



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE
THE LOVE FOR ALL LIVING CREATURES IS
THE MOST NOBLE ATTRIBUTE OF MAN.
— CHARLES DARWIN

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

UNREASONABLE HIKE

Indian farmers need income, not price support. The best way is not through MSP but by direct per-hectare transfers

THE NARENDRA MODI government has raised the minimum support price (MSP) for the 2025–26 wheat crop by Rs 160 to Rs 2,585 per quintal. The rise — more than the Rs 150-per-quintal in each of the last two crop years — defies economic logic. Public wheat stocks, at 33.3 million tonnes (mt) on September 1, were the highest for this date in four years. The 2024–25 crop was good, reflected in official procurement crossing 30 mt for the first time after 2021 and wholesale wheat prices now ruling lower than a year ago. Given the recharged groundwater aquifers and near-full reservoirs from the surplus monsoon rains, one can expect a bumper crop in the ensuing season (November–December sowing and April–May harvesting) as well. In short, there is no dearth of wheat either in government warehouses or in the open market to justify the magnitude of MSP hike that has been announced.

Supply side aside, the MSP increase decision also lacks any production cost-based rationale. The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) has projected the all-India average “A2+FL” cost — which includes all paid-out expenses on inputs incurred by the farmer and also an imputed value of unpaid family labour — for the 2025–26 wheat crop at Rs 1,239 per quintal. The MSP of Rs 2,585, then, works out almost 109 per cent higher than the estimated cultivation cost. That’s well above the minimum 50 per cent margin to be given as per the formula for determination of MSP. For comparison, the MSPs of other rabi season crops have been fixed at just 50 per cent over “A2+FL” cost for safflower, 58–59 per cent for barley and chana (chickpea), 89 per cent for masur (red lentil) and 93 per cent for mustard. Simply put, wheat farmers have been favoured over those growing pulses or oilseeds.

The policy bias extends even to procurement (government agencies buy wheat and paddy at the declared MSPs, which isn’t so with soyabean, chana or millets) and imports (wheat and rice attract 40–80 per cent duty, as against 0–10 per cent on pulses and 16.5 per cent on crude vegetable oils). The CACP’s MSP recommendations are supposed to also factor in inter-crop price parity and domestic and global market price trends. The latest wheat MSP of Rs 2,585/quintal, translating into over \$290 per tonne, is totally out of sync with current international prices of \$225–230. Indian farmers need income, not price support. The best way to deliver that is not through MSP and government procurement but by direct per-hectare income transfers. The farmer should grow what the market wants, which is already the case with animal and horticulture products. It should be no different with field crops.

KEEPING THE PEACE

UP government’s crackdown over a poster erodes ‘vishwas’, undermines its own campaign to showcase state’s ‘vikas’

IT BEGAN WITH a light board installed in front of a lane in Kanpur, “I love Muhammad” written on it, ahead of the annual Barawafat procession to mark the Prophet Muhammad’s birth anniversary. A police FIR blamed one community for deliberately introducing a new practice — “*jaan boojh kar nayi parampara ki shuruat*” — which would ostensibly endanger communal amity, and relocated the banner. But that was not the end of the matter. Over nearly a month since then, protests against the police action spread across several of Uttar Pradesh’s districts, rolling Bareilly in particular, and spilled into other states, including Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra. They were met, more often than not, with official heavy-handedness, with FIRs slapped indiscriminately, a spate of arrests, and demolition of properties. Mercifully, this disquieting pattern is now ebbing.

Violence and arson are unacceptable and those who participate in the lumpenism of the mob must be proceeded against lawfully. At the same time, hard questions need to be asked of those who criminalised the putting up of an innocuous banner. Indeed, it wasn’t even all that new; similar banners had been put up in the Kanpur neighbourhood earlier, too — in cloth, if not as a well-lit display board. And what is wrong, anyway, with a “*naayi parampara*” that does not disturb the peace? More fundamentally, the question is: In a country where the Constitution guarantees and protects the right of every citizen to profess and propagate a religion of her choice, why does the police FIR read like an indictment of the religious practice of one community, and a punishment for its public visibility? The political leadership also has much to answer for. In times when there is a simmering sense of siege in the beleaguered minority community, it is the work of politics, especially one that proclaims “*Sabka saath... sabka vishwas*”, to observe restraint and apply the healing touch. UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s hard line — “denting-painting” must be done to troublemakers, he said, and a lesson taught to subdue future generations — is divisive. It does not behove his office.

Especially now that his refrain is the economic development of UP. The state government has been making moves to attract private investment and address long-standing infrastructure deficits. The flaring of tensions over the “I love Muhammad” banners, the excessive use of the state’s strong arm and the political bid to stoke minority insecurities undermine that effort. They point to a state in which peace is fragile and the vulnerable are ill at ease. The Adityanath government must heed its mandate and its constitutional duty and take steps to correct this.

A DIFFICULT WOMAN

Jane Goodall’s legacy is not merely the pioneering work she did as a primatologist but the fact that she did it her way

BY HER OWN admission, Jane Goodall was a difficult woman: “It actually doesn’t take much to be a difficult woman. That’s why there are so many of us,” she once said. At 23, with no formal scientific training, only a fierce curiosity, she called the paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey in the hope of a chance to work with animals. Perhaps he saw in her something rare — not just intelligence, but also conviction. Soon, Goodall was on her way to the Gombe Stream in Tanzania to observe chimpanzees in the wild. What began as an expedition became a scientific watershed. Goodall’s patient, open-hearted observations of the apes would reshape primatology and force science to re-evaluate what it means to be human. It would also establish Goodall, who died on October 1 at 91, as one of the foremost primatologists of the time, alongside Dian Fossey and Birute Galdikas, who studied the gorilla and the orangutan respectively.

At a time when detachment was the gold standard of scientific observation, Goodall’s approach — empathetic, patient, immersive — contrasted with that of her mostly male contemporaries. She observed chimpanzees not as data points but as individuals with personalities, emotions and social complexity. Her groundbreaking discovery that chimpanzees use tools, previously thought to be a uniquely human trait, redefined the boundaries between species and introduced the radical notion that animals are sentient beings with complex emotions and social bonds. That she gained entry to a Cambridge doctoral programme in 1962 without an undergraduate degree, and earned her PhD by 1966, was a testament to her singular brilliance and the heft of her findings.

Her path-breaking research apart, it was her defiance of convention — scientific, gendered, institutional — that marked her as a pioneer. “Difficult” is a word that often rests precariously on the edge of judgement. When spoken of a woman, especially, it becomes a veiled reproach, at once condescending and reductive. Soft-spoken, gentle, but deeply committed, Goodall’s life’s work stands as proof that what is often termed “difficult” in a woman is simply the courage to insist on another way.



P R KUMARASWAMY

SINCE HAMAS’S OCTOBER 7, 2023 attack on Israel, several well-intentioned and carefully planned strategies to end the conflict have failed. Some ceasefire proposals came close to fruition, only to falter. Some of these were approved by Israel but rejected by Hamas. Hamas, the main actor for any Gaza plan, has not officially agreed to US President Donald Trump’s latest proposal, and its recent actions show both its hesitation and internal disagreements. Indeed, as the Israelis were solemnly observing the holiest day in the Jewish calendar — Yom Kippur — on Thursday, rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel, highlighting the fragility of the situation.

Will the latest proposal be any different? Is it a 20-point or a 21-point proposal? Last week, the Israeli media suggested the latter, and its 18th clause stated: “Israel agrees not to carry out future strikes in Qatar.” Since then, however, the US and the international community have acknowledged Doha’s important mediating role in the Gaza conflict. Israel has apologised for violating Qatari sovereignty and pledged not to repeat these actions, and the US has declared that any attack on Qatar would be an attack on the US itself. Given this consensus, it is now a 20-point plan.

So, what are the main elements of the latest 20-point Gaza plan?

It outlines the key demands of Israel, the Palestinians, and the international community. An immediate ceasefire should be enacted, along with the release of the remaining Israeli hostages, the return of the bodies of fallen Israelis, the freeing of about 2,000 Palestinians currently in Israeli prisons, the withdrawal of the Israeli military from the Gaza Strip, free flow of international aid to the besieged people of Gaza under UN and international supervision, and international commitment to the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. It also calls for reforms in Palestinian government and the “de-radicalisation” of the Gaza Strip. At the same time, the plan also includes some controversial elements.

A reality check for peace

Even if Hamas accepts Trump’s Gaza plan, it may not be a workable solution

First, it grants amnesty to Hamas members who pledge “peaceful coexistence” with Israel and are willing to disarm themselves. In addition, it provides safe passage for those militants to “receiving countries” if they wish. This provision aligns with the demand expressed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during his speech at the UN General Assembly: “One state, one law and one legal security force.”

Second, the Hamas-led administration that has governed the Gaza Strip since July 2007 will be replaced by an internationally supervised transitional government composed of Palestinian technocrats. The internationally recognised Palestinian National Authority will gradually assume control. Some see this as the eventual American acknowledgement of the need to consider the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a unified political entity. At the same time, it also gives an interesting twist to the situation. Having lost effective control of the Gaza Strip, Abbas is seeking the international community’s help to regain control.

The most critical factor, one that finds no mention in the Gaza plan, is the future of the Palestinians. Coming amid growing Western support for and recognition of the Palestinian state, the Gaza plan remains silent on the two-state solution. Despite his aggressive actions towards Israel, Trump is quietly endorsing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s stance on this issue. For weeks, several Israeli leaders have portrayed Palestinian statehood as a ‘reward’ for the October 7 massacre.

Three, armed or unarmed, Hamas will have no role or influence in the future of the Gaza Strip. This is a devastating blow to the organisation that has dominated the Palestinian national movement since its founding in 1988, during the First Intifada. It has successfully challenged and, at times, even outshone all institutions led by Yasser Arafat, including the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the PNA. Without being a party to either of them, Hamas has prevented these organisations from gaining popular support for the idea of co-existence with Israel. One could argue that, like the Israeli right, Hamas has successfully undermined and ultimately destroyed the Oslo process.

Four, it states that Israel “will not occupy or annex Gaza” and that the Israeli military “will gradually hand over territory it currently occupies”. There would be an alternative “security force” that would take control of the Gaza Strip to ensure “stability”. It

is unclear whether the provision is temporary or a long-term commitment.

So far, Trump has managed to secure the support of key Muslim-majority countries, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, and Pakistan, for the Gaza plan. This could be a signal of growing international frustration over Hamas’s conditions for an early end to the Gaza crisis. Their endorsement of the plan also indicates their approval of dismantling Hamas and removing it from the Gaza Strip.

However, the Hamas provision has a downside — it may not sit well with pro-Hamas clergy in countries like Pakistan. They have long been critical of co-existence with Israel. Expecting them to accept the sudden removal of Hamas from the Gaza Strip is unrealistic and could create domestic pressures in these countries. The same is true for Turkey, which has emerged as a major supporter of Hamas in recent years.

However, the most critical factor, one that finds no mention in the Gaza plan, is the future of the Palestinians. Coming amid growing Western support for and recognition of the Palestinian state, the Gaza plan remains silent on the two-state solution. Despite his aggressive actions towards Israel, Trump is quietly endorsing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s stance on this issue. Speaking to a mostly empty UN General Assembly Hall last week, Netanyahu said, “Giving the Palestinians a state one mile from Jerusalem after October 7th is like giving al-Qaeda a state one mile from New York City after September 11th. This is sheer madness. It’s wild, and we won’t do it... Israel will not allow you to shove a terror state down our throats.” For weeks, several Israeli leaders have portrayed Palestinian statehood as a “reward” for the October 7 massacre. Hence, even if Hamas accepts it, Trump’s Gaza peace plan will remain a shaky one navigating uncharted waters.

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OOPALEE OPERAJITA

IT IS DIFFICULT to pay adequate tribute to the Hindustani music titan, the Padma Vibhushan singer, Pandit Chhannulal Mishra of Varanasi, who died on Dussehra day. A rare genius, possessed of an immaculate, euphonious, strong and lilting voice, with staggering range (strongly reminiscent of Pandit D V Paluskar), Chhannulal ji navigated three octaves with ease, interspersing them with lightning *taans* — never straining, never in a state of contortion, or raring-to-display virtuosity. The music simply flowed into him — there was no artifice, no hesitation, and no theatrics; and, likewise, it inundated his readily mesmerised listeners: Several million of them, over seven decades.

Chhannulal ji composed music for my Odissi dance pieces for four decades between 1979–2019: About 15 45-minute pieces, including the renowned “Kewat Prasang”, besides numerous shorter pieces. He did not compose music for any other dancers. I recognised how blessed I was from the beginning, but now that he is gone, my sense of that blessing is enhanced.

His range was astounding: He effortlessly rendered *‘alap’*, the khayal, thumri, bhajan, tappa, the dhrupad ang, and the tarana. But his heart lay in singing verses from his beloved ‘Ramcharitmanas’ by Goswami Tulsidas. Readers might wish to listen to his numerous soul-filling online offerings.

Chhannulal ji came from humble beginnings, and had to endure major struggle

THREE OCTAVES OF GRACE

Chhannulal Mishra was a genius whose humility matched his range

through his early life. Success came to him late, but it was meteoric, and he never looked back. Amongst his consistent and generous supporters were the late Mahant Maharajji, of Sankat Mochan Mandir, professor Veer Bhadra Mishra, head of the Hydraulic Engineering Department at IIT-BHU, and one of *TIME*’s “Eight Heroes for The Planet”. The actor Amitabh Bachchan was amongst Chhannulal ji’s most ardent fans.

Abdul Ghani Khan, of the mellifluous Kirana *gharana* — my favourite *gharana* — was Chhannulal ji’s guru. This *gharana* was founded by Gopal Nayak, and, later, expanded, consolidated, and enriched by Abdul Karim Khan and Abdul Wahid Khan. Famous practitioners of this *gharana* include Bharat Ratna Bhimsen Joshi, Hiralal Barodekar, Saraswati Rane, Sawai Gandharva, Basavaraj Rajguru, Sureshbabu Mane, Gangubai Hangal, Prabha Atre, and others. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, T S Eliot said that when a genuine genius comes along, she fortuitously alters the existing tradition by infusing fresh and vibrant elements into it with certitude; and that, in turn, becomes an ineluctable and significant part of the new tradition. Ditto with Chhannulal ji, whose oeuvre later formed the bedrock of the Banaras *gharana*.

While Chhannulal ji’s base was classical, he was a renowned practitioner of semi-classical forms: It was his ability to practise diverse genres that earned him a gargantuan fan following. His natural gift in evoking

sahridayatvam in all sections of his audience was a miracle.

Chhannulal ji was unassuming — he always smiled, from the heart; he was uncomplicated, uncompaining and abjured arrogance and political flimflammy, as all true geniuses do. *En fin*: I now visualise the rooftop of the Sankat Mochan Mandir — Chhannulal ji singing there, each night, between 9 and 11 pm; the late, affectionate Mahant Maharajji (*chachaji* to me) with us; the chime of the bells during the *arti*; the *rajnigandha*-and-rose garlands, gifted by Mahant ji to us each night, after a sumptuous dinner, served with tenderness; the stars above us, rising to address all creation, and all of this illuminated by sublime music. There was that, and the presence of the eternal river, Ganga. I recall Schopenhauer, and the dynamic power of music as “will”, which pervades body, mind, and the universe itself.

Om Shanti. Let there be peace, beauty, and more peace; and let the music lull us into a heightened state of awareness, fellow feeling, and compassion. That was how Chhannulal Mishra lived, and sang.

The writer was appointed distinguished fellow at Carnegie Mellon University in 1990. She is also a global adviser on public policy, communications, and international relations, and an award-winning Odissi and Bharatanatyam artiste and choreographer. Views are personal



OCTOBER 04, 1985, FORTY YEARS AGO

PAK’S NUCLEAR OPTION

THE PRIME MINISTER, Rajiv Gandhi, expressed concern at the deteriorating security environment in the country’s neighbourhood and said that Pakistan appeared to be intent on exercising the nuclear option. Addressing the four-day Army commanders’ conference, Gandhi, who is also the Defence Minister, referred to the infiltration from across the Punjab and Rajasthan border and the efforts by Pakistan to revive the Kashmir issue.

INDIAN SHIP HELD

AN INDIAN CARGO ship with a crew of 25 has been held by Bangladesh authorities since September 9. The ship, *Arimatta*, belonging to

the Assam Inland Water Transport Directorate, had sailed from Calcutta for Guwahati on September 7 but was held up by the Bangladesh customs as it entered the Rib River, officials said. They added that the ship had been stopped for “want of certain papers” and the External Affairs Ministry and the Transport Ministry had been approached to take up the matter with the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi and the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

SOVIET HOSTAGES

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT has condemned the killing of one of the four Soviet officials kidnapped in Beirut and asked the extremist Muslim grouping which staged the kidnap-

ping to unconditionally release the other three hostages immediately. The Soviets have “nothing to do with the armed actions of antagonist Lebanese groupings and were in no position to meet the demands of the kidnappers”, the Soviet government said.

UK RIOTING UNABATED

YOUTH HURLED STONES at vehicles and clashed with the police in Liverpool’s mostly black Toxteth section and in London in the fifth straight night of urban unrest in Britain. A police spokesman said that gangs of very young children hurled stones at passing vehicles shortly after midnight. There were no injuries or arrests and the neighbourhood was “quiet again” later in the morning.

THE IDEAS PAGE

The teacher is walking away

They are realising that authorities and donors are more interested in evidence of efficiency than in children’s well-being and learning



KRISHNA KUMAR

IT IS NOT easy to come by a permanent teaching job these days. Yet, many young teachers choose to quit and accept a return to the state of unemployment and uncertainty. The deep disquiet spreading in schools is just not known outside. UNESCO had noticed the beginning of this trend in many countries two decades ago. A lead article published in its official journal, *Prospects*, was titled, “Where have all the teachers gone?” It discussed the results of a global survey revealing the exhaustion and disenchantment of experienced teachers across different continents. They were resigning. The survey identified a number of factors for this silent crisis in the profession. Some of the factors had to do with conditions in schools and classrooms, while other factors related to the changes in the home environment that affected children’s behaviour at school.

No studies have so far been done in India to make sense of this phenomenon. However, teachers do talk about things that are making their professional lives difficult. The sense of helplessness they feel in the face of bureaucratic aggression is a common complaint. One might mistakenly assume that bureaucratic aggression and expectations prevail only in government schools. Corporatised management of private schools manifests in ways quite similar to the control that is bureaucratically exercised on government school teachers. Denial of professional autonomy is a common story, especially in the context of current fads.

One of the best history teachers I know resigned from a prestigious public school because the principal insisted that she must use digital resources. She didn’t want to, because she thinks that history calls for analytical reflection on historical data and debates. This goal, she feels, can’t be achieved through digital exposure to historical events. The school she was employed in didn’t mind losing her. Like many others, her principal felt that the future lies in maximising the use of technology. AI is already knocking at school doors, and many principals are eager to welcome it.

Another senior teacher who resigned found the additional work she was expected to do much too distracting and burdensome. She told me that in her school, a Kendriya Vidyalaya, teachers are turning into event managers. Orders to celebrate this or that occasion come from above, and these orders include the responsibility to upload pictures proving compliance. Principals appreciate the teachers who help the school put up a good show on event days. Record-keeping was always an important part of a teaching job, but now it has become more important than teaching itself. Frequent testing has made the job of record-keeping more tedious. All record-keeping is now to be done digitally, which implies its own imposition on the limited time available to teachers to prepare and teach.



C R Sasikumar

One assumes that those who resign can afford to do so. But I recently learnt that a former student from a weaker economic background resigned from his permanent job in a government secondary school because he couldn’t take it anymore. The stress of extra duties, many of which he found absurd, was more than he could handle along with his teaching responsibilities. These duties are the familiar clerical ones, but some are new, such as preparing students for MCQ (multiple-choice question) tests, which determine a school’s image. Dealing with classroom violence was another source of stress for this teacher. Violence in classrooms and corridors has been on the rise for some time. Every now and then, we notice newspaper reports of children bringing a knife or firearm in their school bags. The situation is not yet as bad as it is in the US, but the direction is obvious.

