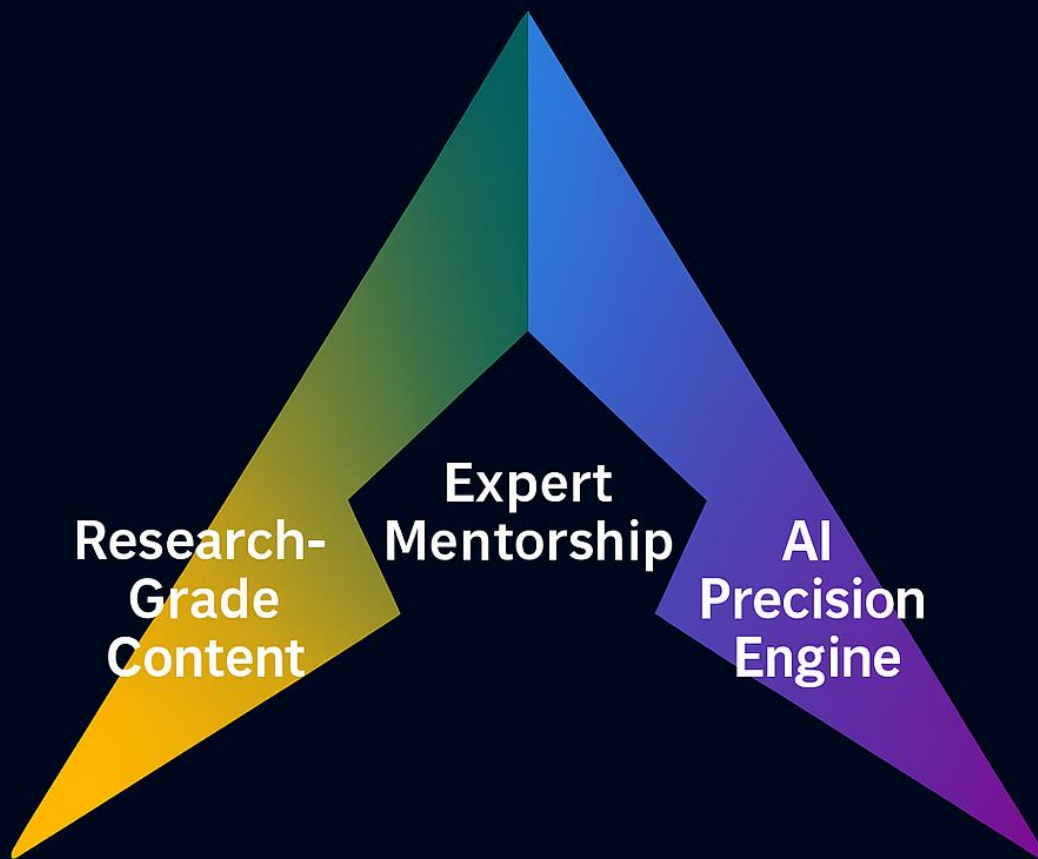


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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 25.11.2025

GS Paper II: Polity

1. Governor's Powers on State Bills: Supreme Court's Advisory Opinion, 2025

a. Introduction

A prolonged phase of tension between several State governments and Governors over pending Bills culminated in a major constitutional development in 2025. Many legislative proposals remained with Governors for months or years without any formal action. When the Supreme Court attempted to address this gridlock by prescribing timelines and introducing the idea of "deemed assent," deeper questions arose: Can courts fill constitutional silences? Can timelines be judicially created? Do Governors act independently or on ministerial advice?

Recognising that these issues affect the structure of Indian federalism, the President invoked Article 143 and sought the Supreme Court's advisory opinion. Delivered in April 2025, the opinion clarified the limits of judicial power, the scope of gubernatorial discretion and the boundaries of legislative-executive interaction.

b. The Questions Before the Supreme Court

The Presidential Reference placed five interconnected issues before the Court. Each required interpreting the Constitution's design regarding executive authority and legislative procedure.

i. Whether the Court Can Create Time Limits

The first question asked if the Supreme Court could prescribe time limits for the Governor or the President when the Constitution itself is silent.

ii. Whether the Governor Must Follow Aid and Advice

A key question was whether the Governor is bound by the State Cabinet's advice when a Bill is presented for assent.

iii. Whether Courts Can Declare "Deemed Assent"

This issue examined whether courts may treat a Bill as assented to if the Governor delays action for too long.

iv. Whether Gubernatorial Conduct Is Reviewable Before a Bill Becomes Law

The Court had to clarify whether its scrutiny can begin even before a Bill receives assent.

v. Whether Article 142 Allows Modification of Constitutional Arrangements

The final issue dealt with whether Article 142 enables the Court to change constitutional procedures in the name of "complete justice."

