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# தினம் ஒரு குறள்

குறள் எண் 236

புகழ்

தோன்றின் புகழொடு தோன்றுக அஃதிலார்  
தோன்றலின் தோன்றாமை நன்று.

பிறர் அறியுமாறு அறிமுகமானால் புகழ் மிக்கவராய் அறிமுகம்  
ஆகுக; புகழ் இல்லாதவர் உலகு காணக் காட்சி தருவதிலும்,  
தராமல் இருப்பதே நல்லது. — சாலமன் பாப்பையா



## *The Saudi-Pakistan deal upends India's strategic thought*

**T**he announcement by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia of the conclusion of a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement has, expectedly, rankled nerves in New Delhi. In the statement's text, the part which says "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both" has raised concerns and questions alike, specifically over the trajectory of the India-Saudi dynamic.

India has mobilised a global diplomatic effort to isolate Pakistan following the April 2025 terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which led to the largest military exchange between the two countries since 1971. However, an aim to internationally quarantine Pakistan has fallen short. The Saudi-Pakistan deal is another feather in Islamabad's cap since then.

In May, as Operation Sindoor was launched to militarily target terrorist camps inside Pakistan, diplomats from Saudi Arabia and Iran were in New Delhi as missiles began to fly across the border. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Riyadh on an official visit during this period and had rushed back to India due to the terror strike. Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Adel al-Jubeir arrived soon after to meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. But Mr. Adel al-Jubeir's meeting at the Prime Minister's Office turned heads, and while both sides remained tight-lipped, Riyadh, in all likelihood, tried to diffuse an escalating situation.

### **Linked to geopolitical changes**

Beyond South Asia, the events above are also a window into the geopolitical fracas unravelling on multiple fronts in West Asia ever since the terror attack by Hamas against Israel, in October 2023, which has pushed a reorienting of strategic calculation across the wider region. Fast forward to September, and the Riyadh-Islamabad agreement is being downplayed but has wider geopolitical reverberations.



**Kabir Taneja**

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The Riyadh-Islamabad agreement is being downplayed but is one that has wider geopolitical reverberations

Indian interests are peripheral for Riyadh, but for Pakistan, this deal kill two birds with one stone. It rekindles lost sheen with the Kingdom and challenges New Delhi's security concerns simultaneously.

The pact is also a return to normal for what was a strained time between the Kingdom and Pakistan, the Islamic world's only nuclear weapons power. In 2015, the then Nawaz Sharif government had refused to send troops to join Saudi's campaign against the Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen. For decades, the Saudis have seen the Pakistani military, with its extensive real-world experience in warfare – most of which has come against India – as the best force to strengthen its own domestic and regional security. Moreover, with the United States increasingly being viewed as an unreliable military partner in West Asia, Riyadh is back shopping in its traditional stomping grounds. For Islamabad, the nuclear file is once again delivering dividends, albeit more as a matter of chance than design. Nonetheless, its effectiveness has been on display from Washington to Riyadh.

Reports in the western press have suggested that this deal had been in the making for around three years. In a statement, India's Ministry of External Affairs said that it had been aware that such an agreement was under consideration between the two countries. For long, Pakistan, the only Islamic country in the world with nuclear weapons, has been touted as a supermarket for Riyadh's potential nuclear requirements. The "12-day war" between Israel and Iran, and both taking turns to launch weapons at Qatar, has further raised the stakes.

### **The fundamentals are solid**

Beyond the surface, however, the Saudi-Pakistan pact is representative of multiple changes taking place in the international order. First and foremost, there is a false understanding of India's

bulging outreach to West Asia that an institutional wedge can be installed between Islamabad and the Arab states. These bilaterals are based on Islam, ideology, and theological principles. In Saudi and Pakistan's case, it is a further strengthening around Sunnism. The fundamentals of this relationship are unbreakable. Second, Riyadh is now chasing strategic autonomy, multipolarity, and multialignment, all stated foreign policy aims and theories India wishes to implement as its core tenets to become a major power. This blueprint is aspirational to many others, and often, will put major partner states on the opposite end of Indian strategic interests.