Increased aggression, bullying and violence in the classroom makes many teachers feel helpless. Those who have tried to study this phenomenon attribute it to children’s participation in social media and their exposure to depictions of violence in online sources. Early introduction to the smartphone has exacerbated this problem as Jonathan Haidt has argued in his book, *The Anxious Generation*. He relates the new tech-

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nological environment to increased levels of stress in children and its contribution to aggressive behaviour.

Thousands of primary schools in rural India function with just two or three teachers. In addition to teaching with extremely limited resources, they are expected to assist the head teacher to collect and transmit data to the block and district officials. Centralised data access has now become an obsession. It covers a wide swathe: Admission, attendance, scholarship distribution, training, mid-day meals, meetings, evaluation, infrastructure, and expenditure. Who must manage and supply all this data? Teachers, of course. Teaching and children don’t matter. The system is focused on transparency on outcomes, which means timely loading of data that higher-placed officials can access. This focus was supposed to improve quality, but it has now become a goal by itself. Teachers and school heads realise that authorities and donors are more interested in evidence of efficiency than in children’s well-being and learning. Official truth has always differed from the teachers’ truth. The latter is closely guarded in order to avert repercussions.

The writer is a former director of NCERT and the author of *Thank You, Gandhi*

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Milei’s upcoming White House visit isn’t about a working plan — it’s about making the US bailout a Trumpian campaign stop. And Argentina, once again, becomes the backdrop for someone else’s political theatre.” — **THE GUARDIAN**

On dams, take the China way

The two countries embarked on big dam construction at about the same time. China today has an installed capacity 10 times that of India



ASIT K BISWAS AND CECILIA TORTAJADA

BOTH CHINA AND India have thousands of years of experience in managing water to reduce the impacts of serious floods and droughts. Empires fell in both countries when kings failed to manage water properly. India became independent in 1947 and the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949. In the 1950s, both countries started to construct large dams. India constructed its two major dams, Hirakud and Bhakra, in 1957 and 1963. Similarly, China constructed its major dam, Sanmenxia, in 1960.

The results of these constructions were very different. Hirakud and Bhakra were successful. India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, proudly proclaimed such large dams to be the “temples of modern India”. In contrast, the record of Sanmenxia was not so good. The dam lost 17 per cent of its storage capacity during the first flood it faced due to excessive sedimentation. Over the next several decades, its design and operating procedures were changed several times for it to remain functional.

In 1980, the Chinese government invited the first author of this article to assess the feasibility of its largest infrastructure project, the South-North Water Transfer. At that time, the confidence of Chinese engineers in building dams was not high compared to their counterparts in India. Sanmenxia had sapped much of their confidence.

Post-1990, the situation in the two countries changed dramatically. China got its dam-building mojo back and became the premier dam-building nation in the world. In the past three decades, it has made major advances in the planning and construction of large dams, seriously outpacing India and all other major dam-building nations of the world.

The policies of China and India on the construction of large dams started to diverge in the late 1980s, primarily over resettlement issues. The 1990s were a mostly lost decade for dam construction in India. The country’s policymakers then believed small was beautiful and big was ugly. They promoted ideas like rainwater harvesting and the construction of check dams over large dams. India’s Supreme Court stopped the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam for six years when much of it was complete. During this period, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank stopped financing the construction of any large dams. In much of the rest of the world, too, dams had a very poor image.

China, in contrast, continued to build large dams for its economic development. It took a pragmatic approach. After the construction of major dams, it assessed what did not work well and modified national policies appropriately so that the new generations of dams did not face similar problems.

China also realised that the construction of large dams enhanced both water and energy security — the latter was especially important to it. By 2000, it realised that in less than a decade, it would become the largest oil importer in the world. Thus, it accelerated a programme to construct large dams that would provide flood management, a reliable water supply for all human use, and also be a major generator of renewable energy.

The comparison between the two countries in terms of hydropower development is stark. In 2000, India had 21.8 GW of installed capacity, compared to China’s 77.08 GW. By the end of 2024, the difference had become even starker. India’s installed capacity had more than doubled to 42.72 GW, but that of China had skyrocketed to 435.95 GW, more than 10 times that of India.

Globally, no country can currently compete with China’s advances in dam building. In 2024, China alone contributed 14.4 GW of new hydro development, out of the total new global capacity of 24.6 GW.

China and India are monsoon countries — nearly all their annual rainfall occurs primarily during the monsoon months. Consider one of India’s rainiest cities, Cherrapunji, which receives an annual rainfall of 10,820 mm, mostly during June-August. Nearly 80 per cent of this annual rainfall occurs in about 120 hours — these are not consecutive. Similarly, in Delhi, nearly 80 per cent of annual rainfall occurs in about 80 non-consecutive hours. India experiences intense rainfall over very short time periods. This means a significant part of this rainfall has to be captured and stored by whatever means possible so that water is available throughout the year for human requirements. This means water must be stored by large, medium, and small dams, groundwater and rainwater harvesting.

Unfortunately, India’s record of dam construction since 1980 has been poor. Consequently, the country has been facing serious water scarcity problems for several decades. Cherrapunji has been facing serious water scarcity problems in the non-rainy seasons because of lack of storage structures, even with its extraordinary rainfall.

India’s population is estimated to increase to 1.7 billion by 2050. India has targeted a multi-fold increase in GDP by 2047. All Indians expect a far better standard of living by 2050. Unless the country builds quickly all types of water storage structures, including large dams, its socioeconomic development would be in peril. Climate change is making intense rainfalls more intense and frequent, making the need for water storage even more important. The country knows how to plan and design all types of good and sustainable storage structures. Unless it completely restructures its water infrastructure and construction policies urgently, it is going to face serious water scarcity problems, which no other generation has had to face.

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RAM RAJYA

BY RAM MADHAV

A century of goodwill

People’s support and its cadres have been RSS’s greatest strength

ON OCTOBER 2, #RSS@100 was one of the top 10 trending hashtags globally. For the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which turned 100 on that day, there cannot be any better signifier of its fame and popularity. Not many organisations survive this long. The RSS has not just survived but has grown steadily in the last 10 decades. In the first quarter of its existence, it faced the wrath first of the British government, which sought to impose curbs on it in the Central Provinces (CP) in the 1930s, and subsequently, the Nehruvian section of independent Indian leadership, which imposed a ban on its activities in 1948.

When the organisation turned 50, it faced another ban during the infamous Emergency at the hands of the Indira Gandhi-led government in 1975. Those initial decades saw the RSS facing severe criticism, mischaracterisation, and demonisation by the Nehruvians and communists who captured important positions in public offices, including the government, media, and academia. Its adversaries believed that the organisation would buckle and perish, but it did not. On the contrary, it succeeded in winning over the support and sympathy of several of them. Jayaprakash Narayan, who had accused the RSS of involvement in the murder of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, turned around in the 1970s and told an RSS gathering, “You are committed and devoted people and also disciplined and imbued with many qualities. It is my expectation from you and, as an elder,

it is my prayer, that God may bless you with strength enough to give a new shape to India.” Even Jawaharlal Nehru had to acknowledge the RSS’s patrician role during the Sino-Indian War of 1962. The RSS *swayamsevaks* were invited to take part in the Republic Day Parade in January 1963, marching shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of the Indian armed forces.

At 75, the organisation saw one of its *pracharakas*, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, leading a government run by a coalition of 23 parties. At 100, another *pracharak*, Narendra Modi, holds sway not only domestically but globally. Hindutva, the sheet-anchor of the RSS school of thought, once regarded by its adversaries as a “fringe ideology”, is today mainstreamed and accepted by millions of Indians. Its cadre, who run dozens of organisations in almost all walks of national life, have emerged as leaders of the entire society.

What more is needed for its leadership to celebrate? True to its tradition, however, the RSS has decided not to celebrate the centenary but assess its journey of the past carefully and orchestrate a new vision for the next 100 years. Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat alluded to it in his annual Vijayadashami address in Nagpur. His centenary message was not only for the rest of the world, but also, importantly, for millions of swayamsevaks and other participants of the vast movement.

In the last 100 years, three key characteristics of the RSS have driven its growth. First, it did not become a prisoner of an ide-

ology. Ideology-driven parties and movements — the Communist Party of India, for instance, which incidentally completed 100 years last year — faded away. Hindutva, in contrast, is emblematic of the core cultural and civilisational identity of the country. KB Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS, drew inspiration from leaders like Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, V D Savarkar, and B R Ambedkar. For these leaders, the use of cultural symbols and religious practices — Ganesh Utsavs, bhajans, and fasting — was a legitimate way of mobilising public opinion against the colonial government. Till the advent of Muslim League-driven separatism, Indian Muslims, too, did not see anything alien in such cultural practices.

Hedgewar was categorical at the very inception that the Sangh was “not created to harbour hatred or to destroy anyone”. “Hinduism, the foundation of our culture, is a religion that emphasises virtuous qualities and teaches us the principle of *atma-vat sarvabhuteshu* (‘to treat all beings as ourselves’),” he emphasised. Bhagwat, too, has reiterated that the RSS’s Hindutva is no different from that of the leaders of the freedom movement. It is not an “us-versus-them” discourse but an effort to unite the entire nation of 1.4 billion people.

Second, the RSS has grown not because of any outside support, but on the strength and dedication of millions of its cadre, whom Balasaheb Deoras, the third sarsanghchalak, described as “*Dev Durlabh Karyakarta*” —

a cadre that even gods envy. The RSS never depended on political or financial power for its growth. It grew stronger in adversity. In states like Kerala, where adversity is most severe, the RSS registered its highest growth. At a time when power and pelf is at its beck and call, the organisation needs to remember this core principle.

Finally, the RSS drew its strength from the goodwill of millions of countrymen. When the British government sought to impose curbs on it in the 1930s, prominent leaders in CP, mostly Congressmen, opposed that move. When Nehru sought to implicate the RSS in Gandhi’s murder, Sardar Patel wrote to him that, as home minister, he didn’t find any evidence of its involvement in the same. Eminent citizens stood in support of the RSS to convince Nehru and Patel to lift the ban. The *sant samaj*, the religious establishment, stands by it today. So do thousands of well-meaning citizens from all sections of society. This support, which Bhagwat describes as the *sajan shakti* (the backing of good citizens), too, has been instrumental in the RSS’s rise.

At 100, the organisation must remember the three crucial factors — inclusive thought process, dedicated cadre, and goodwill of the citizens — that have helped it master the art of navigating adversity. Its future course depends on its ability to steer through the present.

The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REMEMBERING GANDHI

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Mahatma’s quiet courage’ (*IE*, October 3). It was refreshing to see the focus shift from Gandhi’s political leadership to his personal discipline, moral courage, and willingness to sacrifice comfort and family life for his principles. Too often, Gandhi is remembered only for his role in India’s freedom struggle, but the article rightly highlights his lesser-known acts of bravery, tending to plague victims in Johannesburg, standing firm against untouchability despite financial setbacks. At a time when our regime often places political expediency above dialogue, inclusivity, and compassion, Gandhi’s example becomes even more relevant.

Ankit Kumar, Nangloi

LADAKH CRACKDOWN

THIS REFERS TO ‘Best of Both Sides’ (*IE*, October 3). It very clearly enunciated the problems faced by the people of Ladakh. The central government’s actions are not only inadequate in addressing these grievances, but are by all means, heavy-handed. There were better options than firing at the protesters and then arresting Sonam Wangchuk, a respected leader, thereby spoiling all chance of dialogue and resolution of the crisis. Dealing with a sensitive border state in this manner is not only bad policy, it also undermines the security of the country.

Kusum Chadda, Mumbai

HEALTH BURDEN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Join the dots’ (*IE*, October 3). It offers a necessary and critical assessment of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)’s failure to curb air pollution. It is disheartening that the deleterious effects of pollution — now linked to heart attacks and diabetes — remain mere political talking points rather than urgent priorities. The editorial correctly points out that achievable corrective measures are failing due to a clear lack of political will and intent. We must “join the dots” — connect policy implementation with genuine public health outcomes — and enforce the immediate, transparent action required to reduce this health burden.

Krishan Kumar Chug, New Delhi

GAZA FLOTILLA

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Israeli forces seize flotilla carrying Gaza aid...’ (*IE*, October 3). The interception of the Gaza aid flotilla is not just a political incident; it is a moral tragedy. Boats carrying food, medicine, and hope for a besieged population were stopped in international waters. Activists from across the globe, including young voices of conscience, were detained. When aid is seen as contraband, we must ask: Has politics completely eclipsed humanity? Governments speak of security, yet starving children in Gaza are offered only excuses.

Hasnain Rabbani, Mumbai

**बिहार सरकार**

निर्वाचन विभाग
मुख्य निर्वाचन पदाधिकारी, बिहार का कार्यालय
7, सरदार पटेल मार्ग (मैंगल रोड), पटना-800015.

अत्यावश्यक सूचना

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग, नई दिल्ली के पत्रोंक 56/2025/PPS-III दिनांक 19.09.2025 द्वारा वैसे पंजीकृत गैर मान्यता प्राप्त राजनीतिक दलों की सूची जिसमें (1) Aam Adhikar Morcha, (2) Akhil Bhartiya Manavadhikar Vichar Manch Party, (3) Akhil Bhartiya Mithila Party, (4) Apna Adhikar Party, (5) Bhartiya Aam Janta Vikas Party, (6) Bhartiya Jantantrik Janata Dal, (7) Bhartiya Mitra Party, (8) Bhartiya Party (Loktantrik), (9) Gareeb Jankranti Party, (10) Garib Janshakti Party, (11) Hamara Sahara Party, (12) Jai Hind Party, (13) Janta Dal Rashttravadi, (14) Janta Raj Vikas Party, (15) Jantantrik Vikas Party, (16) Jawan Kisan Morcha, (17) Lok Sewa Dal, (18) Loktantrik Sarvjan Samaj Party, (19) Mithilanchal Mukti Morcha, (20) National Tiger Party, (21) Pragatisheel Magahi Samaj, (22) Public Mission Party, (23) Rajnaitik Vikalp Party, (24) Rashttra Sewa Dal, (25) Rashtriya Jagriti Party, (26) Rashtriya Jan-Jagran Morcha, (27) Rashtriya Janvikas Party (Democratic), (28) Rashtriya Samta Party (Secular), (29) Swaraj Party (Loktantrik) ,oa (30) Vanchit Samaj Party सम्मिलित है, द्वारा वित्तीय वर्ष 2021-22, 2022-23 एवं 2023-24 का वार्षिक लेखा परीक्षित लेखे (Annual Audited Accounts) निर्धारित तिथि क्रमशः 07.12.2022, 31.12.2023 एवं 15.12.2024 तक जमा नहीं किया गया है। इसी तरह संबंधित राजनीतिक दलों द्वारा चुनाव लड़ा गया है, परन्तु निर्वाचन व्यय विवरण निर्धारित अवधि (विधान सभा निर्वाचन के संदर्भ में निर्वाचन के पूरा होने के 75 दिनों एवं लोक सभा निर्वाचन के पूरा होने के 90 दिनों के भीतर) के भीतर जमा नहीं किया गया है। इस संबंध में उल्लेखनीय है कि आयोग द्वारा ऐसे राजनीतिक दलों को कारण पृच्छा संबंधी नोटिस निर्गत करते हुए उनका पक्ष प्राप्त कर प्रतिवेदन भेजने का निदेश दिया गया है। अतः उक्त राजनीतिक दलों से अनुरोध है कि दिनांक 10.10.2025 को अपराह्न 03.00 बजे मुख्य निर्वाचन पदाधिकारी, बिहार के सम्मक्ष उनके कार्यालय कक्ष (7, सरदार पटेल मार्ग (मैंगल रोड), पटना-800015) में उपस्थित हो कर अपना तथ्यात्मक पक्ष (साक्ष्य के साथ) प्रस्तुत किया जाये, ताकि इस कार्यालय स्तर से प्रतिवेदन भारत निर्वाचन आयोग को प्रेषित किया जा सके।

PR- 016674 (Election) 2025-26

उप मुख्य निर्वाचन पदाधिकारी, बिहार
नरेश की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

**Govt. of Bihar**

ROAD CONSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, ROAD DIVISION, PATNA WEST
Email ID:- rcdpatwest@yahoo.in, Mob:- 9470001279
SBD BASED DETAILED NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
(Through e-procurement mode only <https://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in>)
NIT No.- RCD/09/Patna West/2025-26 (Short Tender)
1. Designation And Address Of The Advertiser :- Executive Engineer, R.C.D., Road Division, Patna West
2. Date Of Issue of Notice Inviting Tender :- 26.09.2025
3. Period For Download of Tender Document :- From 09.10.2025 to 16.10.2025 Up to 15:00 hrs.
(From Website: <https://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in>) **Only.**
4. Date, Time & Place of Pre-Bid Meeting :- 10.10.2025 at 11:00 hrs. at Office of The Chief Engineer, South, RCD, Bihar, Patna. Vishwasaraya Bhawan, RCD, Bihar, Patna
5. Last Date & Time for Uploading Tender Document By Bidder :- 16.10.2025 Up to 15:00 hrs.
On Website: (<https://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in>) **Only.**
6. Date, Time & Place Of Opening Of Technical Bid :- Date- 16.10.2025 after 15:30 hrs.
On Website : <https://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in>
7. Details Of Works:

Group No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (in Lakh)	Amount of Earnest money (Rs. in Lakh)	Cost of B.O.Q. (To be paid through online mode) (Non-refundable) (In Rs.)	Bid Processing Fee (To be paid through online mode) (Non-refundable) (In Rs.)	Time of completion of work (in months) Including monsoon period.
1	Widening & Strengthening of Approach Road to Buddha Cancer Centre from Khagaul Digha Nahar Road (Total Length 0.600 Km) Under Patna West Road Division, RCD, Patna for the year 2025-26	316.33	6.33	10,000	As appeared on e-proc2	04 (Four) Month


8. Date, Time & Place of opening of Financial Bid :- Date 23.10.2025 Time :- 15.30 hours
(on Website : <https://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in>)

9. Bid Validity :- 120 Days
For further details please visit website [state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar](https://www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar)

PR- 016198 (R C D) 2025-26

Executive Engineer,
RCD, Road Division, Patna West

नरेश की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

**Directorate of Animal Husbandry**
Room No. - 152, First floor, Vikas Bhawan, New Secretariat Patna -800015
Contact info: dirahd-bih@nic.in
Notice Inviting Request for Proposal
TENDER NOTICE

Selection of Service Provider for Closed User Group (CUG) services with post paid SIM cards having data facility and unlimited voice calling under Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Animal and Fisheries Resources Department, Government of Bihar.

Notice Inviting Tender Ref. No: 2025/AHD/12
(Only through E- Tender on website: <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in>)
Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Bihar invites E-Bids from the interested parties for **"Selection of Service Provider for Closed User Group (CUG) services with post paid SIM cards having data facility and unlimited voice calling" under Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Animal and Fisheries Resources Department, Government of Bihar, vide Notice Inviting Tender No.- 2025/AHD/.....**
Detailed tender document containing eligibility criteria, selection mechanism, other terms and conditions are available on <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in>
Tender Schedule


Particulars	
Tender Reference No.	2025/AHD/12
Date and time for downloading of bid document	From 27.09.2025 at 01.00 PM (Up to last submission date)
Last date and time of submission of online bids	17.10.2025 at 01.00 PM
Last date and time for submission of original EMD	17.10.2025 at 03.00 PM
Date, Time and Place of opening of Technical Bid	17.10.2025 at 03.30 PM (Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Vikash Bhawan, New Secretariat, Patna-15
Date and time of opening of Financial Bids	To be intimated later on (After finalization of technical bid)
Validity of Tender	180 days

This information is available on [state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar](https://www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar) also

PR- 016553 (Animal) 2025-26

Director,
Animal Husbandry, Bihar.

