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1. Usha Vance, Wife of US Vice President-elect JD Vance**Background and Family Heritage**

Usha Vance (née Chilukuri) hails from a distinguished Indian-American family with roots in Andhra Pradesh, India. Her parents emigrated to the US in the 1980s.

- Father: Krish Chilukuri, an aerospace engineer from IIT Madras.
- Mother: Lakshmi Chilukuri, a marine biologist and provost at UC San Diego.
- Grandfather: Chilukuri Ramasastry, a founding faculty member at IIT Madras, with a prestigious physics prize named in his honor.

- Great-aunt: Shanthamma Chilukuri, a long-serving physics professor in India.

Growing up in San Diego, Usha was known for being a "leader" and a "bookworm." Her childhood community was filled with intellectual discussions, where women would gather to discuss literature, while men shared gardening tips.

She went on to study history at Yale University, followed by an MPhil at the University of Cambridge on a Gates Fellowship. Despite her academic circles often being politically left-leaning, Usha has remained largely private about her political views, focusing her support on her husband's career.

Meeting JD Vance at Yale

Usha met JD Vance while attending Yale Law School between 2010 and 2013. Vance, known for his memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*, credited Usha for helping him adjust to the prestigious academic environment.

Legal Career and Media Presence

Professionally, Usha Vance has an impressive legal career, having worked as a Supreme Court clerk and associate at prominent law firms.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Indian Diaspora

Source: Indian Express

2. Despite end of Canada's SDS programme, how Indian students can still secure visas

Introduction



Canada announced the end of its Student Direct Stream (SDS) programme for students from 14 countries, including India, effective November 8. While some have raised concerns, as SDS provided a fast-track path for securing student visas, counsellors and experts say the alternative system also has some advantages.

What does the closure of the SDS mean for students?

The SDS programme allowed for quicker processing of student visa applications. It was launched in 2018 for admission into post-secondary Designated Learning Institutions (DLI), which are colleges approved by the government for hosting international students.

It had strict requirements, such as paying one year's tuition fee in advance and providing a mandatory Guaranteed Investment Certificate (GIC) worth \$20,635 as proof of funds. Despite the programme's closure, experts believe students overall do not stand to lose significantly in terms of their visa prospects.

Can students still apply for Canadian visas?

Yes. Students can still apply under the regular, non-SDS application category, which is much more flexible at present. For example, students are not required to pay the full one-year tuition fee upfront but for only six months of tuition and show they have sufficient funds to cover their living expenses. This makes the process more affordable for students unable to meet the more costly SDS requirements thus far. While the GIC is still an option, it is not mandatory.

"Previously, many students with good candidate profiles could not afford to pay the full one-year fee, and this led them to choose other destinations like Germany or Europe. But now, studying in Canada has become much more accessible. It's a huge relief for students with financial constraints who wanted to pursue their education in Canada," said Aman Parmar, a visa consultant at a Punjab-based firm.

He added that aspirants should aim to secure a Letter of Acceptance (LOA) from a reputable college in Canada based on their academic profile and include an attestation letter from the province where the institute is located when paying the tuition to bolster their chances.

What about the IELTS/PTE requirement, part of SDS eligibility?

The English language tests IELTS and PTE, requiring a minimum of six bands and 60 marks respectively, were part of the SDS process. However, under the non-SDS application route, students still have options if they do not meet these specific scores. Students with an overall score of 6 bands across modules and 5.5 bands can also apply.

A good score can always strengthen an aspirant's application. Any other proof of English proficiency acceptable in Canada and a strong academic record can further strengthen a student's profile.

Are there any challenges students should keep in mind?

First, while students no longer need to pay a full year's tuition upfront, they will still need to demonstrate that they can financially support their stay in Canada. The good news for aspirants is that the required funds are now much lower – around Rs 5 to 6 lakh is sufficient for many, whereas SDS demanded around four times the amount.

Additionally, students must ensure a top-notch visa application. This means having a strong academic record and a plan for their higher education. Visa officers are looking for students serious about their education and have a realistic plan for achieving professional success in Canada.

Earlier this year, Canada introduced a cap on the number of study visas it will issue annually. However, the cap is quite generous — Canada aims to grant study visas to 3,05,000 international students annually until 2027. If a student applies to a reputable educational institution with a study permit quota and has a strong LOA they are more likely to be accepted, even if the number of applicants is high.

Students often faced refusals under the SDS category if their profiles weren't strong enough and the same principle applies under the non-SDS route. If there is any gap in a student's education, they must be prepared to provide a strong explanation.

"A strong visa profile is always key. Canada has made changes to the student visa system, but it has not closed the doors to student visas," said Tirath Singh, a Punjab-based consultant.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

3. Private property and the 'common good': Unpacking the SC verdict

Introduction

The Supreme Court last week delivered a landmark verdict in the Property Owners Association & Ors v State of Maharashtra case. The nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud answered two key questions.

First, what is the status of Article 31C, the key constitutional provision that deals with the right to property, and does it still exist despite amendments to it being struck down by the apex court?

Second, does Article 39(b) allow the state to acquire private property as "material resources of the community"?