### **The message for India**

The challenge raised by the Saudi-Pakistan formalisation for the centrality of the 'Islamic bomb', a term coined by the Pakistani press in the early 1980s, may not be immense, but is a trailer of how the geopolitical chessboard is being stacked. It also represents a core challenge for India, that its culturally risk-averse strategic thought and the slow pace at which this is changing, are increasingly detached from prevailing realities. The Indian leadership needs to onboard risks that come with both the embrace and mobilisation of power. Else, India risks losing traction if fence-sitting remains the chosen path and there is an adoption of an idealistic view of playing the role of 'chief pacifist' chokeholds strategic choices.

The world is being re-shaped and will not wait for what India believes is going to be "its time". The Saudi-Pakistan pact is Islamabad – and more specifically the Pakistan Army – using disruptions and crevasses in the global and Western order, to its merit. Another opportunity to reshape how the world functions may not return this century. It is now when Indian calculations need to be right and it needs to act with resolve.



## Context

- **The Agreement:** Pakistan and Saudi Arabia recently concluded a **Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement**, pledging that any aggression against either would be treated as aggression against both.
- **Concerns for India:** This raises alarms for New Delhi, especially after the April 2025 **Pahalgam terror attack** and India's military retaliation under *Operation Sindoor*.
- **Diplomatic Backdrop:** India has been trying to diplomatically isolate Pakistan but the Saudi pact offers Islamabad a major geopolitical boost.
- **Geopolitical Shifts:**
  - Saudi Arabia is recalibrating its security and strategic outlook due to waning U.S. reliability and turbulence in West Asia post-Hamas' 2023 attack on Israel and the "12-day war" between Israel and Iran.
  - Pakistan regains lost influence in Riyadh after years of strain, using its **nuclear capability and military experience** as leverage.
  - For Saudi, the Pakistani military remains a dependable partner, especially in Islamic and Sunni solidarity terms.

## Mains Focus Points

### Strategic Implications for India

- Reinforces **Pakistan's strategic depth** with the Islamic world's most influential state.
- Potential revival of the "**Islamic bomb**" narrative, positioning Pakistan as a nuclear insurance provider for Riyadh.
- Challenges India's diplomatic narrative of isolating Pakistan post-terror incidents.

### Saudi's Strategic Calculations

- Seeking **strategic autonomy and multipolarity** — aligning with multiple partners, not only the U.S.

- Hedging between Iran, Israel, the U.S., and Pakistan for survival and leverage.
- Draws upon Pakistan's **battle-hardened military** and nuclear deterrence potential.

### **Implications for India–Saudi Relations**

- India's growing **economic and energy ties with Riyadh** may face stress if Riyadh tilts toward Islamabad on security issues.
- Signals that religion- and ideology-based ties (Sunni solidarity) still outweigh India's outreach in some spheres.

### **Geopolitical Lessons for India**

- India's **risk-averse strategic culture** needs recalibration — fence-sitting may limit influence in fast-changing geopolitics.
- India must embrace **calculated risks** in power projection and security partnerships.
- Highlights need for India to engage more proactively in West Asia to prevent being sidelined.

### **Broader Message**

- The pact showcases **Pakistan Army's resilience** in leveraging global disorder to its advantage.
- Reflects ongoing **reshaping of the world order**, where India must act with clarity and resolve to retain strategic traction.

## Previous Year Questions

### UPSC Prelims 2016

Which of the following is not a member of 'Gulf Cooperation Council'?

- (a) Iran
- (b) Saudi Arabia
- (c) Oman
- (d) Kuwait

**Ans: (a)**

### UPSC Mains 2017

The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyse India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries.