नरेश की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

**उपग्रह राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण**
ए-1/4, लखनपुर, कानपुर

ई-निविदा सूचना

एएन द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि प्रविष्टि करने के लिए निम्नलिखित क्षेत्रों में विद्युत विकसित, अनुसंधान एवं रस-न्याय कार्यों हेतु सरकारी विभागों/सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों/निगमों/प्राधिकरणों/परिषदों/नगर निगमों में पंजीकृत एवं अनुमति कर्म/उपकरणों से ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है जो दिनांक 04.10.2025 को अपराह्न 04.00 बजे से दिनांक 27.10.2025 को अपराह्न 5.00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है। निविदा को दिनांक 28.10.2025 को अपराह्न 04.00 बजे खोला जाएगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा प्रेषण पत्रों की मूल प्रतियाँ दिनांक 31.10.2025 को सायं 5.00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा को मान्यता से आमंत्रित की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है:-

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत रु० (लगभग में)
1	Supply and Installation of street light, high mast and decorative street light poles in remaining dark zone at I.A. Sikandrabad with 03 year AMC	138.91


नोट- 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर सहित दरें अंकित करें। जीएसटीएल अलग से देय होगी। 2. विद्युत कार्य हेतु निविदादाताओं को निविदा अपलोड करते समय "विद्युत सुरक्षा विभाग" उपग्रह शासन, लखनऊ में वेबो "क" अनुमोदित लाइसेंस अपलोड करना अनिवार्य होगा, अन्यथा निविदा को Consider नहीं किया जाएगा।

निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण जानकारी अधिकतम की website: www.onlineupsida.com पर स्थित ई-निविदा एवं सूचीपत्रों की website: <http://etender.up.nic.in> पर देखी जा सकती है। निविदा से सम्बन्धित अन्य जानकारी हेतु भी सहीत कार्ड, उपग्रहशासन (निग) मुख्यालय से दृष्टान्त को 9205091908 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।

दृष्टि प्रत्यक्ष (वि) गु. उपग्रहशासनाधिकारि, कानपुर

"IMPORTANT"

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**JEEVIKA**
Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society
State Rural Livelihoods Mission, Bihar
3rd Floor, Vidyal Bhawan - II, Bailey Road, Patna- 800 021. Ph. +91-612-250 4980. Fax +91-612-250 4960. Website www.brlps.in

Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Event Management Agencies for Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS)

Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society-JEEVIKA invites sealed proposal for Empanelment of Event Management Agencies for BRLPS. Interested agencies may download detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) document from www.brlps.in/procurement.
Other information is as follows:


Description of services	Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Event Management Agencies for BRLPS
Date of start of download of document	03/10/2025 from www.brlps.in/procurement
Date and Time of Pre-Bid Meeting	17/10/2025 at BRLPS Office, Vidyal Bhawan, Bailey Road, Patna at 03.00 PM
Last Date/Time for submission of sealed Proposal	24/10/2025 till 03.00 PM at BRLPS Office at Patna
Date/Time for opening of the Proposals	24/10/2025 at 03.30 PM at BRLPS Office, Patna
Nodal Person from Client	Dr. Santosh, Procurement Specialist Phone: 0612-2504980 (Extn. 242)

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

PR- 016541 (B & C) 2025-26

(Chief Executive Officer cum Mission Director)


नरेश से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से प्यार।

**GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA**

TENDER NOTICE

SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / END (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, ROHTAK	CONSTRUCTION OF C.C STREET IN DR. MARWAH HOSPITAL STREET FROM ZILA VIKAS BHAWAN SIDE UNDER D PLAN (ROHTAK)	01.10.2025 to 08.10.2025	Rs. 10.00 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9467283967 xenmrohtak@gmail.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in No. 39257/HRY

**GOVT. OF BIHAR**

BIHAR COMBINED ENTRANCE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION BOARD
I.A.S. Association Building, Near Patna Airport, Patna-14.
Website : bceceboard.bihar.gov.in / Helpdesk : helpdesk.bceceboard@bihar.gov.in

UNDER GRADUATE MEDICAL ADMISSION COUNSELLING (UGMAC)-2025 for MBBS/ BDS/ B.V.Sc. & A.H. in Govt. Medical / Dental / Veterinary Colleges and Private Medical / Dental Colleges of Bihar
Adv. No.- BCECEB(UGMAC)-2025/15 Dated 03.10.2025
Notice for Round-3 Online Application & Choice Filling

Online Application with Choice Filling after completion of Round-2 Counselling will be available on Board's website from 03.10.2025. If any further vacancies arises, the Seat matrix will be updated further and updated vacancies shall be uploaded on the Board's website before start of Round-3 Counselling. The candidate must see it before filling up of their Choices for Online Counselling.

3. The online Registration & submission of Application-cum-Choice Filling / Editing of Application Form data (3rd Round) will start from 04.10.2025 and close on 09.10.2025 (10.00 pm).

4. Eligibility criteria for counselling / admission Fee payment procedure, instructions and other details for filling up online applications-cum-choice filling & Consent / Willingness are available in the prospectus of UGMAC-2025 and the related Advertisement No.-BCECEB(UGMAC)-2025/14 dated 03.10.2025, which can be seen / downloaded from the Board's website: bceceboard.bihar.gov.in.

Controller of Examination

**Public Health Engineering Department**
P.H. Division, Bhabhua
e-TENDER NOTICE
RE-TENDER NIT No -03(R2)/2025-26/MVS/BHABHUA
National Competitive Bidding
(Through e-procurement mode on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

1.	Designation and Address of Advertiser	Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Bhabhua.
2. <td>Date of issue of Tender Notice</td> <td>03.10.2025</td>	Date of issue of Tender Notice	03.10.2025
3. <td>Period of sale (downloading) of tender Bid Document</td> <td>17.10.2025 to 05.11.2025 up to 17:00 hrs, through www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</td>	Period of sale (downloading) of tender Bid Document	17.10.2025 to 05.11.2025 up to 17:00 hrs, through www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in
4. <td>Date, time & place of pre-bid meeting</td> <td>25.10.2025 at 13.00 hrs. in the Office of Executive Engineer, P. H. Division, Bhabhua.</td>	Date, time & place of pre-bid meeting	25.10.2025 at 13.00 hrs. in the Office of Executive Engineer, P. H. Division, Bhabhua.
5. <td>Last date and time of receipt (uploading) of tender</td> <td>06.11.2025 up to 16:00 hrs on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</td>	Last date and time of receipt (uploading) of tender	06.11.2025 up to 16:00 hrs on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in
6. <td>Date and time of opening of technical bid</td> <td>06.11.2025 at 17:00 hrs on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</td>	Date and time of opening of technical bid	06.11.2025 at 17:00 hrs on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in
7. <td>Date and time of opening of financial bid</td> <td>To be informed later after the approval of technical bid.</td>	Date and time of opening of financial bid	To be informed later after the approval of technical bid.

8. DETAILS OF WORK :- ADHAURA MULTI VILLAGE PIPED WATER SUPPLY SCHEME IN BLOCK-ADHAURA, DISTRICT-KAIMUR UNDER P.H. DIVISION, BHABHUA.


Gro up No.	Name of Work	Nos. of schemes in a Group.	Estimated Cost (in Lakh)	Amount of Earnest Money (in Lakh)	Cost of Tender Document (non-refundable) in Rs.	BSEDC Bid Processing Fee (in Rs.)	Completion Period (in months)
1	Surveying, Collection of Hydrogeological data, Design, Detailed Engineering, Construction, Supply, Installation and commissioning of Ground Water based Multi-Village piped water supply scheme having 7.85 MLT (Million Liter Per Day) Capacity, 09 Nos. of Tube Well (Including 03 Nos. of Stand by Tube Well), IGSR(Intermediate Ground Storage Reservoir)-2 Nos, Clean water MGSR (Master Ground Service Reservoir)- 01No., UGR(Underground Reservoir)- 06 Nos., Zonal ESR-07 Nos., DI-K7 & DI-K9 Distribution Pipeline Network and house connection including SCAOA and other related EM work etc. in Panchayat Sadki, Athan, Sarodag, Adhaura, Badwankala, Dumrawa & Chainpura under Adhaura Block of Kaimur District, Bihar State with minimum six months of Trail Run and thereafter operation & Maintanences of the Entire System for the next seven years.	01	26029.111	270.300	10000.00	5900.00	24 Months

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

PR. No. 016643 (PHED) 25-26

नरेश की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

Executive Engineer
P.H. Division, Bhabhua

**बिहार राज्य भंडार निगम**

राष्ट्रीय स्पर्धा ई०-निविदा वेबसाइट (www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in) पर
निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या ED-10/SBD/2025-26

1. विज्ञापन दाता का नाम एवं पता

2. निविदा आमंत्रण की तिथि

3. परिमाण विपत्र विक्री (डाउनलोड) अंतिम तिथि एवं समय

4. निविदा प्राप्ति (अपलोड करने) की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय

5. निविदा (तकनीकी बीड) खोलने की तिथि एवं समय

6. निविदा वित्तीय बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय

7. प्रिबीड मीटिंग की तिथि, समय एवं स्थान

8. निविदा विक्री, प्राप्ति एवं खोलने का स्थान

9. निविदा वेबसाइट (<https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in>)

10. कार्य का विवरण :-

प्रबंध निदेशक, बिहार राज्य भंडार निगम, पटना

25.09.2025

दिनांक 15.10.2025 से 07.11.2025 के 3:30 बजे अपराह्न तक

दिनांक 10.11.2025, 3:30 बजे अपराह्न तक

दिनांक 11.11.2025, 01:00 बजे अपराह्न तक केवल वेबसाइट पर

तकनीकी बीड मूल्यांकन के पश्चात

दिनांक 29.10.2025 को 3:00 बजे अपराह्न में सभागार कक्ष, बिहार राज्य भंडार निगम, मीर्यालोक, पटना

वेबसाइट (<https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in>)

120 दिन (तकनीकी बीड खोलने की तिथि से)

क्र.सं.	कार्य का नाम	प्राक्कलित राशि (रु. में)	परिमाण विपत्र का मूल्य+ 18% GST के साथ (अप्रत्यर्थनीय रु. में)	अग्रघन की राशि (रु. में)	बीड प्रोसेसिंग फीस (अप्रत्यर्थनीय रु. में)	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि (माह में)
1	पश्चिम चम्पारण जिलान्तर्गत सुखलाही पैक्स में 2,31,87,615.00 (दो करोड़ ईकत्तीस लाख सत्तासी हजार छः सौ पन्द्रह)	2,31,87,615.00	11,800.00 (ग्यारह हजार आठ सौ)	4,63,752.00 (चार लाख तीरसठ हजार सात सौ बावन)	As per eproc 2	बारह माह
2	सारण जिलान्तर्गत बेलौर पैक्स में 2500 मे. टन क्षमता का गोदाम निर्माण कार्य।	2,31,87,615.00	11,800.00 (ग्यारह हजार आठ सौ)	4,63,752.00 (चार लाख तीरसठ हजार सात सौ बावन)	As per eproc 2	बारह माह
3	सारण जिलान्तर्गत मणिगपुरा पैक्स में 2500 मे.टन क्षमता का गोदाम निर्माण कार्य।	2,31,87,615.00	11,800.00 (ग्यारह हजार आठ सौ)	4,63,752.00 (चार लाख तीरसठ हजार सात सौ बावन)	As per eproc 2	बारह माह
4	पश्चिम चम्पारण जिलान्तर्गत जराहपुर पैक्स में 5000 मे.टन क्षमता का गोदाम निर्माण कार्य।	3,66,87,593.00	11,800.00 (ग्यारह हजार आठ सौ)	7,33,752.00 (चार लाख तीरसठ हजार सात सौ बावन)	As per eproc 2	बारह माह
5	पश्चिम चम्पारण जिलान्तर्गत हरपुर पैक्स में 5000 मे.टन क्षमता का गोदाम निर्माण कार्य।	3,66,87,593.00	11,800.00 (ग्यारह हजार आठ सौ)	7,33,752.00 (चार लाख तीरसठ हजार सात सौ बावन)	As per eproc 2	बारह माह
6	औरंगाबाद जिलान्तर्गत रामनगर पैक्स में 10,000 मे.टन क्षमता का गोदाम निर्माण कार्य।	8,25,16,701.00	11,800.00 (ग्यारह हजार आठ सौ)	16,50,334.00 (चार लाख तीरसठ हजार सात सौ बावन)	As per eproc 2	बारह माह

विस्तृत निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है एवं विस्तृत जानकारी से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

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As India-China direct flights resume, who stands to gain?

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

AFTER A gap of over five years, direct flights between India and mainland China are set to resume by the end of this month. The Ministry of External Affairs announced an agreement between the two countries on Thursday, aligned with the winter season schedule (beginning on October 26).

The agreement will be subject to the commercial decisions of the designated carriers and the fulfilment of all operational criteria. India's largest airline, IndiGo, was the first to announce daily flights from Kolkata to Guangzhou, beginning October 26.

The Tata group's Air India also plans to launch Delhi-Shanghai flights before the end of the year, according to sources. Chinese airlines are also expected to mount flights to India.

How did the resumption happen?

Direct flight connectivity was initially suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic,

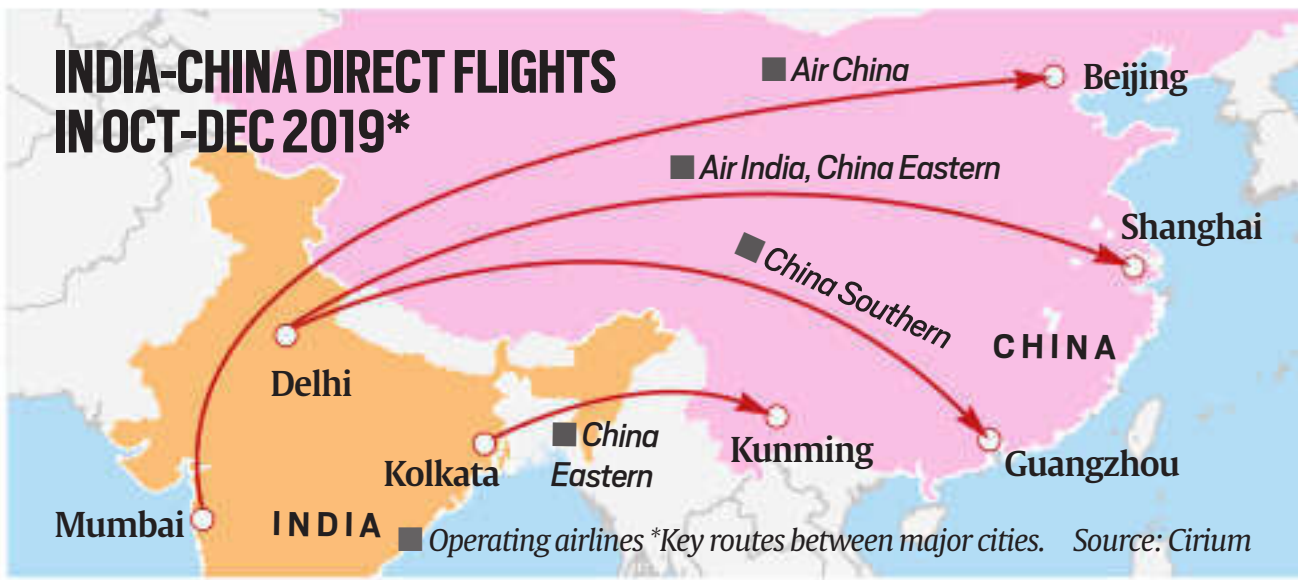
which affected international flight operations around the world.

As the India-China bilateral relationship soured following the Line of Actual Control (LAC) standoff in 2020, direct flights did not resume. While China had been pushing for a resumption for the last two to three years, India was initially reluctant.

However, the recent signs of a thaw in relations — notably at a time when New Delhi's relationship with Washington has seen hit roadblocks — had built hope that air connectivity normalisation was imminent.

The issue featured in talks between the foreign and aviation ministers through 2024, although with no evident progress. In September 2024, it was discussed in a meeting between India's Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu and Song Zhiyong, the Administrator of China's Civil Aviation Administration.

In November 2024, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi discussed the matter at their meeting in Rio de Janeiro during the G20 Summit. That meeting happened less than a month after India and China announced a border pa-



trolling arrangement on October 21, signalling de-escalation. Two days later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met at the BRICS Summit in Russia.

The first clear signs of movement appeared with Foreign Secretary Vikram Mishra's discussions with Beijing during his visit in January. The two sides agreed "in principle" to resume direct flights. Then, with Wang Yi's visit to New Delhi in August, the countries said they had agreed to resume direct flights "at the earliest". They further agreed on the

facilitation of visas to tourists, businesses, media and other visitors.

What's in it for the airlines, flyers?

Chinese and Indian airlines have been keenly watching the developments. In August, IndiGo's Chief Executive Officer Pieter Elbers had said that the carrier stood ready to resume direct flights to China as soon as the bilateral arrangements allowed for it. Chinese carriers, too, are eager to resume direct services, it is learnt.

In 2019, direct flight passengers accounted for over 45% of the total passenger flows between the two countries. Airlines would now look to claw back and expand their market share.

Lack of direct air connectivity, along with stringent visa restrictions, led to airlines from both countries losing out on potential passenger loads. Passenger traffic between India and China — currently solely through connecting hubs in South and Southeast Asia — is less than half of what it was in 2019.

Airlines from regions like Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam have stepped in to fill the gap. Some of the hub airports even managed to clock higher India-China passenger traffic in 2024 than they did in 2019, largely thanks to their home airlines' strategy to focus on connecting such flyers.

To be sure, the Hong Kong airport, the leading connecting hub between India and mainland China, is not exactly considered a Chinese airport due to its special autonomous status and different visa regime than mainland China.

Direct flights will mean more competition among airlines, which usually translates into cheaper airfares, more frequent avail-

ability, and wider options for consumers.

What's known about the traffic?

While the normalisation would likely benefit airlines from both nations, Beijing appears to believe that Chinese carriers have more to gain as they enjoyed the dominant share of the direct flight market earlier. This likely explains why China has been pushing for the move.

In December 2019, there were 539 scheduled direct flights per month between the two nations, offering a cumulative seat capacity of over 1.25 lakh. Indian carriers — IndiGo and Air India — accounted for 168 of those flights (around 31%). Chinese airlines, including Air China, China Eastern, China Southern, and Shandong Airlines, operated the vast remainder.

However, aviation industry observers said that dominance may not be repeated due to notable changes in the Indian aviation sector since 2019. Air India, now privatised and well-capitalised, has ambitions for rapid growth, particularly in the international market. Similarly, IndiGo, India's leading domestic carrier, is also eyeing international network expansion.

GDP: GRAPHS, DATA, PERSPECTIVES

Declining inflation, improving consumer confidence

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

SINCE AUGUST 2023, retail inflation in India has undergone a sharp deceleration, from close to 7% to around or below 2% in August this year. Put simply, the rate at which the general price level was rising has come down.

In July 2023, for instance, consumer facing prices went up 7.4% over their level in July 2022. However, this rate of increase (called inflation) has subdued sharply since then, and prices in August 2025 went up by just 2% over where they were in August 2024. The slide in inflation has been sharpest since October last year.

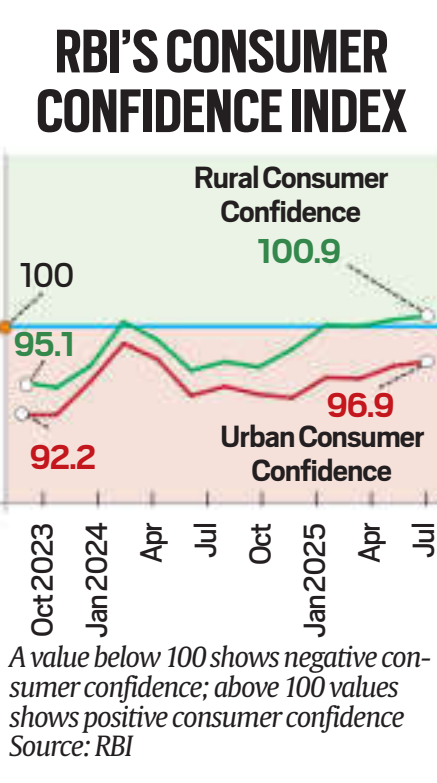
It is this deceleration in inflation rate that has made it possible for the Reserve Bank of India, which is tasked with maintaining price stability in the country, to start cutting interest rates. Central banks raise interest rates to curtail the demand for money and, through that, contain high inflation.

The RBI's latest surveys show that falling inflation rate has also had a salutary effect on consumer confidence across India. That's because lower inflation means better purchasing power in the hands of consumers.

The chart alongside shows how the RBI's consumer confidence indices for rural and urban consumers behaved since September 2023.

