



## Current Affairs of the Day

### Wearing hijab is not an essential part of religion: Karnataka HC

1. The Karnataka High Court upheld the ban on the wearing of the hijab (headscarf) by students in schools and colleges in the State.
2. It held that wearing the hijab is not an essential religious practice in Islam and is not, therefore, protected under the right to freedom of religion guaranteed by Article 25 of the Constitution.
3. The court said it was a reasonable restriction that was constitutionally permissible.
4. The Bench also upheld the legality of the Karnataka government's February 5, 2022, order prescribing guidelines for uniforms in schools and pre-university

#### The dress row | A brief timeline of events around the hijab controversy in Karnataka

**December 2021:** Muslim students of Government PU College for Girls, Udupi seek nod to wear hijab in classes

**January 2022:** Hijab row spreads to other districts of Karnataka

**February 5:** Karnataka government issues guidelines on uniforms



**Tightened vigil:** Police outside the Karnataka HC after the hijab ban was upheld. • PTI

**February 9:** Four girls file petitions challenging the guidelines; Chief Justice sets up a three-judge Bench

**February 10:** The Bench restrains all the students from wearing hijabs, saffron shawls, and religious flags in classrooms until further orders

**March 15:** HC upholds legality of the State's guidelines

**There is sufficient intrinsic material in the scripture itself to support the view that wearing hijab has been only recommendatory, if at all it is – KARNATAKA HIGH COURT**

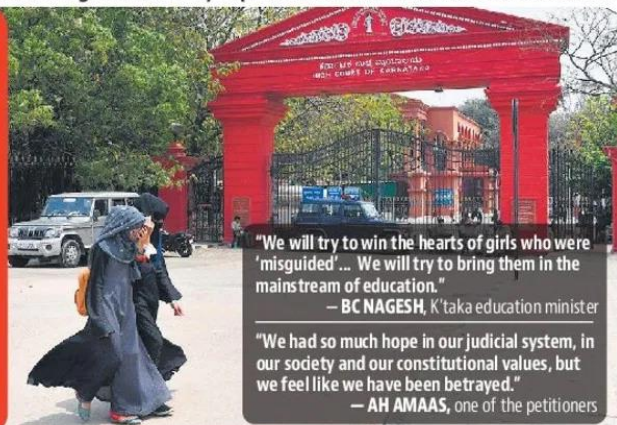
#### ‘Dress code mandatory for students’

The high court on Tuesday upheld the govt's authority to prescribe uniform in educational institutions

The court said that Quran does not mandate wearing of hijab and that the attire "at the most is a means to gain access to public places", but "not a religious end in itself".

"It can hardly be argued that hijab being a matter of attire, can be justifiably treated as fundamental to Islamic faith. It is not that if the alleged practice... is not adhered to, those not wearing hijab become the sinners..."

— KARNATAKA HC



"We will try to win the hearts of girls who were 'misguided'... We will try to bring them in the mainstream of education."  
— BC NAGESH, K'taka education minister

"We had so much hope in our judicial system, in our society and our constitutional values, but we feel like we have been betrayed."  
— AH AMAAS, one of the petitioners

colleges under the provisions of the Karnataka Education Act, 1983, after a row over hijab in Udupi and other districts.



## SC averse to 'sealed cover jurisprudence'

The court was critical about how agencies file reports without sharing the contents with the opposite party.



### Context:

1. Two separate Benches of the Supreme Court tore into the “sealed cover jurisprudence” practiced by the government in courts.
2. The court was critical about how the government and its agencies file reports in sealed envelopes directly in court without sharing the contents with the opposite party.
3. This is usually done on the ground that the contents are highly sensitive in nature, and may injure even national security or “public order”. Another reason given by state agencies, mostly in money laundering cases, is that the disclosure would affect the ongoing investigation.
4. Being kept in the dark about the material contained in a sealed cover report, the petitioners are crippled in mounting a defense, not knowing what they are supposed to defend against.
5. At times, their cases, mostly involving fundamental rights such as personal liberty, are dismissed on the basis of the secret contents ensconced in the sealed covers.

### 'Small exception'

1. Justice Chandrachud said there were only a “small exception” of cases in which the court, for the benefit of the parties, does not want them to see the government files. Like in a case of child sexual abuse.
2. The top court’s judgment in the Anuradha Bhasin case dealt with security measures in Jammu and Kashmir following the revocation of its special status under Article 370.



3. In that case, the court said that any portion perceived sensitive could be redacted but the substance of what is against you, be it a question of national security or not, should be disclosed to the opposite party so that they can get an opportunity to defend.

## Farmers' debt rose 53% in 6 years, Center tells RS

Farmers' debts increased 53% over the past six years, the Union Finance Ministry told the Rajya Sabha.

### Agricultural loans

1. In 2020-21, outstanding agricultural loans for scheduled commercial banks amounted to more than ₹18.4 lakh crore, in comparison to ₹12 lakh crore in 2015-16, with the number of farmers' accounts holding such debts also growing from 6.9 crores to more than 10 crores.
2. The Government listed various initiatives taken to reduce the debt burden, including interest subvention schemes, collateral-free agricultural loans for small farmers and income support and farm insurance schemes, noting that efforts had been made to bring farmers into the fold of institutional credit rather than leaving them at the mercy of informal loans.

### The debt burden is highest in Maharashtra

1. The growth of farmers' debt burden is highest in Maharashtra, with a whopping 116% increase in the outstanding amounts due over the six-year period.
2. In absolute terms as well, Maharashtra farmers owe the highest amount of ₹5.5 lakh crore by way of agricultural loans. Incidentally, the State also consistently has the largest number of farmer suicides, as recorded by the National Crime Records Bureau.



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| <b>MCQs</b>           | <p>Q1. Consider the following statements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The highest indebtedness among farmers is in the state of Maharashtra</li><li>2. At all Indian levels, farmer indebtedness has decreased in the last five years</li></ol> <p>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. 1 only</li><li>b. 2 only</li><li>c. Both 1 and 2</li><li>d. Neither 1 nor 2</li></ol> |
| <b>MAINS<br/>DAWP</b> | <p>Q1. Account for increasing indebtedness among Indian farmers. Critically discuss the way forward.</p>  |