# Cooling rights in a sweltering South

Access to air conditioning is currently severely limited in developing countries, including in India. Enhancing this access is urgently required as a public health safeguard and a necessity for adaptation to climate change. Cooling is no longer a matter of comfort for the global South, but a frontline adaptation need

## EXPLAINER

Ankita Ranjan

In June 2025, the Government of India (GoI) proposed that all new air conditioning systems (ACs) in homes, commercial spaces and vehicles must operate within the temperature range of 20°C to 28°C, with 24°C as the default setting. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) estimates that this proposal could save 20 billion units of energy annually, amounting to ₹10,000 crores and emissions reduction of 16 million tonnes. While such energy-saving measures are important there are more fundamental issues that need to be addressed. Access to air conditioning is currently severely limited in developing countries, including India. Enhancing this access is urgently required as a public health safeguard and a necessity for adaptation to climate change. By treating cooling primarily as an energy and emissions concern, the need to universalise access to cooling and provision of public facilities that can protect vulnerable populations from heat stress often gets sidelined.

In India, access to air conditioning remains severely inadequate, and the main challenge is insufficiency. Cooling is no longer a matter of comfort for the global South, but a frontline adaptation need. In 2021, only 13% of urban and 1% of rural households in India owned an AC. While efficiency and behavioural measures can reduce the emissions footprint of existing users, without simultaneously prioritising access to the most vulnerable, such policies risk becoming symbolic gestures that are ineffective in confronting deeper inequities at the heart of climate justice.

While the national average of AC ownership in India is approximately 5%, it is overwhelmingly concentrated amongst the urban rich. In 2021, the richest 10% in India, mostly residing in urban areas, owned 72% of the total ACs.

This disparity is also reflected in



The per capita electricity consumption for space cooling is 7 GJ in the U.S., which is over 28 times higher than in India, 19 times higher than in Indonesia and 13 times higher than in Brazil. FILE PHOTO

interstate and regional differences.

The inter-country cooling divide is even more stark and inequitable. Developed countries have long enjoyed near universal access to thermal comfort, primarily through widespread heating systems, but more recently through the increased adoption of air conditioning. In 2020, nearly 90% households in the U.S. and Japan owned an AC, as compared to 22% in Central and South America and only 6% in Sub-Saharan Africa. The per capita electricity consumption for space cooling is 7 GJ in the U.S., which is over 28 times higher than in India, 19 times higher than in Indonesia and 13 times higher than in Brazil.

During the European heatwave, which peaked around 42°C in cities like London and Paris, urgent public investments were made in cooling infrastructure, with the current AC ownership doubling in Europe since 1990, and the International Energy Agency (IEA) projecting a four-fold increase by 2050. While several major cities in the global South routinely record temperatures above 40°C, the international discourse around their rising cooling demand is widely framed as a mitigation problem, while it is justified

as a necessary adaptation measure for the North, indicating a troubling hypocrisy.

## The Imperative of cooling

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that between 2000 and 2019, heat exposure contributed to approximately 489,000 global deaths, with India alone recording more than 20,000 heat-related deaths in this period. While extreme heat is increasingly recognised as one of the prominent health threats in the global South, the resulting mortality or morbidity rate is not solely a function of rising temperatures. It in fact reflects the acute shortage of protective infrastructure such as thermally secured housing, reliable electricity supply and adequately equipped public health systems. In 2022, the majority of the health care facilities in high-income countries had a reliable power supply, whereas nearly one billion people in the lower-middle and low-income countries were served by facilities with unreliable or no power supply.

In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), 12% and 15% health centres, respectively, had no electricity, while only

50% hospitals in SSA reported having a reliable power supply.

Without adequate energy infrastructure, providing essential services such as neonatal care, climate-controlled emergency rooms, and vaccine refrigeration becomes precarious as they rely on stable cooling systems. During periods of extreme heat, countries like Kenya, Ghana and Burkina Faso have recorded sharp spikes in cardiovascular, respiratory and renal conditions that cannot be treated safely in overheated and underpowered facilities. Beyond hospitals, the lack of cooling access also undermines workspace safety and labour productivity.