To arrive at the consumer confidence index, the RBI seeks responses on a whole host of variables, such as the general economic situation, income levels, spending levels, employment situation and the price level for the current period (compared to a year ago).

The level of 100 marks the point of difference between negative and posi-



tive sentiments. A value below 100 means that among the people surveyed, more were pessimistic about the current state of affairs than optimistic.

Three things stand out. **ONE**, consumer confidence has improved across the country over the past few months.

TWO, the rural consumer confidence index has been in the positive territory since March. It is now at the highest point since RBI started the survey for rural consumers two years ago.

THREE, despite an uptick, the urban consumer sentiment tells a different story. For one, it continues to languish in the negative territory. It is important to note that the last time when the urban consumer confidence was in the positive territory was in March 2019, just as the country was about to go into the general election. In fact, the urban consumer confidence is still below where it was last March, in spite of the softening of inflation.

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, OCTOBER 3

ALMOST SIX decades after the Naxalbari uprising, which spurred an enduring left-wing insurgency in the heart of India, Maoists are at a crossroads. Under relentless pressure from the government — Union Home Minister Amit Shah has vowed to "end" the insurgency by next March — top Maoist leaders are divided on whether to surrender or keep the fight going.

Earlier this week, Mallojula Venugopal Rao, the ideological head and chief spokesperson of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), wrote a letter calling for the "cessation of armed struggle" to "save the party". This was his second such letter. The previous one, dated September 12, had invited the ire of many other Maoist leaders including Telangana State Committee spokesperson Jagan.

A movement in crisis

At the heart of the crisis is the crackdown by security forces, which has brought the armed guerrillas to their knees.

Much of the top leadership, including former General Secretary Basvaraj, and Central Committee members Katta Ramachandra Reddy, Kadari Satyanarayana Reddy, Gajarla Ravi, Chalapathi, Sahdev Soren, Balakrishna, and Narasimha, have been killed this year. As have scores of armed cadres.

The last holdouts are holed up in pockets in Bastar, Dandakaranya, and areas along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border. Cut off from all sides, they are running low on arms and ammunition, large caches of which have been seized by security forces.

The military problem is compounded by the Maoists' inability to recruit new cadres. Recruitment from non-tribal populations ceased more than a decade ago; today, even tribal youth are disinclined to join the party. Put simply, the Maoists' ideology has simply not kept up with rapid material and social changes in areas that were once hotbeds of revolutionary fervour.

Sources say that tribal communities greatly benefit from government welfare schemes and free education for children which inhibits them from picking up arms. Young people, with access to mobile phones and the Internet, are no longer keen on living the austere jungle life of a Maoist guerrilla.

As a result, much of the top Maoist leadership has grown old, with many suffering



The Naxal insurgency has endured in the very heart of India for almost six decades. But a crackdown by security forces has pushed the Maoists to the brink. Express

from serious illnesses. Surrendering and retiring peacefully, with government benefits, is a lucrative option for many veterans.

Is this really the end?

The Centre and state governments, however, are skeptical about the Maoist peace offers. This is because a similar script has played out in the past.

In 2004, as then undivided Andhra Pradesh's elite Greyhounds cracked down on the Naxals, a peace deal was offered to Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy. Talks collapsed within months, followed by a surge in violence.

Many officers previously involved in anti-Naxal operations have thus been surprised about a senior Telugu Maoist leader writing letters to end the armed struggle.

"The Naxal movement's ideology is armed struggle, and Telugu Maoist leaders are fiercely committed to it. Any offer of peace or surrender is a ruse to buy time to regroup," one official said. "This time it may be to save the party from annihilation."

Another official stated: "There is an understanding among some senior leaders that if the Centre goes about eliminating the insurgency the way it has, CPI(Maoist) will cease to exist. To keep the ideology and the party alive...cessation of armed hostilities and joining the mainstream seems to be the only option".

In April, the Centre rejected a letter, purportedly by the banned CPI (Maoist), offering a ceasefire and peace talks under certain

specific terms. The government is yet to officially react to the two letters written by Rao.

From 1967 to 2025

The Maoist insurgency has its roots in Naxalbari, a village in northern West Bengal. On May 18, 1967 some 150 peasants from the village, armed with only sickles, daggers, and spears, attacked landlords, seized maunds of paddy, and started seizing land.

Charu Majumdar, the communist ideologue behind the Naxalbari uprising, had penned eight monographs, known as the *Historic Eight Documents*, between 1965 and 1967. These laid down the ideological fundamentals of the decades-long insurgency.

Among other things, Majumdar claimed that the Indian state was a bourgeois institution, accused mainstream communist parties of "revisionism" for deciding to work within the framework of this bourgeois state, and advocated for a protracted revolutionary war, on the lines of what Mao Zedong waged in China (hence Maoist), to overthrow the Indian state.

The Naxalbari uprising led to a split in CPI(Marxist) which opposed the armed struggle. Many communists, including Majumdar and his comrade-in-arms, Kanu Sanyal, were expelled from the party. They went on to form the CPI(Marxist-Leninist) in 1969.

However, a government crackdown on CPI(ML) all but ended the original movement. Many leaders went underground, surrendered, or were captured or killed by se-

curity forces. Majumdar himself was arrested, and died in police custody in 1972.

But even as the movement petered out in Bengal, it resonated in many parts of the country. Most notably, it entered Andhra Pradesh through Srikakulam, a district where tensions between tribal farmers and landlords had long been simmering. In October 1969, these tensions came to a boil: peasants attacked landlords, seized grain and land, and armed themselves, joining splinter groups of the CPI(ML).

Over the next decade, the Maoist movement spread through the heart of India, including Maharashtra, present-day Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, undivided Andhra Pradesh, and Bengal. The leadership would be dominated by Telugus who not only provided the ideological impetus for the movement, but also raised funds and helped recruit lakhs of young men and women.

In the 1970s, the Regional Engineering College at Warangal emerged as the fountainhead of the Maoist ideology. Hundreds of students went underground, and joined the armed struggle. Many never returned.

In 1980, Kondapalli Seetaramaiah and Dr K Chiranjeevi founded the CPI(ML) People's War to better organise the armed struggle. Seetaramaiah sought to create a more efficient organisation to wage a guerilla war.

Over the years, the Maoists, according to a press release by the Ministry of Home Affairs, were responsible for "armed violence (against civilians and the state), extortion (of rich landowners or businesses), destruction of infrastructure, and recruitment of children..."

The insurgency peaked in the 2000s: the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army, the armed wing of the Maoists, was formed in 2000, and the CPI(Maoist) came up in 2004 after the merger of a number of factions, including CPI(ML) People's War and the Bihar-Bengal-based Maoist Communist Centre.

In the late 2000s, left-wing extremism (LWE), the government's official nomenclature, affected nearly 180 affected districts across an area of 92,000 sq km. But the government's efforts, "combining security enforcement, inclusive development, and community engagement", have dented its reach.

The number of LWE-affected districts reduced to only 38 in April 2024, with only six of these being deemed "districts of concern". Speaking at an event in New Delhi on Sunday, Shah said that in 2025 alone, 270 Naxals have been killed and 680 arrested, with another 1,225 having surrendered to authorities.

How Jane Goodall revolutionised primatology with her methods, dedication

AMITABH SINHA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3

NO HUMAN being probably knew chimpanzees better. And no human was probably better known to chimpanzees than her. She was their best friend amongst human beings.

Jane Goodall, who died on Tuesday aged 91, became a global icon for her pioneering research on chimpanzees of the Gombe National Park in Tanzania. That work has continued for over six decades after she initiated it in 1960, and is possibly the longest-running study of its kind on any animal species, ever.

Goodall spent years living with the chimpanzees, sometimes months at a stretch, in simple tents and camps. She closely studied behavioural patterns that drastically improved human beings' understanding of their closest living relatives in the evolutionary tree.

Among her discoveries was the fact that

chimpanzees could make and use tools, something that was widely thought to be a special capability of human beings, distinguishing them from every other species.

"I think chimpanzees have helped people understand that we are part of and not separated from the animal kingdom, and that has opened the way to having respect for the other amazing beings with whom we share the planet," Goodall told *Scientific American* in 2010.

She also broke many stereotypes — a young woman studying animals alone in the wild was unheard of in the 1960s and 1970s.

A natural

Born in London in 1934, Goodall did not study to become a scientist. Yet, she ended up becoming the world's best-known primatologist (a scholar of primates) and ethologist (who studies animal behaviour in nature).

She was drawn to nature from the very



Goodall kisses Pola, a chimpanzee baby from Budapest Zoo. AP

beginning, and often told the story of falling in love with the fictional character of Tarzan, the boy raised in a jungle, as a child. Goodall said she was often dismissed for express-

ing her desire to study animals, but her mother, Margaret Myfanwe Joseph, actively encouraged her to pursue her dreams.

Keen to travel to Africa for its majestic wildlife, Goodall worked as a waitress to save some money. Goodall was advised to travel to Kenya to meet the well-known palaeontologist Louis Leakey. Since she had no prior academic training, Leakey got her employed as a secretary at the National Museum in Nairobi, which allowed her to spend time with him during his expeditions. Seeing her dedication, Leakey advised her to move to Tanzania to study chimpanzees.

She arrived in Gombe in 1960, initially accompanied by her mother, since it was difficult for women to make such journeys alone at the time. For most of the 1960s and 1970s, Goodall often lived alone in the forest to observe and interact with chimpanzees. She also enrolled for a PhD at Cambridge University and produced a doctoral thesis titled 'The Behaviour of Free-living Chimpanzees in the Gombe Stream Reserve' in 1965.

She established the Jane Goodall Institute in 1977 for the protection of chimpanzees and other Great Apes.

Landmark research

There is nothing extraordinary about humans spending months or years observing animal behaviour. But before Goodall, such studies were mostly carried out in zoos or laboratories. Forest expeditions were relatively short-term affairs.

This is where she broke the mould, spending decades in Gombe. She followed individual chimpanzees and their families over generations, which allowed her to gain deep behavioural insights.

Her approach of naming her subjects instead of assigning them numbers was criticised by some academics for lacking objectivity. Goodall argued that like humans, animals had personalities and feelings. She thus named many chimps around her, including "David Greybeard", "Goliath", and "Fifi".

Discovering that chimpanzees also ate

meat, she first observed a young male chimpanzee eating raw meat, and later witnessed a group working on an organised hunt. Such behaviour of chimpanzees was completely unknown then.

She also documented one friendly chimpanzee using leaves as a tool to fish out termites from a mound. This was the first documented instance of a non-human making and using a tool. When she telegraphed Leakey about it, his reply captured the deeper questions that this discovery threw up: "Now we must redefine man, redefine tools, or accept chimpanzees as humans."

Well into her late 80s, Goodall travelled and engaged in advocacy about the climate crisis and wildlife conservation.

"We know that nature... [is] essential for good psychological development for young children. It's tragic that we have got so isolated in our little bubble of making money that we have stopped thinking about our relationship to the natural world," she had said in an interview with *Forbes* magazine.



Domestic vitality

Domestic firms show more faith in India than foreign investors

The latest data on investment announcements in the country paint a mixed picture, with varying policy implications. New project announcements by the private sector overall rose to nearly a 15-month high in the first half of this financial year to ₹9.9 lakh crore. Such investments have historically been driven by Indian firms, but that concentration has intensified in the last few years. While Indian firms accounted for 77% of all private sector announcements in 2018-19, that share was 94% in the first half of the current financial year. Taken together, these data points underscore a diametrically opposite outlook on the Indian economy held by domestic and foreign firms. Domestic firms seem increasingly optimistic. It remains to be seen how many of these announcements fructify, but the data show that the value of projects actually completed by Indian firms was also at a near 15-month high so far this fiscal. This should come as a relief to the government, which has been pushing the private sector to invest more. The data also show that most of these new investments are to be in the manufacturing sector – another strong positive for the economy. A large part of these new investments was announced before the GST rate cuts were first made public on August 15, implying the private sector’s confidence goes deeper than an expectation of a temporary demand boost. If the investments do come through, that will leave the government with more fiscal room to address developmental and defence issues, both of which need its attention.

Foreign firms, on the other hand, do not seem quite as convinced by the India story. The value of project announcements by foreign companies fell to ₹0.6 lakh crore in the first half of FY26, marking the third consecutive year of decline during this period, and also a five-year low. Several global factors have certainly dampened investor sentiment ever since the COVID-19 pandemic, but the fact remains that global investment outflows nevertheless increased 11% in 2024 and 3% in 2023. While the latest tariff friction with the U.S. would have shaken some confidence in India as an investment destination this year, the government needs to figure out why foreign companies were looking elsewhere even before. The data also reveal that fresh announcements by the government stood at ₹1.5 lakh crore during the period under review, down 71% over the same period last year. This is in line with the Centre’s warnings that it will not be growing its capex as fast as before. However, with the government and foreign companies pulling back, the pressure on Indian firms increases. Simultaneously, the urgency to keep this momentum going through ease of doing business reforms also sharpens.

Peace mirage

The Trump plan serves Israeli goals and does little for Palestinians

President Donald Trump’s 20-point “peace plan” for Gaza has won rare approval from Israel and key Arab countries. While Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says it aligns with Israel’s war objectives, Arab and Muslim leaders have welcomed the initiative as a step towards peace. But one truly important voice is missing – that of any representative of the Palestinian people. When the latest phase of the Gaza war began, following Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack, Israel vowed to “destroy” the Islamist militant group. Two years on, Israel has turned Gaza into dust and displaced the entire population. Yet, Hamas has not been totally defeated. Any lasting peace hinges on an agreement between Israel and true representatives of Palestinians, even if Hamas is to be kept out. Mr. Trump and Mr. Netanyahu have issued an ultimatum to Hamas: accept the plan or face continued Israeli attacks. The Trump plan promises an immediate ceasefire in return for the release of all hostages. It further states that Palestinians will not be forced to leave. For a population living in makeshift shelters, a ceasefire and the permission to stay on will be a relief. But beyond this veneer of concession, the rest of the plan is structured almost entirely to serve Israeli interests.

It proposes to place Gaza under an international governance body overseen by a ‘Board of Peace’, chaired by Mr. Trump. The plan further calls for the deployment of an International Stabilisation Force (ISF) in Gaza, while allowing the Israeli troops to retain “a security perimeter”. Hamas will have to demobilise itself. In essence, Gaza would be placed under a new colonial-type administration and a foreign military force, while Israel would continue to occupy parts of the enclave. Palestinians will be excluded from the top decision making bodies until “reforms of the Palestinian Authority are complete”. This is a plan written in sand. Even if Hamas were to accept the proposal and disband itself, or if Palestinians were to reject Hamas completely, there is no assurance that the Palestinian resistance will wither away. Without a credible pathway to Palestinian statehood, violence will continue in one form or another – the message of October 7. The plan offers no timeline for its lofty goals; it does not specify which countries would contribute troops to the ISF; nor does it clarify who would oversee the implementation process or the “reforms” within the Palestinian Authority. Rather than forcing his ally to end its daily attacks on Palestinians and withdraw through a ceasefire for hostages agreement, Mr. Trump is making an already intractable conflict more complicated. This proposal will not win him peace. Rather, it will drag him deeper into the quicksand of West Asia.

While the standoff with Pakistan in May 2025 culminated in engagement in the air domain, subsequent developments have shifted attention to the maritime theatre, as seen in key naval movements, capability demonstrations and official statements from both India and Pakistan, with their navies recalibrating posture and signalling readiness for potential escalation.

On October 2, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, citing the 1965 war, warned Pakistan of a “resounding response” that could alter its “history and geography” should any misadventure occur in the Sir Creek area – Pakistan is expanding military infrastructure in the region, a development that has been ongoing since 2023. Historically, Pakistan has had a perceived military edge in the area. This follows the statement in August by the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Dinesh Tripathi, that the service would be the first to take action against Pakistan in any future conflict. Operation Sindoor itself was described as designed for a naval forward deterrent posture, highlighting a readiness for a ‘more active role’ than during the standoff in May. Induction of the first indigenously designed diving support vessel, INS *Nistar*, and India’s first joint patrols with the Philippines in the South China Sea reflect both capacity-building and alignment with a wider Indo-Pacific strategy, where a Chinese presence at Karachi and Gwadar remains a key factor.

Pakistan has also reinforced its maritime signalling. In May, it dispersed assets from Karachi to Gwadar to mitigate vulnerability. Since then, it has launched the Chinese-built Hangor-class submarine, PNS *Mangro*, and showcased the domestically developed P282 ship-launched ballistic missile. In the months after, there have also been overlapping NOTAMs, missile tests and live-fire drills – at times just 60 nautical miles apart – sustaining a cycle of alerts and operational friction in the Arabian Sea.

Strategic weight of naval signalling

The surge of naval activity following Operation Sindoor raises a fundamental question of whether these parallel exercises are mere routine activities or a calculated show of force implying a shift in the India-Pakistan deterrence equation in the naval domain. The answer matters because the current crisis, while resolved in the air domain, has left behind a residue of strategic uncertainty at sea. India and Pakistan appear to be recalibrating their naval postures, preparing not just for deterrence but also for the possibility that the next phase of confrontation could unfold in the maritime theatre.

This shift must also be understood against the broader balance of capabilities. Much like the air domain, the maritime balance can no longer be assumed to mirror the asymmetries of Kargil in



Hely Desai

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In the tensions between India and Pakistan after May 2025, the frontiers are shifting from airspace to sea

1999, or India’s decisive superiority of 1971. India retains numerical and geographical advantages, but its naval fleet is aging, raising modernisation concerns. Pakistan is steadily expanding capabilities, inducting Chinese-designed submarines and Babur-class corvettes from Türkiye. With advanced radar, electronic warfare suites, and versatile anti-air and anti-surface weaponry, these assets are significant.

Acknowledging this shift, India’s Navy Chief had also pointed to the “surprising growth” of Pakistan’s naval fleet. While India’s edge may still endure, the gap is narrowing, complicating assumptions of uncontested dominance in the Indian Ocean. Taken together, these developments are important for three reasons: escalation control, external involvement and shifting doctrines on both sides.

First, escalation control is far harder at sea. Unlike aerial skirmishes that may be calibrated and walked back, any naval engagement (ship-on-ship or ship-on-land) would carry a higher risk of crossing the war threshold. Memories of 1971, when Indian naval operations decisively tilted the conflict, add extra sensitivity – even limited maritime action is associated with existential risk in Pakistan’s strategic imagination. Since then, Pakistan’s core maritime concern has been to avert a recurrence of its vulnerability to Indian naval operations, seen in its pursuit of anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities and gradual articulation of a doctrine oriented toward deterrence-by-denial.

The development of Gwadar under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor framework must also be understood within this deterrence logic. Pakistan’s decision-makers have for long said that Gwadar’s origins lay in Islamabad’s own strategic calculations than in Beijing’s. Thus, Gwadar and Karachi seem more than operational or economic hubs – they are also psychological pressure points. Against this backdrop, should the Indian Navy be drawn into direct operations in future, space for coercion short of war would shrink drastically, with India also having to consider the presence and stakes of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).

External dimension

Second, parallel exercises and missile tests by both sides may reflect more than isolated drills, pointing to deliberate efforts to demonstrate readiness and complicate the adversary’s planning cycle. For India, the pattern may suggest an effort to maintain pressure and shape the post-crisis narrative, reflecting unease with how the post-Sindoor outcome has been perceived. Pakistan has sought to underscore the point that its Navy is no longer the vulnerable force of 1971 and is signalling preparedness to deter coercion and complicate Indian operational planning in the maritime domain. India appears intent on retaining the initiative through visible

demonstrations of capability and risk acceptance. This parallelism suggests that both sides may signal preparedness and also be actively invested in shaping a future “conflict-template” at sea.

Third, the external dimension is sharpening. Chinese involvement in the Karachi and Gwadar ports erodes India’s assumed dominance by raising the spectre of PLAN support to Pakistan in crisis. Türkiye’s emerging role, even if limited to supply or training, adds another layer of uncertainty.

These shifts matter because they change how coercion and deterrence work. It has been reported that Indian deployments had forced Pakistan to disperse its fleet from Karachi, demonstrating dominance and imposing psychological costs without triggering escalation, but that playbook may no longer work. At the same time, projections of recent procurements and high-profile inductions may have fuelled expectations of a more prominent naval role in the future, creating a dilemma – the coercive option may be narrowing, but the pressure to use it is increasing.

