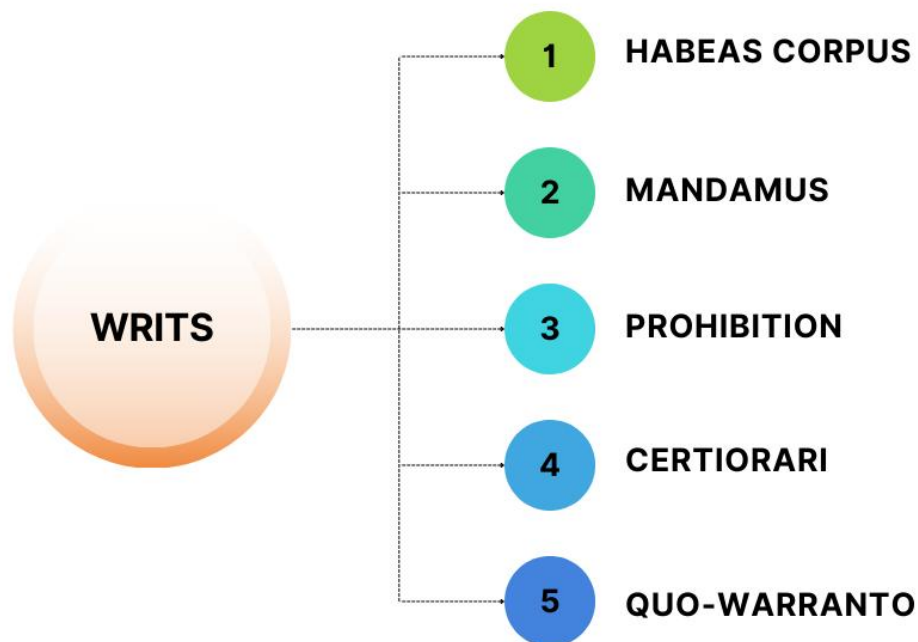
- PILs affect multiple stakeholders.
- Courts may not hear all affected parties - violation of natural justice.

5. Violation of Natural Justice

1. Ignoring **audi alteram partem** (hear the other side).
2. Leads to one-sided or incomplete decisions.

What is the Public Interest Litigation (PIL)?

- **About: PIL** is a legal mechanism that allows any public-spirited individual or organization to file a petition in court on behalf of those whose rights have been violated, but who cannot approach the court themselves due to poverty, ignorance, or socio-economic disadvantages.
 - The concept of PIL originated in American jurisprudence. In India, it was pioneered in the late 1970s and 1980s by visionary judges like **Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer** and **Justice P.N. Bhagwati**.
 - Before PILs existed, the traditional legal rule was **Locus Standi** (which means "the right to stand"). This rule dictated that only a person whose rights were personally infringed upon could file a lawsuit. PIL fundamentally relaxed this rule.
- **Constitutional Basis of PIL in India:**
 - **Article 32 (Right to Constitutional Remedies):** Often described by B. R. Ambedkar as the "heart and soul" of the Constitution, **Article 32** allows individuals to directly approach the Supreme Court of India for enforcement of **Fundamental Rights**.



- Through PIL jurisprudence, its scope has expanded from only aggrieved individuals to include public-spirited citizens acting on behalf of disadvantaged groups, thereby strengthening access to justice.
- **Article 226 (Power of High Courts to Issue Writs):** This provision enables High Courts to actively entertain PILs on regional issues such as governance failures, environmental concerns, and administrative lapses.
- **Article 39A (Directive Principle of State Policy):** Mandates the State to ensure equal justice and provide free legal aid so that no citizen is denied justice due to economic or other disabilities.
 - PILs derive their moral and philosophical foundation from this provision.
- **Supreme Court Directives:**

- **Balwant Singh Chauhal Guidelines (2010):** In *State of Uttaranchal v. Balwant Singh Chauhal*, the Supreme Court laid down strict guidelines to curb misuse of PILs.
 - These include verifying the petitioner’s credentials and facts, ensuring genuine public interest and urgency, checking absence of private or political motives, preventing misuse for publicity, and imposing exemplary costs on frivolous petitions.
- **Supreme Court Rules, 2013 (Procedural Safeguards):** Require petitioners to disclose prior filings on similar issues, declare absence of personal interest (or clearly state it if present), and provide details of income and occupation to establish bona fides.
 - These measures aim to filter out frivolous or motivated litigation while preserving PIL as a tool for justice.

