



The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE ASSAULT

Chorus of condemnation of attack on CJI is welcome.
It will ring louder if it's also read as a criticism of intolerance

THE ATTACK ON the Chief Justice of India by a lawyer who allegedly hurled a shoe at him inside the Supreme Court Monday morning marked a new low. That the head of the institution of the judiciary should be targeted, apparently for remarks he made while refusing to entertain a public interest litigation seeking judicial intervention for the reconstruction of an idol of Lord Vishnu in a Khajuraho temple — comments that were misinterpreted by a troll army citing “hurt Hindu sentiments”, and that the CJI clarified subsequently — signals a breakdown of democratic civility. At the same time, the reaction to Monday’s attempted attack has also been uncommon, and welcome. In these polarised times, it has seen a rare coming together of leaders across political-ideological faultlines to express their condemnation, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking the lead. The PM has said that the attack had “angered every Indian” and that there is “no place for such reprehensible acts in our society”. PM Modi’s words, and those of others belonging to the ruling establishment as well as the Opposition, underline that Monday’s incident was more than an attack on one individual — it was an act of disrespect towards the institution of the judiciary, the Constitution it upholds, and the rule of law.

Implicit, and also explicit in the outrage that is being expressed, giving it an undeniable edge, is the fact that the Chief Justice is also a Dalit. While CJI Gavai has not sought to draw attention to himself, kept his dignity and composure, and even signalled business as usual, political parties and leaders are rightly mindful and protective of the powerful symbolism of his presence at the apex of the judicial system. After all, the journey of an individual from India’s most marginalised to the judiciary’s top, the overcoming of incredible odds and the tracing of a long arc, are democracy’s precious achievements. But having said that, there is something more to this incident that must be acknowledged, and hopefully built on, going ahead. Quite simply, Monday’s attack must be looked at, and condemned, from both ends. It is unacceptable that a CJI, in this case a Dalit CJI, should be targeted. It is indefensible that this is done by claiming the CJI insulted Hinduism.

These are times when “Hindu/Hinduism under siege” has become a convenient justification for a range of transgressions by individuals and the mob, leading to shrinking spaces for expression and a coarsening of the public sphere. All too often, what makes the situation worse is that the powers that be turn a blind eye to this aggressive performance of victimhood, which curtails the rights of a range of vulnerable others. While the political project of Hindutva has notched its several successes by constantly widening its ambit, and coopting movements and strands that lay outside it, this has not been a seamless movement. There are collisions and contradictions, and often there is a tendency to label and demonise those who oppose, and attack any signs of perceived disagreement. The PM’s timely, strong — and much-needed — condemnation of the attack on the CJI becomes all the more powerful if it is read, also, as criticism of this growing intolerance.

THE SAME DISASTER

From Jaipur to Jhansi, recurring fire tragedies
expose fragility of public-hospital safety architecture

THE FRAGILITY OF India’s public-hospital safety architecture was cast into sharp relief once again Sunday night when a fire broke out in the neurosurgery ICU of Jaipur’s Sawai Mansingh (SMS) Hospital, one of the largest government hospitals in Rajasthan. The blaze, reportedly triggered by a short circuit in an adjacent storage room, claimed the lives of at least six critically ill patients. Eyewitnesses and bereaved families speak of horrifying scenes of chaos: Malfunctioning alarms, absent fire extinguishers, locked emergency exits, overburdened staff ignoring early warning signs before abandoning patients and their desperate attendants in the pandemonium that followed. In an institution meant to offer care, this failure of basic infrastructure, preparedness and accountability reinforces a deeper chasm — one of chronic neglect and institutional inertia.

That the SMS Hospital tragedy is not an outlier in India’s recent history of hospital fires is evident from the fact that around the same time as the disaster in Jaipur, in Ahmedabad, in two separate incidents, fire broke out at a children’s hospital on Sunday and at another municipal-run hospital on Monday. An investigation by this newspaper into major fires across 11 hospitals in the last five years, following the death of 18 newborn babies in a hospital fire in Jhansi in November 2024, had revealed an alarming pattern: Short circuits caused by inadequate maintenance and improper storage of highly inflammable and hazardous equipment, lack of firefighting equipment and training in evacuation protocols, and negligence of government agencies in conducting audits and enforcing compliance. Municipal fire inspections are perfunctory; certifications are rubber-stamped; NDMA and building-code guidelines lurch from paper to oblivion. In the aftermath of Sunday’s incident, investigations have revealed that the SMS Hospital has been the site of several incidents of fire, including as recently as June.

The Rajasthan government has instituted a six-member committee to investigate the circumstances of the fire. The reaction joins a long catalogue of such responses that are not backed by consequences. In nearly all of the major fire incidents in the last five years, most of the accused — hospital owners, administrators and service providers — have been granted bail, slipping back into professional life as though no disaster had ever intervened. It signals impunity, and a devastating indifference to human life, especially that of the poor, who depend mostly on public hospitals. Until accountability becomes systemic and consistent, the next disaster is not a question of “if” but “when”.

SMALL IS BIG

Physics Nobel honours scientists who helped unravel mysteries
of quantum world, making it foundation of today’s technologies

WHEN THE GREAT American physicist, Richard Feynman, made his famous remark, “nobody understands quantum mechanics”, he was only stating the limits of human intuition in understanding the ways of sub-atomic particles. Quantum mechanics forces humans to jettison the quest for familiarity when dealing with the universe at its smallest, most fundamental scale. However, over the years, the insights of quantum systems have informed the working of some of the most transformative technologies. This year’s Nobel Prize winners in Physics are among the scientists who have chipped away at the indeterminacy of sub-atomic particles. Over the last four decades, John Clarke, a British physicist based at the University of California, Berkeley, Michel Devoret, a French scientist who has worked at Yale University, and John Martinis, of the University of California, Santa Barbara, have led a “series of experiments to demonstrate that the bizarre properties of the quantum world can be made concrete in a system big enough to be held in the hand”.

The studies revolutionised the understanding of quantum tunnelling — the ability of particles, such as electrons, to move or tunnel through barriers. This is somewhat akin to throwing a ball onto a wall and finding it on the other side of the structure, which remains unscathed. Before the trio began their experiments, the ability of single particles to tunnel was known. Clarke, Martinis and Devoret demonstrated that the phenomenon could take place at a far greater scale; they demonstrated the tunnelling effect in a simple electrical circuit incorporating superconductors, which allows current to flow without resistance.

The discovery paved the way for experiments that tested precise quantum physics on a silicon chip, and laid the ground for next-generation digital technology. As the Nobel Committee noted, their experiments “revealed quantum physics in action”.



R SWAMINATHAN

IT HAS BEEN two years since hundreds of Hamas militants breached the highly fortified Gaza-Israel border using explosives and bulldozers, backed by a barrage of missile attacks on unsuspecting Israelis celebrating a Jewish holiday. In an operation codenamed Al-Aqsa Flood, the militants killed 1,200 Israeli citizens, including women and children, and abducted 251 people.

Within hours, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared war — Operation Iron Swords — on Gaza, vowing to destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas, bring back all the hostages, and ensure Gaza no longer posed a threat to Israel.

While Hamas framed its attacks as a response to incursions and provocations by far-right groups in Israel that had become part of the government, it also had a geopolitical motivation: To thwart the US-backed normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Hamas was also attempting to re-establish itself as the leading military force of the Palestinian resistance.

Hamas, however, completely miscalculated the scale, duration and ferocity of Israel’s response to October 7. It had expected an Israeli response along the lines of those to earlier attacks that resulted in aerial bombardments lasting a few weeks, with limited ground incursions, eventually leading to a ceasefire and an exchange of Palestinian prisoners for Israeli hostages.

What it also did not foresee was the personal motivation of Israel’s Prime Minister to continue in power to avoid facing political consequences for the October 7 failure, as well as to postpone the legal proceedings that were initiated earlier on charges of alleged bribery. Dependent on far-right ministers in his cabinet, his only option to remain in power was to prolong the war. This led to Israel postponing and violating ceasefire proposals for nearly two years, despite the enormous human costs and unprecedented destruction inflicted upon Gaza.

The numbers illustrate the extent of the humanitarian catastrophe. Reportedly, over 67,000 Palestinians have been killed, about half of them women and children. Large

Peace that has eluded Gaza for 75 years can only
come through accommodation, statesmanship

parts of Gaza have become uninhabitable. Roughly 60 per cent of homes, along with most civilian infrastructure including hospitals and schools, have been destroyed or damaged. Almost all of Gaza’s population, estimated at 2.3 million, has been displaced. Eighty-two per cent of Gaza is reported to be within Israel’s militarised zones, leaving 18 per cent of the territory for 90 per cent of the population to survive in. Population density is over 30,000 per square kilometre for Gaza’s Al-Mawasi region. The economic consequences are equally dire. Gaza’s GDP has shrunk by more than 80 per cent with almost no employment. An entire generation of Gazans will have to endure the lasting psychological impact of their humiliation.

In Israel, the war has caused deep fissures. The massive security and intelligence failure remains an unending trauma. While the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) control large parts of the Gaza Strip, Hamas has not been completely destroyed, nor have all the hostages been released. In addition, Israel finds itself more isolated internationally than it has been in decades. There will be long-term consequences for its security.

The geopolitical consequences of October 7 have been equally profound. The war has reverberated in the region and beyond, particularly in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran. This has led to the severe degradation of the Axis of Resistance, an informal Iran-led coalition across West Asia opposing the influence of the US and Israel.

When Hezbollah, the most important part of the Axis of Resistance, opened up a second front in northern Israel immediately after October 7, with the purpose of diverting the IDF’s attention from Gaza, Israel carried out a systematic and highly successful operation against it. It eliminated Hezbollah operatives through a sophisticated attack on the paggers they were using, followed by the assassination of their leader, Hassan Nasrallah. This led to a ceasefire deal in November 2024, effectively ending Hezbollah attacks on Israel. It also led to Lebanon reasserting sovereignty and military control over the south, opening up possibilities for its reconstruction and development.

The weakening of Hezbollah by Israel’s military campaign in Lebanon had a direct and fatal impact on Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria. Hezbollah had played a critical military role in keeping it alive from the Arab Spring of 2011 onwards. With the near collapse of Hezbollah, Russia focusing on the Ukraine war and Iran more concerned about self-preservation, the Assad regime collapsed after a 12-day offensive led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, the current Syrian president.

The change of regime in Syria, the collapse of Hezbollah and the destruction of Hamas have also severely undermined Iran’s power and influence, making it vulnerable to attacks by Israel. Soon after the International Atomic Energy Agency declared that Iran was not complying with its safeguards obligations and had enriched more than 400 kg of uranium to 60 per cent, Israel implemented its long-term policy of eliminating Iran’s nuclear program. It attacked Iran’s nuclear facilities, destroying its air defences and missile launchers, and targeting its military and nuclear leadership. The attack ended with a massive US bombing of uranium enrichment installations. These attacks not only derailed the nuclear discussions between Iran and the US but led to the UN reimposing sanctions on Iran that were suspended in 2015.

The notion that diplomacy could refashion a different West Asia — through the Abraham Accords and a new connectedness between Israel and longstanding Arab adversaries — now faces huge hurdles. The war in Gaza, which has now lasted for two years, has not only devastated the strip but also intensified existing geopolitical tensions, triggered major regional conflicts, and put immense strain on the international system and its humanitarian laws. Talks are currently underway in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Long-lasting peace that has eluded the region for the last 75 years can come about only with accommodation and statesmanship. One can only dare to hope.

The writer is former ambassador of India to Egypt and former permanent representative of India to the Arab League

ANIMALS, UNLIKE US

In the gulf between humans and other species, wonder takes hold



POOJA PILLAI

ON A LONG-AGO afternoon, Jane Goodall gave me something that I understood to be a gift only many years later. It came from a scene in a National Geographic documentary about her work with the Gombe Stream chimpanzees in Tanzania. In the film, amidst the many visuals of chimps grooming and screeching at each other, brawling and meditatively munching on fruits and grub, there was one that shook me: A pair stealing and killing the baby of another member of their troop and eating it.

These were animals that I had seen, until then, as mischievous and clownish, but fundamentally benign. Received from cartoons, this was an image my childish heart had held on to despite being introduced at a young age to nature’s brutality via wildlife documentaries — “the poor lion also has to eat, no?” being a typical parental comment.

Of course, chimps were known to be clever; in the 1950s, a chimpanzee named Congo had become famous for his Jackson Pollock-style paintings (his talent had first been recognised by Desmond Morris, zoologist, artist, and author of *The Naked Ape*). Then along came Goodall, who discovered in the 1960s that not only are these apes able to use tools, they make them for specific purposes — an ability that was, until then, considered uniquely human.

But intelligence is one thing, and cunning and malevolence are quite another. What I saw in that documentary shed a harsh new light on animals that had seemed, for so long, like charming cousins, mischievous imitators that reflected back our gestures with endearing

This was Jane Goodall’s gift to us. When she taught us to see chimpanzees not only as creatures that echo our behaviours — tool-users, mourners, affectionate kin — but also as beings whose violence, estrangement, and silence mark them as irreducibly other, she showed that similarity becomes the lens through which difference is magnified.

clumsiness. Here they were shown waging war, brutally beating and killing their “enemies” and even eating their own young.

It would be a few years before I understood the deeper truth that emerged from Goodall’s work: That animals are beings of incredible complexity, as capable of ferocity as they are of tenderness, as given to cruelty as to kinship. Their lives cannot be reduced to symbols of innocence or savagery. They inhabit a continuum where both are possible, and where neither can be fully explained in human terms.

For those who love animals, it is astonishingly easy to forget this. This is especially true when it comes to our pets, the animals who share our homes, who eat and sleep alongside us, who depend on us for care and diversion. Perhaps it’s only to be expected: After all, our longest inter-species relationship, with dogs, is even older than agriculture itself. We believe we know and understand these companions completely. A dog waits at the door, it bounds in happiness at the prospect of a walk, and looks at us with pleading eyes at the dining table — these gestures seem to speak a language of transparency.

But mystery persists — as much with dogs as with cats, horses, and all the other animals we have domesticated over millennia. It reveals itself in the way, for example, my cats often stiffen and turn their gaze towards what appears to my eyes as empty space. What can they possibly be seeing? It can be disconcerting to realise that animals’ senses operate on

frequencies we cannot enter, that their instincts are shaped by evolutionary histories we cannot possibly inhabit, even if a small, hidden part of us has always known this (as evident in ancient myths and legends, and today’s horror films and novels, about animals being able to perceive and communicate with worlds or dimensions beyond our ken).

This shadowland that lies between our species and others is what allows respect to flourish. If an animal could be fully translated into human terms, it would cease to be an animal — it would become a mere projection. The shimmer of mystery between us and animals is, thus, an invaluable bequest. It reminds us that adoration and respect depend on distance as much as closeness.

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OCTOBER 8, 1985, FORTY YEARS AGO

SC ON DEMOLITION

THE SUPREME COURT ruled that the move to demolish the Indian Express building in New Delhi was politically motivated, mala fide and “intended and meant to silence the voice of the Indian Express”. In a historic judgment, the court quashed the demolition notice served on the Express Newspapers Ltd in March, 1980 and held that the construction of its new building in Delhi was with the permission of the Union Government.

INDIA, CHINA OPT OUT

INDIA AND CHINA told the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) that they would not use the trust fund facility for the next six years until 1991. Their decision was applauded by delegates at the IMF’s interim committee meeting. India’s decision to opt out of trust funds will not affect its eligibility for other funds granted by the Washington-based organisation.

BODIES RETURNED

THE BODIES OF the three jawans killed by Pakistani troops in an ambush well within the Indian side of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir were handed over to Indian authorities, according to the Defence Ministry. The three jawans were on routine

patrol in the Kargil sector when they were fired upon. Their bodies were later taken away by the Pakistani soldiers.

TASTE OF WINTER

WINTRY CONDITIONS PREVAILED for the second day with the day temperature falling by nine degrees Celsius to 25 degrees. The skies were overcast throughout the day even though there was not much rain. The Safdarjung meteorological office recorded only 0.2 mm of rainfall during the day compared to 17 mm the day before. A wintry touch was apparently evident on this cold day with lots of people beginning to wear sleeveless sweaters.

West is turning multipolar

Europe is increasingly ill at ease with Donald Trump’s America First nationalism. A loosely knit West offers India greater room for manoeuvre and cross-cutting coalitions



BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Keir Starmer’s visit to Mumbai this week, the new trade and investment pact with the EFTA countries, and the ongoing trade talks with the EU in Brussels together signal the steady rise of Europe in India’s diplomacy. After decades of Indian neglect, the continent is gaining weight in Delhi’s strategic calculus — just as Europe itself begins to develop its own geopolitical act rather than remain a mere extension of the US within the so-called “collective West.”

Since the end of World War 2, “the West” meant political and strategic unity under American power, reinforced by European and Japanese deference to Washington. For centuries before that, the rivalry among Western powers had shaped the modern world; after 1945, those rivalries yielded to solidarity against communism and the Soviet Union in the Cold War.

The Soviet collapse not only cemented the unity of the West but also saw an effort to expand it. Russia was briefly welcomed into the G7, and the 1990s were hailed as the “end of history” and the triumph of Western liberal universalism. Yet that unipolar moment soon frayed — first through a resentful Russia seeking more honourable terms of engagement, then through a rising China intent on building a post-Western order.