Finally, there may also be the problem of strategic drift. Both militaries appear to be operating on precedents from past crises, even as new capabilities from hypersonic missiles to drones are altering the escalatory ladder. If crisis decision-making remains anchored in outdated assumptions, the risk of miscalculation grows. In effect, the maritime theatre is becoming the space where this cognitive gap will be tested.

The broad view

The naval element of the next India-Pakistan crisis is unlikely to remain peripheral. Both sides may not just be testing platforms but also signalling thresholds at sea, where risks of miscalculation are qualitatively different from the air domain. Unlike air skirmishes, naval deployments linger, continuously, shaping perceptions of intent and resolve.

Yet, paradoxically, this very pattern may also carry stabilising effects. By testing and observing each other’s tactics, manoeuvres, and novel applications of capability, both navies are building mutual awareness that may, over time, reduce the fog of war. In this sense, the Indian Navy may be acquiring insights into its Pakistani counterpart in a way the Air Force arguably could not prior to Operation Sindoor.

For India, the challenge will be to decide whether to treat the maritime theatre as an arena for early signalling or hold it back as a reserve domain of escalation. The commissioning of stealth frigates, emphasis on joint patrols in the wider Indo-Pacific, and drive for indigenous capacity suggest that New Delhi is preparing for both possibilities: an expanded regional role and a crisis-specific coercive lever. The question then remains whether the Navy will be drawn into frontline operations earlier than in the past.

This clean energy rise needs climate finance expansion



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Without this, India will struggle to meet its climate targets

battery storage, scaling up green hydrogen, and transitioning to sustainable transport and agriculture. The current flow of climate finance falls well short of this target.

By December 2024, India’s cumulative aligned green, social, sustainability and sustainability-linked (GSS+) debt issuance had reached \$55.9 billion, representing a 186% increase since 2021, with green bonds accounting for 83% of total aligned issuance. The trajectory remains strong, with green bond investment in India crossing \$45 billion in 2025, and sustainable finance targets aiming for \$100 billion by 2030, indicating robust private sector engagement.

However, the challenge of expanding beyond large corporates remains valid. While the private sector was responsible for 84% of the total green bond issuance, access for micro, small, and medium enterprises, agri-tech innovators, and local infrastructure developers continues to need enhancement through concessional finance and risk-sharing mechanisms. India’s successful solar energy auctions under the Solar Park Scheme have been cited as one initiative in support of attracting private financing. Similarly, India’s issuance of sovereign green bonds and the success of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)-regulated social bonds have channelled private capital into climate action, education and health care.

Changes to strategy

To unlock this gap in finance, India must diversify and deepen its climate finance strategy, starting with public finance. National and State governments can use Budget allocations and fiscal tools to attract private capital and de-risk green investments.

Blended finance can bridge this divide. While concessional finance and risk-sharing mechanisms are often referenced, there is a need

to examine how they work across sectors, scales and investor profiles. Credit enhancement instruments such as partial guarantees or subordinated debt can improve the risk-return profile of green projects, making them more attractive to private lenders. Similarly, performance or loan guarantees can unlock finance for mid-sized clean energy infrastructure in Tier II and III cities, where governance and delivery risks may deter investors.

Scaling such models will require unlocking domestic institutional capital, from pension funds, insurers and sovereign wealth funds. India, too, can unlock similar potential by enabling its institutional investors such as the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation or the Life Insurance Corporation, to allocate a portion of their portfolios to climate-aligned investments. This would require regulatory reforms such as clearer environmental, social, and governance investment guidelines, risk mitigation instruments and long-term green project pipelines.

Tap carbon markets

Policy and institutional support are critical. Carbon markets offer another avenue. India’s new Carbon Credit Trading Scheme could unlock new finance streams if it is transparent, well regulated and equitable. Equally urgent is financing for adaptation and loss and damage.

India must lead not just on clean energy but also on climate finance innovation, with visible, scalable breakthroughs. This can be through blockchain for tracking climate finance, Artificial Intelligence-driven risk assessment for green portfolios, or tailored blended finance models that reflect India’s unique social, environmental and economic realities.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Contradictory

A tribute to the RSS on October 2 alongside Gandhi Jayanti raises troubling questions of historical irony. Mahatma Gandhi embodied non-violence, interfaith harmony and social justice, while the RSS distanced itself from the freedom struggle, the Salt Satyagraha and Quit India movement. The ideological hostility to Gandhi’s

principles cannot be ignored. National tributes should be consistent with truth, not political convenience.

Gopalaswamy J., Chennai

Transparency needed

The politics around the Karur stampede is like a sty in the eye. A commission of inquiry has been instituted to get to the

bottom of the facts. There has also been criticism of an incommodious venue for what was a very big rally. Whether the authorities concerned will be proceeded against remains to be seen. There must be an attempt to be honest.

Mani Natarajan, Chennai

Jumping ahead

I have been talking to a few

children in my neighbourhood and was aghast to know that most of the schools in my town have begun teaching Class 10 subjects to Class nine students. This has been happening since August this year. It is a matter of concern as Class nine has important lessons such as ‘Democracy’, ‘The French Revolution’, ‘The Non-Cooperation

movement’ and a lot of fundamental mathematics that is designed for this age group. It is unfortunate that a generation of students will miss these subjects/ topics when schools pressure them to focus only on the board examination. Such a trend also affects the holistic learning experience, placing undue emphasis on rote preparation rather than

conceptual understanding. This will have an impact on the analytical abilities of students. The Education Department officials, school administrators and parents must reconsider this practice.

Bhavya Kakarla, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

GROUND ZERO



A stampede broke out during an election campaign rally for Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, led by the actor-turned-politician Vijay, in Karur. The incident claimed 41 lives. MOORTHY M.

In Karur, where there was no way out

On September 27, thousands of people gathered in Karur, Tamil Nadu, to attend a rally by actor-turned-politician Vijay. As the chief of the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam party arrived hours late, the crowd swelled and surged towards his vehicle, triggering a stampede that killed 41 people and injured over 100. **C. Jaisankar** and **Nacchinarkkiniyan M.** report on the tragedy, caused by many factors, including poor planning and alleged security lapses

Lalli, a 32-year-old homemaker, is consumed by guilt. She is unable to shake off the feeling that she failed to save her nephew, Thuruvishnu, from being crushed to death at a political rally last week.

On the evening of September 27, a Saturday, Lalli carried the infant in her arms and walked to the venue of the rally in Karur, a textile hub in Tamil Nadu. Her husband and their two children went as well. They were excited to hear the popular actor, Vijay, address the crowd as president of his fledgling political party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK). The rally was part of the actor-turned-politician's State-wide tour. Tamil Nadu is scheduled to have Assembly elections in 2026.

At the venue, the crowd kept swelling despite the heat. Vijay arrived several hours late, and there was allegedly little security in place. Many people fainted, while others tried to get closer to Vijay's vehicle. Chaos erupted and the resulting crowd crush left 41 people dead, including 10 babies, and injured more than 100 people. Most of the adult victims were aged 18-30.

"I thought I could save him. This guilt will stay with me until I die," says Lalli, who is sitting with family members in Thuruvishnu's house. The cries of the family echo through the house in Vadivel Nagar in Velusampuram, located barely 50 metres from where Vijay addressed the crowd.

Lalli's brother Vimal, a 25-year-old daily-wage worker, and his wife Matheswari, 22, had Thuruvishnu two years after getting married. On the morning after the stampede, the couple performed the last rites of their 22-month-old son. He was the youngest to die in the stampede.



A deadly cocktail

For the people of Velusampuram, where houses and textile shops can be found on both sides of the roads, the rally has left deep scars. Many residents insist that the disaster was neither accidental nor unforeseeable, and that it was the outcome of poor planning and official neglect.

Crowds had begun to gather at the spot of the rally, scheduled to begin at 3 p.m. on September 27, from the previous night. Young men roamed the stretch putting up posters, stringing banners, and blaring TVK songs on loudspeakers.

"By around 10 a.m. on Saturday, many people had already arrived. By 3 p.m., traffic could not move through this road. And by evening, there was simply no space for anyone to even turn," says G. Sitharam, a resident.

Many believe that the timing of the rally was poor. "Saturday evening is when textile workers collect their wages in Karur. There is already some rush at that time. If you hold a large political rally in such a congested pocket at the same time, you're asking for trouble," says B. Balusamy, another resident.

Vijay arrived late, say residents. "Had he kept to the schedule, people would have left early. But he arrived after 7 p.m. The town was overflowing with people by then," says V. Balaji, a textile worker from Gowripuram in Karur town.

Residents also allege that they had little access to basic needs, especially drinking water. Karur has a hot, semi-arid climate and while September



Had Vijay kept to the schedule, people would have left early. But he arrived after 7 p.m. The town was overflowing with people by then.

V. BALAJI
Textile worker

marks the end of the hottest season, temperatures during the day can soar to 37-38°C.

"People stood in the sun for hours. I saw children faint, and boys climbing transformers just to catch a glimpse of Vijay," says G. Chitra, a homemaker and resident of Velusampuram. "There was only one hotel nearby, which was open. But the food there was too expensive for workers and daily-wage families. In the surrounding shops, there was no food available."

Lalli recalls the moments before the stampede occurred. "When Vijay began to speak, there was a power cut, and the mic failed. The crowd grew restless. I was holding Thuruvishnu in one hand and my daughter in the other when someone shoved us. I fell and he slipped from my arms."

For two hours, a hapless Lalli, who was injured herself, searched the lanes, before being admitted to the Karur Medical College Hospital. She learned only the next morning that her nephew had been found dead. Thuruvishnu's father, Vimal, had recognised him in TV footage from the government hospital. He had rushed to the spot to find his son's small body on a stretcher.

A descent into chaos

Karur residents draw parallels with other recent political gatherings, including by the two main parties in the State – the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida



Matheswari lost her 22-month-old son in the crowd crush. VENGADESH R.



Only a few policemen were standing along the side of the road. Many of the policemen were posted in the outer ring of the meeting spot, only to regulate the traffic

KARTHICK
Survivor from Erode district

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, and leaders of various political parties expressed grief and shock over the tragedy.

The State government responded swiftly, arranging medical aid and overnight autopsies, and promptly handed over the bodies to the grieving families. It also constituted a one-member Commission of Inquiry by retired High Court Judge Aruna Jagadeesan to probe the tragedy.

Hours after the tragedy, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin flew down to Tiruchi and drove to Karur past midnight, to console the bereaved families and call on the injured. The government directed doctors and specialists to the Karur Government Medical College Hospital, to take care of the people who continued to arrive in ambulances until late at night.

He later gave a statement saying, "No political party leader would ever wish for their followers or innocent civilians to die. When political parties and public organisations conduct such events, it is the duty of all of us to establish rules on how to act responsibly in the future."

The next day, AIADMK general secretary Palaniswami and a host of leaders of various political parties also visited the injured at the hospital. Palaniswami blamed the police for failing to provide adequate security. Terming the probe panel an "eyewash", he demanded an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The TVK has moved the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court, also seeking a CBI inquiry into the tragedy.

The BJP constituted an eight-member delegation of Members of Parliament (MP) of the National Democratic Alliance, led by MP Hema Malini, to study the reasons for the stampede. The team visited Karur on September 30 and interacted with the survivors. They demanded an impartial probe led by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court. Malini told reporters that the venue was "inappropriate" for a rally held for thousands of people. "In the history of politics, such a tragedy has not happened," she said, adding that both the organisers and the administration should be held accountable. A day before the team visited the district, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also visited Karur and consoled families who had lost their loved ones.

The incident has emerged as a rallying point for the TVK and the main Opposition parties, including the AIADMK and the BJP, to hold the DMK government responsible for the tragedy. The State government has strongly refuted the charges made against it.

Vijay, who has not yet visited the grieving families or the injured being treated in hospitals, issued a video statement three days after the tragedy. "As a human being, how could I leave the place when so many people were affected? I chose not to go there immediately only to avoid the risk of any further unforeseen incidents," he said. He also addressed the Chief Minister and told him with a dramatic flourish to "take revenge against him, and spare the TVK cadre".

What the police say

The police say Velusampuram is often identified by political parties as a location for public meetings. According to S. Davidson Devasirvatham, Additional Director General of Police, Law and Order, the organisers had originally sought permission for the rally at the Light House Roundabout. This was denied on the grounds that it was not a suitable location to hold a meeting. A day later, they sought permission at Uzhavar Sandhai. They were denied permission again, on the grounds that the location was narrow. Finally, they were allotted Velusampuram, and the organisers consented to this.

Karthick from Erode district, who is one of the survivors, is critical of the police. "Only a few policemen were standing along the side of the road. Many of the policemen were posted in the outer ring of the meeting spot, only to regulate the traffic," he says. "Only around 10-15 policemen were walking alongside or in front of the vehicle. The tragedy could have been prevented if more policemen had been posted at the meeting spot and a large venue had been provided."

Dismissing the accusations, Devasirvatham says there was adequate security in place. The police deployment was in a ratio of 1:20 (police-public), he says. As the crowd swelled, Devasirvatham says more policemen were called in from the neighbouring districts.

A policeman on the condition of anonymity says the situation caused panic, even among the police. "I saw a person try and get a glimpse of the actor and slip and fall near his vehicle. The crowd trampled over him. Many people, who became tired and dehydrated, fell down on the road, only to be crushed by others. No one came forward to save the injured. Everybody was focused only on catching a glimpse of Vijay." He says he lifted up seven people trapped in the crowd. Of them, he laments that he could save only one.

While some blame the DMK and others blame Vijay for the tragedy, for many people, grief has not turned into anger against the actor. Sanjay, who lost his 7-year-old brother S. Kirithiyadav in the crowd crush, feels the actor cannot be held fully responsible. "Thalapathy [the honorific name popularly used for Vijay] would never have wanted this for us. If it had been in his control, he would have stopped it. He would never allow something like this to happen to any of us," he says.

Neela, Thuruvishnu's aunt, sits besides Matheswari. She says the mother, who suffers a speech and hearing impairment, is in shock. She says, "The pain in her eyes says it all."

Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK).

K. Veeramani, a resident of Velusampuram, says, "The DMK's Mupperum Vizha drew a much larger crowd. [Mupperum Vizha is a festival held in honour of icons of the Dravidian movement, such as Periyar and party founder C.N. Annadurai.] But it was held near the ring road, where there is space. Even the Opposition leader, Edappadi Palaniswami [of the AIADMK], addressed a meeting here two days earlier without incident. Why did this collapse into chaos?"

Participants say trouble began when Vijay's vehicle started moving through the crowd on one of the carriageways of the road with a median. His vehicle inched its way to the selected spot, where he was to address the gathering.

As people, including those who had been waiting since morning, tried to get closer to the vehicle, a major commotion broke out. People were pushed back and many lost their balance and fell on the road, say residents. Minutes after Vijay climbed on a makeshift stage atop his vehicle, frantic people tried to leave the area any which way, to save their lives.

Amid this confusion, Vijay delivered a few minutes of his speech. The atmosphere turned electric when he broke into a jingle, targeting former State Minister V. Senthilbalaji in connection with a money-laundering case.

Photos and videos that emerged later show people throwing footwear towards the campaign vehicle while Vijay was speaking. Some video clips showed lathi-wielding policemen charging at some people in the crowd. On hearing the frantic cries of people in the crowd, Vijay tossed water bottles at them. A video also showed the actor pausing his speech when he saw ambulances struggling to make their way through the crowd.

It was only when he seemed to realise the magnitude of the situation that Vijay cut short his speech. He quickly left the venue, went to Tiruchi, which is nearly two hours away by road, and flew to Chennai on a chartered plane; this drew a lot of criticism. He ignored journalists at the airport. Hours later, the actor posted on X, expressing grief over the incident and offering condolences to those killed.

According to officials of the Karur Medical College Hospital, 39 of the victims were brought in dead, while two others died later. A senior doctor says the primary cause of death was compressive asphyxia, triggered by intense pressure on the chest during the crowd surge. "Many people collapsed within minutes of being caught in the crush," the doctor says, adding that in some cases, he found rib and spinal fractures.

The First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Karur town police on September 27 says Vijay's arrival was deliberately delayed so more people could come to the rally. It says the police warned TVK leaders of the cadre's behaviour, but their warnings were not heeded. It also says that while the organisers had stated that 10,000 people would come, more than 25,000 people turned up at the rally.

The people, who waited in large numbers for several hours without food, water, and medical assistance, became fatigued due to the heat and crowding, which consequently led to a crush resulting in multiple deaths, the FIR adds.

The police charged TVK's Karur (west) district secretary V.P. Mathiyazhagan, party general secretary A 'Bussy' Anand, State joint general secretary C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar and others under Sections 105 (culpable homicide), 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant) and 125 (endangering life of others) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and Section 3 of the Tamil Nadu Property (Prevention of Damage and Loss) Act, 1982. They have arrested Mathiyazhagan and central town secretary M.C. Pounraj and remanded them in judicial custody.

The blame game

The tragedy, believed to be the first of its kind in a political rally in India, drew nationwide attention. As soon as news of it broke, President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

Credit overdrive

Increased limits on loans against securities poses risks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its recent monetary policy, has gone all-out to push credit growth — at below 10 per cent this fiscal — in an effort to boost consumption. On Wednesday, it announced two bold steps — first, increasing the retail limit on borrowing against shares and debt securities from ₹20 lakh to ₹1 crore per person; and second, raising the limit for IPO financing from ₹10 lakh to ₹25 lakh per person.

There is no denying the potential of these steps to infuse liquidity in the hands of consumers. But they are unlikely to move the needle much on bank credit growth. However, the moves could encourage unwanted speculative activity, with downsides for investors and the banking system. Lending against shares and other securities forms a small part of the overall bank credit. Loans against shares given by scheduled commercial banks stood at ₹9,730 crore towards the end of July 2025. This is a miniscule portion of the personal loan portfolio of banks worth over ₹61 lakh crore. Most of the financing against shares is undertaken by NBFCs and stock market intermediaries. In fact, with the markets in a corrective phase, borrowing against shares has been tepid in recent months, with a 3 per cent decline in loans outstanding between April and July this year. If stock prices turn weak, the stress in these loans can mount, leading to higher non-performing loans in this segment. Higher borrowing limits will help investors raise more funds by pledging the shares, listed debt securities, REITs and InVITs they hold. With higher retail participation since the pandemic increasing the retail holding to more than 23 per cent of domestic market capitalisation, investors can pledge these securities to ramp up their consumption — in other words, activating what economists call the ‘wealth effect’. But pledging shares at current levels could be risky for borrowers. With stocks trading at elevated levels, a correction will lead to margin calls — which means that borrowers would be asked to give additional securities as collateral to meet the shortfall. On failure to do so, the lenders sell the security pledged with them, exacerbating the decline in stock prices and hurting investment portfolios. The increase in the IPO financing limit was not warranted at this juncture; the stock market regulator is, in fact, trying to quell speculative activity by individual investors in the primary market. Individual investors have increased their activity in the primary market by betting on listing gains for quick returns. While individual investors’ share in IPO allotment on the mainboard was 28.5 per cent in August 2025, their share in SME IPOs was 37.8 per cent. If banks begin wooing consumers with loans to buy shares in IPOs, speculation in the IPO segment will only increase. Trying to improve credit flow is all very well, but the central bank must be mindful of financial stability and ensure that these funds are used for productive purposes.