Judicial Review of Gubernatorial Assent: Allowed vs. Not Allowed

Judicial Review Allowed	Judicial Review Not Allowed
- Examine extreme delay - Direct Governor to decide - Review mala fide inaction - Prevent constitutional paralysis	- Question merits of assent/return/reservation - Impose a timeline - Declare deemed assent - Modify process using Art. 142

c. The Supreme Court's Opinion: Core Principles

i. The Governor Has Only Three Constitutionally Permitted Choices

Article 200 exhaustively lists what the Governor may do when a Bill is presented:

- give assent,
- return the Bill (if it is not a Money Bill),
- reserve it for the President.

The Court emphasised that this list is complete. Keeping a Bill pending indefinitely is not an authorised course of action.

ii. The Governor's Discretion Is Independent but Limited

The Court reaffirmed that the general rule—rooted in parliamentary democracy—is that Governors act on the aid and advice of the State Cabinet. However, Article 200 forms an exception where the Governor enjoys independent discretion.

This discretion is:

- not absolute,
- bound by constitutional principles,
- guided by the democratic structure of the Constitution.

iii. Courts Cannot Create Timelines

The Court struck down earlier attempts to impose fixed periods such as three or six months. It held that constitutional silences cannot be filled through judicial innovation. Any timeline must arise either from Parliament or a constitutional amendment.

iv. "Deemed Assent" Is Not Permissible

The Court clarified that Article 142 cannot be used to presume assent simply because the Governor delays. Declaring deemed assent would fundamentally alter Article 200's architecture and therefore exceeds judicial authority.

v. Judicial Review of Delay Is Possible, But Review of Substance Is Not

The Court distinguished between two forms of review:

- Review of Delay: Courts may examine whether the Governor has unreasonably delayed action, and may direct him to decide.
- Review of Substance: Courts cannot evaluate the merits of the Governor's choice (assent, return or reservation).

vi. Actions Before Assent Cannot Be Challenged, Except for Extreme Delay

The Court stated that gubernatorial or presidential actions during the assent process cannot be judicially tested until the Bill becomes law. Only in cases of extreme delay may courts intervene to nudge the process forward.

d. Aid and Advice After the 2025 Opinion

i. General Rule: Aid and Advice Prevails

Under India's constitutional scheme, Governors ordinarily act on the advice of the Council of Ministers.

ii. Specific Exception: Legislative Assent

The advisory opinion carves out an exception for Article 200. Here, the Governor exercises independent judgment. The State Cabinet cannot compel a particular outcome or prescribe timelines.

iii. Implication: Greater Gubernatorial Autonomy

This creates a zone where the Governor's decision-making has widened, altering earlier understandings that largely bound the Governor to ministerial advice.

e. Implications for Federal Governance

i. Increased Possibility of Delay in Opposition-Ruled States

When the Governor and the State government belong to different political formations, delays in granting assent may become more frequent.

ii. Narrow Window for Judicial Intervention

Since courts cannot impose timelines or declare deemed assent, the Governor's role has become stronger. Courts can intervene only when delay becomes extreme or mala fide.

iii. Need for Cooperative Federalism

Smooth functioning now depends even more on mutual respect, constitutional morality and adherence to democratic conventions by both the Governor and the elected government.

f. Way Forward

i. Introducing Clear Timelines Through Law or Amendment

A constitutional amendment or a parliamentary statute prescribing time limits could reduce friction.

ii. Limiting Discretion to Exceptional Circumstances

Narrowing the Governor's discretionary field strengthens democratic accountability.

iii. Implementing Commission Recommendations

Both the Sarkaria and Punchhi Commissions recommended prompt decisions by Governors and minimal reservation of Bills. Legislating these norms would bring practice in line with constitutional values.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's 2025 advisory opinion clarifies the constitutional boundaries surrounding gubernatorial assent to State Bills. By disallowing judicially imposed timelines and rejecting deemed assent, the Court reaffirmed the primacy of constitutional text. At the same time, it preserved a limited judicial role to prevent paralysis caused by unreasonable delay. Ultimately, the opinion places the burden on constitutional actors—Governors, State governments and the Union—to act with restraint and uphold constitutional morality. Only through such conduct can the delicate balance between parliamentary democracy and Indian federalism be maintained.