Many middle powers, including India, responded by calling for a multipolar world to temper American dominance. But as China’s ambitions widened, Delhi began to speak also of a multipolar Asia. Today, a new layer has emerged: The recognition of the deepening divisions within the West. Engaging this “multipolar West” has now become an important strand in India’s external strategy.

US President Donald Trump’s America First nationalism has sharpened internal Western fissures — questioning alliances, revising security commitments, and the arbitrary rewriting of global rules. The Trump era has forced both Europe and Asia to debate “strategic autonomy” and to plan for a world where longstanding American policies can no longer be taken for granted.

Differences between the US and its allies — on Russia, China, trade, and technology — are now quite deep. Europe also watches with unease as the American right challenges liberal norms and exports its culture wars across the Atlantic. The sense that Washington treats some allies more harshly than adversaries has rattled capitals from Berlin to Tokyo.

In response, Europe is discovering its own vocabulary of sovereignty. Emmanuel Macron’s call for a “*Europe puissante*” and Olaf Scholz’s *Zeitenwende* in defence spending have converged in a continental quest for self-reliance.

In her 2025 State of the Union address last month, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared that “Europe must be prepared to stand on its own feet — economically, technologically, and militarily.” The long-debated idea of strategic autonomy



C R Sasikumar

has moved from slogan to principle. Europe now seeks to hedge against US unpredictability by building an independent defence capacity, deepening technological and industrial sovereignty, and articulating a distinct approach to global governance and values.

To be sure, Europe remains internally divided — between east-west threat perceptions and north-south economic priorities — but the direction is unmistakable: Towards greater strategic unity and agency within a plural West. It will take a while, but it is an existential imperative for Europe.

A multipolar West does not mark Western decline; it is about a rearrangement within. The US remains at the top of the global power heap. What has changed, though, is the domestic political consensus on how Washington uses that position more unilaterally — and for what purposes — to protect its own interests rather than to lead a collective West or underwrite a global order. America’s allies in Europe and Asia have no desire to break ties with the US, but the engagement from now on will be on different terms.

China has risen to be the second most important power and is acutely conscious of its opportunities in a world that might see the US stepping back. Russia is determined to reshape the European order. That leaves the US allies in Asia and Europe scrambling to develop new strategies to deal with China and Russia, while reducing their dependence on the US.

Europe, on its part, is rearming itself, and expanding defence cooperation within the EU and bilaterally with the UK, Canada, Japan, and South Korea. Economically, it is diversifying trade beyond the Atlantic — reaching deeper into the Indo-Pacific and Latin America through new trade and connectivity initiatives.

America’s Asian allies — Australia, Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN — are making similar adjustments. All will have to learn to live with a less predictable US, minimising risks while exploiting new opportunities that Western pluralism may bring.

India’s patient handling of the Trump-era turbulence, its renewed engagement with Europe and the UK, its search for a pragmatic balance between ties with Russia and the West, and its recent effort to reset ties with China show that Delhi’s diplomacy is adapting to change. Yet whether India’s internal structures — still slow to reform and modernise — can match the speed of external transformation remains unclear. Without domestic institutional agility and economic modernisation, India risks under-leveraging the new openings that Western pluralism creates.

India features prominently in Europe’s effort to diversify its strategic partnerships. The EU’s September 2025 Joint Communication on relations with India captures Europe’s widening geopolitical imagination. It asserts that “India’s success benefits the EU, just as the EU’s success benefits India”. The document outlines cooperation in trade, technology, and defence while acknowledging differences on Russia. It highlights connectivity through the Global Gateway programme, partnerships in digital public infrastructure, and collaboration on resilient supply chains. In Asia, it is moving beyond the China-centric focus of the last few decades and sees India as a pivotal actor in its Indo-Pacific outreach.

From the Indian perspective, a multipolar West brings both potential relief and considerable risk. A loosely knit West allows greater room for manoeuvre and cross-cutting coalitions. India can now explore multiple points of collaboration within the West. But the fragmentation of the West could weaken collective international responses to authoritarian assertiveness and generate instability.

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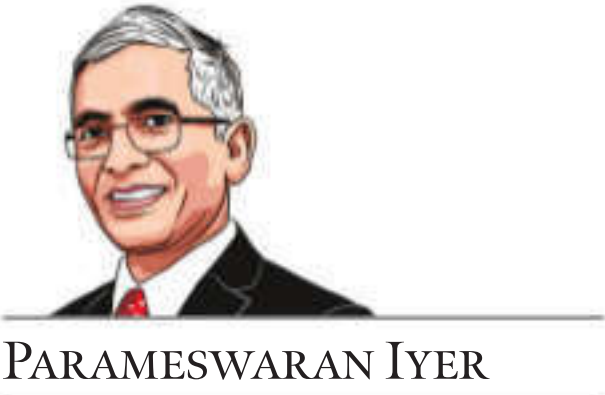
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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“ Hamas terrorists are the ones who perpetrated the brutal massacre of October 7, 2023, but this failure happened on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s watch. He didn’t resign, he didn’t even beg forgiveness, and for two years, he has also blocked the establishment of a state commission of inquiry.” —HAARETZ, ISRAEL

The running Air Marshal

Forty years ago, on Air Force Day, my father led a contingent of 250 on a 220-km run from Agra to Delhi



OCTOBER 8 IS Air Force Day, and it brings back many happy memories. Exactly 40 years ago, on October 8, 1985, my father, retired Air Marshal P V Iyer, then 55 years old, arrived in Delhi leading a contingent of about 250 runners from the Indian Air Force, along with a few special invitees, on a run all the way from Agra. They covered a distance of around 220 km in three-and-a-half days — an average of about 65 km a day. The run culminated at the sports grounds of Air Force Station, Palam, on Air Force Day, with the “Running Air Marshal”, as my father was known, leading the contingent and, in front of a huge audience, handing over the Air Force flag to Air Chief Marshal Denis LaFontaine, who was then Chief of the Air Staff.

To add to the glamour of the event, the Air Marshal had invited three celebrities who were also outstanding athletes to join the run. These were Asha Agarwal, India’s first woman marathoner, Ranjit Bhatia, a Mathematics professor at St. Stephen’s College and Devapriya Lahiri, a Rhodes Scholar and Oxford Blue. I, then a young IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre and a former Delhi University tennis player (but not in training for the “crazy” idea of running from Agra to Delhi), accompanied the runners in a jeep, much to the amusement of my father’s team.

A lot of meticulous preparation had gone into the run’s organisation. The Air Marshal, himself a logistics expert, had planned everything to the last detail, including the selection of about 250 Air Force personnel of all ranks and their training regimen for a gruelling run needing the equivalent of almost two marathons a day for three-plus consecutive days. The planning involved transporting the runners from all over India to Agra two days before the kickoff on October 5, the logistics of arranging food and water along the route, the medical and first aid support, and the meals and lodging along the way for such a large contingent. The planning also involved organising the entertainment and a musical evening every night at the stopover points for the weary runners.

The running plan was simple: Two running sessions a day, one starting early in the morning for about four to five hours, followed by a lunch break, then another three

to four hours in the afternoon, followed by a night halt en route. Flagged off by Air Marshal ML Sethi, Air Officer Commanding in Chief of the Air Force Maintenance Command, against the backdrop of the majestic Taj Mahal on the morning of October 5, the first night stop was at Mathura. But early the next morning, there was a surprise. About 30 runners, sore and weary after the gruelling 60 km run from Agra to Mathura, dropped out. Not a little shaken by this, the remaining 220 gamely continued on the much longer (about 80 km) Mathura-to-Palwal leg the next morning. By the end of the second day, at Palwal, almost everyone, including Agarwal, Bhatia and Lahiri, was bone-tired and wondering if they could continue on the third leg to Faridabad. The Air Marshal tried his best to keep everybody’s spirits up and joked at the evening meal that if an “old man” like him could keep it up, all the youngsters should have no problem. Another 20-odd runners, however, did not show up the next morning for the Palwal to Faridabad leg. But the Air Marshal continued to motivate the remaining runners by literally leading from the front. By the time the 200 runners reached Faridabad and halted for the third and last night, they were weary but battle-hardened and determined to complete the last leg from Faridabad to Palam, Delhi.

The final leg, on the morning of October 8, was the relatively “short” 30-km run from Faridabad to Palam, which by now seemed like child’s play to the “veteran” 200 runners. There was much cheering by the bystanders along the route and of course huge applause when the runners filed into the Air Force stadium at Palam. “Well done, Iyer” said Air Chief Marshal LaFontaine when the Air Marshal handed over the flag to him, to which the response was “glad to be able to finish on Air Force Day, sir”.

On another Air Force Day, many years later, the now 89-year-old Air Marshal Iyer had the privilege of meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Air Force Day reception at Air House on Akbar Road. He was thrilled to be introduced to the PM and smartly saluted him. The PM was kind enough to spend a few minutes chatting to the Air Marshal, which so thrilled the latter that he went home and promptly had a glass of whisky to celebrate.

Today, as we celebrate another Air Force Day, the Air Marshal’s family and friends, and most of all, the members of the once in a lifetime Agra-Delhi Run team, wish the Air Marshal — still doing three hours of running and fitness a day — a very happy 96th birthday at the end of October, and many more Air Force Days to come.

The writer is India’s executive director at the World Bank. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BIHAR BATTLE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Bihar will decide’ (IE, October 7). Bihar has been at the forefront of shaping the political landscape and democratic movements. It was Bihar, under Lalu Prasad, that halted the Rath Yatra in 1990. The state has been a pioneer of the demand for a caste-based census. Congress and the BJP were compelled to support the idea. The Bihar election is a critical test not only for political stakeholders but also for the EC’s credibility. The Leader of Opposition has successfully proven, if not beyond reasonable doubt then with a degree of preponderance, the irregularities in the voters’ list of two constituencies in Kamataka. This election is do-or-die for everyone concerned.

Vasant Nalawade, Satara

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Bihar will decide’ (IE, October 7). The Election Commission’s announcement of a two-phase Bihar Assembly election on November 6 and 11 sets the stage for a fascinating political battle. This election, the first after the state’s caste survey, will test whether the politics of identity still outweighs governance, development, and employment. Both the Nitish Kumar-led NDA and Tejashwi Yadav’s Mahagathbandhan are returning to familiar battle lines — stability versus stagnation, governance versus grievance. However, the controversy surrounding the SIR of electoral rolls and allegations of vote theft cast a shadow over the process. The absence of data on removal of illegal voters, as admitted by the Chief Election Commissioner, raises concerns about transparency. At the same time, the EC’s decision to replicate the SIR nationwide underscores the importance of ensuring a clean and credible voter list.

Vandana Chopra, Chandigarh

A HEAVY PRICE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Killer medicine’ (IE, October 7). This is not the first time that cough syrups sales have shone a light on regulatory lapses from Jammu to Rajasthan, and even across borders in Gambia and Uzbekistan. The fact that hundreds of pharmaceutical units continue to operate without meeting the upgraded “good manufacturing practices” is alarming. Periodic extensions and weak enforcement have emboldened smaller firms to prioritise profits over safety. Negligence must carry criminal liability; only then will firms invest in safer processes. The cost of regulatory indifference is being paid through children’s lives. Quality control cannot remain a slogan; it must become a non-negotiable practice.

Harsh Pawaria, Rohtak

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Killer medicine’ (IE, October 7). In the present instance, the cough syrup under scrutiny is like many others available in the market, that is, irrational combinations. It allegedly has chlorpheniramine, phenylephrine and paracetamol. The first two have the potential for serious adverse effects; this is why they are globally disallowed for children under the age of two; in some countries, they are banned for children up to the age of six. Combining them with paracetamol, which has a different frequency of administration, makes it a high risk for overdoses. These risks are irrespective of the addition of glycol levels. There has to be vigilant monitoring and regulation. And stringent action must be taken when violations are detected. It is criminal to act only when deaths have occurred; that is indefensible. The approach to drug regulation currently is dangerous.

SS Paul, Nadia



GAITRI ISSAR KUMAR

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Keir Starmer will make his first official visit to India on October 8-9 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The visit reciprocates Modi’s July 2025 visit to London, which, *inter alia*, saw the signing of the landmark Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

Starmer’s visit marks an optimistic uptick in India-UK economic cooperation at a time when global geopolitics and trade face unprecedented disruptions and uncertainty. From unilateral sanctions and punitive tariffs to intersecting alliances and “multi-alignments” necessitated by continuously evolving security concerns, every factor of our interconnected world seems to be forced towards a “reboot”.

As the Ukraine war ravages the financial planning of governments across Europe, the UK, too, has felt a significant impact. Higher energy costs have affected daily life and industrial productivity. High expenditure on support for Ukraine — the UK has committed up to £21.8 billion — has necessitated a recasting of its domestic expenditure outlay, even as it copes with the fallout of Brexit and Covid.

For both India and the UK, the challenging international scenario has been a reminder of their complementary strengths. These are reflected in the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership — Vision 2035, a 10-year roadmap for initiatives in trade, investment flows in both di-

London-Delhi-Mumbai

Keir Starmer’s visit marks an uptick in India-UK cooperation

rections, better market access, fintech and financial linkages, collaboration in innovation and advanced technology, education, health, defence and security, people-to-people relations as well as global issues such as climate change, sustainable development and energy security (both are co-founders of the One Sun One World One Grid Initiative and the UK was the first co-chair of the Governing Council of India’s Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure initiative).

The India-UK relationship is highlighted in the UK’s 2023 policy paper, “Integrated Review: Responding to a more contested and volatile world” (IR 2023). It talks about building on the comprehensive partnership, implementing the India-UK 2030 roadmap, strengthening the defence and security partnership with India, increasing collaboration on technology and “leading the maritime security pillar of India’s Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative”. The paper emphasises UN Security Council reform, welcoming India as a permanent member in particular — a stance Starmer has recently reiterated. Starmer’s government, while carrying forward IR 2023, commissioned a Strategic Defence Review in 2025, which specifically acknowledges India as a partner in global security.

London and Mumbai being financial hubs, it is fitting that the two prime ministers will address the sixth Global Fintech Fest and engage with stakeholders for the success of the CETA, designed to boost bilateral

trade by £25.5 billion annually and take it to a total of £90 billion (\$120 billion) by 2030. This would be hugely beneficial to key sectors in India such as textiles, footwear, sports goods, toys, marine products, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, auto parts and engines and organic chemicals — bringing relief amid US tariff hikes and with the EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism looming on the horizon.

In Mumbai, the two leaders will review progress on the India-UK Vision 2035 initiatives they endorsed in July. So far, progress in the different tracks has been encouraging but could be better. For example, full operationalisation of the India-UK Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement signed in May 2021 — which has seen patchy implementation so far — will enable smoother movement of professionals between the two countries, streamline visa procedures for diplomats, officials, transit passengers and other categories and, hopefully, hasten extraditions.

Bilateral defence consultations and air-, sea- and land-based joint exercises, as well as institutionalised defence dialogue mechanisms, are ongoing. On the eve of Starmer’s visit, the Konkan bilateral naval exercise began in the western Indian Ocean, with the deployment of aircraft carriers, warships, submarines and fighters for complex combat manoeuvres. Transforming defence ties towards a qualitatively new level — of co-development and co-production — would be a

win-win for both India and the UK, and for the countries that we would export to. Greater sensitivity to each other’s security concerns and concrete action in addressing them, and closer cooperation in cybersecurity and real-time intelligence sharing, would greatly enhance mutual trust and hold value for both sides.

A valuable element in the India-UK relationship is the Indian diaspora, a well-integrated component of the British economy. British Indians are counted among the top contributors to British productivity and competitiveness. They own 65,000 companies in the UK and have the highest average earnings and highest employment levels (75 per cent). They are valued in every sector — business, industry, academia and science, politics, literature and the arts.

Our governments and parliaments have recognised the true potential of closer cooperation across the board, with a shared commitment to common values. In both our free and pluralistic societies, there are bound to be elements that remain intent on promoting a narrative that would hinder the realisation of “Vision 2035”. We must do all it takes to insulate the India-UK partnership from the continuous efforts of vested interests to derail it. Both governments must keep their sights on the swift achievement of shared goals for their people and the world.

The writer is former high commissioner of India to the United Kingdom



Release Wangchuk

Detention of peaceful activists does not serve national interest

The basis of good governance and democracy is that it provides enough leeway and wherewithal to address issues related to national security. The smart way to address a problem that started as a legitimate demand for greater autonomy in governance is not by misusing laws that allow for preventive detention against peaceful dissenters but by finding a route to defuse it. That does not mean that those who indulged in violence and arson in Ladakh during the protests for Statehood and Sixth Schedule status should be spared the long arm of the law. Yet, the Centre’s detention of climate activist and social reformer Sonam Wangchuk under the National Security Act (NSA), in response to the protests, is wrong. Mr. Wangchuk has been a consistent and peaceful advocate for the legitimate democratic aspirations of Ladakh, which have found resonance across Leh and Kargil districts, as well as religious, ethnic and political identities. His recourse to non-violent dissent, with sustained agitations for a legislature to address Ladakh’s environmental and livelihood concerns, is in keeping with the historical ethos of Indian politics established during and after the freedom movement. Invoking a law that is intended to counter a threat to the security of the Indian state against a peaceful dissenter reveals a problematic intolerance for democratic expression.