POCKET



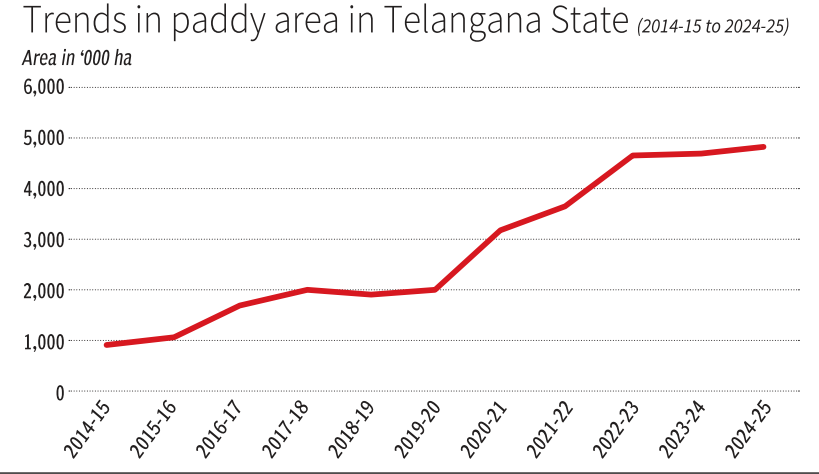
Urea shortfall is a demand issue

POLICY SKEW. Paddy demands a lot of urea — and support prices have unequivocally favoured paddy over other crops



A NARAYANAMOORTHY

Farmers standing in long queues to purchase urea fertiliser is an unusual sight in India. Yet, this has become a reality in several States this crop season, most visibly in Telangana. Officials explain that the good monsoon and consequent increase in the area under paddy cultivation have created a sudden demand. But this explanation does not tell the full story. What is unfolding today is a direct result of the faulty crop price policy that successive governments have pursued for decades. Unless we connect fertilizer demand with crop pricing, we will continue to treat the symptom without addressing the root cause. Before the Green Revolution of the mid-1960s, the use of chemical fertilizers was less than 2 kg/hectare in India. Farmers largely relied on organic manures. With the introduction of high-yielding varieties of paddy and wheat, alongside assured irrigation and fertilizer subsidies, urea use shot up dramatically. In the early 1970s, total urea consumption was less than 2 million tonnes (mt), it had crossed 16 mt by 2010-11. Today (2023-24), India consumes over 21 mt annually, making it the second largest consumer of urea in the world. State-level patterns mirror the cropping choices of farmers. Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and more recently Telangana, account for a disproportionately large share of urea consumption because of the dominance of paddy. Crops such as pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals, which receive little price support, consume far less fertilizer. Thus, fertilizer demand has not been uniform; it has followed the trajectory of government procurement and price support policies. PADDY VS OTHER CROPS Paddy cultivation is highly fertilizer-intensive. On average, farmers use 150-200 kg of urea per hectare on paddy, depending on the availability of irrigation. In contrast, pulses and oilseeds require far less, often less than 30-40 kg per hectare. Even wheat, though a major fertilizer-consuming crop, requires relatively less urea than paddy. This skewed pattern explains why a surge in paddy acreage immediately translates into soaring fertilizer demand. In States like Telangana and



Chhattisgarh, where paddy area has expanded rapidly in recent years due to attractive procurement at minimum support prices (MSP), urea sales have increased correspondingly. The present shortage in supply is, therefore, not simply a case of distribution inefficiency but of structural demand rooted in government policy. The MSP policy has strongly favoured paddy over other crops. While MSP is announced for 23 crops, in practice, large-scale procurement is effectively carried out only for paddy and wheat. Farmers in Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Haryana know that if they grow paddy, the government will procure it at a guaranteed price. Such an assured market does not exist for pulses, oilseeds or millets. This price distortion has encouraged farmers to expand paddy cultivation far beyond agro-climatically suitable regions. Paddy was not grown before the 1970s in Punjab, but it is a dominant crop now. Similarly, Telangana, which traditionally cultivated cotton and coarse cereals, has witnessed its paddy area expand about five times in the last 10 years (Figure 1). As paddy expanded, so too did the demand for urea. The fertilizer queues we see today are a result of the MSP-driven bias in crop choice. Farmers do use urea excessively and inefficiently, particularly in paddy cultivation. Several studies suggest that farmers often apply more nitrogen than recommended, believing that higher doses ensure better yields. However, the efficiency of nitrogen use in Indian agriculture is very low, estimated at only 30-35 per cent. This means that nearly two-thirds of the nitrogen applied is lost to the environment through evaporation, leaching/runoff. But excessive use cannot be seen in isolation. Farmers’ choices are shaped by economic compulsions. With paddy assured of procurement and higher returns compared to other crops, farmers are willing to invest in fertilizers to maximise yields. Blaming farmers for “overuse” without acknowledging the policy-induced incentive structure is unfair. The environmental consequences of excessive urea use are well documented. Continuous application of nitrogenous (N) fertilizers without adequate phosphates (P), potash (K) and organic

As long as policy incentives overwhelmingly promote paddy cultivation, farmers will continue to use large amounts of urea

Audit reports — what’s included and what’s left out

ICAI must urge Ministry of Corporate Affairs to streamline rules on audit reports

Mohan R Lavi

The Auditors’ report for the year ended December 2024 on the Consolidated Financial statements of Tesla is about three pages in length. The Auditors’ report for the year ended March 2025 on the Consolidated Financial statements of L&T is about 10 pages long. In comparing these reports, exclusions have been made for Key Audit Matters and Other Matters which are entity specific. Exclusion has also been made for the Companies Auditors Report, Order 2020 which is unique only to India. In other words, the statements and assertions made by auditors in India are more than double in length that those abroad. Is there a case for audit reports in India to be made shorter without compromising on conveying what they have to say? The standard auditors’ report in India has eight headers. These are Opinion, Basis for Opinion, Key Audit Matters, Information other than the financial information and the Auditors’ report thereon, responsibilities of management and those charged with governance, Auditors’ responsibility for the audit, Other Matters and a report on other legal and regulatory requirements. Audit reports prescribed by the Public

Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) in the US have only four headers — Opinion, Basis for opinion, report on internal control over financial reporting and critical audit matters. PCAOB does not mandate that the responsibilities of the management, the auditor and the report on other legal and regulatory requirements be included in the report of the auditors’ report. Some critics have commented that read in its entirety, the independent auditors’ report reads like an insurance document. There are numerous disclaimers and safely worded sentences. For instance, auditors state “Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with SAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these consolidated financial statements”. They also state: “Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain



AUDIT REPORTS. The fingerprint

audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.” Stakeholders in companies look upon audit reports for an assurance (though reasonable) that there are no accounting surprises that are not being either accounted or disclosed. They would also be concerned that accounting accidents (think Indus-Ind Bank) are still occurring despite a lot of regulatory supervision over the last decade or so. There is a consensus amongst stakeholders that although it is not the primary responsibility of the auditor to

detect a fraud, he should certainly report transactions that appear suspicious. Most of these transactions show up later in a weak cash flow statement, undisclosed related party transactions or management greed. NEED FOR CHANGE The format of the financial statements is expected to change from 2027. The new format of the profit or loss account mirrors the cash flow statement by reporting activity-wise profits or losses. This could be an opportune moment for the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) to revise SA 700- Forming an opinion and reporting on Financial Statements. ICAI should also represent to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) that the Companies Act should be amended so that auditors report talks only of exceptions and not templates. There could be a main audit report that summarizes the work done by the auditors and their conclusions with exceptions if any. An annexure to the audit report can detail the work done by the auditor, his exceptions and conclusions. As James Baldwin says, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can change until it is faced”. The writer is a chartered accountant

LETTERS TO EDITOR Send your letters by email to bleditor@thehindu.co.in or by post to 'Letters to the Editor', The Hindu Business Line, Kasturi Buildings, 859-860, Anna Salai, Chennai 600002.

Simple name, massive aim This refers to “Does Arattai have the muscle to take on WhatsApp?” (October 3). With 500 million Indian users on WhatsApp alone, India needs a social media platform of its own like Arattai. Its features will have to at least match if not be better than that of its competitors. It should also address the major concerns of users, such as privacy and data security. Arattai should find ways of spreading its presence on a large scale beyond word of mouth. It may be worth thinking of renaming it to a word

simple to use and remember. YG Chouksey Pune Harvesting rain This refers to the news report, ‘Villagers want to escape India’s new ‘Rain Capital’ (October 3). With the annual rainfall ranging between 7000-9000 mm since 2019, the remote hamlet Patharpunj in Sahayadri hill range of Satara district of Maharashtra has emerged as the new ‘Rain Capital’ by overtaking Cherrapunji of Meghalaya. The State should not only take steps

to tap Patharpunj’s tourism potential, it must also alleviate the people’s distress. The State must also divert the excess rainfall to the parched Marathwada region. This would alleviate the sufferings of Patharpunj villagers by overcoming the problems of agricultural fields getting inundated and crops getting damaged and also help the drought prone Marathwada region. RV Baskaran Pune Curbing food adulteration This refers to ‘FSSAI directs States to

ramp up surveillance during festival season’ (October 3). What impact FSSAI’s efforts will have on the ground remains to be seen. There have been instances of open defiance to FSSAI norms. No wonders if the dishonest acts of some ends up affecting unsuspecting consumers. SK Gupta New Delhi Rate pause Apropos, “Prudent Pause” (October 3), the MPC’s decision to hold the repo rate steady provides stability at



OPINION

The
Hindustan Times
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

{ OUR TAKE }

Sending out the wrong message

It is in poor form for Opposition leaders to criticise the government on foreign shores

In 2017, on one of his first visits outside the US after two terms in the White House, to India to speak at a conference organised by this newspaper, President Barack Obama refused to be drawn into commenting on his successor Donald Trump, despite events back home providing him with enough motivation and ammunition to do so. Politicians from many other countries do the same, preferring to keep their domestic political rivalries just that — domestic. It is almost as if there is a universal (and unwritten) code on how politicians should behave when they travel abroad. Their criticism of the government (or rivals) back home is muted; and they always talk about their country and its achievements with pride.

After all, anyone travelling on a country's passport can be seen as its ambassador. As the late Winston Churchill once said: "When I am abroad, I always make it a rule never to criticise or attack the Government of my own country. I make up for lost time when I come home." He said this in 1947, when Labour was in power in the UK, and added that while "speaking to foreigners I have even defended our present Socialist rulers, and always I have spoken with confidence of the future destiny of our country".

This isn't just about good form. It is about leaders ensuring that their comments while travelling abroad do not hurt their home countries either perceptually (reputation) or materially (attractiveness as a destination to study or do business).

It is in this context that recent comments by the Indian National Congress' Rahul Gandhi, leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, need to be seen. This time, the comments were made in Colombia, South America, but Gandhi has made similar comments elsewhere before, including in the US and the UK. Speaking at a university in Medellin earlier this week, Gandhi seemed to suggest that India was seeing a "wholesale attack on the democratic system", and that large-scale corruption is rampant in the country with "three or four businesses taking over the whole economy...."

This is not to suggest that the government's record is blemishless or that it is beyond reproach. Nor is it to suggest that the Opposition should not criticise the government. It is the Opposition's job to oppose the government of the day. They can choose to take the high ground and attack policies or they can choose to go low and get personal. They can even unleash troll armies on social media. All of this is their right. But when leaders travelling outside a country criticise the government back home, they are allowing their domestic politics to override everything else. Indeed, portraying India as a flawed democracy where there is no rule of law, and where corruption is rife is not a good message to send about a country that will soon be the world's third-largest economy, and which has, over the years, and through the work of successive governments, including some headed by Gandhi's party, the Congress, managed to pull hundreds of millions out of poverty, built an IT industry that is world-class, and nurtured institutions of the sort that aren't commonly found in the developing world. And it is definitely not a good message to send about a country which is a thriving multi-party democracy — several opponents of the current political hegemon, the Bharatiya Janata Party, are in charge of important states — and where the transfer of power, both in states and at the Centre, has always been peaceful.

Then there's the clinching argument on why domestic politics is wasted on foreign audiences: They do not have a vote.

Back to the future: Reimagining the world of Indian IT

The US's H-IB squeeze is a reminder of the opportunity and potential for world-class innovation for Indian IT at home even as it doubles down on existing partnerships abroad and striking new ones

In my five decades in the IT industry, I have come to accept one enduring truth, that "uncertainty is the only certainty". The recent hike in H-IB visa application fees is a reminder of this. It brings back memories of disruptions such as the dot-com collapse, the 2008 financial crisis, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Each of these seemed existential at the time, yet out of them emerged resilience and renewed confidence in the Indian IT sector's ability to adapt.

The US-India technology corridor, meanwhile, has long thrived on complementary partnerships. The H-IB visa was a policy innovation that addressed America's consistent shortage of STEM professionals. It powered US innovation while enabling Indian talent to contribute globally. However, as costs rise, the larger story now is less about compliance, but more about how India can build resilience in its talent pipelines and recalibrate partnerships. Indian firms have already been reducing visa-dependency over the years through local hiring, reskilling, and hybrid delivery models. While policy measures may cause short-term friction, they cannot undo the strength of the US-India technology collaboration.

The story of Indian IT has always been one of adaptability. Each crisis tested us, but also revealed our potential. The dot-com bust revealed the hollowness of the stereotype that Indian IT was simply "cheap labour". That view was never accurate. What truly defined the IT sector was a talent ecosystem of disciplined, creative, and determined professionals with a can-do attitude and solution-mindset, who built trust through innovation and impeccable execution.

The financial crisis of 2008 once again

demanding leaner operations and new delivery models. Yet, Indian firms not only survived but deepened partnerships abroad. The pandemic was the ultimate test when offices shut overnight, but within weeks, hundreds of thousands of employees were working from home, keeping global systems running without interruption.

This was not just resilience, but reinvention at scale. It was the outcome of a culture of continuous learning, flexibility, future readiness and efficient management of talent. Also, industry bodies such as Nasscom ensured that non-compliance rarely slipped through. Indian IT's reputation was built on responsibility and governance, and that credibility is now India's strategic asset.

The rise of Global Capability Centres underscores this journey. Multinationals that once focused on cost advantages, now stay for ingenuity and problem-solving. Indian IT firms themselves have grown into innovation-driven enterprises, shaping solutions across health care, finance, energy, education, supply chains, and mobility. As Clayton Christensen emphasised in *The Innovator's Solution*, the real task business is not defending the present but building capabilities for the future. In the era of AI- and Agentic AI-driven disruption, this lesson is urgent as we are required to reinvent and reimagine the future with extreme agility.

Talent flows to where opportunities exist, and history shows that no border can contain it for long. From the Silk Route to the Industrial Revolution, from post-war America to modern-day China, mobility of talent has always driven prosperity. Nations that welcomed it thrived, and those that resisted stagnated.

India, in its early years of Independence, adopted institution-building to nurture its brightest minds. The India Institute of Science, IITs, AIIMS, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Indian Space Research Organisation, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and so on, gave scientists and engineers both purpose and world-class platforms. Many, who could have left, chose to stay and build. My personal story also finds resonance here as I went to the US for higher studies, but returned due to an urge to contribute to India. The Tata Group



S Ramadorai

{ THIRD EYE }

Barkha Dutt



In poll-bound Bihar, signs of politician Prashant Kishor

In Rajgir, Bihar — once the capital of the Magadha Empire — amid its hot springs, cut out caves, Buddhist monasteries and gentle undulating fields, I witnessed a dramatic and discernible shift in Indian politics.

This was, after all, the home base of Nitish Kumar, the beleaguered chief minister, where we were following political strategist-turned-politician, Prashant Kishor (PK), on the campaign trail. He had brought his fight straight to the home turf of the man on whose side he had once worked. There was a sea of supporters thronging to get a glimpse of PK, whose political party, Jan Suraj, turned a year old this week. Of course, before announcing the formation of Jan Suraj, Kishor spent time walking across the state on foot, in the sort of mass contact *padayatra* he used to help craft for other leaders during a different stage of his life.

Though those opposed to the BJP have sometimes caricatured PK as the party's "B Team", what I saw and heard belied that criticism and rhetoric entirely.

First, among the young people at the Rajgir Sabha, who pushed and shoved almost hysterically for the chance to shake Kishor's hand through his car window, there was what I can only call a desperate hunger for hope and change. Most were young men, mostly between

the ages of 17 and 25, with their whole lives ahead of them — hoping that here, finally, was something that would break the heavy weight of status quo.

And certainly, to Kishor's credit, his speech — which did not fundamentally change as he changed geographies within the state — was highly unusual. He begins his address by declaring that he is not a politician and he has not come to ask for votes. Later, when I asked him to explain that disclaimer and pushed him to clarify if he was not a *neta*, then who he was, he instantly retorted, "*Main Bihar ka beta hoon*" (I am a son of Bihar).

To return to the *sabhas*, Kishor engaged in an almost Socratic dialogue with the crowds assembled to hear him. Those who believe that Kishor would never target the Prime Minister (PM) — the first political campaign in India that he worked on was Narendra Modi's prime ministerial campaign of 2014 — should go on the ground and hear him.

What he does is both subtle and hard hitting. He does not personally attack the PM or any other politician, unlike, let's say Rahul Gandhi. Instead, he asks questions of the voters. Should they be focused on Modi's "56 inch chest or their malnourished children's 15 inch chest"? Should not a vote for the BJP translate into a



India's present challenge is to consolidate existing strengths while building new ones. Government, business, and academia must act in concert.

HT ARCHIVE

reinforced this philosophy. Long before it became fashionable, the group invested in education and people, proving that talent, nurtured with foresight, becomes the true foundation of progress.

Globalisation is not a passing phase; it is a reality. Our economies, supply chains, and technologies are deeply interconnected and interdependent. Cultural battles and barriers, therefore, serve us no good. For India, this means staying true to our ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family) while promoting collaboration, inclusion, and dialogue.

At the same time, India cannot afford to be overly dependent on a few countries. We must expand partnerships with Europe, East Asia, Africa, West Asia, Latin America and Oceania. In today's volatile world, trade and investment are easily weaponised.

Self-reliance, therefore, is an imperative to withstand external shocks.

According to the economist Michael Porter, a nation's competitive advantage rests on four interconnected forces: The quality of its factors of production, the sophistication of its domestic demand, the strength of its supporting industries, and the competitiveness and structure of its firms. Seen through this lens, India's path ahead becomes clearer.

India must invest in advanced research ecosystems, state-of-the-art educational institutions, stronger intellectual property regimes, closer academia-industry collaboration, and incentives for entrepreneurship. Also, India is a huge market, confronting challenges of scale

in health care, finance, education, and sustainability. If our entrepreneurs rise to these challenges with imagination, the solutions they build here can not only transform India but also set global standards. Digital public goods such as Aadhaar and UPI are prime examples.

India's start-up ecosystem has grown rapidly, but fragmented linkages between research institutions, venture capital, and established firms make it critical to build stronger bridges between discovery and deployment, so that ideas translate into impact. And, finally, the structure of Indian firms matters greatly, and sustaining a culture of competition, global ambition and sound governance, will be vital for India's leadership.

India's present challenge is to consolidate existing strengths while building new ones. Government, business, and academia must act in concert. Policies should enable, not obstruct. Above all, credibility matters. A high "say-do ratio" inspires confidence in talent, entrepreneurs, and investors alike.

The world today needs imagination that turns disruption into opportunity and uncertainty into progress. India, with its cultural depth and its potential for growth, is uniquely positioned to lead with this vision. If we invest in talent, align policy with purpose, and nurture collaboration, India's best days are ahead of us.

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factory in Nalanda, and not in Surat? Have they ever voted on the basis of better education for their children? More than 7% of Bihar's population migrates out in search of employment. And this economically enforced *palayan* (distress migration) forms the backdrop of many of the questions Kishor throws at his audience. He underlines that till the voter changes the issues she votes on, every politician will continue to disappoint.

Everything about Kishor's campaign is atypical. As is his blunt break from the political correctness around prohibition in the state. Nitish Kumar thought he was courting the female voter of Bihar with the policy, offering an evident shield against alcoholism-induced domestic violence. Kishor calls out the humbug of this idea pointing to the thriving underground liquor mafia that provides "home delivery" for booze, while denying the state much-needed revenue. It is a policy he says he will reverse within hours of being in government.

So, can Kishor win Bihar? Or is the idea still too audacious at this time?

I genuinely am not able to predict how crowds convert into votes or seats. But here's

KISHOR HAS WORKED HARD ON THE GROUND TO TRANSITION FROM HIS EARLIER LIFE INTO THIS NEW ROLE. AND THE HARD WORK SHOWS. THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT, AT THE LEVEL OF SENTIMENT AND RECALL, HE HAS MORE THAN STRUCK A CHORD

what I can say from what I observed — not just in Rajgir, a Nitish Kumar bastion, but also in Jehanabad, where Tejashwi Yadav's RJD has dominated for years. PK is a definite talking point among voters, from taxi drivers to young men dreaming of owning small businesses. Even on the streets of Patna, Modi fans, who may vote NDA again but demand a different CM, say the only other *neta* who has caught their imagination is Kishor. Some say, "he is good, but needs more time..." and others say he already has their vote.