In India, almost 80% of the labour force is engaged in sectors such as agriculture, construction and street vending; jobs that require strenuous outdoor activities. Recognising this vulnerability, several Indian States and cities have developed Heat Action Plans (HAPs) that include early warning systems, information sharing, heat shelters and public awareness campaigns. However, their implementation is often constrained due to underfunding, limited institutional coordination and weak legal foundations. Addressing these intersecting challenges in the global South requires an urgent need to integrate heat resilience as a core development priority through policies that focus on stronger labour protection, targeted social safety nets and comprehensive heat action plans.

As low-income nations already face staggering challenges due to economic and energy poverty, without large-scale investments in public infrastructure and access to finance from the North, cooling will remain unaffordable for billions in the South. Closing this gap is important to prevent avoidable deaths, protect livelihoods and build climate-resilient public systems. Therefore, cooling must not be treated as a climate liability to be rationed, but as a non-negotiable development right that is crucial for strengthening equity and enabling adaptation.

## THE GIST

▼ In 2020, nearly 90% of households in the U.S. and Japan owned an AC, compared to 22% in Central and South America and only 6% in Sub-Saharan Africa

▼ In India, the national average of AC ownership is around 5%, concentrated mostly among the urban rich

▼ The World Health Organization estimates that between 2000 and 2019, heat exposure caused approximately 489,000 deaths globally

## Context

- **Rising Heat Stress:** Climate change has made extreme heat a public health emergency, particularly in the **Global South**.
- **India's Policy Step (2025):** Government proposed mandatory temperature range (20–28°C) for all new ACs, with **24°C default setting**, aiming to save **20 billion units of energy**, reduce emissions by **16 million tonnes**, and save ₹10,000 crore annually.
- **Core Challenge:** While energy-efficiency measures are important, the bigger issue is **inadequate access** to cooling infrastructure among vulnerable populations in developing countries.
- **Equity Gap:** Cooling access is concentrated among the **urban rich**; in 2021, only **5% of Indian households** owned an AC, with the richest 10% owning 72% of them. Globally, disparities exist (90% AC ownership in U.S./Japan vs. 6% in Sub-Saharan Africa).
- **Health Risks:** WHO estimates **489,000 global deaths due to heat (2000–2019)**, with over **20,000 in India**. Lack of reliable cooling in **hospitals, workplaces, and homes** worsens mortality and morbidity.

## Mains Focus Points

### Cooling as Adaptation, not Luxury

- Cooling is no longer a matter of comfort → it is a **frontline adaptation need** for survival.
- Should be recognised as a **development right** in the Global South.

### Equity and Climate Justice

- Current policies frame cooling in the South as a **mitigation problem**, while in the North it is justified as an **adaptation necessity** → reveals hypocrisy in global climate discourse.
- Energy efficiency is important, but **access for vulnerable groups** is central to climate justice.



### India-Specific Challenges

- Low AC ownership (5% nationally; 13% urban, 1% rural).
- 80% workforce in outdoor sectors (agriculture, construction, vending) highly exposed to heat stress.
- Heat Action Plans (HAPs) exist but suffer from **underfunding, weak legal backing, and poor implementation**.

### Public Health & Infrastructure

- Unreliable electricity in low-income countries undermines hospital cooling → affects emergency care, neonatal care, vaccine storage.
- Extreme heat worsens cardiovascular, respiratory, renal conditions.
- Lack of cooling also reduces **labour productivity and economic resilience**.

### Global Divide in Cooling Access

- U.S. per capita cooling energy use: **7 GJ**, 28x higher than India.
- Developed countries rapidly expanding AC penetration, while Global South is asked to restrict it.
- Need for **global finance and technology transfer** to enable equitable cooling access.

### Way Forward

- Treat cooling as a **public good** and part of **basic infrastructure**.
- Scale up **Heat Action Plans** with proper funding and accountability.
- Invest in **passive cooling housing designs**, renewable-powered cooling solutions, and reliable electricity supply.
- Push for **climate finance from developed nations** to support adaptation in the South.
- Build **social safety nets & labour protections** for outdoor workers.