In recent judgments, the Supreme Court of India has repeatedly clarified that a clear distinction must be made between a “law and order” issue and a threat to “public order”. The NSA, which is meant to address “public order”, pertains to acts that disturb “the even tempo of the life of the community”. There is no evidence to suggest that Mr. Wangchuk’s activism reaches this benchmark. The Centre appears to have failed to apply its mind and reach a “requisite subjective satisfaction”, as demanded by the Court, to show that his actions posed any real threat to “public order”. The Centre’s response has clearly sought to conflate dissent with acts akin to sedition. Mr. Wangchuk’s case is not an isolated one, as in the past, similar Acts were used to stifle dissent and bypass due process, as was the case with the detention of Kashmiri politicians following the abrogation of the special status of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir. Ladakh’s aspiration for self-governance is genuine and requires the Centre’s nuanced and empathetic response, more so as it is a sensitive border region. The Centre must revoke Mr. Wangchuk’s detention immediately and re-engage in a meaningful dialogue with the people of Ladakh. Not doing so will only precipitate another crisis.

Radical tunnel

The Physics Nobel exemplifies value of inquiry not driven by immediate utility

John Clarke, Michel Devoret and John Martinis’s experiments in the 1980s proved that the strange laws of quantum mechanics could govern not just subatomic particles but entire circuits visible to the eye. Their discovery of macroscopic quantum tunnelling and energy quantisation in an electric circuit won them the 2025 Physics Nobel Prize. This marks a significant interval since quantum mechanics last directly featured in a Physics Nobel, noticeable given the field’s enduring vitality, and at a time when the world anticipates profound revolutions in computing and communications. Their experiments at the University of California, demonstrated quantum behaviour in a circuit comprising two superconductors separated by an ultrathin insulating barrier, also known as a Josephson junction. In classical physics, a current flowing through this system would be trapped in a zero-voltage state unless it had enough energy to cross the barrier. But at temperatures near absolute zero, they found that the current could escape by ‘tunnelling’ through the barrier, a uniquely quantum phenomenon. The system also behaved as if it were a single large particle, with discrete energy levels instead of a continuous range. To ensure these effects were not artefacts of noise in the circuits, the team took elaborate pains to isolate them from stray microwave radiation. Their results confirmed that a superconducting phase difference, a collective property of the trillions of pairs of electrons that sustained superconductivity, behaved as a single quantum variable.

Josephson junctions are the foundation of superconducting qubits, which animate many of today’s leading quantum computers; superconducting circuits also underpin ultrasensitive magnetometers, quantum voltage standards and single-photon detectors used in astronomy and biomedical imaging. By confirming that quantum laws apply to objects “big enough to hold in your hand”, the laureates opened a new domain of applied quantum engineering. Today, the challenge is not to prove that macroscopic quantum behaviour exists but to preserve it long enough to be useful. Quantum states are exquisitely sensitive to their surroundings; research thus focuses on materials with lower loss, better filtering and cryogenic control and hybrid architectures that combine superconducting circuits with mechanical, photonic or spin-based systems. The 2025 prize also exemplifies the value of inquiry driven solely by curiosity about nature’s limits. When the laureates set out to test whether quantum mechanics could govern a macroscopic electrical circuit, no one foresaw its consequences. Their pursuit of a fundamental question produced the principles underpinning the pursuit of engineers today, including in India, of new technologies – and prestige for their host countries.

Before October 7, 2023, West Asia looked like a different region, at least from a geopolitical perspective. The Palestine question had been pushed to the margins of the region. Palestinians themselves were divided with the Islamist Hamas controlling Gaza and the Fatah running the Palestine Authority in the West Bank. Iran, despite its economic woes, remained a powerful actor through its so-called axis of resistance. The Arab countries, mostly the wealthy Persian Gulf monarchies, saw Iran as a security threat, and chose to deepen security cooperation with Israel.

The United States, seeking to slowly disentangle itself from West Asia, was trying to knit together two of its key regional pillars – the Arab world and Israel – into a joint front against Iran. The foundation of this vision was laid in the Abraham Accords of 2020, brokered by the first Trump administration, through which four Arab countries signed a normalisation agreement with Israel. By 2023, Saudi Arabia was in an advanced stage of normalising ties with Israel.

Washington’s broader plan was to integrate Israel deeper into the regional economy as well as the global order with two major initiatives, both involving India – the I2U2 grouping (India, Israel, the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates), and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC). It was a grand vision to reshape the region under the American leadership with Israel at the heart of what was being hailed as “the new Middle East”. Then came the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel, in which about 1,200 people were killed. The attack shattered the sense of security that Israel had seemed to enjoy despite its continued atrocities against Palestinians. Hamas’s murderous assault was widely condemned, but the violence also served as a reminder that unless the Palestine question was addressed, peace and stability would remain elusive in West Asia. Israel also realised that the attack sabotaged its efforts to reshape the region in its favour diplomatically. The Israeli response was swift and overwhelming – an all-out war, first focused on Gaza and then spilling into the wider region.

Objectives of the war

Israel declared two primary objectives – the destruction of Hamas and the release of the 251 hostages taken on October 7. But the way it fought the war suggests that it has deeper ambitions. For Israel, Hamas was only the tip of the iceberg. Its real conventional enemy was Iran, which backed Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and other militant groups. After October 7, Israel saw an opening to wage a two-front war – the first was to crush Palestinian resistance once and for all, and the second was to dismantle Iran’s axis and weaken its regional influence. Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wanted the



Stanly Johny

The grand diplomatic vision of reshaping West Asia, with Israel at its centre, could be in ruins

following: to build a unipolar West Asia, with Israel, backed by the U.S., being the central security player; Iran rolled back; Arab countries subdued, and the resurgent Palestine question pushed to the margins.

To be sure, Israel has made some advances in this direction. Hamas’s militant and administrative infrastructure have been severely damaged, and Israeli forces control much of Gaza. Even if they withdraw under U.S. President Donald Trump’s 20-point ‘peace’ plan to the initial withdrawal lines, Israeli troops will still retain parts of Rafah in the south, much of Khan Yunus and a buffer zone in the north. Hezbollah, the feared Shia militant group in Lebanon, has been humbled by Israel’s repeated strikes.

In Syria, the collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime, and the rise of Abu Mohammed al-Golani (Ahmed al Sharaa), a former al-Qaeda jihadist, marked a tactical victory for Israel. Mr. Assad had been a critical link between Iran and Hezbollah and his fall not only weakened Hezbollah further but also allowed Israel to grab more Syrian territory. Emboldened by these developments, Israel carried out air strikes on Iran in June to destroy its nuclear programme and degrade its military capabilities.

Israel’s strategic missteps

While Israel’s tactical gains project the image of a country determined to reshape West Asia through force, none of these advances has translated into long-term security. If the destruction of Hamas was one of the principal objectives of the war, two years on, Hamas has not been defeated, let alone destroyed. Israel may have decapitated the Hamas leadership and killed thousands of its fighters, but Hamas is not al-Qaeda or the Islamic State – transnational jihadist organisations detached from local populations and which have flourished through nihilistic violence.

Hamas is deeply rooted in Palestinian nationalism. Faced with military setbacks, Hamas has reinvented itself as an insurgency, its original avatar. This makes it extremely difficult for Israel to crush Hamas – ask the Americans about their 20 years in Afghanistan. If Israel sought to push the Palestine question back to the margins, its genocidal war in Gaza has had the opposite effect. Today, even Israel’s closest partners have started formally recognising Palestinian statehood, while global public opinion is steadily turning against the Zionist state.

Regionally, Israel’s strikes have incapacitated Iran’s non-state allies and weakened its influence, but Hezbollah remains a formidable political and social force in Lebanon. And Iran did not merely survive Israel’s 12 days of bombing (June 13-25, 2025). It hit back with long-range missiles. If Israel’s desperation to weaken Iran took it to the 12-day war, its desperation to defeat Hamas took

it to bomb Qatar in September, which turned out to be a grave mistake. Israel targeted a gathering of Hamas’s political leadership in Doha, but failed to kill any of the group’s top leaders. Since October 7, Israel has bombed at least five countries besides Palestinian territories. It has targeted Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran and Qatar. Qatar is a close American ally and its targeting shook the foundations of the U.S. security guarantees in the Arab world.

Israel’s expansionism has pushed Arab countries to reassess their political and security calculus. If in September 2023, Saudi Arabia wanted to join the Abraham Accords and normalise ties with Israel, today an agreement with Tel Aviv is seen as a liability in the kingdom rather than as a strategic asset. Without a Saudi normalisation deal, the IMEEC is unlikely to take off. The I2U2 remains paralysed with the UAE making it clear that any Israeli attempt to annex the West Bank – a key demand of Israel’s powerful far right – would cross a red line.

The Gulf monarchies have moved ahead diversifying or doubling down on their security partnerships – Saudi Arabia has signed a mutual defence agreement with nuclear-armed Pakistan, and Qatar has got a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-style security assurance from Mr. Trump. His executive order states that future attacks against Qatar would be seen as a “threat to the peace and security of the U.S.”

No end plan

Despite its tactical military gains, Israel finds itself trapped in a strategic labyrinth. Like Mr. Trump put it, “Bibi [Netanyahu] took it very far in Gaza.” Israel still does not have an end plan. It cannot ignore the Palestine issue any more and continue the occupation without consequences. Isolated internationally, it is clinging to U.S. support for political, economic and military cover. Hamas remains an unresolved problem even after Israel’s killing of at least 67,000 Palestinians in Gaza. The Iranian regime still stands with its nuclear programme. And the grand diplomatic vision of reshaping West Asia, with Israel at its centre, lies in ruins, as Arab states increasingly view Israel as a threat rather than a security provider. The return of Palestine to West Asia’s geopolitical core would mean that Israel would have to make concessions to go back to the pre-October 7 diplomatic order. But Israel’s leaders hate making concessions on Palestine. Mr. Netanyahu’s only solution to these strategic challenges was to continue the war endlessly. But even that path is being shut after Mr. Trump publicly demanded Israel “to stop bombing Gaza immediately”.

Mr. Netanyahu wanted to reshape West Asia. The region is being remade, but not according to his design.

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A path to progress that is paved with gold



Gourav Vallabh

is a Part-Time Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) and Professor of Finance

collectively hold close to 25,000 tonnes of gold, making this the single largest private reserve in the world. At today’s prices, this translates to about \$2.4 trillion of wealth, or more than 55% of India’s GDP in FY26 terms – a stock of value even larger than all the credit extended by India’s banks.

Paradoxically, despite such reserves, India remains one of the largest importers of gold, “meeting roughly 87% of demand from abroad, with imports accounting for 8% of its total bill. Between 2010 and 2013, gold imports made up almost a third of India’s trade deficit. This paradox highlights both an enormous challenge and an unprecedented opportunity.

Because India’s relationship with gold is cultural and civilisational, coercive restrictions are not the answer. What is needed instead is a revitalised, trust-based gold monetisation scheme. Unlike past experiments that faltered due to weak infrastructure and limited outreach, a reimagined scheme must build on global best practices. A striking example comes from a few nations that successfully invested in assaying facilities, created innovative gold savings products, and digitised gold flows through mobile apps, managing to bring thousands of tonnes of “under-the-pillow” gold into their formal financial system. India can adapt these lessons.

The basics

The road ahead demands three essentials. First, infrastructure – hallmarking and purity testing centres need to scale faster for trusted valuation across the country. India requires a formal network of collection and purity testing centres. Only recently has it begun expanding the reach of standardised testing: the number of Bureau of Indian Standards-registered assaying and hallmarking centres has almost doubled in the last four years. Yet, a large share of the market still consists of unbranded gold with uncertain purity, which prevents the efficient recycling of gold into the economy. Second, logistics – banks

can manage the money flows, while experienced collection and purity testing centres handle gold movement securely and transparently. Third, digitalisation – every household depositor should be able to track their “metal balance” as easily as a bank account balance. But, above all, trust is the foundation. To build it, we must remove frictions such as goods and services tax and customs scrutiny on deposits, and ensure a simple, “no questions asked” environment where returns flow back directly to depositors without hidden costs.

If structured this way, the economics are favourable. The cost of funds raised through gold monetisation could fall in the range of 4.5%-6.5%, lower than the effective cost of borrowing from international markets. Even if a fraction of India’s household is mobilised, the impact would be transformative – easing import pressure, strengthening the current account and creating a vast pool of domestic capital to drive infrastructure, manufacturing and innovation.

Moment of financial self-reliance

History shows that India has always risen to moments of crisis, transforming them into capability. Just as it attained food security during the Green Revolution and global leadership in IT services during the digital age, its now stands before the call for financial self-reliance. Mobilising domestic wealth, particularly through gold, is not just an economic choice. It is a civilisational one.

This is about building the confidence that Bharat can fund Bharat, harnessing its own wealth, ingenuity, and resilience. The path forward demands trust, foresight and determination. But the prize is unmistakable – an India that defines its growth on its own terms, self-reliant in spirit and substance, and financing its aspirations from within to step boldly into the future.

The views expressed are personal

A revitalised, trust-based gold monetisation scheme can help India define its growth on its own terms

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Disgraceful behaviour

The incident, on October 6, 2025 at 11.35 a.m., in which an advocate attempted to throw his footwear towards the Chief Justice of India during proceedings is a disgrace to the very spirit of the judicial system. Despite the Chief Justice’s magnanimity in letting the incident pass, law

enforcement authorities should take stringent action against the advocate. If not, it will set a dangerous precedent, as he has violated professional ethics and lowered the dignity and sanctity of the Supreme Court of India. The rule of law cannot coexist with unruly, unfettered, and delinquent members of the

legal fraternity in India.

C. Raghavan,
Chennai

The Nobels as a celebration

As autumn drapes the world in amber and gold, it brings more than the whisper of falling leaves. It heralds the annual celebration of human curiosity, the Nobel Prizes, honouring those

who transform how we think, explore, and heal. The awards remind us that discoveries, like autumn, pares back complexity to reveal essential truths. The discoveries illuminate the enduring power of curiosity and rigour to shape a more enlightened world.

Vijay Singh Adhikari,
Nainital, Uttarakhand

Exam and typewriter

I write this letter as the Secretary, Consumer Protection Council–Tamil Nadu, Tiruchirappalli. It is most surprising that the Department of Technical Education, Tamil Nadu, still conducts its Typewriting – Tamil Junior and Senior Grade examinations with the use of the typewriter. As

practically no office in India and the State today uses typewriters, this skill is redundant. It is time that the Department of Technical Education pursues reform and conducts its examinations using the computer and an English keyboard.

S. Pushpavanam,
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

Tracks without trains

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

People killed in Gaza, two years after the October 7 attack

67,000

World leaders marked the second anniversary of the Palestinian militant group's attack which sparked the war in Gaza by urging Hamas to free the remaining captives and calling for an immediate ceasefire. AFP

Number of CAPF companies being deployed in Bihar

1,200

The Election Commission may deploy up to 1,200 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) for the Bihar Assembly elections on November 6 and 11. Around 500 units have already reached the State as part of the pre-poll deployment. PTI

Number of wild elephants in the State of Tamil Nadu

3,170

Tamil Nadu's wild elephant population has grown to 3,170, up from 3,063 in the previous count, according to the 2025 synchronised elephant estimation report as part of the Wildlife Week celebrations at the Secretariat. PTI

Number of teachers engaged in the ongoing caste survey

1.2

In lakh. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced that all government and aided schools will remain closed from October 8-18 to help complete the State's ongoing Social and Educational Survey. The survey aims to map Karnataka's educational landscape. PTI

DTC bus breakdowns reported in Delhi over a span of two years

81,869

According to the data, an average of nearly five buses broke down every hour and every day for two years. Officials said the public transporter has been working to reduce such incidents. PTI

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Why Indian capital needs to invest domestically

As the global economy now moves to an extended period of uncertainty, due to tariffs and fluctuations in world trade, India's private business houses have to work closely with the government and align with public interest to maintain the economy's growth momentum

ECONOMIC NOTES

M. Suresh Babu

A central challenge for policy makers in India, at the present juncture, is to work out a balance between the long-term benefits of global trade and the short-term harms that current uncertainties pose to large sections of the population who are at risk of low wages and unemployment. Tackling this requires a change of the existing system to account for the needs of the larger masses rather than only enriching private capital's interests.

The evolution of capital

Indian capital has an important role to play in this change by becoming more inclusive of a broader set of interests beyond individual profits and rapid accumulation. The history of capitalism shows that this is not impossible as capitalism has evolved before, and if it is to continue into the future, it can evolve again. As the economy is at risk of negative shock to external demand for its products, due to unprecedented tariffs imposed and distortions caused in the global trading system, Indian capital needs to reinvent itself and work closely with the government to mitigate the risks posed.

