

# PrepAlpine

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# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 30.03.2026

## GS Paper II: Current Affairs

### 1. Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026

#### a. Introduction

The Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026 is a significant development in the debate over religious conversion, personal liberty, and State regulation.

While the law aims to prevent forced or fraudulent conversions, it also raises deeper constitutional questions about privacy, autonomy, and religious freedom in a secular democracy.

Thus, the issue lies at the intersection of fundamental rights, public order, and State authority.

#### b. Constitutional and Legal Background

Religious conversion in India is governed by the framework of fundamental rights.

##### Article 25 – Freedom of Religion

- Guarantees freedom of conscience
- Right to profess, practise, and propagate religion
- Subject to reasonable restrictions — public order, morality, health

##### Article 21 – Personal Liberty

- Protects right to life and personal liberty
- Includes right to privacy and dignity
- Covers personal choices like religion and marriage

##### Judicial Interpretations

- *Puttaswamy Judgment* – Recognised privacy as a fundamental right
- *Shafin Jahan Case* – Upheld right to choose a partner
- Affirmed autonomy in matters of belief and identity

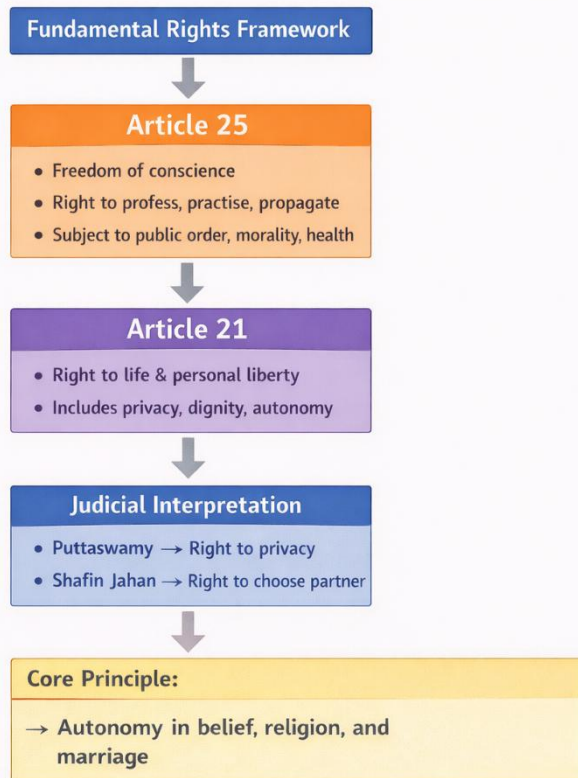
#### c. Key Features of the Legislation

The Bill introduces several provisions to regulate religious conversion.

##### Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion

- Bans conversion through force, fraud, coercion, misrepresentation, or inducement
- Targets exploitative practices

#### Constitutional Basis of Religious Conversion in India



### **Criminal Nature of Offences**

- Offences classified as cognisable and non-bailable
- Gives strong powers to police and administration

### **Expanded Scope of Complaints**

- Complaints can be filed by the individual or relatives
- Includes parents, siblings, and close relations
- Introduces third-party intervention

### **Protection of Vulnerable Groups**

- Stricter penalties for cases involving women
- Special protection for minors
- Additional safeguards for SC/ST communities

## **d. Procedural Requirements and Implications**

The Bill introduces mandatory procedures for conversion.

### **Prior Declaration Requirement**

- Individual must inform authorities 60 days before conversion
- Enables State monitoring

### **Post-Conversion Declaration**

- Additional confirmation after conversion
- Ensures administrative record

### **Implications**

- Brings personal decisions under State scrutiny
- May discourage voluntary conversions
- Raises concerns of privacy violation

## **e. Marriage and Conversion**

The Bill connects religious conversion with marriage.

### **Void Marriages**

- Marriage can be declared void if done solely for conversion
- Targets misuse of marriage as a tool

### **Safeguards for Children**

- Protection of inheritance rights
- Provisions for custody

### **Broader Implication**

- Impacts interfaith marriages
- May conflict with judicial recognition of personal choice

## **f. Rationale Offered by the State**

The government provides several justifications for the law.

### **Maintaining Public Order**

- Prevent social tensions arising from conversions
- Avoid communal conflicts

### **Protection of Vulnerable Groups**

- Prevent exploitation through inducement or coercion
- Focus on women and disadvantaged communities

### **Addressing Legal Gaps**

- Existing laws may not adequately cover such cases
- Need for specific legislation

## **g. Concerns and Constitutional Challenges**

The Bill has been widely criticised on several grounds.

### **Infringement of Personal Liberty**

- Religious choice is a private decision
- Prior notice requirement enables State surveillance

### **Third-Party Interference**

- Relatives can file complaints
- May disrupt consensual relationships
- Particularly affects interfaith couples

### **Risk of Misuse**

- Broad definitions — inducement, misrepresentation
- Non-bailable offences increase coercive potential

### **Administrative Overreach**

- Bureaucracy involved in personal decisions
- Reduces role of judiciary and personal autonomy

### **Question of Necessity**

- Lack of strong empirical evidence of widespread forced conversions
- Raises issue of proportionality

## **h. Way Forward**

A nuanced and constitutionally grounded approach is required.

### **Clear Legal Definitions**

- Precisely define coercion, fraud, inducement
- Reduce ambiguity and misuse

### **Safeguards Against Arbitrary Action**

- Ensure judicial oversight
- Limit administrative discretion

### **Protect Individual Autonomy**

- Respect voluntary religious choices

- Prevent interference by third parties

### **Evidence-Based Policy**

- Use reliable data to justify legislation
- Ensure proportionality of measures

### **Uphold Constitutional Morality**

- Prioritise dignity, liberty, and equality
- Balance regulation with freedom

### **Conclusion**

The Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026 reflects the State's attempt to regulate religious conversion in the interest of public order and protection of vulnerable groups.

