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## Medieval-minded (UP's Anti-Conversion law)

(The Hindu, 05-08-24)

### What are the key amendments made to the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021?

1. Increased jail terms, up to 20 years or life imprisonment for converting minors, women, or "certain communities" through force, threat, or coercion
2. Stricter penalties for receiving foreign funds for unlawful conversion
3. Introduction of stringent bail requirements
4. Anyone can file a complaint against supposedly forcible or fraudulent conversions.
  1. Earlier, only an aggrieved person, that is, the victim or a close family member, could file a complaint against unlawful conversion
5. Mandates prior intimation to the authorities for those intending to change their religion

### How do the new bail provisions compare to other laws?

1. Similar to bail-denying provisions in the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act), that is considered as strict & rigid.
2. Requires opportunity for public prosecutor to oppose bail
3. Requires reason to believe the accused is not guilty and unlikely to repeat the offense

### What motivations are suggested for these amendments?

1. Claim of rising "forced conversions" in the state
2. Desire to make it harder for accused to get bail
3. Attempt to circumvent previous bail grants due to complainants not being aggrieved parties

### What concerns have been raised about the amendments?

1. Potential for increased misuse of the law
2. Infringement on fundamental rights, particularly regarding inter-faith marriages
3. Questionable validity of treating "conversion by marriage" as unlawful conversion
4. Possible violation of constitutional principles of equality & liberty

*Can you answer the following question?*

*Critically examine the implications of anti-conversion legislations on personal liberty, religious freedom, and social harmony in India.*

## Olympics boxing gender testing controversy

(The Hindu, 05-08-24)

Imane Khelif, a 25-year-old welterweight from Algeria, qualified for the quarterfinals of the Olympic women's boxing tournament by dismantling Italy's Angela Carini in the round of 16. Their fight lasted just 46 seconds.

- Since her victory, Khelif has been the target of a wave of abuse, with many calling her a “biological man” who had an “unfair advantage” over Carini. Some people also wrongly identified Khelif as a transgender woman.

### What is the background of the controversy?

- In 2023, Imane Khelif and Chinese Taipei boxer Lin Yu-ting were banned from competing in the IBA’s World Championship in New Delhi after failing a confidential "gender eligibility" test.
- The IBA stated that the boxers did not meet the criteria to compete in the female category.
- Both boxers are now competing at the Paris Olympics, as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) derecognized the IBA over governance and financial issues.
- The IOC-appointed unit governing the competition in Paris only requires the gender stated in an athlete’s passport for eligibility, and Khelif’s passport identifies her as female.
- The participation of trans women, and women having certain “masculine” biological characteristics like higher testosterone levels, in women’s sports has long been a subject of polarising debate.

### What has been the response of International Olympic Committee (IOC)?

- Following Khelif’s win and the subsequent abuse, the IOC stated that all Olympic boxers complied with eligibility and entry regulations.
- It noted that both Khelif and Lin have competed in women’s competitions for many years, including the Tokyo 2020 Games.
- The IOC also criticized the IBA's decision to ban the two women as arbitrary and not following proper procedure.

### Why Gender Eligibility is a contentious issue in sports?

- Modern sports are organized on the basis of sex, with men and women competing in different categories. This is because men, on average, have certain physiological advantages over women.
- **Sex is determined based on chromosomes**, which carry genes.
  - Humans have 23 pairs of chromosomes — 22 are identical in men and women; one, the sex chromosome, is different.
  - The XX sex chromosomes result in the development of female sex organs, and XY in male sex organs.
  - The SRY gene, found on the Y chromosome, is responsible for the production of testosterone.
- **Link between testosterone and athletic performance**
  - Many studies have supported the link between testosterone and athletic performance.
  - As per them, the difference in circulating testosterone between adults likely explains most, if not all, sex differences in sporting performance due to testosterone's effects on muscle mass, strength, bone size, strength (density), and circulating hemoglobin.
  - However, other studies note that data on this matter is currently inadequate.
- **DSD and Swyer syndrome**
  - Some people born with female reproductive organs may also carry the XY chromosome, in what is known as Swyer syndrome.
  - This syndrome is one of many “Disorders of Sex Development”, or DSDs.
  - Swyer syndrome, also known as 46 XY gonadal dysgenesis, is a rare genetic condition where individuals have one X and one Y chromosome in each cell (typically associated with males) but develop female reproductive structures.

- People with Swyer syndrome are genetically male but phenotypically female, meaning they have a female appearance and female external genitalia.
- This is at the heart of the debate surrounding gender eligibility in women's sports.
- Many argue that in order to prevent some athletes from having an unfair advantage in women's sports, women with DSDs must not be allowed to compete with other women.
- They claim that DSDs facilitate greater testosterone production, and other consequent athletic advantages.
- **Fairness and competitive advantage:** Some question whether Khelif's biological characteristics provide an unfair advantage over her opponents.
- **Cyberbullying and misinformation:** Khelif has faced a wave of online abuse and misidentification as a transgender woman, highlighting the issue of misinformation and harassment in sports