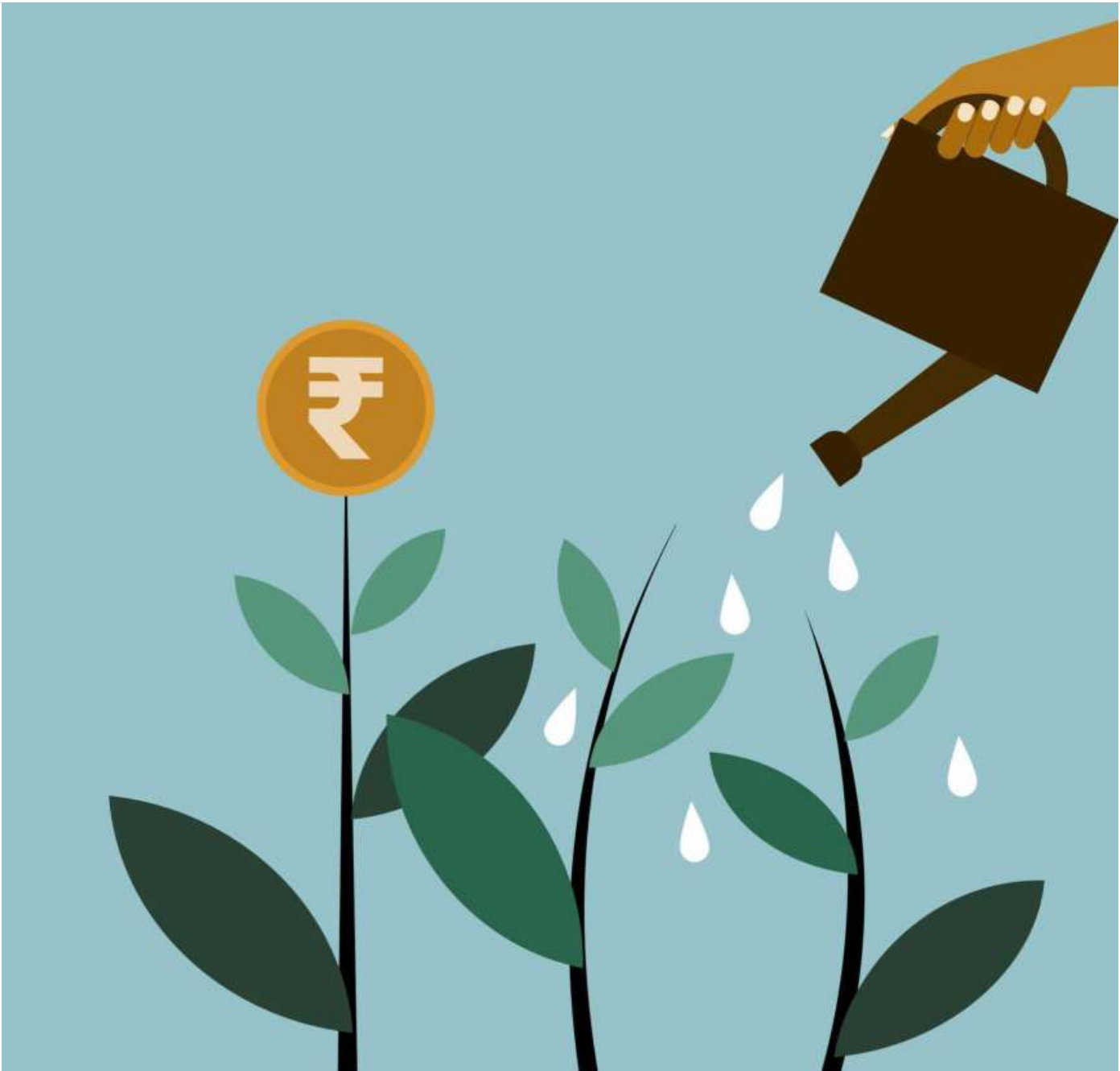
Historically private businesses, managed by Indian capital, have clamoured for a more active role in the economy as well as larger concessions and subsidies along with a liberal business environment. Governments have often been called on to command and control such businesses. These private enterprises used India's protected economic environment (pre-liberalisation) to grow and accumulate by riding on inward-looking policies and reaping supernormal profits (excess of normal profit) from protected domestic markets. The accumulated surpluses gave them the confidence to cross borders, buy out businesses elsewhere and forge global links when the economy opened up in the early nineties. This phenomenon, though not widespread among Indian businesses, has created depth in Indian capital, spawning some giants who control various important sectors of Indian industry.

However, as the global economy now moves to an extended period of uncertainty, these business houses now have to work closely with the government and align with public interest to maintain the economy's growth momentum.

Three key processes were instrumental in the emergence and subsequent development of mass markets in the contemporary global economy. First, the creation of a wage-labour class; second, the productivity-enhancing effects of industrial mass production; and third, changes in the composition of demand as personal incomes grew.

The growth of demand is an important but unrecognised ingredient in these processes. Firms require an expansion of demand if they are to realise profits from the production of additional goods and services. Most of the current macroeconomic policy frameworks simply assume that demand responds passively to supply, therefore the expansion of the latter is all that is of interest to growth.

In a globalised world, demand has two components, domestic and external. Early approaches to industrialisation focussed on the domestic component and later ones emphasised on the external side. The current turbulence in the global



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economy has led to shocks in external demand and hence exports are impacting aggregate demand and inducing vulnerabilities and fluctuations in external demand. In this scenario turning to domestic markets, raising the levels of domestic demand and catering to it, remains a viable option.

The importance of domestic capital

In India, domestic capital has an important role to play in stimulating domestic demand via three routes.

The first area for more active involvement of Indian capital is to enhance internal private investments. Despite India Inc. sitting on record-high profits, the willingness to invest hasn't kept pace with such profits. During the post-COVID period, public investments did all the heavy lifting. Fiscal policy has been fine tuned to offer incentives, while monetary policy has been responding with easier access to credit. A bulk of the regulatory requirements have been simplified along with the tax regime. Infrastructure development has been accorded high priority along with a slew of benefits, such as production-linked incentives. The net effect of all these is reflected in the indicators of the business environment.

However, despite these efforts by the government, private investments have remained flat over the past few years. The Finance Ministry in its June monthly review noted that "Slow credit growth and private investment appetite may restrict acceleration in economic momentum," underscoring the urgent need for the private sector to step up.

While private capex remains subdued, public capital expenditure surged from ₹3.4 lakh crore in FY20 to ₹10.2 lakh crore in FY25, which is a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25%, driven largely by railways, roads, highways, and communications. Interestingly, during a period of sluggish domestic private investments, India's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) flows have grown at a sharp pace over the past five years, with a CAGR of 12.6%, much higher than the global average of 3.9%. This indicates that Indian capital is keener to explore foreign locations than its domestic economy. An opportune time has come for a reversal of this.

The second thrust area is to ensure that there is moderate wage growth in the economy. The Economic Survey 2024-25 flagged the trend of increasing corporate profits and lagging wage growth. In 2023-24, profits touched a 15-year high, while growth in wages stagnated. This affects distribution in the economy and dampens domestic demand. Rating agencies project that real wage growth might decline to 6.5% in FY26, down from 7% in FY25. Real wages are expected to grow faster when inflation is low. However, we find evidence contrary to it indicating worsening of distribution. The growing trend towards contratualisation within formal sectors has been eroding the collective bargaining power of workers, leading to slower wage growth within the manufacturing sector.

The third area for priority action is to invest more in Research and Development (R&D). The tendency has been to invest less and only in areas of

quick returns. This paradigm has to change as fundamental research and development is crucial for long term productivity gains. The gross expenditure on R&D in India is 0.64% of the GDP, which is insufficient and remains low compared to many advanced economies. Further, R&D funding in India is primarily through the government. In the U.S., China, Japan, and South Korea, private enterprises routinely contribute more than 70% to the total national R&D expenditure. In China, R&D spending has reached 2.1% of the GDP, with the private sector complementing the funding of the government, while in India only around 36% of R&D is funded by the private sector. In India not only is the private sector investment in innovation low, but it is also concentrated in sectors such as drugs and pharmaceuticals, information technology, transport, defence, and biotechnology.

The road ahead

An uncertain global economic environment calls for unified responses from the government and the private sector.

While the government has been facilitating the creation of a favourable environment for businesses, that effort alone is not sufficient for tackling present challenges. Long term national interest needs to be protected by Indian capital by keeping it as an objective above profit maximisation. It is time for Indian capital to step in more actively.

M Suresh Babu is Director, Madras Institute of Development Studies. The views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

As the economy is at risk of negative shock to external demand for its products, due to unprecedented tariffs imposed and distortions caused in the global trading system, Indian capital needs to reinvent itself and work closely with the government to mitigate the risks posed.

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CACHE



Future of finance: U.S. President Donald Trump holds the ‘Genius Act’, which will develop regulatory frameworks for stablecoin cryptocurrencies, at the White House in Washington, D.C., on July 18, 2025. REUTERS

Modernisation of financial architecture: how India is adopting stablecoins

Stablecoins are blockchain-based digital assets designed to maintain a consistent value over time. Until recently, India’s approach to stablecoins was cautious. But now Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has stated that India needs to be ready to engage with crypto assets such as stablecoins

Sanhita Chauriha

Stablecoins are a category of crypto assets that aim to maintain a stable value relative to a specified asset, or basket of assets, providing perceived stability. Various definitions of stablecoins exist, with different countries; standard-setting bodies such as the Financial Stability Board, Bank for International Settlements and International Monetary Fund; and many central banks contributing to these definitions.

Largely, stablecoins are blockchain-based digital assets designed to maintain a consistent value over time. They achieve this by being backed by reserves such as fiat currencies, commodities, or other crypto assets. They are a distinct class of Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs) backed by fiat currencies, commodities, or other assets. They aim to maintain a stable value, thereby distinguishing them from other VDAs.

Broadly, there are three types of stablecoins:

Fiat-backed stablecoins – these are backed by reserves of traditional currencies such as the U.S. dollar or Euro, held in banks or regulated institutions. Examples include the USDT and USDC.

Crypto-backed stablecoins – these are collateralised by other crypto assets. DAI, backed by Ethereum, is a leading example.

Algorithmic stablecoins – these maintain stability through automated algorithms that adjust supply and demand, without relying on reserves. They are more experimental and

risk-prone, as seen with projects like TerraUSD.

New financial plumbing

In the traditional financial world, cross-border payments are expensive, slow, and fragmented. Stablecoins are digital tokens backed by fiat reserves and powered by blockchain rails which are rewriting that equation. According to Visa’s 2025 report Making Crypto Real, over \$220 billion worth of stablecoins are already in circulation, with transactions settling in seconds rather than days, and at a fraction of traditional costs. The average remittance via stablecoin costs as little as \$0.01, compared to \$44 through conventional banking routes.

This efficiency is not just a technical feat; it’s economic evolution. In the same way that HTTP allowed information to flow seamlessly across the web, stablecoins could enable value to flow over digital rails in real time. The emerging vision, often described as “agentic payments,” imagines a world where AI systems autonomously initiate transactions paying cloud providers, renewing subscriptions, or even reallocating treasury funds over stablecoin protocols.

A maturing global order

Stablecoins have outgrown their niche origins. Institutional finance has taken notice. BlackRock, Fidelity, and Bank of America have each announced or launched stablecoin initiatives, while Societe Generale became the first major European bank to issue a dollar-pegged coin in 2025. Regulators, once sceptical,

are now codifying legitimacy. The EU’s MiCA framework and the U.S. GENIUS Act provide clear definitions, reserve standards, and consumer protections, transforming stablecoins into regulated financial instruments.

In effect, what we are witnessing is not the replacement of traditional money but its modernisation. A new three-layered structure is emerging– the blockchain base layer which is decentralised, auditable, and interoperable; the reserve layer which includes regulated institutions backing stablecoins with transparent fiat or treasury reserves; and the interface layer where payment cards, APIs, and digital wallets are making stablecoins usable in everyday commerce.

Visa and Mastercard’s moves to support stablecoin settlement on Ethereum and Solana are not experiments; they are strategic recalibrations.

Stablecoins are fast emerging as a new settlement layer for global finance. Value can now move as seamlessly as information flows online. By bypassing legacy rails like SWIFT, they transform cross-border transfers from days to seconds, creating a real-time, programmable foundation for the internet economy.

India’s evolving stance

Until recently, India’s approach to stablecoins was cautious. But the global tide is shifting, and so is New Delhi’s calculus. Recently, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has stated that India needs to be ready to engage with crypto assets, like stablecoins.

The maturation of stablecoins mirrors the path the Internet itself once took: from anarchic experimentation to institutional adoption. What was once a tool for traders is now morphing into a universal payment backbone. In emerging markets, stablecoins are filling gaps that banks find tough to reach; in developed markets, they are cutting inefficiencies that banks long tolerated.

In Visa’s language, stablecoins are “crypto’s superpower.” Their functional advantages, that is, speed, low cost, and transparency are undeniable. But their real promise lies in what they can enable. In an AI-driven, hyper-connected economy, money must move at machine speed.

The road ahead

India’s digital infrastructure built on UPI, Aadhaar, and account aggregators has already redefined inclusion. The next leap is interoperability: not just between banks, but between blockchains, currencies, and algorithms. Stablecoins, with clear regulation and institutional backing, could provide that bridge.

The debate, then, is no longer whether stablecoins will shape the future of finance but how India chooses to shape stablecoins. As the world’s financial plumbing gets rewired, nations that embrace stable, programmable, and globally interoperable money will define the rules of the new digital economy. Stablecoins will not replace fiat but they will redefine what fiat feels like in an Internet-operated world.

Sanhita Chauriha is a Technology Lawyer.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Sindhu Nagaraj

QUESTION 1

Apart from his tenure as President, Mr. Putin has also served Russia in what major capacity?

QUESTION 2

What was the name of the security agency in Russia, during the Soviet era, for which Mr. Putin first worked as a foreign intelligence officer?

QUESTION 3

In March 2023, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Mr. Putin for war crimes. What was he mainly accused of?

QUESTION 4

Mr. Putin’s grandfather was a personal cook to which former Russian revolutionaries?

QUESTION 5

In May 2024, Putin was inaugurated as President of Russia for the ____ time. Fill in the blank.



Visual question:

Identify this Russian politician. How was he related to Mr. Putin? THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Questions and Answers to the previous day’s daily quiz:

1. Mother Teresa said the call to found the order came on a train journey to this place in 1946. **Ans: Darjeeling**
 2. These many sisters were part of the initial congregation. **Ans: 12 sisters (including Mother Teresa) in Kolkata**
 3. The names of the first home for the dying destitutes and abandoned children. **Ans: 'Nirmal Hriday' and 'Shishu Bhavan'**
 4. The country in which the order started its first house outside India. **Ans: Venezuela**
 5. The government of India marked the canonisation of Mother Teresa with this. **Ans: The distinct blue border saree, the apparel worn by the Missionaries of Charities nuns, was given IP recognition and trademarked**
 6. This person founded the Missionary Brothers of Charity in 1963. **Ans: Brother Andrew (formerly Ian Travers-Ballan)**
 7. It takes this long to become a full-fledged missionary of Charity. **Ans: Nine years**
- Visual: Name the headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity. **Ans: Mother House in Kolkata**
- Early Birds:** Tamal Biswas| Erfanally Oosmany| Tito Shiladitya| Emily Manij Sunil Madhavan



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know Your English

Upendran

“How are you feeling this morning?”
“Just great! The tablets that the doctor gave me cured me from the cold.”
“That’s good! Now that you’ve been cured of the cold, what do you plan to...”
“... cured of my cold! Shouldn’t it be cured from my cold?”
“You’re usually ‘cured of’ something. For example, the doctor promised my aunt that he would cure her of cancer.”
“Our family doctor has cured my father of his migraines. Does that sound OK?”
“Sounds fine to me. Some researchers claim that they have a miracle drug which can cure people of AIDS.”
“A drug which can cure people of AIDS! I wish I had known about it earlier.”
“Why?”
“I would have told my friend. His cousin died from AIDS recently.”
“You don’t die ‘from’, but ‘die of’ something. For example, thousands of people die of AIDS every year.”
“In the past few years several people in my family have died of cancer.”
“Every day in the newspaper we read about people dying of starvation.”
“That’s true. And you also read about people who die of grief.”
“That’s a good example. Now then, why did you...”
“... before I forget, I have some news for you. My physics teacher has decided to leave teaching.”
“I am sure you and your classmates are delighted. But why has she decided to give up teaching?”
“She has decided to leave teaching...”
“... not ‘leave’ teaching, but ‘give up’ teaching. When you decide to stop doing something, it’s better to use ‘give up’ rather than ‘leave.’ For example, a friend of mine has decided to give up painting.”
“Meaning that he has decided to quit painting?”
“That’s right.”
“I wish some of our Ministers and Chief Ministers would give up politics. Life would be so wonderful then.”
“Wishful thinking indeed! My neighbour is planning to give up singing.”
“Lucky you! I wish my neighbour would give up playing the violin. I get a headache every time she plays it.”
“That’s no problem. All you have to do is to take a pill every time she plays.”
“But she plays the violin every day. I don’t want to become dependent of pills.”
“You’re always ‘dependent on’ or ‘dependent upon’ someone or something. Not ‘dependent of.’ For example, some people become dependent on/upon drugs and alcohol very early in life.”
“Young children are dependent on/upon their parents for food and shelter.”
“That’s true. Many European countries are dependent on/upon the Arab nations for their oil.”
“I don’t like to be dependent on anyone. I like to be independent on all...”
“... it’s ‘dependent on’, but ‘independent of.’ For example, most teenagers want to be independent of their parents.”
“But the parents want the teenagers to be dependent on them.”
Published in The Hindu on May 19, 1998.

Word of the day

Compunction:

a feeling of deep regret (usually for some misdeed)

Synonyms: remorse, self-reproach

Usage: *He had no compunction about deceiving her.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/compunctionpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /kəmˈpʌŋk.jən/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject ‘Text & Context’

By reusing old genes, bats became the only mammals able to fly

Scientists have wondered how bats keep a sheet of skin between their fingers. In other mammals, this disappears before birth in a process called apoptosis where the cells die on purpose; one hypothesis is that bats evolved flight by suppressing this interdigital cell death, which allowed the skin to stay and form the wing's surface

Manjeera Gowravaram

Bats are the only mammals capable of true powered flight, yet their wings have evolved from the same basic five-digit limb structure found in all mammals. How, then, can they alone fly?