Context: Articles 39(b) & 31C

The case before the SC pertained to a Maharashtra law that allowed a public housing body to acquire certain decrepit privately owned buildings in Mumbai. The specific 1986 amendment in question stated that the law gave effect to Article 39(b) of the Constitution, which places an obligation on the state to ensure “that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed so as best to subserve the common good”.

While upholding the law in 1991, the Bombay High Court had said that laws passed to give effect to Article 39(b) are protected under Article 31C of the Constitution. Introduced by the Constitution (Twenty-Fifth) Amendment Act in 1971, Article 31C was meant to further the Indira Gandhi government’s stated socialist goals. The original provision contained two parts. The first part said “no law giving effect to the policy of the State towards securing the principles specified in clause (b) or clause (c) of article 39 shall be deemed to be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with, or takes away or abridges any of the rights conferred by article 14 [right to equality], article 19 [assorted rights including freedom of speech and freedom to practise any profession] or article 31 [right to property, repealed and replaced by Article 300 A in 1978]”.

The second half said “no law containing a declaration that it is for giving effect to such policy shall be called in question in any court on the ground that it does not give effect to such policy” — effectively protecting laws meant to give effect to Articles 39(b) and (c) from being challenged in court. This part was struck down by the SC in its landmark *Kesavananda Bharti* in 1973. But the first part remained in effect.

The Constitution (Forty-Second Amendment) Act, 1976 further expanded the scope of Article 31C to all articles in Part IV of the Constitution (Articles 36-51). But this amendment was struck down by the SC in the *Minerva Mills* case in 1980.



SCC TIMES

Not all private properties are ‘material resources of community’ under Art. 39(b) for state to equally distribute; Supreme Court rules in landmark 7:2 verdict

Justice Dr. D.Y. Chandrachud • Justice Hrishikesh Roy • Justice B.V. Nagarathna
Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia • Justice J.B. Pardiwala • Justice Manoj Misra
Justice Rajesh Bindal • Justice Satish Chandra Sharma
Justice Augustine George Masih

Question 1: Status of Article 31C

In 1992, when the petitioners in the Property Owners Association case approached the SC to appeal Bombay HC's decision from a year before, they argued that Minerva Mills verdict effectively struck down Article 31C in its entirety. This, they argued, opened the Maharashtra law to be quashed on the grounds that it violated Article 14.

Now, the 42nd Amendment had substituted the words "the principles specified in clause (b) or clause (c) of article 39" in Article 31C with the words "all or any of the principles laid down in Part IV".

The court in Property Owners Association case clarified when striking down the amendment in Minerva Mills, the words "all or any of the principles laid down in Part IV" would not simply be deleted as this would lead to "absurd outcomes or render the text wholly unworkable".

Instead, the version of Article 31C that was upheld in Kesavananda Bharati — the first part of the original provision — would remain. The court thus held that the repeal of the earlier wording in the Constitution and the substitution of the new one are a part of the same action by Parliament.

The whole Bench, including Justice BV Nagarathna, who authored a concurring opinion, and Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, who delivered the sole dissent, agreed on this point.

Question 2: Interpretation of Article 39B

Justice Krishna Iyer, in his concurring opinion in Ranganatha Reddy (1977), specifically dealt with what constituted a "material resource of the community". He held that "all resources, natural and man-made, public and private-owned" that satisfy material needs fall within the ambit of the phrase "material resources of the community" used in Article 39(b).

The SC relied on this minority opinion in Sanjeev Coke Manufacturing Co (1983). In a challenge to the Coking Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1972, the court held that the nationalisation of coke oven plants owned by the petitioners was immune from being challenged for violating Article 14.

The court in Property Owners Association, however, drew a distinction between whether private property can be considered as "material resources of the community", and if all private property is included in this phrase (as Justice Iyer had held). It held that if Article 39(b) was meant to include all private property, the provision would have been worded differently to make this clear.

Justice Iyer's interpretation, the court said, was rooted in "the belief that an economic structure which prioritises the acquisition of private property by the state is beneficial for the nation". This was an "error" since it was based on a single "rigid economic theory".

"Today, the Indian economy has transitioned from the dominance of public investment to the co-existence of public and private investment," the court said and that "a construction of Article 39(b) which provides that all private property is included within the ambit of Article 39(b) is incorrect". Justice Nagarathna, however, disagreed and said the interpretation of

Article 39(b) "cannot be critiqued... merely because the socio-economic policies of the State have changed".

The majority opinion provided four factors that must be considered to determine whether private property may be deemed as a material resource of the community:

- The nature of the resource and its inherent characteristics;
- The impact of the resource on the well-being of the community;
- The scarcity of the resource; and
- The consequences of the resource being concentrated in the hands of private owners.

In his dissent, Justice Dhulia wrote in favor of retaining the view that all private resources can be considered the material resources of the community. He stated that though poverty may have decreased "in absolute terms", this does not mean that overall inequality and "the gap between the rich and the poor" has decreased. Addressing this requires "welfare measures...under Article 39(b) & (c) of the Constitution, as interpreted in Ranganatha Reddy and Sanjeev Coke", he held.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express