GS Paper II: Current Affairs

2. Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025

a. Introduction

The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025 is a major attempt to correct deep-rooted weaknesses in India's power distribution segment. Distribution companies have long faced chronic losses, outdated billing systems, and the inability to upgrade infrastructure. Consumers often remained tied to a single distributor, leaving little room for competition or quality improvement. The Bill seeks to replace this long-standing monopoly structure with a more competitive, transparent, and financially stable distribution ecosystem. It aims to ensure better service for consumers, more rational tariffs for industry, and smoother integration of renewable energy.

b. Context and Background

i. Constitutional Framework

Electricity lies in the Concurrent List under Entry Thirty-Eight, which means both the Union and the States share responsibility for legislation and oversight. Effective performance in the sector therefore relies on coordinated policymaking and cooperative federalism.

ii. Legacy Challenges in Distribution

Distribution companies accumulated losses over decades due to:

- weak billing systems and leakages,
- theft and high technical-loss levels,
- a single-supplier monopoly model,
- heavy cross-subsidisation, where industry paid more so agriculture and households could pay less.

This distorted pricing structure raised manufacturing costs and weakened the financial health of discoms. With limited resources, they could not expand networks or modernise them. These long-standing flaws provide the backdrop for the 2025 reforms.



c. Key Features of the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025

i. Competition and Structural Reform

The Bill introduces regulated competition in distribution. More than one distribution company may operate in the same area using a shared network. Monopoly supply is replaced with performance-based competition.

Every licensee must meet a universal service obligation by supplying all consumer categories. State regulators may exempt this obligation for very large industrial consumers to promote open access and industrial efficiency.

ii. Tariff Rationalisation and Cross-Subsidy Reform

The Bill emphasises cost-reflective tariffs so that discoms recover the actual cost of supply. Cross-subsidy for sectors like manufacturing, railways and metro services will be phased out over five years. This reduces industrial tariffs and improves competitiveness.

Support for farmers and low-income households continues, but it will now come through transparent budgetary subsidies under Section Sixty-Five. This replaces hidden subsidies with accountable, on-budget support.

iii. Optimising Use of Distribution Networks

To avoid wasteful duplication, the Bill bars the creation of parallel distribution networks. Regulators will set uniform wheeling charges applicable to all licensees, creating predictability in revenue collection.

Energy storage systems are formally recognised to help balance grids with rising renewable energy inputs.

iv. Regulatory Strengthening and Governance Architecture

A new Electricity Council will be created for better Centre-State coordination. State regulatory commissions receive greater powers, including the authority to impose penalties and to initiate tariff determination if discoms delay their filings. This enhances transparency and strengthens regulatory governance.

v. Sustainability and Power Market Development

Renewable purchase obligations become stronger, with penalties for non-compliance. New market instruments and trading platforms are encouraged to make power procurement more flexible and competitive.

vi. Legal and Operational Clarifications

Updates are made to align the Act with newer laws, such as the Companies Act of 2013. The Electric Line Authority, similar to the Telegraph Authority, gets clearer powers for laying lines, compensation, and handling local disputes.

d. Analytical Perspective

i. Significance of the Reforms

The reforms are expected to:

- reduce industrial tariffs and improve competitiveness,
- strengthen discom finances and attract investment,
- improve service quality for consumers,
- support India's renewable-energy transition,
- enhance Centre-State cooperation through institutional mechanisms.

ii. Challenges and Concerns

Several concerns may arise:

- States may resist reforms that alter their traditional control over distribution.
- Cost-reflective tariffs can be politically difficult in States heavily dependent on subsidies.
- Private players may prefer high-paying consumers unless oversight is strict.
- Eliminating cross-subsidies requires careful design so vulnerable users are protected.
- Regulatory capacity varies across States and may limit effective implementation.