“At first, when scientists started comparing animals, we thought big anatomical differences must come from big differences in DNA,” Christian Feregrino, a lead co-author of a new study published in *Nature Ecology & Evolution* said.

“But as more genomes were sequenced, we realised mammals share most of the same genes. Embryos, too, look very, very similar in early stages – you can’t tell a bat from a mouse or even a dolphin. So the question became: how do the same genes, starting from the same blueprint, produce such different limbs?”

“The answer lay in what scientists call regulatory evolution: changing when, where, and how genes are switched on.”

The chiropatagium mystery

Mammals usually have forelimbs that form arms or legs with five fingers or toes. In bats, these limbs have changed a lot over time. Digits (fingers) two through five are stretched out and connected by a thin sheet of skin called the chiropatagium, which makes up most of the wing's surface for flying.

Scientists have long wondered how bats keep this skin between their fingers. In other mammals, like humans or mice, the skin between the fingers disappears before birth in a process where the cells die on purpose, called apoptosis. One leading hypothesis is that bats evolved flight by suppressing this interdigital cell death, which allowed the skin to stay and form the wing's surface.

The new study painted a more nuanced picture, however.

To test whether bats really did suppress apoptosis in the developing wing, the researchers built an “interspecies limb atlas” using single-cell RNA sequencing, plus other genomic tools, on more than 180,000 cells from embryonic limb tissue from bats (*Carollia perspicillata*) and mice at various stages of development.

This allowed them to map every major cell population in the limb across key developmental stages, including those responsible for bone, muscle, connective tissue, and skin, and compare the results using computational models and statistical analyses.

“We expected to find special, unique cells in bats that form the chiropatagium,” Magdalena Schindler, a co-lead author of the paper, said. “But our first big surprise



A colony of Indian fruit bats seen in Chennai. VELANKANNI RAJ B./THE HINDU

was that, at the cellular level, bat and mouse limbs are almost identical. The same cell types appear throughout development, whether the limb becomes a paw or a wing.”

In both species, genes linked to cell death, such as *Aldh1a2* and *Bmp2*, were active in the tissue between the fingers, even in bats where the chiropatagium persisted. This meant cell death still happened, challenging the hypothesis that wing tissue is retained because cell death is inhibited.

Digging deeper, the team performed targeted single-cell analysis of the chiropatagium itself by dissecting and sequencing the genetic material in cells from that region in bat embryos. They found a specialised population of fibroblasts – connective tissue cells – present only in bat forelimbs and between the fingers.

That is, instead of inventing a new cell type, evolution had repurposed an existing one normally found closer to the shoulder in mice. In bats, these cells are deployed between the digits while the surrounding cells still undergo apoptosis that sculpts separate fingers.

These fibroblasts showed high activity of two transcription factors, *MEIS2* and *TBX3*. In other mammals, these genes are switched off before fingers form. In bats, they are switched back on in the distal limb near the developing digits.

“They’d been spotted before in developing bat wings, but no one knew their role,” Dr. Schindler said. “Our analysis now connects them to the identity of this specific fibroblast population, showing that they are central



Bird wings, fish fins, and whale flippers may all follow a similar strategy: start with a universal developmental plan, then tweak specific genetic dials to create new forms

CHRISTIAN FEREGRINO
LEAD CO-AUTHOR

components of the genetic program that gives these cells their identity and may influence how apoptosis is regulated.”

This kind of genetic redeployment, known as evolutionary co-option, allows organisms to build new structures by using existing gene programmes rather than inventing new ones.

Testing in mice

But could these genes really drive wing formation on their own?

To test this, the researchers engineered transgenic mice to express bat versions of the genes *MEIS2* and *TBX3* in the distal limb and interdigital tissues, where they’re usually silent. They used a special DNA enhancer that activated these genes in the developing fingers and the webbing between them.

The result: mouse embryos began to grow webbed digits, and the tissue between their fingers became thicker and more structured, much like an early bat wing. Cells in the webbing also began expressing other genes found in bat wing fibroblasts.

These changes weren’t just molecular.

When researchers imaged the limbs in 3D, they saw clear physical differences. The modified mice had fused digits and expanded connective tissue in the hand area, both hallmarks of the bat chiropatagium.

“With just these two transcription factors, we could partially recapitulate the bat’s wing-building program,” Dr. Feregrino said. “It’s a long way from turning a mouse into a bat, as flight requires coordinated changes in bones, muscles, skin, and more. But the findings show how powerful these regulatory shifts can be.”

Beyond bats

While the researchers weren’t aiming for medical applications, the findings could help understand human developmental disorders. Syndactyly, a congenital condition where fingers remain fused, may share mechanisms with bat wing formation. Knowing which genes influence digit separation could help better diagnose or even treat such conditions.

“The study also offers clues to other evolutionary puzzles,” Dr. Feregrino said. “Bird wings, fish fins, and whale flippers may all follow a similar strategy: start with a universal developmental plan, then tweak specific genetic ‘dials’ to create new forms.”

“With single-cell tools, we expect to uncover many more ways evolution repurposes old genes creatively,” Dr. Schindler added.

(Manjeera Gowravaram has a PhD in RNA biochemistry and works as a freelance science writer. gmanjeera@gmail.com)

THE GIST

Mammals share most of the same genes, which has led researchers to investigate how a bat produces such different limbs from the same genetic material. The answer lies in what scientists call regulatory evolution: changing when, where, and how genes are switched on

Analysing the chiropatagium, the team found fibroblasts. These fibroblasts showed high activity of *MEIS2* and *TBX3*. In other mammals, these genes are switched off before fingers form. In bats, they are switched back on in the distal limb near developing digits

Researchers engineered mice to express *MEIS2* and *TBX3*. The result: mouse embryos began to grow webbed digits, and the tissue between their fingers became thicker and more structured, much like an early bat wing. The modified mice had fused digits and expanded connective tissue

BIG SHOT



A drone view shows a building with a helipad under construction for foreign heads of state who will stay at the adjacent “leaders village” during the upcoming UN climate change conference COP30 in November in Belem, Brazil. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

What is a supermoon?

Vasudevan Mukunth

A supermoon occurs when a full moon or new moon coincides with the moon’s closest approach to the earth in its elliptical orbit – a point known as the perigee. Because the moon’s orbit is not a perfect circle, its distance from the earth varies throughout the month by around 50,000 km. When the moon is near its perigee and also directly opposite the sun, the full moon appears about 14% larger and 30% brighter than when it is at its farthest point. This is the supermoon.

A supermoon was visible on the night of October 7 and will appear twice more in November and December. The astrologer Richard Nolle popularised the term ‘supermoon’ in the 1970s, but it has since been adopted by astronomers and the media to describe the visually striking lunar events. Though the difference in size is subtle to the naked eye, the enhanced brightness often makes the moon appear vivid against the night sky, especially when seen low on the horizon.

Supermoons also influence the



A full moon sets behind Stonehenge in April 2021, in Amesbury, England. GETTY IMAGES

tides, creating perigeon spring tides. These tides are slightly higher and lower than usual because the moon’s stronger gravitational pull acts in concert with that of the sun. While the changes are typically modest, they can exacerbate coastal flooding when combined with storm surges. Culturally, supermoons have long captured human imagination, inspiring folklore and spiritual observances across civilisations. They also offer opportunities for astronomers and photographers to observe lunar surface details and study tidal effects more clearly.

For feedback and suggestions for ‘Science’, please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject ‘Daily page’

Battle for Bihar

Test for bruised CM, restive Opposition and a challenger

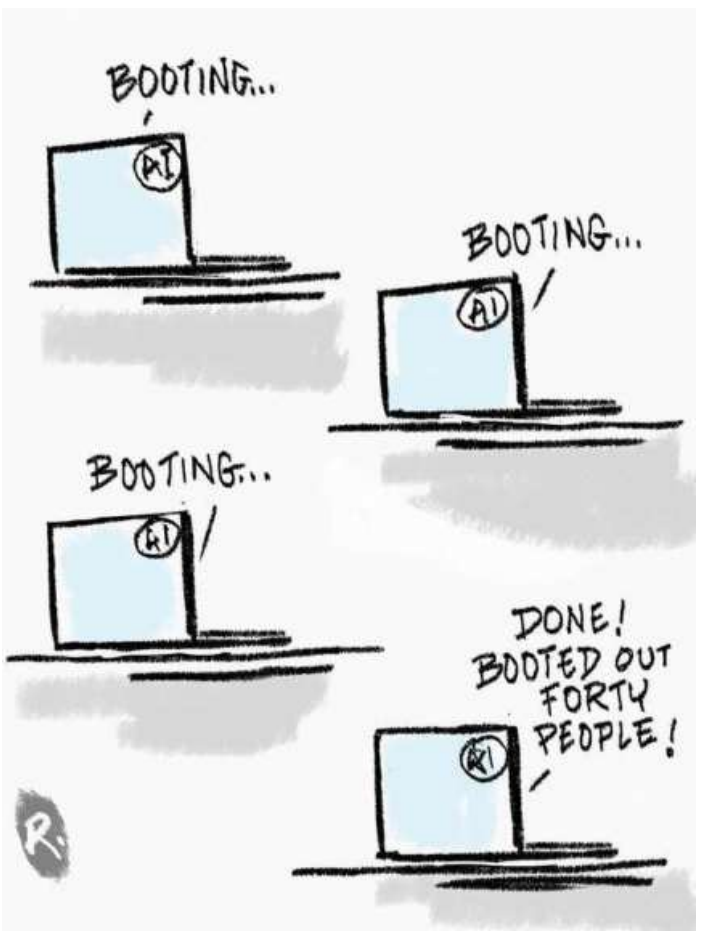
After months of intense debate over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Bihar, the Election Commission has formally announced two-phase polls in what promises to be a riveting contest in the Hindi heartland State. Too many imponderables — Chief Minister Nitish Kumar’s fading health, the revision of electoral rolls, and the entry of Prashant Kishor’s Jan SuraaJ Abhiyan (JSA) — are expected to impact the high stakes battle between the NDA (BJP, Janata Dal (United), Lok Janshakti Party, Rashtriya Lok Samta Party, Hindustani Avam Morcha) and the opposition bloc of Rashtriya Janata Dal, Congress, Vikassheel Insaan Party, CPI, CPM and possibly, CPI(ML) Liberation.

The typically caste-aligned discourse in Bihar has been disrupted by the voluble Prashant Kishor who is questioning the paradox of India’s most politically sophisticated State tolerating decades of abysmal governance. Indeed, the relevance of Kishor’s narrative cannot be overstated. Bihar remains the poorest State with a per capita income of ₹66,828 — barely a third of the national average. Nearly half its people still depend on low-yield agriculture, only 5.7 per cent of its workforce is in manufacturing, and joblessness drives massive migration. Maternal mortality stands at 100 per 100,000 births and the total fertility rate at three children per woman is higher than the national average.

This underdevelopment is rooted in history. The Permanent Settlement system of revenue collection concentrated land in the hands of a few elites, deepening inequality. Agrarian and Naxalite movements that flared up in central Bihar in the 1960s and 1970s emerged from this feudal order and formed the backdrop of India’s great political upheavals — the JP Movement against the Emergency, and the Mandal wave that redefined social power. Lalu Prasad Yadav’s rise marked the assertion of backward castes against entrenched elites, while Nitish Kumar’s ascent in 2005 promised a clean break. In alliance with the BJP, he restored law and order, built roads and launched multiple development initiatives. Two decades later, Nitish’s ‘sushasan (good governance)’ narrative has faded. Tejashwi Yadav now presents himself as a steadier heir to his father’s social justice legacy.

For the BJP, Nitish continues to be a necessity as it lacks a statewide face in its own ranks. Having once fielded Chirag Paswan as a spoiler who cut into Nitish Kumar’s votes in 2020, the BJP has now rallied behind Nitish, highlighting welfare schemes such as the Mukhyamantri Nari Samman Yojana, which offers ₹10,000 to women, and the Patna Metro as symbols of progress. The opposition banks on Nitish’s waning credibility and allegations of “vote chori” in electoral revisions. This election has national implications. An NDA win will seal the BJP’s post-Lok Sabha recovery. If the Opposition succeeds, it will set the stage for upcoming elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala where the BJP faces an uphill task.

POCKET RAVIKANTH



MRIDUL SAGGAR

The RBI in its October monetary policy, raised its baseline growth projection from 6.5 per cent to 6.8 per cent. This was no surprise as Q1 GDP came at 7.8 per cent – a full 1.3 percentage points (ppt) higher than its projection. Even if it had retained its projections for the subsequent three quarters the full year projected growth would have been at 6.8 per cent. RBI also fine-tuned its quarterly growth projections by lifting the Q2 projection by 0.2 ppt, while lowering the next two quarters growth by 0.1 ppt each. This is a small moderation out of higher US tariffs which was assumed to stay at 50 per cent. These projections imply a slowdown from 7.4 per cent growth in H1 to 6.3 per cent in H2. Much of this slowdown is on account of adverse base effects.

GROWTH AT RISK Growth may be at greater risk than factored in the policy because effects may not just come from share of the US in our net exports but the impact on capital flows and investment targeting Indian business in multiple ways. The information so far, however, is fuzzy. Anecdotal evidence from the banking channels suggests start of some stress in some MSME segments such as textiles and apparels, seafood, gems and jewellery, in chemicals and machinery. RBI’s forward-looking surveys of September, however, show both urban and rural consumer confidence has improved. Manufactures, on the other hand, noted modest moderation in demand conditions in Q2. Capacity utilisation adjusted for seasonality continue to improve. Service sector and infrastructure outlook remains upbeat. In the short run, 0.3-0.4 ppt of GDP can be shaved off on account of tariffs and other protectionist measures. It is unfortunate that even while the countries which gained most from free trade and will still be better off preserving it, have chosen inferior protectionist outcomes. An “insurance rate cut” to assuage sentiments in October may have been possible, but it would not have averted growth deceleration, adding instead to the sliding exchange rate. As a baseline case, India growth can withstand shocks of tariff and some moderation. If the going gets worse, there are fiscal (e.g. ECLGS type support to SME exporters) policy options available but at this stage it is best to



encourage businesses to adjust to new realities rather than to artificially support sentiments. The possibility of a rate cut in December policy exists but as indicated, several things need to be considered in the run up to December, including multiple trade deals now in the offing. It should not be lost on us that the RBI has supported growth in this policy itself in a better manner. There has been a structural shift in the regulatory ethos that can yield growth dividend. The introduction of the Expected Credit Loss (ECL) framework was overdue. It is best that the Indian banks adopt IFRS 9. Large private banks with global presence are anyway going that route. It is a myth that Indian banks do not have the data for probability of default, loss given default and exposure at default (PD-LGD-EAD) calculations. If the ECL calculations are properly kicked in, it will have a one-time hit on the Indian public sector banks, but they have the capital to provision. In fact, they might even benefit later by lower standard asset provisioning. Infrastructure lending will pick up

A rate cut may have been possible, but it would not have averted growth deceleration, adding instead to the sliding exchange rate

once the regulatory capital requirements are reworked and aligned to external ratings under revised Basel Framework. The move towards principle-based regulation where risk-weights for infrastructure lending by NBFCs will get aligned to the risk-profile of operational projects will lead to more efficient allocation of capital. **GIVING BANKS A CHANCE** What is being silently attempted in this policy is to give banks a chance of lowering their transaction costs amid worrisome disintermediation trends. Banks are now hardly funding corporate fixed investments and have shifted business to retail lending. With lower regulatory burden and compliance costs, will they now be able to change their business models? For instance, review of the capital market exposure guidelines for banks may push up M&A activity in India and increase lending against shares, units of REITs and InvITs. It remains to be seen if it breaks the glass ceiling that the foreign I-banks enjoy in this segment, the bar for which is quite high. **A NOTE OF CAUTION** Can RBI’s policy still go wrong? The changes effected places an onerous responsibility on the RBI’s supervision side. While principle-based regulation and greater role for SROs is good, it comes with a huge risk if central bank supervision is not up to speed.

For instance, banks may try to game the ECL calculations for lower provisioning. For external ratings to work, the shopping for ratings must stop. SEBI must review its guidelines for the Indian credit ratings business as the divergence between global and Indian ratings is stark. Most big names that typically enjoy a AAA ratings from Crisil hold BBB or BBB- ratings from top global credit rating firms. RBI has replaced Large Exposure Framework at the system level by macro-prudential measures. At the same time it lowered risk weights on housing and also indicated that they will open the ECB route for real estate for all FDI-eligible investments. Real estate bubbles and bursts have been extremely costly for several countries, and we may be found walking on thin ice in the coming years. Current default rates may be illusory, and will RBI be ready to apply brakes in time if needed? Last but not the least, central bank needs to upgrade its talent by encouraging risk management certifications by its supervisory cadre. Knowledge frontiers are rapidly advancing all the time. Even the current models used in the ECL framework can get obsolete in coming years with cash-flow-based machine-learning algorithms. The writer is Professor, IIM Kozhikode and former RBI ED and MPC member. Views expressed are personal

All about the contaminant causing cough syrup deaths

Children dying in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan once again raise crucial questions on drug regulation

bl.explainer PT Jyothi Datta

Despite regulatory attention on cough syrups over the last few years, recent deaths of children in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have cast a long shadow over these products — as a familiar contaminant raises its head again. A look at the unfortunate incident, and the questions it raises.