Kishor has worked hard on the ground to transition from his earlier life into this new role. And the hard work shows. There's no question that, at the level of sentiment and recall, he has more than struck a chord, especially among the young in a state where 23% of voters are between 18 and 29 years of age. So far, he is larger than the party he has created — which will be his main challenge. Surveys such as that by C-Voter show that he is only second to Tejashwi Yadav in the most preferred contender for CM, surpassing Nitish Kumar by several percentage points. Kishor himself says trendlines of massive change cannot be captured by polls and questionnaires. What's the goal he has set for himself, I ask him? His answer is characteristically audacious. "Even if I get 125 seats, I would consider it a defeat." He is expecting either a cataclysmic outcome or many more years of hard work ahead. "*Ya aandhi, ya farsh*," he tells me. "Either a storm or Prashant Kishor will be on the floor."

Beyond the rhetoric of that claim, the truth is that Kishor's political style has taken root effectively. Even though he says he is not a *neta* at every rally, Kishor, the politician, has arrived.

Barkha Dutt is an award-winning journalist and author. The views expressed are personal

Good cinema and duty that the audiences owe

Once in a while from the mainstream Hindi cinema establishment comes a film like *Homebound* that leaves a gaping hole in your heart. Backed by a brilliant ensemble cast, poignant dialogues, masterly cinematography, editing and writing, *Homebound* is a winner in every possible way. It shows a country that we all know too well but don't want to admit or recognise. Cinema amplifies the truth though and when you encounter it on the big screen, it shakes your conscience and you are left wondering if you too are complicit in this systemic discrimination of the marginalised that the film portrays with such nuance.

Homebound is akin to a mirror that we don't wish to face fearing the tough ques-

tions it will provoke. Directed by Neeraj Ghaywan and India's official entry for the Best International Feature Film category at the Oscars 2026, *Homebound* charts the story of two rural youth and best friends, Chandan and Shoaib, both aspirants for a government job. Life doesn't go as planned and the friends leave home in search of an occupation elsewhere. Shoaib has to organise funds for his father's medical treatment and Chandan works tirelessly, often going hungry, to send money back home to build a simple house for his family.

Homebound also bears testimony to the hopelessness of the rural youth. In one of the most poignant scenes in the film, Chan-

dan's mother sends a big jar of pickles for her son complaining that he doesn't eat well at all. Then the Covid epidemic strikes, dealing the final blow. Chandan and Shoaib are forced to leave their workplace and set out on a long journey home beset with challenges and uncertainty.

To see what happens next, please go watch the film. Or perhaps you already know the end by now. And before you make assumptions, this isn't poverty porn. Let us not be held hostage by categories, mostly ill-in-



Kunal Ray

formed ones. There's not an ounce of dishonesty in what *Homebound* shows. Caste and religion-based sectarianism that the film shows is an everyday reality in this country.

As audiences of contemporary cinema, we often complain about the current state of Bollywood films. We fuss about the box office and then are told that audiences will return when the quality of films improves. *Homebound* is that rare Hindi film which deserves your support and applause. But are we doing enough to champion or celebrate

excellence at the cinemas? Or, perhaps, waiting for the film to come to an OTT platform and watch from the convenience of home? And applaud it further when it wins an international award.

There are several Indian movies that win big awards or other recognition at film festivals abroad but struggle even for a limited release at home. Which filmmaker wouldn't want their creation to be shown in the country of its origin?

When films like *Homebound* also perform well at the box office, it emboldens producers to attempt new stories and storytelling in cinema, to introduce new faces and a new aesthetic on screen and just not do hackneyed stuff over and over again. Why wait for a foreign award for that validation? Why can't we do it ourselves and help create a cinema culture where movies of all kinds, small and big, the glamorous and not so glamorous ones can breathe and co-exist?

Kunal Ray is a culture critic and teaches at FLAME University, Pune. The views expressed are personal



Food and Climate Change: Sarah Briddle Year: 2020

India’s economy is stronger than Trump thinks



SHANG-JIN WEI

India has long benefitted from geopolitical arbitrage, maintaining working relationships with Russia, the United States, and Europe. But this delicate balancing act is now being tested by a series of policy shocks delivered by US President Donald Trump’s administration. These disruptions, unlikely to ease anytime soon, raise a critical question: Can India retain its status as the world’s fastest-growing major economy?

The most urgent challenge facing Indian policymakers is weathering the escalating trade war. In August, Mr Trump imposed a 50 per cent tariff on Indian imports, citing the need to reduce India’s trade surplus with the US and punish the country for its massive purchases of Russian oil. Adding to the pressure, Mr Trump has urged the European Union and other G7 countries to take even harsher steps — namely, to impose a 100 per cent tariff on imports from India and China.

Mr Trump’s decision to hike H-1B visa fees to \$100,000 represents yet another blow to India’s economy, particularly its IT services industry — one of the country’s most dynamic growth engines. Currently, Indian nationals account for more than 70 per cent of all H-1B holders, with most of them working in IT or technology-related sectors. Given this, it’s hardly surprising that the share prices of Indian companies

like Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, and Wipro, which rely heavily on H-1B visas to access the US market, declined following Mr Trump’s announcement.

While Mr Trump has labelled India a “dead economy,” it is unclear whether he meant this as a statement of fact or a threat he will make good unless India offers sufficient concessions in its trade negotiations with the US. Either way, there is little evidence to suggest the Indian economy is at risk of collapsing anytime soon.

On the contrary, India is among the world’s most vibrant economies. In July, before the new US tariffs were imposed, the International Monetary Fund projected that India’s gross domestic product (GDP) will grow by 6.4 per cent in 2025 and 2026 — well ahead of America’s projected annual growth rate of 1.9 per cent. No other major economy comes close, with the exception of China, at 4.8 per cent.

Barring external shocks, India is well-positioned to sustain its rapid growth rate over the next decade and become the world’s third-largest economy by 2030. Given its vast population and growth momentum, India could even overtake China and the US to emerge as the world’s largest economy within the next 50 years.

That said, the extent to which US policy shifts might affect India’s growth trajectory remains unclear. In the early 2000s, India was far less exposed to global trade than China was, with exports accounting for less than 15 per cent of its GDP, compared with China’s 20 per cent. Since then, however, India’s reliance on trade has increased significantly. Exports now make up more than 20 per cent of GDP, leaving the country more vulnerable to trade shocks.

Given that the US is India’s largest export market, Mr Trump’s tariffs will likely hit harder than similar actions by other

trade partners. Still, it is important to remember that India is a continental economy, with domestic consumption playing a far greater role than external demand. Moreover, the EU’s trade significance for India nearly matches that of the US, and China and West Asia are also important export destinations. Consequently, while US tariff hikes are disruptive, they are far from fatal.

This is not to say that Indian policymakers can afford to be passive. To mitigate the impact of US restrictions, they must pursue a dual strategy comprising stimulative macroeconomic policies and a concerted effort to deepen trade ties with the EU, China, and West Asia.

It is also worth noting that the relative importance of the US market is likely to decline as a result of Mr Trump’s protectionist trade policies. Should his administration stay the course, the EU and China

may well surpass the US as the world’s leading import destinations by 2028.

Beyond short-term policy responses aimed at offsetting the fall in US demand, the Indian authorities would be well advised to implement structural reforms. Key priorities for sustaining long-term growth include raising the female labour-force participation rate from 33 per cent to levels much closer to China’s 60 per cent, improving the investment climate by tackling bureaucratic corruption, and upgrading infrastructure — roads, railways, ports, and airports — to lower the cost of production and trade.

By adopting these reforms, India will not only be able to weather Mr Trump’s tariff war in the short term but also sustain its growth miracle for years to come.

The author, a former chief economist at the Asian Development Bank, is professor of finance and economics at Columbia Business School and Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. ©Project Syndicate, 2025



ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

Fearing TikTok’s brilliance



VIEWPOINT
DEVANGSHU DATTA

The saga of TikTok with its 1.7 billion users may be entering its next act. TikTok is owned by ByteDance, a Chinese company. It has 170 million American users. The United States (US) business may soon be hived off in a deal with the approval of the US and Chinese governments.

TikTok has been banned in the US since January 2025. There have been back-and-forth negotiations about an enforced selloff of TikTok US for years. Assuming this happens, (it seems as certain as anything involving the inconsistent Donald Trump administration can be), this would be a mega-billion carveout. Control of the algorithm and processing of US-related data would go to the new owners.

TikTok is the only Chinese social media platform with global traction of the same order as Facebook, Insta, and Twitter. ByteDance is estimated to have reported 2024 revenues of \$155 billion, with around \$33 billion in profits. About \$39 billion of those revenues came from outside China, with \$10 billion earned in the US. In 2024, US adult users spent an average of 52 minutes per day on TikTok.

A lot of creative brilliance is required to create a platform that exploits behavioural patterns to inspire huge dollops of content.

Creating a TikTok video is a simple, intuitive process. A new user can do it within 15 minutes of getting onto the platform. Uploading video from elsewhere is also easy.

When TikTok launched, videos were restricted to 15 seconds. Now, in-app TikTok videos can be a maximum of 10 minutes long. This works well given short attention spans. You can upload longer videos recorded outside TikTok, but most content seems to come in at below a minute.

There is algorithmic genius involved in getting people engaged with that content and keeping them engaged to the point of addiction. That’s another element of the secret sauce. TikTok feeds are unique to the user and very carefully curated to keep you scrolling.

The smart algo feeds into a smart business model that translates engagement into cash and influence. TikTok knows enough about its users to find the right ads to show each individual. It is also pretty good at finding content that fits well with, and amplifies worldviews. A mad racist will be served content that fits with their specific brand of mad racism; someone who wants to see children singing hymns in chorus, or cats doing weird things, will be offered that content.

But going beyond the creative and business smarts, there’s also lots of geopolitical complexity, security-related paranoia, and multiple conspiracy theories centred on TikTok. A Chinese app grabbing a big chunk of mindshare in global social media has triggered lots of racist tropes. There are plenty of people who believe that social media mindshare should only be controlled by big corporations based in Silicon Valley.

User data and content stored and processed in servers controlled by ByteDance in the People’s Republic of China (or Singapore or wherever) has also raised “security” and privacy concerns. India, for example, cited security risks before banning TikTok. The bipartisan US lobbies that have tried to shutdown TikTok, or force the sale of the US business, have also cited such concerns.

It’s not very clear how much of a security threat TikTok is in reality. Any freely viewable social media content may contain sensitive information such as, for example, the location of a video, identifiable persons, and sensitive personal data related to posters and content providers who share revenue. It’s also possible that many other China-centric companies may receive lots of sensitive personal data given the vast number of Chinese smartphones in circulation, which may have “backdoors”. These concerns aren’t unique to TikTok.

There are also concerns about pornographic and political content. A consortium led by Larry Ellison is trying to take over US TikTok with the Trump administration’s blessings. Mr Ellison is strongly pro-Israel and pro-Maga.

Given control of the algo and access to user data, will TikTok US wive or shadow-ban all content that doesn’t conform to Mr Ellison’s worldview, and amplify content that does fit with his politics? Also, given that the Trump administration has gone after media organisations and talk-show hosts, it’s conceivable TikTok users could be targeted. So there are also concerns about freedom of expression, which loops back into debates about media freedoms. As investors often say on Wall Street, this will be a “key monitorable”.

How Pakistan thinks - 2

Pakistan’s army has been a rentier force available to a reasonable bidder. It has never come to the aid of any Muslims, including Palestinians or Gazans, except for making noises here and there

This sequel to last week’s National Interest under the same headline is triggered by one line I had added as a very belated afterthought, almost as the column was going into print. Take it from me, I had written, Pakistan will sign some equivalent of the Abraham Accords and recognise Israel much before it makes peace with India. The news cycle has moved dramatically within days. Pakistan now seems closer to that denouement than anybody would’ve imagined on September 26 (Friday) when I wrote the first part of “How Pakistan thinks”.

Almost playing to a script, Donald Trump announced his 20-point resolution for Gaza in the presence of Benjamin Netanyahu and hinted that even the larger Palestinian question could be rolled into it. Within hours, never mind the time zones, Pakistan was the first Islamic country to rise in the fullest support. Check out the long social media post from Shehbaz Sharif. His language is breathless in praise and obsequious, as you would expect from a minor feudal lord addressing the big *badshah*. That the fawning pleased the *badshah* is evident in how he acknowledged it in public, even calling the field marshal’s words — hailing him as a man of peace — “most beautiful”.

Even India waited a full day before expressing support, probably to figure out if friend Netanyahu was fully on board with this. Of course, by this time the Pakistanis had also done a closer reading and grown some buyer’s remorse, whispering that words had been changed from what they had been shown. However, they haven’t pulled back, and in any case, this minor confusion does not indicate how, in our understanding, Pakistan thinks.

It goes into the very heart of what kind of state Pakistan is. Is it indeed as Islamic as the Constitution or the text-book ideology of the republic promises? If that were the case, how come the Pakistanis have never gone to fight for any Islamic cause? Across their western periphery, multiple Islamic states have faced threats and, in some cases, obliteration. Pakistan talks endlessly of the Ummah, invoking it to suit its convenience — at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on Kashmir, for example. But is willing to do very little for it.

It isn’t as if its armies have never gone to fight in fellow Islamic countries, all to its west. It is just that to describe any of these as contributions or sacrifices towards an Islamic cause is fallacious. In Jordan (1970, Palestinian revolt) and Saudi Arabia (Siege of Mecca), 1979 it was to protect the ruling

royal families. Even today, the Saudis need Pakistani protection not against Iran or Israel but Muslim Brotherhood.

If you turn around and remind me that the Pakistanis sent some contingents to Jordan during the Yom Kippur war, especially its air force, I will remind you that the two countries had a deeper and long-standing military partnership rooted in Western alliances. It was also reciprocal as Jordan had transferred 10 F-104 Starfighters to beef up the PAF fleet in the 1971 war. Details, even entries in the Royal Jordanian Air Force diaries, have been published in *Fiza’ya: Psyche of the Pakistan Air Force* by Pushpinder Singh, Ravi Rikhye and Peter Steinemann.

During the first Gulf War, the Pakistanis sent contingents not to defend Muslim Iraq but to protect the Saudis from Saddam’s armies after they occupied Kuwait. They were never fighting for any ideological cause, but for their favoured client. Or you might prefer to describe them as patron. Afghanistan helps us understand this better. In the first Afghan Jihad, Pakistan was in the coalition against the pro-Soviet regime and they could argue that the Mujahideen’s cause was Islamic enough.

Then what happened when the Americans returned after 9/11 in 2001? Now the Pakistanis joined them again, but this time against the Taliban. Now who could be more Islamic than them? There are words spoken, recorded and archived which come back to haunt both sides. These also help establish our argument. Secretary of Defence in the Bush Administration, Robert Gates, for example, described Pakistan as a “stalwart ally against terror”. And this, by the way, was said in the wake of 26/11. So reassuring it must’ve been for New Delhi!

The upshot is that the Pakistani military and strategic capital has always been available for rent — whether for cash, kind (from Middle Eastern Arabs), or strategic and economic benefit, as with the US. Not only did Pakistan collect billions of dollars in rent as military and civil aid fighting on opposite sides of the Islamist Mujahideen/Taliban in the two American wars in Afghanistan, it similarly collected from the rich Arab states as well. Just for a touch of irony, I need to underline the names of the schemes under which the US sought to transfer F-16s to Pakistan: Peace Gate-I (1983), Peace Gate-II (1986–87), Peace Gate-III (December 1988), Peace Gate-IV (September 1989), Peace Drive (2005–06), and finally 16 second-hand Jordanian F-16s



NATIONAL
INTEREST
SHEKHAR GUPTA

under a scheme called Peace Falcon-I.

The short point is that Pakistan’s has been a rentier army available to a generous bidder, Muslim or Christian. You’ve never seen it come to the aid of Iran or its proxies, like the Houthis, as they are pulverised by Israel and its American allies, besides the Gulf Arabs, who occasionally fight directly, as in Yemen, but mostly act as silent partners in anti-Iran coalitions. It has never come to the aid of any Muslims, including Palestinians or the Gazans, except making noises. And now this endorsement at hypersonic speed of a plan that pleases Netanyahu, reduces Gaza to a gated colony under Western management, and buries the very idea of a two-state solution.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah had, in fact, given Pakistan its Palestine policy. He would have balked even at a two-state solution. He wanted Palestine restored to its “original” territories and an Israel, if at all, could be accommodated in Europe. The only country a Pakistani passport bars for its citizens is Israel.

I cannot help but tell you an enduring Pakistani lore I might have shared with you before. In 1947-48, with the Palestine-Jerusalem (Al Quds) fervour on, writer Saadat Hasan Manto would pass by processions shouting angry slogans in Lahore every day. One day he stopped to ask, “*bhai, roz aap kahan ja rahe ho?*” (brothers, where do you keep going every day?). Told that they were going to liberate “Philistine and Al Quds,” he said, “*Theek hai... dekhhiye, Regal Chowk se hokarni kadal jaiyega; nazdeek padega*” (good idea..best that you take a shortcut through Regal Square, a Lahore landmark).” What Manto underlined with his trenchant wit is the reality even today, Pakistani support to the Palestinian cause and the larger Muslim sentiment on Jerusalem has merely been tamasha and a cosplay version of farcical strategic posturing. Pakistan’s army, in conclusion, is not an Islamic army, and since the army owns the state, it follows that Pakistan isn’t an Islamic state either.

What is it then? If we read backwards to all we have listed here, the net outcome would be that the ideological foundation of Pakistan is not Islam or Islamism. It is anti-Indianism (read anti-Hindu). It will make any compromises, rent services to any patron, dump Iran yesterday, today, and tomorrow, abandon Palestinians for eternity, and kill fellow Muslims as long as it brings it wherewithal to weaken and challenge India. Pakistan’s occasionally elected leaders understand this. As long as anti-Indianism (anti-Hinduism) defines their nationalism, the army will never cede power to them, whatever their majority. That’s why two of them, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, searched for lasting peace and were punished severely. Even Musharraf was not spared for peacemaking, despite being the army chief. All of these leaders seeking lasting peace with India were seen by the army, and ultimately by indoctrinated popular opinion, as going against the ideology of Pakistan. I can rest my case here.

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Handshakes or not

EYE CULTURE
ATANU BISWAS

One may recall that Virat Kohli’s refusal to shake hands with Sourav Ganguly during the 2023 IPL or Mary Kom’s refusal to shake Nikhat Zareen’s hand in 2019 created considerable noise. Refusing to shake hands in public by top sportspeople — not for Covid-like precautions, but for other reasons — is a big statement and can cause a lot of social uproar. Incidentally, such events are becoming more commonplace worldwide, though the reasons vary.

“An agreement can be expressed quickly and clearly in words but is only made effective by a ritual gesture: Open, weaponless hands stretched out toward one another, grasping each other in a mutual handshake,” historian Walter Burkert explained. The gesture’s original meaning was perhaps to express peaceful intentions. It also served as a sign of good faith while taking an oath or making a pledge.

A ninth-century BC relief depicting the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III establishing an alliance with a Babylonian monarch is one of the oldest examples of a handshake. Handshakes are mentioned in Homer’s epics, mostly in reference to promises and expressions of confidence. In contrast, the handshake was a sign of loyalty and friendship in ancient Rome.

Shaking off the handshake is sure to generate buzz today, because shaking hands is generally considered courteous, if not mandatory, in most sports. However, it has mostly affected the tennis community in the recent past for a variety of reasons. After losing to Anastasia Potapova at the Miami Open in 2023, Ukrainian star Marta Kostyuk declined to shake hands with the Russian. In fact, Kostyuk has often voiced her displeasure at athletes who fail to denounce the invasion of her country.

Another Ukrainian player, Elina Svitolina, refused to shake hands with Victoria Azarenka of Belarus after a 2023 Wimbledon match. Recently, at the conclusion of their second-round match at this year’s US Open, Latvian player Jelena Ostapenko, who has come to be most known for her fractious handshakes, angrily attacked American player Taylor Townsend.