iii. Stakeholders and Impact

State governments remain central to implementation. Discoms must improve efficiency and reduce losses. Industrial consumers expect reduced tariffs, while farmers and poor households are protected through budgeted subsidies. Private players gain opportunities, but must comply with universal service obligations.

iv. Comparative Insights

Experiences from countries like the UK and Australia show that competitive retail supply can function well if supported by strong regulators. India's own inter-state transmission system demonstrates that shared infrastructure with regulated competition can work effectively.

e. Way Forward

i. Strengthen Billing and Metering

Prepaid smart meters and efficient billing systems should be scaled up to reduce leakages.

ii. Shift to Direct Benefit Transfers for Subsidies

This makes subsidies transparent, targeted, and fiscally accountable.

iii. Build Regulatory and Institutional Capacity

Regulators need more technical expertise, human resources, and digital tools.

iv. Enforce Universal Service Obligations

Private players must supply all categories of consumers, not only profitable segments.

v. Enable Renewable Integration and Storage

Policies on storage, demand response, and grid flexibility are essential for a clean-energy future.

Conclusion

The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025 marks a decisive step toward modernising India's distribution sector. By introducing regulated competition, promoting transparent tariffs, protecting vulnerable consumers through direct subsidies, and strengthening regulatory capacity, the Bill attempts to build a more reliable and future-ready electricity ecosystem. Its emphasis on renewable integration and industrial competitiveness aligns with India's long-term goal of becoming a developed economy by 2047. Ultimately, the success of the reforms will depend on strong Centre-State cooperation and consistent regulatory enforcement.

GS Paper III: Science and Technology

3. India's Green Hydrogen Potential and the National Green Hydrogen Mission

a. Introduction

India stands at a strategic moment in its clean energy transition. With vast solar and wind resources, low renewable tariffs, and a growing industrial ecosystem, the country is naturally positioned to become a global leader in green hydrogen. The National Green Hydrogen Mission, with a production target of five million tonnes per year by 2030, provides a structured pathway for using green hydrogen to decarbonise heavy industry, build new energy markets, enhance energy security and create future-ready jobs.

b. Why Green Hydrogen Matters for India

i. Decarbonising Hard-to-Abate Sectors

India's journey towards net-zero by 2070 requires deep emission cuts in industries like steel, cement, refining and fertilisers. These sectors rely heavily on fossil fuel-based hydrogen or carbon-intensive feedstocks. Green hydrogen, generated through renewable-powered electrolysis, offers a clean alternative that can eliminate embedded industrial emissions.

ii. Alignment with Renewable Strengths

India's abundant solar and wind resources make green hydrogen increasingly cost-competitive. As renewable tariffs continue to fall, the price gap between green hydrogen and fossil-based grey hydrogen is narrowing.

iii. Strengthening Energy Security

India imports significant volumes of ammonia and other fossil-fuel-based industrial inputs. Green hydrogen and green ammonia reduce import dependence and improve long-term national energy resilience.

iv. Supporting International Climate Commitments

Green hydrogen directly contributes to Sustainable Development Goals Seven, Nine and Thirteen by promoting clean energy, industrial innovation and climate responsibility.

c. India's Green Hydrogen Ambition

i. Production and Capacity Targets



India aims to produce five million tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030. This requires an additional renewable energy capacity of about one hundred and twenty-five gigawatts dedicated to hydrogen production.

ii. Expected Outcomes

These targets are expected to:

- reduce emissions by tens of millions of tonnes annually,
- attract large-scale private investment,
- create high-skilled employment,
- significantly cut fossil fuel imports,
- position India as a global supplier of low-cost clean fuels.

d. National Green Hydrogen Mission: Structure and Design

i. Budgetary Allocation and Pillars

The Mission has an allocation of nineteen thousand seven hundred and forty-four crore rupees until 2029–30. Its structure rests on five broad pillars: industrial scale-up, port-based hydrogen hubs, certification systems, innovation ecosystems and global partnerships.

ii. Role of the SIGHT Programme

A large part of the budget is allocated to the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) programme, which supports electrolyser manufacturing and hydrogen production incentives.