Prime Minister's Office



Prime Minister shares an article highlighting the transformative impact of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

Posted On: 01 MAY 2026 12:26PM by PIB Delhi

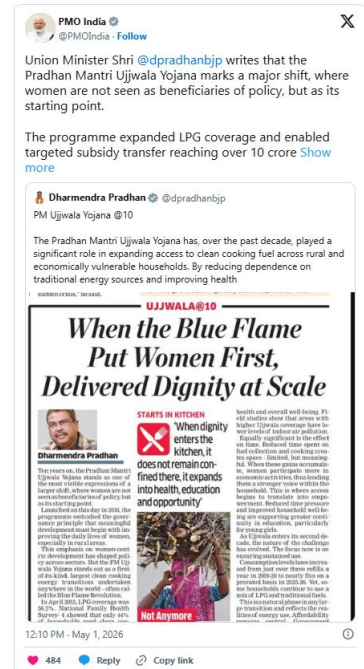
10 Years of PMUY

Why in News?

The Prime Minister highlighted how the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** has transformed women in **10 years** from mere policy beneficiaries into the very starting point of clean energy empowerment.

What is Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana?

- **About:** PMUY is a flagship welfare scheme launched by the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG)** in 2016 to provide **clean cooking fuel (LPG)** to women from poor households, replacing traditional polluting fuels like firewood and coal.
 - In **2025-26**, the Union Cabinet approved the continuation of a **targeted subsidy of Rs 300 per 14.2 kg cylinder** for up to **9 refills per year**.
- **Key Objectives:** To improve the health of women and children by **reducing indoor air pollution** and smoke-related respiratory diseases.
 - To promote **dignity, convenience, and safety** in daily household chores.
- **Saturation Goal:** As of late April 2026, the scheme has released over **10.54 crore connections**. An additional **25 lakh connections** were approved for the 2025–26 cycle to achieve universal coverage.
 - Target beneficiaries are women from **Below Poverty Line (BPL)** households, SC/ST households, forest dwellers, and other deprived sections.
 - It is often described as the **"Blue Flame Revolution"** for delivering clean energy at a massive scale.
- **Ujjwala 2.0 (The Migration-Friendly Phase):** Launched in 2021, this phase simplified documentation. **Migrants can now apply using a self-declaration** as proof of address rather than requiring formal ration cards or local residence proof.



- **Financial Model:** The government provides **Rs 1,600 per connection**, covering security deposits and installation. Under Ujjwala 2.0, the **first refill** and a **gas stove** (hotplate) are also provided **free of cost**.
- **Consumption Trends:** Average **per capita consumption** increased from about three refills in 2019-20 to **4.47 refills in 2024-25**, indicating sustained adoption of clean cooking fuel.

Achievements of PMUY

- **Health & Safety:** PMUY eliminates toxic smoke from firewood and coal, significantly **reducing respiratory diseases**, lung infections, and eye irritation. It prevents pregnant women from inhaling harmful fumes, which is often compared to smoking **hundreds of cigarettes a day**.
 - It saves hours previously spent collecting **firewood** or preparing **cow-dung cakes**. This saved time allows women to pursue **income-generating activities**, education, or rest.
- **Women's Empowerment:** The LPG connection is issued in the name of the **adult woman** of the household, increasing her financial agency and status within the family.
- **Infrastructure and Energy Justice:** Total LPG connections in India grew from **14.52 crore** in 2014 to over **32 crore** by late 2024, nearly doubling the national coverage
 - The number of LPG distributors nearly doubled, with a specific focus on reaching **eastern** and previously **underserved** rural regions.
- **Behavioural and Systemic Shifts:** The success of Ujjwala has created a "**behavioral shift**" in habits and mindsets, paving the way for the next stage of the transition, such as induction-based cooking.
- **Technological Efficiency:** The success of the scheme is anchored in the **JAM trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile)**, which facilitated **leakage-free targeted subsidy transfers** directly into the bank accounts of female beneficiaries.

What Concerns are Associated with Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana?