However, it also raises serious concerns about privacy, autonomy, and misuse of power.

The key challenge lies in ensuring that regulation does not erode fundamental freedoms. A balanced, constitutionally grounded approach is essential to maintain harmony between State authority and individual liberty in a democratic society.

## **GS Paper II: Current Affairs**

### **2. MGNREGA Wages, Minimum Wages and the VB-G RAM G Act Debate**

#### **a. Introduction**

The debate over wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) reflects a deeper issue within India's welfare system. It is not just about how much workers are paid, but about the nature of employment guarantee schemes themselves.

The emerging concerns around the proposed Viksit Bharat–Gramin Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (VB-G RAM G) Act raise an important question:

*Will such programmes remain rights-based instruments of social justice, or become administratively controlled schemes with limited impact?*

Thus, the issue lies at the intersection of labour rights, rural economy, and welfare governance.

#### **b. Background and Legal Framework**

MGNREGA was designed as a rights-based employment guarantee law.

##### **Core Features**

- Guarantees at least 100 days of wage employment to rural households
- Aims to ensure livelihood security
- Strengthens rural wage floor

##### **Wage Determination Framework**

- Central Government notifies wage rates
- If not notified, state minimum wages should apply
- Intended to prevent wages falling below legal minimum

##### **Broader Objective**

- Not just a welfare scheme
- Acts as a labour rights instrument
- Influences rural wage dynamics

### c. Centrality of Wage Rates in the Programme

Wage levels determine the effectiveness of MGNREGA.

#### When Wages are Adequate

- Higher worker participation
- Strong livelihood support
- Acts as a safety net

#### When Wages are Low or Delayed

- Reduced participation
- Weakens programme impact
- Declines trust among workers

#### Key Insight

- Wage policy is not a technical issue
- It is the core driver of success or failure



### d. Evolution of Wage Policy

The wage system under MGNREGA has changed significantly.

#### Early Phase

- State minimum wages largely applied
- High participation rates
- Positive impact on rural wages

#### Shift to Centralised Wage Notification

- Centre began fixing wages directly
- Slower growth in wages
- Divergence from state minimum wages

#### Consequence

- Real wages stagnated
- System became less responsive to local conditions

### e. Key Challenges in the Present Framework

Multiple issues have weakened the effectiveness of the programme.

#### Wages Below Minimum Wage

- In many states, MGNREGA wages are lower than statutory minimum wages
- Raises legal and ethical concerns

#### Stagnation of Real Wages

- Limited increase despite inflation
- Decline in purchasing power

#### **Gap with Market Wages**

- Private sector offers higher wages
- Workers prefer market employment

#### **Payment Delays**

- Technical issues in digital systems
- Administrative bottlenecks
- Reduces worker confidence

#### **Governance Issues**

- Lower participation weakens local monitoring
- Increases risk of leakages and corruption

### **f. Concerns Regarding the Proposed VB-G RAM G Act**

The proposed law has been criticised for not addressing core problems.

#### **Lack of Structural Reforms**

- No clear mechanism for timely payments
- Limited focus on accountability

#### **Continued Centralisation**

- Centre retains control over wage fixation
- States have limited flexibility

#### **Legal Ambiguity**

- Unclear compliance with Minimum Wages Act
- Raises questions about legality of low wages

#### **Missed Opportunity**

- Does not strengthen the existing framework
- Risks continuing current inefficiencies

### **g. Broader Economic and Governance Implications**

The impact extends beyond the programme itself.

#### **Impact on Rural Economy**

- Supports rural incomes
- Sustains consumption and demand

#### **Risk of Economic Slowdown**

- Low wages reduce purchasing power
- Weakens rural demand

#### **Labour Market Effects**

- Reduced bargaining power of workers
- Reinforces informal and exploitative conditions

## **Governance Concerns**

- Excessive centralisation
- Over-reliance on technology without safeguards
- Risk of exclusion

## **h. Core Tensions in the Policy Framework**

The current situation reflects several contradictions.

### **Rights vs Administrative Control**

- Scheme guarantees employment
- Low wages reduce its real value

### **Fiscal Prudence vs Worker Welfare**

- Cost control leads to wage suppression
- Undermines social justice goals

### **Policy Intent vs Ground Reality**

- Designed to empower labour
- Implementation weakens effectiveness

## **i. Way Forward**

Reforms must focus on restoring the scheme's effectiveness.

### **Align Wages with Minimum Wages**

- Ensure fairness
- Increase worker participation

### **Improve Payment Systems**

- Eliminate delays
- Strengthen technical and administrative processes

### **Decentralise Wage Determination**

- Involve states and local institutions
- Reflect regional economic conditions

### **Ensure Legal Clarity**

- Align with labour laws
- Avoid constitutional inconsistencies

### **Strengthen Governance**

- Improve transparency
- Reduce leakages
- Protect worker rights

## **Conclusion**

The debate on MGNREGA wages and the proposed VB-G RAM G Act represents a critical moment in India's welfare policy.

The success of employment guarantee schemes depends not only on legal provisions but also on fair wages and effective implementation.

Ensuring timely payments and adequate wages is essential to uphold the dignity of labour and trust in the State.

A rights-based, constitutionally grounded approach remains crucial for achieving inclusive rural development and social justice.

## Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

### 1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

### 2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

### 3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

If you prefer a specific style (lists → paras, paras → tables, etc.), feel free to convert using any free LLM.

### 4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

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