What is the link between cough syrups and child deaths in two the States? Following the deaths of over 14 children in MP and Rajasthan, investigations by Central and State regulatory authorities have put the spotlight on cough syrups given to children. Initially, the regulators said some of the product samples picked up from the site in MP did not contain the contaminant Diethylene Glycol (DEG). However, follow-up action by the Tamil Nadu drug regulatory authority found that samples of the syrup made by Sresan Pharma — the company that supplied the cough syrups to MP — did contain DEG, at more than “permissible” levels, according to a Health Ministry communicate. Health-related authorities are still investigating this. Two deaths were

reported in Nagpur (Maharashtra), as well. In Rajasthan too, reports initially linked the deaths possibly to cough syrup from Jaipur-based Kaysons Pharma, and subsequently the State banned products containing dextromethorphan. Both companies have not made any public statements following the incidents. **What is DEG?** Diethylene glycol (DEG) and ethylene glycol (EG) are toxic substances used as industrial solvents and antifreeze agents that can be fatal if taken, even in small amounts, especially for children, says the World Health Organization. The widely used analytical technique to test pharmaceutical products for DEG/EG is Gas Chromatography, it added. **How does it get into a pharmaceutical product like cough syrups?** Drugmakers use excipients (inactive substances) in their products, and pharma-grade propylene glycol is one such used in drugs and cosmetics, say global food and drug regulatory authorities. Industry insiders explain that propylene glycol needs to be sourced from an authentic seller and tested for impurities like DEG. The final formulation is tested again



(in-house or outsourced) for contaminants (DEG), before being released into the market. All these documents are supplied to the State regulatory authorities who check if the company has adhered to all requirements. The regulator also runs random checks on products picked up from the factory or marketplace. In the MP case, reports suggest the DEG component was over 46 per cent (it should be less than 0.1 per cent), industry-insiders say. And that, if true, is a grave miss by all those who ran quality checks on the product and cleared it for consumption. The incident also raises questions on integrity of the supply chain, and the procurement process of these products at hospital and retail levels.

Wasn’t there an international

controversy involving cough syrups from India? Yes. In 2022, child deaths in Gambia were linked to possibly contaminated cough syrups from India. Similar incidents were reported from countries like Uzbekistan. Subsequently, drug companies exporting cough syrups are now mandated to get it tested before they leave Indian shores. But DEG is a recurring villain on the cough syrup landscape — be it the Jammu or Gambia incident. About 39 years ago, a DEG-led incident in Mumbai — where 14 people died — led to the Lentin Commission report that came down hard on health and hospital administrators, corruption and regulatory lapses.

So are cough syrups unsafe for children? Paediatricians advice not to give cough syrups to infants (below 2 years). The Indian Medical Association says, in most cases, the cough or cold resolves on its own. And if prescribed, the dosing is based on clinical evaluation by the doctor. If you have to buy a cough syrup (or any medicine actually) — ensure it is on medical advice, and the medicine is made by a reputed company, bought from a registered chemist, with a receipt.

Securing our battery future

Localising cathode active material, a must

Chetan Jain

India's electric mobility and energy storage ambitions are accelerating rapidly, supported by robust policy incentives, growing domestic demand, and global climate commitments. Yet, the foundation of this transition remains fragile. Cathode Active Material (CAM) forms the nucleus of the lithium-ion battery value chain, defining technological performance, economic viability, and strategic leverage. Without CAM, cell manufacturing is incomplete, and without local CAM capabilities, India risks remaining dependent on global supply chains dominated by China.

The lithium-ion cell has four critical components, but the cathode is both the most cost-intensive and technologically defining. Accounting for 40-45 per cent of cell cost, CAM determines energy density, cycle life, charging speed, and thermal stability. Different chemistries ranging from Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) to high-nickel Nickel Manganese Cobalt (NMC/NCA) offer trade-offs in affordability, performance, and material dependence.

HEART OF THE BATTERY

For India, where cost competitiveness, safety, and renewable integration are paramount, LFP-based chemistries are particularly significant. LFP dominates Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), which are critical for renewable grid integration. At the same time, NMC/NCA remains essential for premium EV segments. However, whichever chemistry dominates, CAM remains the heart of the battery, and whoever controls CAM controls the industry.

Globally, the CAM market is projected to expand from \$40 billion in 2024 to \$100-120 billion by 2030, reflecting nearly 18 per cent CAGR. Yet, this market is overwhelmingly concentrated. China accounts for more than 90 per cent of global CAM production, led by companies such as CATL, Ronbay, and BTR.

It recently restricted exports of advanced Gen 3 and Gen 4 CAM technologies, limiting global access to high-energy-density cathodes, a move that heightens the strategic urgency for India to develop its own capabilities.

South Korea and Japan maintain leadership in high-nickel chemistries, while the USnited



GROWING MARKET. For cathode active material

States and Europe are investing aggressively through policy interventions such as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the EU Critical Raw Materials Act. India remains on the margins. The PLI-ACC scheme has catalysed gigafactory announcements from Tata Agratas, Ola Electric, and Amara Raja, but it does not directly incentivise upstream CAM or precursor production. Without refining and precursor-to-CAM conversion infrastructure, India's battery manufacturing risks being limited to assembly operations dependent on imported cathodes.

Localising CAM production offers India multiple layers of strategic advantage:

Economic competitiveness: With batteries contributing up to 40 per cent of EV cost and CAM comprising 40 per cent of that, local CAM production can reduce EV costs by 15-20 per cent, strengthening mass-market affordability.

Strategic security: Dependence on Chinese CAM imports exposes India to geopolitical and trade vulnerabilities, particularly given China's ban on Gen 3 and Gen 4 CAM exports. Any disruption could stall the EV transition.

Industrial and employment gains: Establishing domestic CAM plants would catalyse a vendor ecosystem, including local equipment manufacturers for specialised reactors, calcination, and coating technologies, generating thousands of high-value jobs.

Circular economy integration: By 2030, India will generate 50-60 GWh of spent batteries annually. Recycling could meet up to a third of CAM precursor demand, embedding sustainability and reducing reliance on virgin imports.

Trade deficit mitigation: Local CAM production could enable exports, reducing India's trade deficit and positioning the country as a global green battery supplier.

The writer is Sr. Vice President, LOHUM

What's behind US' Pak pivot?

Two White House visits in four months, talk of Bagram airbase — it could be to pressure India to align with US priorities

THE WIDER ANGLE.



PARAN BALAKRISHNAN

It's a geopolitical mystery involving our next-door neighbour with whom we just fought a mini-war. Why is the US courting Pakistan so assiduously? Washington is bending over backwards. Field Marshal Asim Munir must be one of the few foreign guests ever invited to the White House twice in barely four months.

Even the Pakistanis are baffled. Some seasoned analysts speculate Washington's renewed interest has less to do with Pakistan's intrinsic value and more with pressuring India to align with US strategic priorities. Pakistani academic Junaid S Ahmad put it sharply: "The United States, red-faced with frustration, dangles an unusual set of privileges before Pakistan's military junta, as if polishing a rusted sword could somehow intimidate New Delhi into line."

Pakistani analyst and opinion writer Cyril Almeida is blunter: "The big uncertainty is that no one actually knows why Trump is being nice to Pakistan." About the Washington meeting, Almeida commented acerbically: "Asim to get big boy meeting at White House... Shehbaz to tag along..."

Pakistan has turned from being an insignificant pawn on the global chessboard into something more dynamic, a knight capable of leaping in unexpected directions. Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif caught the world's attention in Washington and then in Riyadh when they signed a military cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia.

Will Pakistan now defend the Saudis against the Houthis or even Iran? Will it lend troops to protect the Gulf region? Or will it, as seems most likely, train the Saudi military and stay away from Yemen's frontlines? Pakistan has always treated its other neighbour, Iran, with extreme caution.

It seems unlikely Islamabad would



POWERPLAY. Pakistan has turned from being an insignificant pawn on the global chessboard into something more dynamic

risk Tehran's wrath, even for a generous infusion of Saudi riyals.

The American agenda was further muddled when President Donald Trump abruptly declared that the US wants the sprawling Bagram Airbase outside Kabul back and that the Taliban government should hand it over immediately.

Trump, in his trademark candour, admitted Bagram's location was ideal for spying on China's remote Xinjiang region. Could Pakistan help the US shoehorn its way back into Bagram? That seems doubtful, especially since Pakistan and the Taliban government are not on backslapping terms right now, and such a move would invite Beijing's ire.

Adding to the intrigue is Pakistan's newfound importance as a home of crude oil and rare earth minerals vital for the electric vehicle sector. Yet Pakistan has never lived up to its mineral-rich promise. The most famous example, the Reko Diq project in

While Pakistan seeks to reinvent itself as indispensable, India will need to play an extremely cautious game

militancy-plagued Balochistan, is said to hold vast gold and copper deposits, yet progress has been painfully slow and commercially disappointing.

DELICATE BALANCING ACT

These geopolitical shifts have forced Pakistan into a delicate balancing act. On one side lies China, with which it maintains an "all-weather strategic cooperative partnership," and on the other, a capricious US, which had effectively dumped Pakistan after the chaotic Afghan withdrawal. Islamabad is now attempting to keep both powers engaged, a tricky dance on an increasingly slippery stage.

Meanwhile, Beijing has been pursuing a vigorous diplomatic offensive across South Asia. Determined to block India's rise as a regional rival, China has deepened ties not only with Pakistan but also with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Reports suggest China and Pakistan have held as many as 22 meetings this year, while Beijing and Dhaka have met seven times in 14 months. Most tellingly, China was the driving force behind a trilateral meeting with Pakistan and Bangladesh in Kunming in June, a move underscoring its regional ambitions.

India views any resumption of ties

between Pakistan and Bangladesh warily. But tripwires remain. Bangladesh still demands an apology and money owed to it from the time of the 1971 war that split East and West Pakistan.

Amid all this, Pakistan's economic situation remains precarious. Inflation has eased somewhat, and its balance of payments position is marginally better. Hopes are pinned on Saudi investments following the new defence accord, though even China, once Pakistan's most enthusiastic investor through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), has scaled back several grand projects. Global corporations are retreating too. Procter & Gamble recently became the latest multinational to shut down its Pakistan office, a symbolic blow to investor confidence.

While Pakistan seeks to reinvent itself as indispensable — militarily to the Saudis, strategically to the Americans, and economically to the Chinese — India will need to play an extremely cautious game.

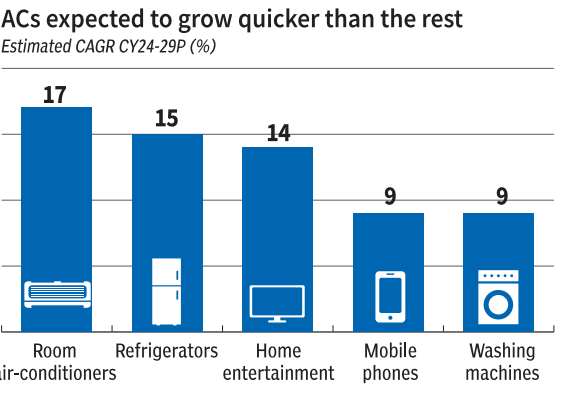
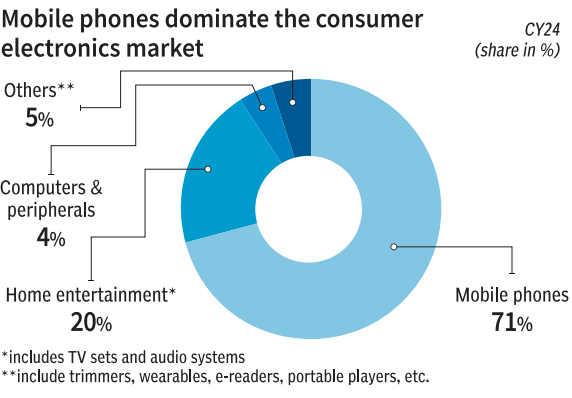
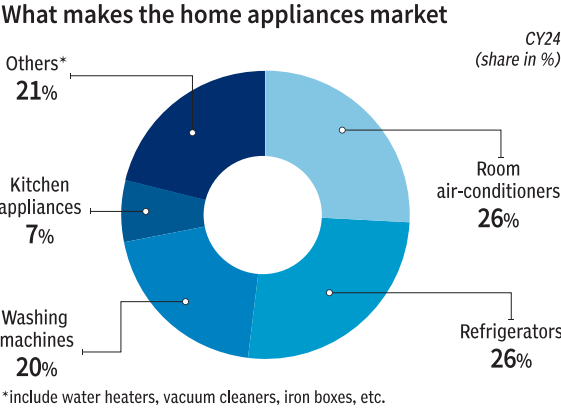
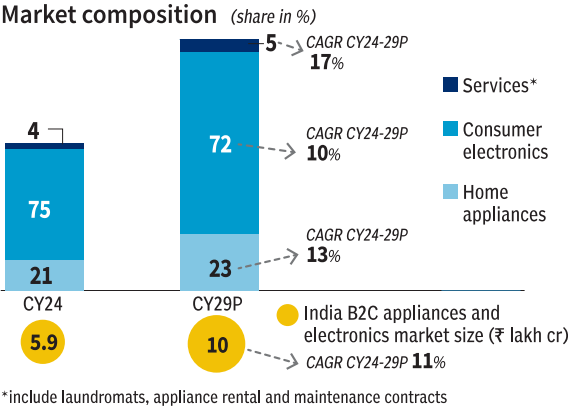
We face a geopolitical chessboard dominated by an unpredictable Trump-led US, a calculating China, and a Pakistan suddenly back in play. We must make the right moves and stay agile or risk finding ourselves cornered on the world stage.

STATISTALK.

Compiled by Nishanth Gopalakrishnan | Graphic KS Gunasekar

Unboxing India's appliances and electronics market

The IPO of LG Electronics India is open for susbcription and its RHP provides interesting facts about India's appliances and electronics market. The B2C market forms over 90 per cent of the overall market and has two major segments — home appliances and consumer electronics. Mobile phones dominate the consumer electronics market and rank at par with TV sets in terms of penetration. Fast growing room air-conditioners are expected to grow roughly about twice the rate of current GDP, at 17 per cent, over the next four years



Source: LG Electronics India's RHP

On businessline.in

What lies beyond the policy repo rate

The growth outlook remains resilient at present, thanks to benign inflation, softer interest rates and RBI's measures to boost investment, says **RK Pattnaik**

From symbolism to action: Sustaining the millet renaissance

The future of India's millet revival hinges on the steady strength of cooperative networks, effective value chains, and supportive policies, says **P Alli**

Mental health: India's silent crisis

A large proportion of people with severe mental disorders receive no formal care, because of infrastructure gaps, stigma and cost barriers, say **Urvashi Prasad** and **Shreya Anjali**

thehindubusinessline.

TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY.

October 8, 2005

Re hits 10-month low

The rupee slid to a near 10-month low of 44.39/40 against the dollar on Friday as import-related demand drove heavy buying of greenback. According to dealers, concerns of dollar strengthening against other major currencies and outflow of FII funds in the last couple of days sparked higher demand for the dollar in the local market.

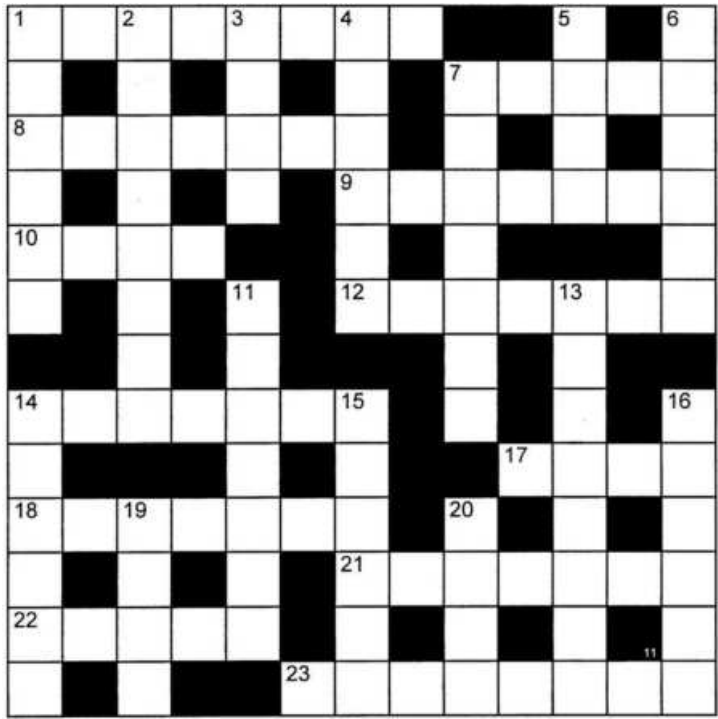
SBI to acquire 76 pc stake in Kenyan bank

State Bank of India is acquiring 76 per cent stake in Kenyan bank, Giro Commercial Bank, for \$7 million, as part of its global expansion plans. This will increase SBI's footage in Africa, where it is already present in four countries, said Mr A.K. Purwar, Chairman. This is SBI's second overseas acquisition, after it picked up a 51 per cent stake in the Mauritius-based Indian Ocean International Bank in February this year, for \$8 million.

Pawar to head agri reforms panel

The Government has constituted a high-level committee under the chairmanship of Mr Sharad Pawar, Union Minister for Agriculture, to draw up a detailed five-year perspective plan for reforms in agriculture and allied sectors.

BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2798



EASY

ACROSS

- Wedding (8)
- Removes skin (5)
- Working the land (7)
- Arm movement expressing something (7)
- By mouth (4)
- Seeming (7)
- A gift (7)
- Animal foot (4)
- Push back attack (7)
- Easily broken (7)
- European national (5)
- Became corrupt, suppurated (8)

DOWN

- Sheep meat (6)
- Can be counted on (8)
- Flag; part of eye (4)
- Suppressed laughter (6)
- S American nation (4)
- Agreement (6)
- Overtaking (7)
- Garden structure with crossed bars (7)
- One to send goods abroad (8)
- Die (6)
- Boy's singing voice (6)
- Hurt one's sensibilities (6)
- Feeling of hurt (4)
- Produce coins (4)

NOT SO EASY

ACROSS

- Union meeting may spoil the anger one was involved in (8)
- Nod off in reverse order as one strips off (5)
- I'll get in metal on 3rd August if I'm working the land (7)
- An army manoeuvre? Sure: get knotted! (7)
- No written examination can be righteous when topless (4)
- I'd been taken in by woman, not heartless, as may be seen (7)
- It's a gift to be in the here and now (7)
- On the which meat is bought living (4)
- Ward off attack that is concerned with beater (7)
- British Rail, head lost only a bit, is liable to break up (7)
- Landlocked European whose Guard guards the Pope (5)
- Trees, fed wrongly, went bad (8)

DOWN

- Meat, leg of which may be sleeved (6)
- In drunken reel embraces bail-breaker one can depend on (8)
- One gets the schoolmaster up for a girl (4)
- One-night performance with broken leg makes one laugh (6)
- Country for each that reaches a posh conclusion (4)
- Arriving the way it was posted, it signifies agreement (6)
- Such a thought as the motorist pulling out may entertain (7)
- Garden structure made to hold about fifty litres (7)
- An outlandish sort of businessman? (8)
- He rips around, but will go no farther (6)
- Increase threefold his output in the choir (6)
- Break the rules, not being on at the finish (6)
- What one may suffer if one is in the pot (4)
- To coin a phrase, it is flavoursome (4)

SOLUTION: BL TWO-WAY CROSSWORD 2797

ACROSS 7. Misconception 8. Barrel-organ 12. Horrid 14. Grated 16. Pro tem 18. Stream 19. Standardise 23. Paterfamilias

DOWN 1. Limb 2. Scar 3. Indeed 4. Belong 5. Stag 6. Moon 9. Airport 10. Actress 11. Edam 12. Hope 13. Ice 15. Rot 17. Modify 18. Scrimp 19. Sham 20. Ales 21. Ills 22. Élan



OPINION

The
Hindustan Times
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

{ OUR TAKE }

All firecrackers pollute & harm

A green firecracker is a chimera; legalising it will compromise the fight against pollution

The Delhi government’s decision to approach the Supreme Court for green firecrackers to be allowed during Diwali spells self-harm for a region that gasps for breath every winter. The apex court confirmed a pervasive, year-round ban in the national capital in April this year. It is this ban that the government wants conditionally lifted for what is essentially a festival of lights. To circumvent the law and the science that firecrackers of all sorts pollute, the government has resurrected the discredited idea of green crackers. This is unacceptable.

First, there is nothing green or safe about “green” firecrackers. They pollute a little less (30% less particulate matter and fewer heavy metals), but they still pollute. Considering the National Capital Region (NCR)’s pollution levels, a green firecracker is hardly a solace. There is enough scientific literature on the impact of pollution on respiratory and general health. The noxious NCR air that often blots out the sky during the day contributes not only to a higher prevalence of reduced lung capacity among residents compared to those living in cleaner areas, it also shortens life expectancy by 8.2 years compared to pollution standards set by the WHO, and by 4.74 years even when India’s less stringent pollution limits are considered. It causes particular suffering to the very young, the old, those with pre-existing morbidities, and even pets and strays, which face the double whammy of polluted air and extreme noise pollution. Second, the Supreme Court had provided for the use of “green” crackers in 2018, only for the Delhi government to impose a total ban two years later. The reason was that it was impossible to distinguish the “green” from the banned ones as fakes flooded the market, compromising enforcement. The premise that drove the government decision was that public sentiment based on claims of tradition and convention cannot be allowed to trump public health concerns. It is not clear how an order on “green” crackers will now be enforced — and monitored.

The government should rethink its “green firecracker” plan. It must also educate the public about the pollution and harm arising from the use of firecrackers, undertake public campaigns to make it a part of common sense, and focus on better enforcement of the summary ban on firecrackers in the national capital. It must show the political will to resist demands based on faith or commercial interests and ensure that the gains made in the last few years against pollution through civil society activism and legal backing are not reversed.

France’s elusive search for political stability

France’s tryst with instability has continued with prime minister Sébastien Lecornu resigning after just 27 days in office. However, President Emmanuel Macron has asked him to “pursue negotiations” with the opposition parties. That Lecornu is the third prime minister to resign in less than a year reveals a lot about the unsettled nature of the French polity. The snap polls last year delivered a fractured verdict with three clear ideological blocs — the Left, the far Right and Macron’s own centre-right alliance — emerging with none anywhere close to a clear majority. Attempts to build convenient coalitions of opposing groups have failed to provide stable governments, leading to a political and economic crisis. The markets have responded negatively to the instability in Europe’s second-largest economy. The current crisis in French polity dates back to the collapse of the traditional political system that revolved around the centre-Left and centre-Right outfits. The arrival of Macron, and the founding of his party, the Renaissance, in 2016 as a force and the parallel rise of the far-Right outfight, the National Rally, has unsettled the political space with no party in a position to swing the election. Old certainties around the Fifth Republic have weakened, and issues such as migration, coupled with economic problems, make it nearly impossible to build consensus on policies and form stable coalitions. This is also the reason why elections are failing to produce clear verdicts. Macron can try to appoint a new prime minister or dissolve the National Assembly and call for fresh legislative elections. That, however, is unlikely to provide clear solutions to the looming economic crisis that can impact Macron’s party’s chances when his presidential mandate ends in 2027.

Conservation plans to combat climate crisis

India’s efforts at protecting wildlife and their habitat offer a blueprint to the world

Wildlife conservation in India has made significant strides over the past decade. The period has been marked by ambitious initiatives aimed at preserving species and restoring degraded habitats.

According to the India State of Forest Report 2023, the country’s total forest and tree cover increased by 1,445 sq km, bringing green cover to 25.17% of its land area — comprising 21.76% forest cover and 3.41% tree cover — since 2021. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)’s *State of World’s Forest 2024*, India ranks third globally in average annual forest area gain, adding an impressive 266,000 ha each year from 2010 to 2020. According to FAO’s *Global Forest Resource Assessment 2020*, India, with 72.16 lakh ha of forest cover, ranks among the top 10 countries.

On the protected-area front, India now maintains 1,022 protected areas, encompassing 178,640 sq km — or 5.43% of its geographic territory — which includes national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves, community reserves, and several of them enjoy the status of tiger reserves and elephant reserves. Community and conservation reserves have increased from 115 in 2014 to 343 in 2024 and 37 national parks and wildlife sanctuaries have been added after 2014, making for a

total of 106 national parks and 573 wildlife sanctuaries. To date, 474 eco-sensitive zones have been established across India. This deliberate expansion of formal protection alongside ambitious afforestation efforts reflects a dual strategy — securing habitat for wildlife and restoring green cover.

A strong legislative framework was established to protect biodiversity during this period. In 2022, the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act was passed, implementing CITES obligations, rationalising species classification, and enhancing sanctuary governance by including gram sabha consultations in the management. The Modi government has also prioritised the formulation and execution of the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP), emphasising the importance of local involvement in conservation efforts.

A notable success in the realm of conservation has been the resurgence of iconic species. India is the first country to prepare a checklist of its 102,718 species of fauna in the 10 biogeographic zones of the country. The population of the tiger, which once faced extinction, has seen a commendable rebound. As per the 2022 countrywide population estimation, the number of tigers has increased by over 30% in the last decade. With 3,682 tigers, India is now home to 70% of the global wild tiger population. India’s Amrit Kaal Ka Tiger Vision (Tiger@2047) — unveiled during the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger in April 2023 — establishes an ambitious strategy to bring all potential tiger habitats under conservation cover, integrate

core, buffer and corridor areas, and mobilise green investments, multi-ministry coordination, and ecosystem-based climate resilience through a unified approach across national, state, and local levels.

Lions, too, constitute a remarkable conservation success story. The May 2025 census recorded 891 Asiatic lions, marking a significant growth of 32% since 2020. At 13,874 animals, leopards also have a stable population. India is the third-largest range country for snow leopards, with 718 of them spread across the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region. The Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India programme covered almost 70% of the potential habitats. Recognising the importance of conserving the animal as a keystone species in high-altitude Himalayan ecosystems, India launched Project Snow Leopard by involving local communities, state governments, and conservation partners.

The ambitious reintroduction initiative under Project Cheetah has marked the return of cheetahs to India after their extinction in 1952. The first batch of eight African cheetahs from Namibia was released into Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh, in September 2022. This marked the first intercontinental wild-to-wild translocation of any species in the world. This was followed by the arrival of another 12 cheetahs from South Africa in February 2023.

Project Dolphin, launched in 2020, achieved landmark success with the first-ever comprehensive river dolphin survey across eight states,



A notable success in the realm of conservation has been the resurgence of iconic species. SHUTTERSTOCK

revealing an estimated 6,327 dolphins across the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus river systems, which is more than 90% of the global population of the endangered Ganges river dolphin. The project also piloted India’s landmark satellite tagging of the Ganges river dolphin in Assam, a transformational step that will enhance our understanding of dolphin ecology and inform targeted riverine conservation measures.

India has also achieved a remarkable milestone by expanding its network of Ramsar-designated wetlands from just 26 in 2014 to 91 by mid-2025, making it the country with the most Ramsar sites in Asia and third globally. With 91 Ramsar sites covering 1.35 million hectares, India champions wetland conservation.

India has also made remarkable progress over the last decade in adopting smart green linear infrastructure to safeguard wildlife. The NH-44 upgrade through Pench Tiger Reserve in Central India introduced nine carefully designed underpasses and overpasses — now used by at least 18 species, including tigers and leopards — demonstrating a 240% increase in wildlife crossings within

three years. This approach has since been mainstreamed: The Samruddhi Expressway, India’s first green highway, includes multiple wildlife bridges and underpasses planned in consultation with the Wildlife Institute of India, an autonomous institution of the Union ministry of environment and forests, for future monitoring, and the forthcoming Delhi-Dehradun Expressway features Asia’s longest wildlife corridor (14 km) through Rajaji National Park, integrating elevated corridors and underpasses to facilitate safe animal movement. These projects reflect a national shift toward embedding biodiversity safeguards into road and railway design.

Looking ahead, the climate crisis poses a significant threat to wildlife habitats. Addressing these challenges requires sustained commitment and innovative solutions. However, the foundation built over the past decade provides hope and optimism.

Bhupender Yadav is Union cabinet minister for environment, forest and climate change. The views expressed are personal

Grand bargain reduced to imperfect compromise

Now that the hoopla surrounding the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate cuts is behind us, it is time to take a hard look at India’s eight-year-old grand bargain. Billed as a shining example of cooperative federalism, the grand bargain underlying the GST was premised on the willingness of both the Centre and the states to pool their tax sovereignty and jointly exercise the powers to tax. The Centre agreed to share its tax sovereignty, and the states gave up fiscal autonomy to arrive at this grand bargain.

The GST Council was set up as the site for collective decision-making on indirect taxes. Unlike other federal institutions, like the Planning Commission of yore, this was a product of the states coming together rather than the Centre controlling the purse strings and “inviting” states to the bargaining table. In theory, this grand bargain was a template for deepening co-operative federalism beyond tax bargains.

In practice, however, the grand bargain has been constrained by short-termism and a weak commitment to the federal principle. Both the Centre and states are to blame. The blatantly obvious truth that eight years of the GST has laid bare is that Indian federalism is caught in a low-equilibrium trap. Despite celebrating cooperative federalism, the Centre has done all it can to undermine that spirit, seeking to use its powers to impose cess and surcharges to shore up revenues for itself, while routinely delaying revenue transfers and compensation cess.

This has pushed the states to view federal bargains in zero-sum terms: States chose to deploy their political capital bargaining for compensation, rather than working toward the goal of a single market.

There is no better illustration of this than the GST 2.0 rate rationalisation. The decision didn’t emerge through collective decision-making. It was the Prime Minister who made the announcement from the ramparts of the Red Fort, not the GST Council. The group of ministers debated the proposal and sought consensus in the council, but it’s hard to ignore that it was presented to the council as a *fait accompli*.

The Centre can rightly claim that states refused to bell the cat. The maze of multiple rates, duty inversion, and the absurdities of caramel versus salted popcorns, for which the GST Council — the states and Centre — must bear collective responsibility, had to be fixed, and thus, it, exercised leadership and secured a consensus.

But after the blitzkrieg of publicity and the launch of the GST Bachat Utsav (savings festival) by the Centre, no one can argue that these reforms have imbued the federal spirit. Indeed, the GST Council’s consensus appears stage-managed, and the concerns of the states, including over compensation, are being summarily dismissed.

The roots of this low equilibrium trap lie in the “two-third, one-third” problem of India’s fiscal federal design and the political culture this has enabled. By design, the Centre has greater revenue powers while the states bear the bulk of expenditure obliga-

tions. The Centre devolves tax revenues via the Finance Commission formulae and other grants to the states.

But this created a moral hazard of sorts. The Centre has long used its powers to squeeze the states of funds due to them. States, on their part, busied themselves extracting revenue bargains from the Centre and blaming, often rightly, the Centre for revenue shortfalls.

But for the states, the “two-third, one-third” problem created the opportunity to conveniently avoid utilising the limited powers they do have, such as raising property and agriculture taxes, which would come with political costs, and thereby, entrenching a culture where the states preferred to extract fiscal space from the Centre over improving their own tax effort.

The resultant federal bargain suited both the Centre and the states. The states routinely railed against the Centre’s pernicious centralisation, but rarely pushed to reform the federal bargain; and governments at the Centre accrued political credit by encroaching on the domain of the states when needed. This persevered through the era when regional parties dominated national politics. This is what made the grand GST bargain so significant.

As negotiations unfolded, producer states worried about revenue loss, made compensation the primary bargaining chip. Fiscally strapped consumer states saw GST as a revenue bonus, and producer states agreed to join the party when a generous compensation package was offered.

Effectively, the “grand bargain” became a bargain about revenue extraction for the states rather than a shared ideological commitment to tax harmonisation for a single market.

This is why an imperfect GST with a complex and arbitrary rate structure was unleashed. The states failed to leverage the council as a forum for federal negotiations; the Centre, on its part, found new ways to re-centralise and squeeze states.

In recent weeks, the Congress has argued that an 18% cap and a simple, rationalised tax were its long-standing demands. But it begs the question of why it never sought to build a consensus within the GST Council. One explanation is partisanship. State governments under the BJP would not go against the will of the Centre, but this also points to a fundamental limitation — the absence of a principled commitment to cooperative federalism.

Far from a grand bargain, the GST is an imperfect compromise constrained by a political culture with a limited commitment to the federal principle.

Rather than leverage the GST and the GST Council to reshape fiscal federalism, the forces of centralisation have dominated, pushing the states to view fiscal bargains related to the GST in zero-sum terms.

For India and the possibilities of a reimagined fiscal federalism, this is a huge opportunity lost.

Yamini Aiyar is senior visiting fellow, Brown University. The views expressed are personal

{ RAJNATH SINGH } UNION DEFENCE MINISTER

Today’s warfare has become completely technology-oriented. We have seen a demonstration of this in Operation Sindoor



In Japan, a new leader from old political stock

For the first time in its postwar history, Japan will elect a woman as the Prime Minister (PM). Sanae Takaichi, a veteran conservative politician secured the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)’s presidency, and if the *Diet* (Japan’s parliament) endorses her for the PM post, she will break a barrier that has stood firm for nearly eight decades. Her election to the LDP presidency was a surprise to many, given opinion polls suggested that Koizumi Shinjiro, the youthful agriculture minister and reformist star, would emerge as the frontrunner. Koizumi represented generational renewal and enjoyed strong public backing. Yet, the LDP’s factional arithmetic, grassroots loyalties, and conservative instincts produced a different outcome.

Takaichi’s triumph however is not necessarily evidence of a gender revolution in Japanese politics. It only reflects the party’s need for consolidation after the recent setbacks. The LDP turned to a leader who could hold its conservative base and prevent defections to populist rivals such as the Sankei-to. By choosing Takaichi, the LDP signalled continuity rather than transformation, even as it made history. Her challenge is to consolidate factions and broaden appeal to younger, urban voters.

Sanae Takaichi is regarded as an arch-conservative firmly aligned with Shinzo Abe’s ideological camp. A regular visitor to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, she reinforces her nationalist credentials despite fierce criticism from China and South Korea. On defence, she calls for Japan to spend at least 2% of GDP, doubling its long-standing 1% ceiling, and supports developing domestic arms industries. Economically, Takaichi has shifted from her earlier support for aggressive deficit spending toward a more cautious stance. She emphasises restoring the LDP’s credibility and tackling voter concerns about rising living costs and job insecurity.

Nationalist themes also feature strongly. She has warned against unchecked immigration and mass tourism, especially in her home constituency of Nara, where over-tourism has strained cultural sites. Though potentially alienating abroad, such rhetoric resonates with domestic voters drifting toward populist alternatives. On foreign policy, the US alliance remains the cornerstone of Japan’s security.