- **Refill and Affordability Gap:** Despite the free initial connection and the Rs 300 subsidy, the **out-of-pocket cost** for subsequent refills remains a **financial burden** for BPL households compared to free traditional biomass.
 - Data shows that while general consumers average **6–7 refills** annually, PMUY beneficiaries average closer to **4–5 refills**, with a significant percentage taking **one or no refills after the first year**.
- **Global Volatility:** As seen during the **West Asia crisis in early 2026**, India's **50%+ dependence on LPG imports** makes domestic prices vulnerable to global conflicts, often pushing the effective price beyond the reach of poor households despite subsidies.
- **Fuel Stacking (Multiple Fuel Use):** Beneficiaries often engage in "fuel stacking"—using LPG only for quick tasks like **making tea** while relying on firewood or dung for **labor-intensive cooking** (e.g., making rotis or boiling water). As long as traditional biomass is used alongside LPG, the health risks (respiratory diseases, cataracts) persist.
- **Last-Mile Distribution & Logistics:** The lack of **home delivery services** in hilly or tribal terrains forces workers to lose a day's wage to transport cylinders. Operational rules, such as a **45-day mandatory gap** between refills in some rural regions, can disrupt supply for larger families who might exhaust a cylinder faster.
- **Ghost Connections:** Historical audits have pointed to "**inactive**" or "**ghost**" connections where cylinders might be **diverted to commercial use** (hotels/transport) instead of reaching the intended poor households.
- **Cultural Preferences:** In some regions, a preference for the taste of food cooked on **traditional chulhas** or a belief that wood-fire cooking is more "**natural**" slows down the total adoption of LPG.

What happened to Komagata Maru passengers in 1914?

Why was the Komagata Maru denied entry into Canada? What happened to the passengers?

Updated - May 02, 2026 10:46 am IST

Why in News?

The **Komagata Maru incident** (1914) was a pivotal event in the global history of the Indian freedom struggle, highlighting the racial exclusion faced by **Indian immigrants** in Canada (then British Dominion) and the subsequent radicalisation of the **Ghadar movement**.

What was the Komagata Maru Incident?

- **About:** The Komagata Maru incident refers to the **1914 voyage of the Japanese steamship** Komagata Maru (also known as the *Guru Nanak Jahaz*), which became a symbol of systemic **racism and exclusionary immigration** policy in Canada.
 - Chartered by **Gurdit Singh Sandhu**, the vessel sailed from Hong Kong to Vancouver carrying 376 passengers from Punjab, British India.
- **Goal: The voyage** aimed to challenge the "**Continuous Journey Regulation 1908**"—a Canadian law that required immigrants to come from the country of their **birth or citizenship** by a **continuous journey** and or through tickets purchased before leaving the country of their birth or nationality.
 - This policy was aimed at **South Asians**, as nonstop travel from India to Canada was **largely unavailable** and acted as a "**hidden**" **ban** on Indian immigration.
- **Standoff in Vancouver:** Upon reaching **Vancouver in May 1914**, the ship was denied docking permission, and only 24 passengers who could prove prior Canadian residence were allowed to disembark.
 - The local Indian community formed a "**Shore Committee**" to pursue legal action, but the court upheld the exclusionary law.
 - The authorities restricted supplies, and the ship was eventually forced to leave Canadian waters in July 1914 under naval escort.
- **Budge Budge Riot:** The incident turned tragic when the ship returned to India and docked at **Budge Budge**, near Kolkata, in September 1914. When the passengers refused to board a special train to Punjab and instead tried to march to Calcutta, the British police opened fire.
 - **20** passengers were killed, and many were imprisoned. Gurdit Singh evaded capture until **1920**, surrendering at **Mahatma Gandhi's** request and serving **5 years** in prison.
- **Historical Significance:** The incident acted as a catalyst for the Indian freedom struggle in several ways:
 - **Ghadar Movement:** It provided a massive recruitment boost for the **Ghadar Party**. It convinced many overseas Indians that "British subjects" had no rights and that **armed revolution** was the only path to dignity.
 - **Exposing Colonial Hypocrisy:** It highlighted the contradiction of the British Empire, i.e., while Indians were expected to fight for Britain in **World War I** (which began just as the ship returned), they were denied entry into other British colonies.
 - **International Relations:** It remains a significant moment in Indo-Canadian history. In **2016**, the Canadian Prime Minister offered a **formal apology** in the House of Commons for the tragedy.