# Why India's urban definition is failing its growing towns

In the 2011 Census, an urban unit was defined as either a statutory town or a census town

Niranjana K.P.

**The story so far:** Registrar General of India (RGI) and Census Commissioner Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan in a letter dated August 14 to the States' Directorates of Census Operations (DCO) said, "It is proposed to retain the same definition for urban areas for Census 2027 as this will ensure comparability with the previous Census and provide the basis for analysis of urbanisation trends in the country."

In the 2011 Census, an urban unit was defined as either a statutory town or a census town. Statutory towns are areas that are formally notified as urban by the State government. They have urban local bodies like municipal corporations, municipal councils and nagar panchayats. All other places that satisfied the following criteria – a minimum population of 5,000, at least 75% of the

male main working population engaged in non-agricultural activities, and a population density of at least 400 persons per sq. km – are classified as census towns. The census towns remain administratively rural, but they function like urban areas.

## What are the limitations?

In India, urban local bodies are more autonomous and have more freedom and control over their finances, while Panchayati Raj institutions are limited to implementing centrally designed welfare schemes. Hence, urban status, if granted to a settlement, would imply development of the area.

The current definition of urban and rural areas is a binary that ignores the complex and evolving nature of the settlements in India. It fails to take into account the settlements that fall in the spectrum between rural and urban. Rapid

urbanisation is transforming many villages into towns both in function and form, yet these areas often lack formal recognition and remain under rural governance.

As a result, settlements such as census towns and peri-urban regions – despite having dense populations, non-agricultural livelihoods, and urban lifestyles – remain excluded from urban governance structures and infrastructure provision, leading to gaps in planning, services, and resource allocation.

Census data from 2001 and 2011 show that 251 census towns identified in 2001 remained under rural governance by 2011, despite meeting urban criteria.

West Bengal illustrates this gap. Data from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses show that a significant number of settlements classified as census towns in 2001 continued to be governed by rural local bodies even a decade later. West Bengal

experienced the highest increase in the number of census towns, with 526 new census towns identified in 2011. However, 251 settlements that had already been classified as census towns in 2001 saw no change in governance status by 2011. This delay highlights how many urbanised settlements are not 'municipalised' – that is, not being converted into statutory towns with elected urban local bodies – leaving infrastructure and planning inadequate.

## What are the implications?

As India prepares for its next Census, it is crucial to revisit and revise the definition of what qualifies as 'urban.' A 2019 research paper published in the journal *Population and Environment*, stresses the importance of population size and density in defining what is 'urban.' The study shows that relying solely on a narrow framework – such as a population size above 5,000 and the percentage of non-agricultural workers – can result in a substantial undercount of urban populations. Depending on the density threshold used, India's urban population in 2011 could be 35-57%, higher than the official 31%.

Many settlements that appear rural on paper actually form part of larger, informal urban clusters that lack any recognition under current Census methods, simply because they fall outside

municipal limits or are divided across administrative units.

The 75% male workforce rule is outdated; small towns may not meet this threshold, yet show clear urban traits. Industries, service jobs, and gig economy work are spreading into villages and semi-urban areas, blurring rural-urban distinctions.

The rule also fails to take into account those who engage in both agricultural and non-agricultural work, often seasonally or concurrently. Many people in semi-rural and transitional areas commute daily or seasonally to nearby towns or cities for work, while still maintaining ties to agriculture, either through land ownership or seasonal farming. The expansion of app-based and gig economy jobs into smaller towns and semi-urban or rural areas highlights how urban-type employment is no longer confined to traditionally urban centres. The 'male workforce' criterion is also problematic, as it ignores the women's informal or unpaid work.

Hence, retaining the outdated definition of 'urban' in the 2027 Census risks misclassifying millions, undercounting urbanised areas, and excluding rapidly growing settlements from appropriate governance and services. A rigid, binary framework no longer reflects India's evolving settlement patterns.