e. Major Components of the Mission

i. SIGHT Programme

The SIGHT programme provides financial support to domestic electrolyser manufacturing and incentivises the production of green hydrogen. By promoting indigenous technology, it aims to reduce India's reliance on imported electrolysers. Several companies have already received manufacturing and production allocations, creating the foundation for a competitive domestic ecosystem.

ii. Port-Led Hydrogen Hubs

The Mission identifies ports such as Kandla, Paradip and VOC Chidambaranar as hydrogen hubs that will integrate production, storage, transport and export. These hubs enable export-oriented hydrogen and ammonia value chains and support bunkering facilities for green shipping fuels.

iii. Certification and Standards

The Green Hydrogen Certification Scheme, launched in 2025, defines hydrogen as green based on lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency functions as the nodal body, ensuring reliable and internationally accepted certification for export markets.

iv. Innovation and Research Partnerships

The Strategic Hydrogen Innovation Partnership links premier institutions like ISRO, BARC, CSIR labs, IITs and IISc to accelerate R&D. Funding is available for start-ups and for collaborations with the European Union, the United Kingdom and Germany. These efforts aim to reduce costs and scale up indigenous technologies.

v. Sectoral Adoption and Pilot Projects

Pilot projects are underway in:

- fertilisers, where green ammonia auctions are replacing natural gas feedstock,
- refineries, transitioning from grey to green hydrogen,
- steel, experimenting with hydrogen-based iron reduction,

- mobility, with hydrogen buses and trucks tested along designated routes,
- ports, developing bunkering and methanol-based facilities.

High-altitude pilots in regions such as Leh demonstrate hydrogen's viability under extreme conditions.

vi. Enabling Framework

The government has waived inter-state transmission system charges for renewable power used in hydrogen production. Open-access permissions have been streamlined. Skill development programmes are being expanded to build a trained hydrogen-ready workforce.

vii. International Cooperation

India's partnerships with the European Union, Germany, the UK and Singapore focus on harmonising safety standards, collaborating on R&D and exploring export market opportunities. These alliances strengthen India's long-term presence in the global hydrogen economy.

f. Analytical Perspective

i. Significance

The Mission strengthens India's energy autonomy, accelerates industrial decarbonisation and enhances the competitiveness of exports in a carbon-sensitive global market. It supports job creation, stimulates domestic manufacturing and aligns with India's long-term net-zero strategy.

ii. Challenges

Green hydrogen is still costlier than grey hydrogen. Electrolyser manufacturing capacity must scale up significantly. Electrolysis requires water, which is scarce in many regions. Storage and transport technologies are still evolving. Policy coordination across ministries and States remains crucial, and global competition is increasing rapidly.

iii. Opportunities

India can become a leading exporter of low-cost green hydrogen and green ammonia. New industries such as low-carbon steel, green shipping fuels and hydrogen-based chemicals can emerge. Synergies with battery storage, smart grids and port-based economic clusters can amplify economic benefits.

g. Way Forward

i. Reduce Costs Through Scale and Local Manufacturing

Scaling up electrolyser production, promoting domestic components and encouraging large-scale hydrogen projects will lower costs.

ii. Improve Water Efficiency and Infrastructure

Research into water-efficient electrolysis and investments in storage pipelines, safety standards and bunkering infrastructure must accelerate.

iii. Expand Sectoral Pilots

Hydrogen applications should be expanded in railways, long-distance mobility, shipping and industrial clusters.

iv. Build State-Level Policy Frameworks

States need clear guidelines for renewable integration, land allocation and hydrogen-ready industrial zones.

v. Develop Green Ammonia Corridors

Decarbonising the fertiliser sector through green ammonia corridors can significantly reduce emissions and import dependence.

Conclusion

Green hydrogen offers India a transformative opportunity to decarbonise industry, strengthen energy security and emerge as a global clean-fuel hub. The National Green Hydrogen Mission provides a comprehensive roadmap that spans production targets, infrastructure creation, industrial pilots, innovation support and international partnerships. By leveraging its renewable energy strengths and scaling up indigenous manufacturing, India can position itself at the forefront of the global hydrogen economy. This transition will support long-term economic growth, build technological self-reliance and contribute meaningfully to the nation's climate commitments.

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