Ghadar Movement

- **About:** The Ghadar Movement was a **transnational** revolutionary movement founded by expatriate Indians (primarily Punjabis) in North America with the goal of liberating India from British rule through an armed uprising.
 - The word "**Ghadar**" literally means **revolt** or **mutiny**, a name chosen to evoke the spirit of the **Revolt of 1857**.
- **Formation:** It was formally established in **1913** as the **Pacific Coast Hindustan Association** in San Francisco (United States).
- **Key Figures:** **Lala Har Dayal** (intellectual and the ideological soul of the movement), **Sohan Singh Bhakna** (1st President of Ghadar party), **Taraknath Das** (founder of *Free Hindustan* journal), and **Kartar Singh Sarabha** (a young revolutionary who became a legendary martyr).
- **Ideology:** The movement was deeply secular, uniting **Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims** under the common banner of Indian nationalism. They published a weekly newspaper called **Ghadar**. Its masthead famously read **Angrezi Raj ka Dushman** (Enemy of British Rule).
- **Ghadar Mutiny (1915):** The outbreak of **World War I** in 1914 was seen as a "God-sent opportunity" because the British army was distracted in Europe.
 - Thousands of Ghadarites returned to India to incite a mutiny among Indian soldiers. They fixed **21st February, 1915**, as the date for a **general uprising** in the Punjab and army cantonments.
 - The British infiltrated the movement with **spies** (notably Kirpal Singh). The conspiracy was leaked, leading to mass arrests, executions, and the declaration of the **Defence of India Act, 1915**.

How is the next UN chief being chosen? | Explained

Why is the role of Secretary-General important? Who are the candidates? What factors shape the choice? Why does this election matter now? What are the candidates' campaign priorities? What happens next?

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RAJA KARTHIKEYA

Why in News?

The election process for the **next Secretary-General of the United Nations** is underway, with candidates presenting their vision before the General Assembly, as the current **Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres**, completes his second term on **31st December 2026**, and the new Secretary-General is set to take office in **January 2027**.

How is the UN Secretary-General Elected?

- **Constitutional Provision:** The UN Charter simply states that the Secretary-General is appointed by the **General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council**.
- **The Power of the P5:** Because the recommendation must come from the Security Council, the five permanent members (P5) (China, France, Russia, the U.K., and the US) wield decisive influence. **Any of the P5 nations can veto a candidate**.
- **Nominations and Public Dialogues**

- **Joint Call for Candidates:** The process officially begins when the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council send a joint letter to all 193 Member States, inviting them to **nominate candidates**.
- **Vision Statements:** Candidates must submit a formal curriculum vitae and a "vision statement" detailing their proposed direction for the UN.
 - In a move toward greater transparency introduced in 2016, candidates must participate in "**informal, interactive dialogues**" with the General Assembly. During these publicly broadcast sessions, they present their vision and answer questions from Member States and civil society groups.
- **Straw Polls:** The real power in the selection process lies within the **15-member Security Council**, particularly its **five Permanent Members**.
 - The Security Council holds a series of secret ballots known as "**straw polls**." Members vote to "**encourage**," "**discourage**," or express "**no opinion**" on each candidate.
 - In the later rounds of straw polling, the ballots of the P5 nations are printed on different colored paper. This is crucial because **any "discourage" vote from a P5 member acts as a veto**, effectively eliminating that candidate from contention.
 - These polls continue until a single candidate emerges with sufficient support (at least nine out of 15 votes) and zero vetoes from the P5.
- **Formal Recommendation:** Once a consensus candidate is identified, the Security Council adopts a formal resolution behind closed doors to officially **recommend that individual to the General Assembly**.
- **General Assembly Appointment:** The recommended candidate's name is forwarded to the General Assembly. The Assembly votes to confirm the appointment, requiring a simple majority.
 - However, historically, the General Assembly approves the Security Council's recommendation by consensus or acclamation without a formal vote.