## Context

- **Census 2027 Definition:** Registrar General of India (RGI) proposes to retain the 2011 Census definition of "urban" for comparability.
- **2011 Definition:**
  - **Statutory Towns:** Notified by State, governed by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
  - **Census Towns:** Meet 3 criteria (population  $\geq 5,000$ ;  $\geq 75\%$  male workforce in non-agriculture; population density  $\geq 400/\text{sq.km}$ ) → but remain under rural governance.
- **Problem:** This rigid **binary definition (urban vs. rural)** fails to capture India's complex settlement transitions — peri-urban areas, census towns, and growing clusters function like towns but lack recognition and governance structures.

## Mains Focus Points

### Governance Gap

- Census towns are **administratively rural** despite functioning like urban areas → governed by Panchayats, not ULBs.
- Panchayats have limited autonomy compared to ULBs → weaker infrastructure, planning, and finances.
- Example: **West Bengal** (2001–2011) → 251 census towns remained under rural governance despite urban traits.

### Outdated Criteria

- **75% male non-agricultural workforce rule** is outdated:
  - Ignores women's unpaid/informal work.
  - Overlooks **mixed livelihoods** (agriculture + service/gig economy).
  - Fails to reflect economic diversification in small towns/semi-urban areas.

### Undercounting Urbanisation

- Narrow definition risks **misclassifying millions**:
  - India's official 2011 urban population = **31%**.
  - Research (2019, *Population and Environment*): If density/population size considered, actual share = **35–57%**.
- Many rural-labelled settlements are actually part of **larger informal urban clusters**.

### Implications

- **Policy Misalignment**: Urban-like settlements remain excluded from **urban schemes, funds, and infrastructure upgrades**.
- **Planning Deficit**: Rapidly urbanising areas lack waste management, housing regulation, transport planning, etc.

- **Social Inequity:** Populations face urban pressures (pollution, congestion, informal work) but are governed by rural frameworks.

### **Way Forward**

- **Revise Urban Definition:** Update criteria to reflect realities of migration, density, mixed livelihoods, and women's work.
- **Recognise Peri-Urban Areas:** Create governance frameworks for transitional settlements.
- **Dynamic Census Tools:** Use geospatial mapping, satellite data, and mobility tracking to capture evolving settlements.
- **Policy Integration:** Ensure newly classified towns get access to urban development funds (AMRUT, Smart Cities, etc.).



## Previous Year Questions

### UPSC Mains 2017 – 10 Marks

The growth of cities as I.T. hubs has opened up new avenues of employment, but has also created new problems.” Substantiate this statement with examples.

### UPSC Mains 2016 – 12.5 Marks

Major Cities of India are becoming more vulnerable to flood conditions.

### UPSC Mains 2016 – 12.5 Marks

With a brief background of the quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the smart city program.

### UPSC Mains 2015 – 12.5 Marks

Smart cities in India cannot sustain without smart villages discussing this statement in the backdrop of rural-urban integration.

### UPSC Mains 2015 – 12.5 Marks

Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata are the three MegaCities of the country but air pollution is a much more serious problem in Delhi as compared to the other two. Why is this so?

### UPSC Mains 2013 – 12.5 Marks

Discuss the various social problems which originated out of the speedy process of urbanization in India.

# ABSTRACT



AP

## Citizens, domicile, migrants: Why should we worry about Provincial Citizenship?

Provincial citizenship emerges from nativist politics rooted in an emotional belonging to a State, which gains immediate leverage in regional electoral politics. It challenges the idea of singular Indian citizenship, sparking debates over definitions of 'native', 'indigenous', 'Adivasi', 'local', or 'son of the soil'

Swatahsiddha Sarkar

**R**anjan, A. (2025). Provincial Citizenship: Jharkhand Domicile, Migration and Politics of Scale. *Studies in Indian Politics*, forthcoming (published online, September 2025)

Mobility in its many forms has long been considered core to the notion of progress and the formation of civilisation. Conversely, sedentarism – the practice of living in one place – emerges from the need to link property, descent, and lineage to the control of resources. World history is replete with the caravan trails of tribes, pastoralists, traders, and soldiers. This historical context of mobility is reinforced by today's global networks, which facilitate a new world defined by the flow of not only goods, services, and capital but also labour. This, of course, alludes to globalisation – a force that has affected our social, cultural, political, and economic standpoints, as well as our very perspectives and identities.