In the men’s world, following the Brit’s comeback victory in the Davis Cup 2023, French star Arthur Fils shook hands with Dan Evans in a “no-look” manner. Then, in 2024, following Arthur Fils’ victory in the Hamburg Open final, German star Alexander Zverev could hardly look at Fils. There are instances in football also. In 2012, Liverpool’s Luis Suárez refused to shake Manchester United star Patrice Evra’s hand ahead of a Premier League fixture. An angry Man Utd manager, Sir Alex Fergu-

son, said Suárez “should not be allowed to play for Liverpool again.” Suárez was not penalised in that manner, but the penalties of not handshaking can be severe in certain situations. An Egyptian judoka, for instance, was sent home from the 2016 Rio Olympics after refusing to shake hands with an Israeli opponent after their bout. In 2008, the arbiter awarded British Grandmaster Nigel Short the full point after Bulgarian Grandmaster Ivan Cheparinov refused to shake hands at the beginning of a match. In chess, that was the rule.

There’s no such rule in many other sports. Should “courtesy” be embedded into sports more rigorously in the form of mandatory handshakes? Should Suárez or Surya Kumar Yadav be compelled to shake hands even if they don’t want to? But think about Iga Świątek and Victoria Azarenka’s icy handshake during this year’s French Open that startled tennis fans. They shook hands, but the “Frostbite Handshake,” as social media swiftly dubbed it, had no eye contact, no smiles, and none of the usual sportsmanship flair tennis fans are accustomed to. Is such a “no-look handshake” preferable to none at all? One may certainly argue that shaking hands should be something one does spontaneously out of courtesy, not because it’s mandatory. Most professionals respect their opponents, for sure. But if you don’t, why would you be bothered to fake a handshake? The debate continues.

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The real challenge



TICKER
MIHIR S SHARMA

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, by all objective criteria, is a basket case of a state — and should therefore be ignored and dismissed on the world stage. Instead, its leaders have been received warmly in recent weeks by both the American and Chinese Presidents, signed new agreements to boost inward investment, and finalised a landmark defence deal with Saudi Arabia. Tilak Varma might have stayed in to hit a six in the final over and win the Asia Cup for India, but in the game of geopolitics, it is Asim Munir and Shehbaz Sharif who have, as cricket commentators too often say, played a blinder.

Let’s run quickly down the Pakistani establishment’s recent achievements. In spite of India receiving a reasonable amount of support following the brutal terrorist attack on tourists in Pahalgam earlier this year, the Pakistanis nevertheless managed to minimise the expressions of

support for Indian actions in Operation Sindoor. Its military managed to make the case globally that they held off Indian attacks, even setting off some ill-advised comparisons between Chinese and Western weapons platforms.

With the United States (US), the Pakistanis have managed to eke out a relatively favourable trade agreement that reduced tariffs on the country to 19 per cent from the earlier 29 per cent; and also secured US investment in the country’s supposed fossil-fuel reserves. Its army chief has met President Donald Trump twice in recent times, once for a longer-than-expected lunch and once with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, during which the President was shown a display of the critical minerals and rare earths that Pakistan (also supposedly) possesses. What is certain is that the US Exim Bank has committed millions to financing mining projects in the country, including the gold and copper mine at Reko Diq. They have lavished praise on Mr Trump, nominating him for the Nobel Prize and so on — and the President seems to have developed a decided partiality for a country he once condemned as untrustworthy. A “tilt,” as they used to say in the 1970s.

The Chinese might have lost some enthusiasm for their “iron friends” in Islamabad and Rawal-

pindi, but they are not turning off the tap completely. Mr Sharif’s visit to Beijing last month was accompanied by news that a new \$8.5 billion deal for investment was signed — though how much of that will actually materialise and at what cost to the Pakistani public is not clear. We have never had answers to such questions about China’s big plans for Pakistan, of course. Some existing Chinese investments in the country have had to be co-financed or taken over by more traditional multilateral sources. But calmer relations with the US may in fact help China’s activity in Pakistan; there have been reports in that country’s press that a recent American delegation even expressed interest in investing in the Chinese-controlled port of Gwadar, perhaps by building a terminal there that could receive shipments of liquefied natural gas from the US.


Even Russia, which should by any reasonable standard be grateful to India for not adding to its international isolation, has made a few startling statements of late. President Vladimir Putin has described Pakistan and Russia as “natural allies” and called Islamabad Moscow’s “traditional partner in Asia”. It’s hard to understand exactly where this is coming from, but then nobody ever really knows what Mr Putin is thinking at any point. The Russians even put New

Delhi in the difficult position of accepting Pakistan as an “observer” in the Zapad military exercises in which the Indian military participated (alongside China and more than 15 other nations).

And, finally, there was the bombshell news that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have signed a defence agreement that includes mutual protection. We can disagree over whether this means that Rawalpindi’s nuclear umbrella has been extended to the Gulf. It is also the case that the two countries have a long history of security cooperation, with the Pakistani army as the senior partner. But it certainly represents something of an improvement over the past decade, during which Islamabad’s refusal to join Riyadh in its war against the Houthis in Yemen had caused a chill in relations.

How has the Pakistani establishment — discredited, undemocratic, and profligate, running an economy that has signally failed to invest in itself and develop productive potential — managed this series of achievements? Partly it is because they are willing to make promises and pay rhetorical tributes to leaders like Mr Trump in a way that the Indian leadership simply cannot. But partly it is old-fashioned flexibility — finding ways in which they can be useful to multiple partners. New Delhi might have loudly welcomed an age of multipolarity, hedging, and strategic autonomy. But it seems the winner in that game is Islamabad, not us.





A thought for today

We often find far more power in a symbol than in something that is an actuality

STEVEN BERKOFF

Zubeen: Grief To FIRs

The troubling power of public anger over administration

His death has amplified Assam musician and local cult figure Zubeen Garg’s impact beyond mere fandom. Here was a singer who brought together a deeply fractured people. His songs comforted, a stark relief from every Assamese fault line of ethnicity, language, faith and region. His music connected – for decades bridged the state’s divisions that governance didn’t mend, that politicians always exploited, that couldn’t be settled for any number of painful reasons. Against this unchanging backdrop, Zubeen sang of the everyday, and fans poured out ‘their soul’ to him. As we are witnessing, Zubeen’s legacy is not just his music – it is the *community* his work created that lifted all Assamese above their differences.

It is this community that’s railing against the sudden void his death has created. Unsurprisingly then, and as with many cases of collective grief, conspiracy theories have flourished. Zubeen was for no political party. But he wasn’t apolitical either: A viral video now shows him saying, “I am just a human. I have no caste, no religion, and no God.” Collective mourning, especially when it’s so demonstrative, can morph into flaming anger without any obvious provocation. And anger on such a scale irrationally looks for someone to blame. If elections are due in not too distant a future – Assam votes next year – that need to blame can have electoral consequences. Which is why, despite Singapore police having given the all-clear and clearly indicating there was nothing amiss in Zubeen’s death, the musician’s aides were arrested. This is, of course, a tricky slope. Across Assam, 60 FIRs have been filed ‘seeking justice’. This has to be one of the best demonstrations of the troubling power irrational public demands can have over administrative decisions, especially when electoral apprehensions are in the mix.

Vive La Cartoon

Cartoons are stoking protests; long live cartoons

Cops, stop picking up activists who have Marx on their shelves – they will never finish it. The real threat to national security and sovereignty are kindergarteners with Winnie-the-Pooh tiffin boxes, or Hello Kitty bibs. Or – if you’ve kept up with the symbolism of recent protests in Nepal, Indonesia and Philippines – teens in tees emblazoned with ‘One Piece’ flags. These are hopelessly beyond the ken of inspectors- and directors general of police who can’t tell OneRepublic from One Direction.

To the uninitiated, which includes almost everyone Gen Y backwards, the One Piece flag looks like a silly version of the old Jolly Roger pirate flag – from a time when pirates meant business. It’s the same skull and crossbones, but with a yellow straw hat. Not menacing at all. In fact, it’s so endearing that Japanese manga artist Eiichiro Oda, who created the flag and its bearers – pirate Monkey D Luffy and his ‘Straw Hat crew’ – has sold 500mn copies of his comic books since 1997.

Yet, the flag’s emergence as a symbol of Gen Z resistance isn’t surprising. Why? Don’t look for logic or a formula here. The British didn’t imagine chapatis would become a vector for the 1857 revolt. The Chinese state was stumped when Winnie-the-Pooh became a proxy for Xi in 2013, a year after Hello Kitty became the mascot for protests in Hong Kong. Pepe the Frog again raised hackles in Hong Kong in 2019. This year, Pikachu the Pokemon has been used as a symbol by protesters in US and Türkiye. You can’t say what the next symbol of youth resistance will be. Which is key to disruption. As for Marx and Guy Fawkes masks, leave them for conformists who fancy themselves as subversives.

I Know You Know...

Commonly unknown facts about common knowledge

The purpose of language is to coordinate human behaviour and this starts from the earliest moments in our life. When three-year-olds are taught the word ‘mouse’ they do not worry that it means other things to other people. They tacitly assume ‘common knowledge’. The same cognitive talent also takes its own outputs and feeds these back into more cognition, which is how human progress happens.

Thus, in his new book *When Everyone Knows That Everyone Knows...Common Knowledge and the Science of Harmony, Hypocrisy and Outrage*, cognitive scientist Steven Pinker has a new focal point (common knowledge) alongside the running theme of his broader work, ‘recursive mentalising’. As in, I know something and you know it with common knowledge, also, I know that you know it and I know that you know that I know...

Pluralistic ignorance | In dictatorships, people conceal their political opinion to avoid being punished, so they can’t know if their discontent is widely shared. A demonstration in a public place can, however, generate the common knowledge needed to coordinate resistance.

Why have the past two decades seen the success rate of nonviolent civil resistance campaigns start to decline (though they still outperform the violent ones)? Because of the dictators’ learning curve. Their censors now squelch posts that might coordinate action.

You can’t agree to disagree | Facts don’t care about your feelings. Pinker asks, why should the SARS-CoV-2 virus, or life on Mars, or the gunman of Nov 1963, care about your melanin or your genitals or your DNA or what you learned at your mother’s knee? Real human disagreements can come from dishonesty as much as from incompetence. Either way, what we need to do is make our own deliberation more rational.

The canceling instinct | It comes from the fear that common knowledge is what makes an idea dangerous. What Pinker reminds us is that the moral order did not collapse when people accepted that the Earth was not the centre of the cosmos, nor that humans were descended from apes.

Humans have clawed increments of progress out of an indifferent universe only by the process of conjecture and refutation, where the better ideas prevail in the long run. Universities cannot discover and transmit knowledge without intellectual freedom. And an academic establishment that stifles debate can end up providing false guidance on vital issues.

Pinker writes that many of the early policies for combating the pandemic – including draconian lockdowns – have now been revealed as not being based on scientific evidence. They were imposed by demonising what turned out to be reasonable criticisms. The toll this took on the economy, on mental health, on children’s education also undercut people’s trust in science and public health.

Rational hypocrisy | But guess what Pinker says is the ultimate dishonesty? Calling for complete honesty! Everywhere the rationale for obliterating zones of privacy is, if you aren’t doing anything wrong you should have nothing to hide. But neither authentic human relationships nor homo sapiens’ overall interdependence would survive making every wisecrack, conversation and thought public.

While the historical trend of transparency is welcome, civilisation won’t survive putting every kind of private and reciprocal knowledge into common knowledge.



Wealth Of (Non-US) Nations

New research reveals many countries where rising entrepreneurs are generating serious wealth, none more striking than India, which is home to 40 companies with high average annual returns



Ruchir Sharma

In the last decade, as US stock market tore up the competition, generating returns three times higher than the average for the rest of the world, a belief took hold that America has a monopoly on wealth creation. That refrain can be heard even now, when many foreign markets are finally outperforming. But it’s not true and never was.

Drivers of wealth creation outside US vary in type and impact, from manufacturing in India to metal mines in Canada, defence contracting in Europe and even some state-backed industries in China. But all belie conventional wisdom – that no nation other than America has a booming entrepreneurial culture capable of creating serious wealth.

The illusion remains because AI-led tech mania is concentrating wealth in America to astonishing degrees. US now accounts for eight of the world’s ten richest tycoons, and eight of the ten most valuable companies by market cap. Since Dec, US has produced the first person worth more than \$400bn (Elon Musk, briefly) and the first company worth more than \$4tn (Nvidia).

However, my latest research shows that below the world’s top 10 firms and individuals many nations are in fact generating significant wealth. Even over the last decade, when America’s stock market returns were truly exceptional, its rivals held their own. Since 2015, the world has generated a total of 444 companies with average annual returns in dollar terms of more than 15%, and a market cap that today exceeds \$10bn. A solid majority of these firms – 248 – emerged outside US.

These rapid wealth generators, or steady ‘compounders’, are spread all over the globe. Countries like Japan, Canada, Taiwan, Switzerland and Germany have

their fair share but the big numbers are in China with over 30 such compounders and, remarkably, India, despite its relatively low per capita income. The home of the last decade’s only major bull market in stocks outside US, India has produced 40 of the steady compounders in that time.

Most compounders have arisen in manufacturing, tech or finance. US has a narrow lead in tech compounders, but other nations too have produced major contenders in this category like TSMC of Taiwan and SAP of Germany. Meanwhile the rest of the world has a clear lead in manufacturing and finance industry compounders, with examples ranging from a Korean maker of railway hardware to a Saudi banking service – businesses that don’t get the attention that tech draws but have still generated real wealth.

No region worries more about falling behind US than Europe. Last year’s Draghi report battered the continent with dismal stats on its lapses in tech, including the fact that

Why Life Isn’t An Episode Of Friends Anymore

Time together is the fuel of friendship, but with work, commutes, family and social media consuming our waking hours, most of us are running on empty



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In 1992, anthropologist Robin Dunbar posited that humans can’t have more than 150 casual friends at a time. Close friends are fewer, and the number of besties tops out around five. Even *Friends*, which aired 1994 onwards, had a total of six – so one-plus-five. This limitation arises because remembering faces, names, traits, histories, likes and dislikes, conversation points, etc, consumes brain power, which is limited. Dunbar’s key idea was that social circles are limited by the size of the human brain, particularly the neocortex.

Thirty years on, the numbers seem incredible. Did we really have five best friends once? These days, it’s more like one or none. A survey in US found 12% of the population has no close friend at all – up from 3% at the time Dunbar published his research. Findings of the Ipsos India Happiness Report also show friendship is a minor contributor to happiness – behind health, personal finance and family. It also shows that people in metros value friendship less (6%) than residents of small towns (9%).

Psychologists are calling it the “friendship recession”. We not only have fewer friends, but also spend less time with them. Time spent face-to-face with friends has reduced from roughly an hour a day – on average – before 2014 to about 35 minutes in US.

This is partly down to the psychological benefit of friendship – being among friends reduces stress, measured as blood pressure. Tough tasks seem easier with friends. In one experiment, people perceived a hill to be less steep when they climbed it with a close friend. But good friends also boost immunity – your ability to resist and fight off pathogens.

In a recent interview, Dunbar says endorphins – the body’s feel-good chemicals – are the glue of friendship. “They are 30 times more powerful as analgesics than morphine, and they aren’t chemically addictive.” Endorphins flow when you’re with friends, doing their anti-depressant, painkilling routine, but also “upregulating the immune system, especially the natural killer cells”.

Life insurance policy | If friendship was only about having a good time together, its decline would have caused no more concern than, say, the passing of cassette players. But friendships aren’t trivial. There’s research showing that not having friends impacts physical and mental health. In fact, the feeling of isolation is a risk factor for dying early. Data tracking 308,000 people showed that not having any friends at all, or having only poor-quality friends, is more damaging than smoking 20 cigarettes a day.

Demands SIP of time | In Orwell’s *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*, the protagonist, Gordon, ruminates, “You can’t be friendly, you can’t even be civil, when you have no money in your pocket.” But turning an acquaintance into a strong friendship requires time more than money. A few years ago, University of Kansas professor Jeffrey Hall claimed you need 50 hours of together time to

become “casual friends”, of which Dunbar allows you 150. You would need another 90 hours together to move to the next circle of “friends”. And investing 200 more hours might – there’s no guarantee – turn friends into besties.

So, finding friends who reduce your stress and boost immunity can be a job of years. Think how hard it is to spend 340 hours getting to know one person with all the pressures of work and the distractions of modern life. And as Hall says, it has to be time spent hanging out, joking, playing video games, etc. “Hours spent working together just don’t count as much.” Plus, as an HBR article said early this year, “Forming friendships is only half the battle. Friendships thrive on ritual and repetition.” Which means devoting more time – a lifelong “systematic investment plan” almost.

Virtual isn’t real | But who has the time anymore? Our work hours have become longer. So have commutes. Never before in history have so many people migrated for work. They leave behind old friendships, and the big city raises hurdles to form new ones. So, the friendship recession is at its core a recession of free time. When free time is at a premium, you have to redraw priorities. Should you spend evenings in a group of acquaintances, hoping that some would become your friends, or do your chores? Just as we have defaulted to working long hours, solitude has become our natural preference. This does not only leave us friendless in the present but also causes a “fundamental loss of the ability to form and sustain” friendships.

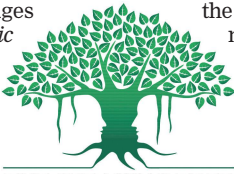
US data lights another interesting point, that people are spending more time at home. Roughly 100 minutes every day, on average. But they aren’t devoting this time to family – rather, they are “retreating inward”, spending more time online, even having all their friendships in the virtual world, getting used to the sense of control these confer. But without the investment of real together time, how real are these friendships? Can they reduce stress and boost immunity? Can they make us live longer? Alas, no.







Jane Goodall’s Secret Was Nature’s Love



Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati

I don’t need to sit. I can dance.” Jane Goodall announced to me, and she demonstrated by twirling around the front of the room. I had asked her assistant to get a chair for her so she could do her 9.30pm question/answer session sitting down rather than standing up. She was 90 years old at the time and in Mumbai on a four-day tour last Nov. I had been with her since 9am that morning when she arrived for her first event of the day during her trip to Mumbai. She gave a 45-minute unscripted keynote speech (standing!) and then graciously proceeded to be part of innumerable individual and group photos with the audience. She then gave another programme in the afternoon during which she again gave a 45-minute keynote – also standing – and returned to the hotel in the evening for the gala gathering by

the British Council and Jane Goodall Institute of India. She lovingly offered to do a post-dinner Q&A. And no, she still did not need to sit down, as she made abundantly clear by her loving indignation when I suggested a chair.

This was Jane, my hero since at ten or eleven, I started plastering the walls of my bedroom with pages torn from *National Geographic* of photos of Jane with chimpanzees. Whenever anyone asked me “What do you want to be when you grow up?” my answer was clear: Jane Goodall.

Even though divine destiny brought me to Rishikesh, India rather than Gombe, Tanzania, Jane has remained my lifelong hero. It is not only her passionate and fervent work for the environment, but it is the deep love with which she does it. Jane’s work

flowed from love, not rage. She travelled around the world three hundred days a year fuelled by love.

During the question-answer session she opened by dancing, someone asked her: “What is your anti-ageing secret for longevity?” She responded, “I just love animals, and I love children, and I love the planet. People have told me that my voice inspires them to take care of animals, children, and the planet, so I keep travelling to bring inspiration.” That was her secret to being 91 years young: Love.

Through love she transformed the way scientists understand similarities between humans and animals. She sat with families of wild chimps in the forest of Tanganyika (now Tanzania) the way an opera lover beholds a grand aria, or the way an art lover beholds a painting – with patience,

stillness, awe, and awareness of something greater than herself unfolding. In 1960, she saw the chimp she had named David Greybeard do something previously unseen in the wild: He broke off a twig, stripped it of its leaves and used it to draw termites from a hole. It was the first time in recorded history of animals creating and using tools and it unleashed a wave of new discoveries and realisations of intelligence in our non-human sisters and brothers.

She passed away on the final day of Navratri, the sacred Hindu holiday dedicated to Mother Goddess, the Divine Feminine. Throughout nine days we celebrate the Goddess as She embodies both fierceness and femininity, strength and softness, power and *prem*. If the Universe was not prepared to fulfil my wish to have Jane live forever, then I cannot think of a more fitting day for her to pass on.