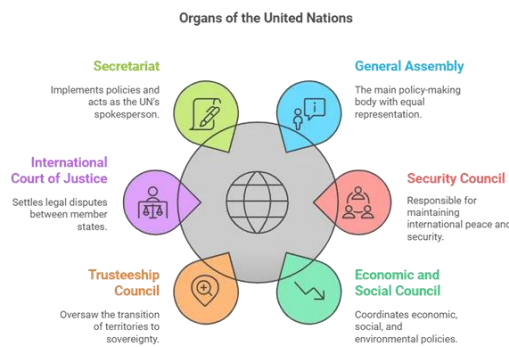
Unwritten Rules and Customs

- **Regional Rotation:** By convention, the post rotates among the UN's five regional groups (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe and Others) to ensure global representation.
- **Term Limits:** The **UNSG serves a five-year term**. While there is no technical limit to the **number of terms under the Charter**, a **two-term limit has become the established convention**.
- **P5 Exclusion:** It is an unwritten rule that a citizen of any of the five Permanent Members of the Security Council cannot be appointed as Secretary-General to avoid concentrating too much power in the hands of one country and to ensure an impartial, independent arbiter.

What is the Role of the Secretary-General?

- **Chief Administrative Officer:** Under **Article 97** of the UN Charter, the Secretary-General is designated as the "chief administrative officer" of the Organization.
 - The Secretary-General is responsible for carrying out the decisions, mandates, and functions entrusted to them by the UN's principal organs (the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, etc.).
- **Guardian of Global Peace and Security:** **Article 99** of the UN Charter empowers the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council *any matter* which, in their opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. This gives them an independent political voice.
- **Preventive Diplomacy and 'Good Offices':** The Secretary-General uses their independence and impartiality to engage in "**good offices**", taking steps publicly and in private to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating, or spreading.

- **Appointing Envoys:** They have the authority to appoint Special Representatives and Personal Envoys to mediate conflicts, lead peacekeeping missions, and facilitate peace negotiations in global hotspots (e.g., Syria, Yemen, Sudan).
- **Global Advocate and Moral Conscience:** Often described as the **world's "chief diplomat,"** the UNSG acts as the face and voice of the UN, speaking as the world's conscience on issues ranging from **climate change** to human rights and economic inequality.
 - The Secretary-General acts as a spokesperson for the world's most vulnerable populations, advocating for human rights, humanitarian access, and the protection of civilians in armed conflict.
- **Navigating 'Creative Tension':** The Secretary-General must uphold the universal values and moral authority of the UN Charter while simultaneously navigating the sovereign interests and intense geopolitical **rivalries of the 193 Member States**—especially the five veto-wielding Permanent Members (P5) of the Security Council who ultimately control their appointment and the UN's budget.



UN Security Council (UNSC)

The UN Charter vests the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the UNSC

About

One of the **6 principal organs** of UN, established in **1945** by UN Charter

Headquarters

New York City

First Session

17 January 1946 at Church House, Westminster, London

Membership

- 15 members - 5 Permanent Members (P5), 10 Non-Permanent Members elected for two-year terms (5 elected each year)
- P5 - the US, the UK, Russia, France and China

Presidency

- Rotates every month among the 15 members
- India's Presidency for year 2022 - December

Voting Powers

- 1 member = 1 vote
- P5 have **veto power**
- Members of UN sans membership of UNSC participate without vote

UNSC Committees/Resolutions

Terrorism

- Resolution 1373 (Counter Terrorism Committee)
- Resolution 1267 (Da'esh and Al Qaeda Committee)

Non-Proliferation Committee

- Resolution 1540 (against nuclear, chemical and biological weapons)

India and UNSC

- Served **7 times** as non-permanent member; elected for the **8th time** for 2021-22; **advocates for a permanent seat**
- Arguments for a permanent seat:
 - **43 peacekeeping missions**
 - Active participation in **formulating Human Rights Declaration (UDHR)**
 - India's **population, territorial size, GDP, economic potential, cultural diversity, political system** etc.



G4

Group of 4 countries (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) which advocate each other's bids for permanent seats in the UNSC

Uniting for Consensus (UfC) Movement

- Informally known as the **Coffee Club**
- Countries **oppose the expansion Permanent Seats** of UNSC
- **Prime movers of the club** - Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Argentina and Pakistan
- Italy and Spain are opposed to Germany's bid; Pakistan - India's bid; Argentina - Brazil's bid and Australia - Japan's bid

Major Challenges in UNSC

- Usual UN rules don't apply to UNSC deliberations; **no records of meetings kept**
- Powerplay in UNSC; **anachronistic veto powers** of P5
- **Deep polarisation** among P5; frequent divisions end up blocking key decisions
- **Inadequate representation** of many regions among of the world