### A matter of concern

Given this backdrop, it's curious that while the idea of mobility has expanded, our physical mobility often remains restricted, particularly when it comes to seeking livelihoods outside one's home State. Despite the precarity of migrant workers becoming painfully evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, Indian metropolises remain the most coveted destinations for destitute rural workers from different States.

More recently, in the wake of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) updation and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls, the mistreatment of migrant labour in various cities has become a matter of national

debate and anxiety. While there has been an upsurge of a media-fed 'public mood', the 'public mind' needs to be nudged toward a deeper engagement with complex issues like inter-state migration.

In this regard, it's worth reflecting on provocative discussions in academic forums where fresh insights, such as "provincial citizenship" (a term pitched by Alok Ranjan, a PhD candidate at JNU), are sparking deep reflection. Following Ranjan's lead, it is meaningful to explore the idea of inter-state migration for a broader audience, especially for those who might think this issue only concerns the directly affected or the policymakers tasked with providing relief.

Ranjan's work reflects on inter-State migration and how it has drafted a new chapter in the "politics of domicile" within India's democratic body politic, though this operates only at the provincial level. "Provincial citizenship" emerges from nativist politics rooted in an emotional belonging to a State, which gains immediate leverage in regional electoral politics. In the process, the entanglement of spatial identity, freedom of movement, and citizenship allows domicile to surface as a new category for political mobilisation. Crucially, these tendencies accentuate the significance of States as sites of citizenship, even at a time when a more inclusive, national-level citizenship is being emphasised as the fulcrum of *Akhanda Bharat* (Undivided India).

Following Ranjan, we see that a close scrutiny of States like Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and Assam can help us understand how domicile becomes a potent political instrument. In J&K, domicile policies were implemented after the 2019 abrogation of its special status as a measure of inclusive politics to

safeguard minorities (like the Valmiki, Gorkhas, and West Pakistan refugees). Jharkhand, however, represents a case where domicile was used to articulate majoritarian grievances against the perceived influence of a minority elite in a State formed in 2000. Backed by its unique history, the politics of domicile in Jharkhand departs from the norms seen in Sixth Schedule regions. It tends to encompass the whole State, superseding the nation's federal structure and questioning the national citizenship rights guaranteed by Article 16(2) of the Indian Constitution.

Attaining statehood did not resolve sub-nationalist politics in Jharkhand. Instead, these sentiments were channelled into a democratic politics of domicile after 2000. This transition challenges the "one nation, one citizenship" ideal. Here, the notion of a single national citizenship is undermined by the efficacy of the unofficially constructed idea of provincial citizenship, whose political importance can render the national framework inadequate.

Jharkhand's experience also suggests that conflicts between the interests of internal migrants and the concerns of provincial citizenship cannot be democratically adjudicated within the existing political structure, often requiring the Supreme Court's intervention.

### The newness of an old idea

This "unofficial" provincial citizenship problematises the official idea of a singular Indian citizenship. It creates a contest over definitions of 'native', 'indigenous', 'Adivasi', 'local', or 'son of the soil' that exist alongside the identity of an Indian citizen.

The problem of internal migrants in

provincial contexts is not new. Myron Weiner, in his book *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (1978), was perhaps the first to assess the social and political consequences of internal migration in States like Maharashtra, Bihar, and Assam. More recent coinages like "citizen-outsiders" (Roy 2010), "differentiated citizenship" (Jaya 2013), and "paused citizens" (Sharma 2024) "hyphenated nationality" (Sarkar 2025) have enriched our vocabulary for analysing this issue.

It is also relevant to consider the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) of 1955. The members of the SRC anticipated the problems of discrimination and exclusion arising from domicile policies. They were greatly concerned about these rules, finding them inconsistent with Articles 15, 16, and 19 of the Constitution and contrary to the very concept of Indian citizenship. The members stated: "We do not feel called upon to pronounce on the purely legal aspects of these restrictions, but we have no doubt whatsoever that their total effect is the exact opposite of what was intended by the Constitution" (SRC Report 1955, p. 230).

The SRC Report recommended that domicile rules should be replaced by appropriate Parliamentary legislation, warning that "Otherwise, the concept of a common Indian citizenship would have no meaning" (pp. 230-231). In many respects, the concept of provincial citizenship echoes these decades-old warnings. Its newness lies in how this concept has transcended the passivity of a written report to become an active and grave reality.

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## Provincial Citizenship: Why it Matters

### Concept

- Coined recently by Alok Ranjan (2025).
- Refers to **nativist politics** where States construct an **emotional belonging-based citizenship** that competes with the idea of a **singular Indian citizenship**.
- It rests on defining who is “native,” “local,” or “son of the soil” — and excludes others, especially **internal migrants**.

### Background Context

- **Mobility vs. Sedentarism:** World history shows human progress linked to mobility (trade, migration, globalisation).
- **In India:** Internal migration is crucial (e.g., rural workers moving to metros). COVID-19 highlighted migrant precarity.
- Despite this, domicile-based rules restrict migrants’ rights in jobs, education, housing, and political participation.

### Case Studies

- **Jharkhand:**
  - Statehood in 2000 didn’t end sub-nationalism.
  - Domicile became a tool of **majoritarian assertion** (against perceived minority elite dominance).
  - Goes beyond Sixth Schedule protections → questions Article 16(2) (no discrimination in employment on grounds of place of birth/residence).
- **Jammu & Kashmir:**
  - After 2019 abrogation of special status, domicile laws used to **safeguard minorities** (Valmiki, Gorkhas, West Pakistan refugees).
- **Assam:** NRC process linked domicile, migration, and citizenship into high-stakes exclusion politics.
- **Maharashtra, Bihar (historical):** Anti-migrant mobilisations (“sons of the soil”) shaped regional politics since 1960s.



## Constitutional Tension

- **Articles involved:**
  - **Article 15, 16, 19** → protect against discrimination & guarantee mobility.
  - **Article 16(2)** → no residence-based exclusion from jobs.
- **States Reorganisation Commission (1955)** already warned that domicile restrictions contradict Indian citizenship.
- **Supreme Court interventions** often required, since State-level policies clash with national rights.

## Implications

- **Erosion of One Nation, One Citizenship:** Undermines Article 5–11 citizenship framework.
- **Exclusion of Migrants:** Creates second-class citizens (“citizen-outsiders,” “paused citizens”).
- **Rise of Sub-nationalism:** Strengthens regional parties’ leverage via domicile politics.
- **Fragmented National Identity:** Produces layered citizenship — Indian + State-based.
- **Governance Challenge:** Conflicts over jobs, land, education, and voting rights cannot be democratically adjudicated within present frameworks.

## Scholarly Lineage

- Myron Weiner (1978) – *Sons of the Soil*.
- Niraja Jayal (2013) – *Differentiated Citizenship*.
- Udit Roy (2010) – *Citizen-outsiders*.
- Sanjib Sharma (2024) – *Paused citizens*.
- Sarkar (2025) – *Hyphenated nationality*.
- Alok Ranjan (2025) – *Provincial Citizenship*.



### **Why Should We Worry?**

- Because **provincial citizenship is no longer a theoretical concern** — it is actively shaping State politics.
- It risks **institutionalising discrimination** against migrants in jobs, housing, and welfare.
- It undermines the **constitutional promise of equality and common citizenship** (SRC's 1955 warning coming true).
- It may fuel **inter-State conflicts**, deepen regionalism, and weaken national integration.