Yet relations have been strained under the Trump administration, particularly over tariffs and defence burden-sharing. Shigeru Ishiba, Takaichi’s predecessor in the PM office, had negotiated a trade package involving \$550 billion in Japanese investments in return for tariff relief, but implementation disputes persist.

Takaichi signals a firmer stance. She insists trade deals must benefit Japan and is expected to renegotiate unfavourable terms. Her first diplomatic test will come at the East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur, where she will meet US President Donald Trump, PM Narendra Modi, and other regional leaders. Takaichi has pledged to strengthen Japan’s flagship “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) strategy. She needs to ensure Japan is not sidelined by any prospective US-China bargains. Strengthening security and economic ties with India, Australia, and Southeast Asian partners will be central to her approach. However, her hawkish profile will complicate relations with China and South Korea. While she may soften certain gestures as PM, her political

base expects her to maintain nationalist positions. Balancing domestic legitimacy with regional diplomacy will test her leadership.

India and Japan have steadily deepened their strategic partnership, covering infrastructure, digital technology, and labour mobility. In August, Ishiba and Modi agreed to train 500,000 Indian workers and host 50,000 in Japan over five years. Takaichi’s scepticism about foreign workers raises questions about the programme’s future. Analysts suggest her concerns are directed primarily at Chinese migrants, yet uncertainty lingers. Despite never visiting India, she has maintained close contacts with the Indian Embassy in Tokyo. Her commitment to FOIP ensures that India will remain central to Japan’s strategic calculus. Symbolically, Takaichi’s victory is groundbreaking. Substantively, it reflects the LDP’s calculation that only a hawkish, conservative woman could project stability in uncertain times. Whether she can turn symbolism into effective governance will define not only her legacy but also the trajectory of Japanese politics.

Gurjit Singh is a former ambassador to Germany, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Asean and the African Union. The views expressed are personal



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

What parents should know when giving cough syrup to kids

EXPLAINED INTERVIEW



PANKAJ HARI

AT LEAST five states have banned the sale, distribution and use of Coldrif cough syrup, following the deaths of at least 11 children in Madhya Pradesh allegedly linked to the cough medicine.

A test report from the Government Analyst at the Drug Testing Laboratory in Chennai found that its sample was “found to be adulterated, since it contains Diethylene Glycol (48.6% w/v) which is (a) poisonous substance which may render the contents injurious to health.”

The Rajasthan government last Friday

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

ABOUT THE 1807 LAW TRUMP MIGHT USE TO SEND TROOPS INTO STATES



National Guard personnel in Washington. The New York Times

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump will consider invoking the Insurrection Act, an 1807 law that grants the President emergency powers to deploy troops on American soil.

On Monday evening, he said he saw the Insurrection Act as “a way to get around” the opposition to the deployments, but did not commit to invoking the law. “If we don’t have to use it,” he said, “I wouldn’t use it.”

Over the weekend, two court rulings blocked the Trump administration from deploying hundreds of out-of-state National Guard troops to Oregon. Judge Karin Immergut, a Trump appointee, broadened her initial restraining order Sunday after Trump tried to sidestep it, telling Justice Department lawyers that the president had been “in direct contravention” of her order.

What is the Insurrection Act?

The Insurrection Act grants the President the power to send military forces to states to quell widespread public unrest and to support civilian law enforcement agencies. Before invoking it, the President must first call for the “insurgents” to disperse, according to a 2006 Congressional Research Service report. If stability is not restored, the President may then issue an executive order to deploy troops.

Trump has raised the idea of deploying the military for domestic law enforcement since his first term. However, the Act has not been invoked in over 30 years, and Trump’s use of the emergency powers for routine law enforcement would carry profound implications for civil liberties and the traditional constraints on federal power.

When can a President invoke the Act?

The law typically forbids the use of the military as a domestic police force.

similarly banned the distribution of cough syrups containing dextromethorphan after it was linked to the deaths of three children in the state.

While doctors generally say there is no need to administer cough syrups to children under six years of age, cases linked to contaminated cough syrups have raised alarm among the parents of young children.

Are cough syrups dangerous for children?

Unless contaminated, cough syrups cannot cause death if medical protocol is followed.

Syrups with Dextromethorphan Hydrobromide, a key and common active ingredient in over-the-counter cough syrups and other cold medicines, are not harmful. It is a cough suppressant and works by blocking the cough reflex in the brain. You don’t develop kidney failure because of it.

When should children be given cough syrups?

There are two types of cough syrups. One, the cough suppressants, are used to treat dry cough, which can be a distressing condition.

Decongestants, on the other hand, reduce nasal congestion, particularly a runny nose. They also help when a cough is triggered by nasal congestion and nasal discharge.

Generally, neither must be given to infants and toddlers. In the US, doctors do not prescribe them for children under four. Here in India too, we do not administer these, except in a few select cases under strict supervision, and only if the child is two years or older.

The problems arise in India because cough syrups are over-the-counter drugs, which are easily available without a doctor’s prescription. So the family goes and buys the

syrup themselves. This should be avoided. Buy it only when the doctor prescribes.

What is the right dosage for children?

First, parents must always consult a paediatrician for the specific dosage.

A general physician is not aware of the dosage per milligram that paediatricians use. Always get a prescription from a paediatrician or child specialist. It is prescribed in milligrams per kg for children.

Generally, each dose is 0.5 to 1 milligram per kg body weight, with a maximum of three doses per day. Parents must use the dosing spoon that comes with the bottle, and not a teaspoon or a tablespoon of syrup, which can cause overdosing.

If the doctor needs to prescribe cough syrup in a special situation where the child is under four years, then he must write the specific dosage on the prescription.

EXPLAINED HEALTH

EXPLAINED STRATEGY

India-UK ties: much to build on

The FTA with India has the stamp of a bipartisan consensus in the UK, and that broadly tells the story of India-UK ties. Under the Vision 2035 document, progress is envisaged in a wide range of areas

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 7

BRITISH PRIME Minister Keir Starmer is coming to India on Wednesday for a two-day visit, his first since he assumed office in July 2024. He will hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and attend the Global Fintech summit in Mumbai.

This is a reciprocal visit by the British PM, after Modi travelled to the UK in July and they signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The FTA has the stamp of a bipartisan consensus in the UK — and that tells the story of India-UK ties broadly.

While Boris Johnson had kickstarted negotiations in 2022, in July this year, after Starmer led the Labour win, he spoke to Modi and “agreed to work towards an early conclusion of a mutually beneficial India-UK free trade agreement”.

Dependable ties in an uncertain world

In the current global environment, where US President Donald Trump’s disruptive approach has created uncertainties, India and the UK have the opportunity to be reliable and predictable partners.

As an Indian official said, “the FTA is the floor, not the ceiling (for the relationship).”

While Starmer is facing political challenges back home, he continues to play a significant role on the global stage. For instance, after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s disastrous White House meeting with Trump in March, he got European leaders and major democracies, including Australia, Canada, and Japan, to form the Coalition of the Willing against Russia’s invasion.

‘Living bridge’

The Indian diaspora forms about 2.6% of the UK population, contributing to academia, literature, science, business, and politics. More than 65,000 companies in the UK are owned by the Indian diaspora, and these contribute heavily to job creation, local economic growth, and taxes. This forms the “living bridge” between the two countries.

The India-UK relationship is robust, multi-faceted, and mutually beneficial, and on May 6 this year, it was elevated to a new level, when the two PMs announced the conclusion of the India-UK FTA and the Double Contribution Convention.

Then during PM Modi’s visit to the UK in July, a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the Vision 2035 document, as well as a new Defence Industrial



PM Modi and Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, with Keir Starmer and then UK Treasury Secretary Jonathan Reynolds in July. X/narendramodi

Roadmap were signed.

The key pillars of India-UK Vision 2035 include growth and jobs in the UK and India, education and skills partnership to nurture the next generation of global talent, developing cutting-edge technology, and strengthening defence and security co-operation.

Here’s a look at the different facets of this relationship and the vision for the future.

Economic cooperation

The India–UK FTA brings together the world’s 5th and 6th largest economies.

Bilateral trade (both goods and services) stood at around USD 56 billion during 2024 with imports at around 17 billion and exports at around 26 billion pounds. Total bilateral trade in goods is around 18 billion pounds while trade in services is around 25 billion pounds in 2024. Now, the bilateral trade is projected to double by 2030.

The FTA is expected to give Indian businesses more competitive market access in focus sectors like textiles, leather, footwear, sports goods and toys, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, auto parts and engines.

Indian and British companies employ more than 650,000 people in each other’s countries.

The India UK CETA provides duty free access to approximately 99 per cent of India’s exports by value. This supports MSMEs too and boosts jobs.

The agreement enables growth in IT and ITes, financial and professional services, education, and other business services. This has the potential to expand high-skill jobs across India. It also means lower costs for professionals and employers, and the Double Contribution Convention provides a three-year exemption from UK social security for eligible Indian workers on temporary assign-

ment and their employers. This benefits more than 75,000 workers.

Defence cooperation

A Defence Industrial Roadmap for collaboration in co-design and co-production of defence products is expected to meet the growing demand in both countries, as well as cater to the world market. A key area the two countries are working towards is jet engines.

A broad spectrum of activities, including joint military exercises, port calls, defence technological cooperation, subject matter expert exchanges for exchange of best practices (SMEEs), defence education, and defence procurement are also taking place.

Education

The number of Indian students in the UK is around 170,000. Various UK universities are planning to establish campuses in India, including the University of Southampton coming to Gurugram, making it the first foreign university to set up a campus under the New Education Policy.

An MoU for mutual recognition of academic qualifications was signed in July 2022, and hence, UK degrees are formally recognised in India.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND PATHWAYS: Chevening Scholarships and the Young Professionals Scheme create a study-to-work pathway between the two countries.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SCHEME: About 3,000 young professionals from each country can live and work in the other country for up to two years. This supports early career growth and skills transfer.

EDUCATION AS AN INVESTMENT MAGNET: Education is among the top sectors attracting UK foreign direct investment into India. Queen’s University of Belfast and

also happen in paracetamol and other medicines where propylene glycol is used. Dextromethorphan does not cause kidney failure. It is not a nephrotoxic drug; only diethylene glycol causes kidney injury.

So, what are some other cough relief alternatives?

The other alternative is dexamethasone, which is the second antihistamine — phenylephrine and chlorpheniramine. According to the FDA, even these should be avoided in children less than two years of age. So this leaves no pharmaceutical alternatives for infants. Homemade remedies like steam and humidified air may help. If there is nasal congestion, then use saline nasal drops, which do not contain any medicine.

Prof Pankaj Hari is head of the Department of Paediatrics at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. He spoke to **Ankita Upadhyay**

the University of Surrey are both about to set up their international branch campus at GIFT IFSC, Gujarat.

Research and Innovation

An India–UK Science and Innovation Council (SIC) is held once every two years to develop bilateral relationships in science, technology and innovation. The UK is India’s second largest international research and innovation partner with a joint research programme pegged at 300–400 million pounds.

An MoU was signed in 2023 for wider co-operation, especially in quantum technology, clean energy, pandemic preparedness, AI and machine learning. There is a plan to establish a new India-UK Net Zero Innovation Virtual Centre focusing on industrial decarbonisation, and work on focus areas including use of green hydrogen as a renewable energy source.

Culture

FILM CO-PRODUCTION FRAMEWORK: An updated co-production framework is expected to help Indian and UK producers access incentives in both markets. It supports jobs for crews, VFX and post production, and helps stories travel to wider audiences. Significantly, Trump recently said he would impose 100 per cent tariffs on all movies made outside of the US.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES GROWTH: The cultural agreement signals support for creative businesses. It helps festivals, labels, publishers and production houses to build cross-border projects that generate local jobs for artists, technicians and venue workers.

PEOPLE FIRST BENEFITS: More shows and exhibitions in Indian cities, more Indian content on UK platforms and vice versa, and more training and exchange opportunities for young creators.

Connectivity

MORE LOCAL ACCESS TO SERVICES: New Consulates General of India in Manchester and Belfast were inaugurated in March, expanding services beyond London, Birmingham and Edinburgh. This brings passport, OCI and consular support closer to large Indian communities in Northern England and Northern Ireland.

MORE FLIGHTS AND SEATS: Virgin Atlantic operates a daily London to Bengaluru service from March 2024. British Airways added a new daily Delhi to London flight from April this year. IndiGo has announced Delhi to Manchester flights starting November 15, using leased Boeing 787-9 aircraft. Air India continues substantial UK operations from multiple Indian cities to London airports.

Trump-Ryder Cup saga: a new normal in sharply politicised sporting world

NAMIT KUMAR

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 7

IN THE aftermath of a spirited victory at the Ryder Cup golf tournament in late September, Team Europe’s triumphant moment was marked by a video of them celebrating and singing the chant “Are you watching Donald Trump?” The American President left a cheeky reply on his socials: “Yes, I’m watching. Congratulations”.

But why exactly is the victorious camp from the biggest team event in golf celebrating by engaging in banter and taking digs at the American President? Perhaps because Trump’s presence loomed large over the swarming Bethpage Black golf course in New York, larger than any player, coach or fan.

Marking Trump’s presence

The 2025 edition of the Ryder Cup was

won impressively by the away team, as the Europeans defended their title despite the tribalism and home-field advantage that are essential tenets of the event.

But it was collectively acknowledged that lines were crossed over the weekend in Long Island, with abuse hurled at players (especially Europe’s star, Rory McIlroy, whose wife was even hit with a beer can). Spectators went so overboard with their behaviour that state police and guard dogs had to be brought in to the normally serene fairways at Bethpage.

How much of the churlishness and abuse from the fans was a consequence of Trump’s involvement in the event, if at all, may be up for debate. That the European team’s video did not address an opposition player or captain, but the American president, may well be instructive.

What is not in doubt is how Trump’s presence was marked at the Ryder Cup event. He and his fans arrived at the event



Trump arrives at the Ryder Cup with his granddaughter, Kai. X/WhiteHouse

with full pomp and show. There was an expectant air around the course with Trump’s scheduled visit last Friday, making him the

first sitting American President to arrive at the Ryder Cup. US golfer Bryson DeChambeau said he hoped his presence would inspire the players. His arrival marked the rowdiest day, and his huge security deployment kept a lot of paying fans out of the course for large parts of the day.

Unlike the US Open tennis tournament last month, where Trump also came to watch the men’s final in New York, he was given a rousing reception this time.

Commentators across the world voiced their belief that this was a political move to further his agenda using sport; the polarised fan support became a consequence of that.

Trump’s history with golf

Trump has been an avid golf fan for years and is something of a motivated amateur player.

Professional tournaments are often held at the numerous golf courses he owns. He gets in touch with the top names every time

they win the big events (Europe recorded the video as an opportunity for a bit of banter after Trump sent a personal text message to McIlroy).

He claims his handicap is as low as 2.8 and that he has won multiple club championships. In his 2019 book, *Commander in Cheat*, journalist Rick Reilly went about trying to explain Trump’s politics with his attitude on the golf course, and the amount he supposedly cheats on it.

That explains his keenness to be present for the event, alongside his proximity to some of the biggest golfers in the world, but that’s not all. As Trump looked on from his bulletproof enclosure before the first tee — which he only left to interact with DeChambeau to a wild crowd reception — the message wasn’t merely that of a golf fan coming to appreciate the sport. It was political, too.

Setting new precedents

In Dubai, during the men’s Asia Cup

cricket tournament last month, and once again on Sunday in Colombo during the Women’s World Cup, the India and Pakistan cricket teams have set new terms of (non) engagement. They have elevated an already fiery rivalry to a point of heightened animosity due to the decisions of their political establishments.

In global football, there was growing noise for FIFA and UEFA to take a stand and ban Israel from competing.

Simultaneously, Iranian athletes set to travel to the United States for international competitions, like next year’s FIFA World Cup and the 2028 LA Olympics, face uncertainty after citizens of the country have been prevented from travelling there due to a recent ban.

The Ryder Cup was just another event that showed how globally, political establishments are attempting to latch onto sport for a range of goals — if not as a rallying cry against a warring nation, then just to further the cult of personality of a leader.



CONTRAPUNTO

Political satire became obsolete when Henry Kissinger was awarded the Nobel peace prize

- TOM LEHRER

Noblesse Oblige?

Trump's desperate for peace Nobel. He isn't the first strange candidate who's so keen on this prize

Trump has wanted a peace Nobel for the longest time, but never as much as now. Just over a week ago he said if he doesn't get it this time, on Oct 10 – he's been nominated four times before – “It'd be a big insult to our country.” He never says that lightly – last time was in 2020, when he said if Biden's running mate Kamala Harris ever became president, “That would be an insult to our country.”

Why Trump wants the peace Nobel is a mystery. Winners are in dubious company. Gandhi's soul would be ever so grateful for being spared an honour that the likes of Henry Kissinger and Aung San Suu Kyi earned in later years. Kissinger, who prolonged the Vietnam war and had a hand in the bombing of Cambodia and Laos; Suu Kyi, who defended her military's persecution of the Rohingya.

Maybe Trump wants it only because Obama got it. In the words of a veteran Republican: “Obama has been living in Trump's head rent-free for the last two decades.” But Obama got the Nobel as a nudge for shunning the militarism of his predecessor Bush – and ignored it. Can't blame the Nobel committee if they won't trust another US president.

But you have to give it to Trump for trying. He returned to office talking about stopping the Russian

krieg. Success would have cemented his place at the head of this year's 338 candidates, but Putin didn't oblige. Regardless, Trump is claiming to have stopped seven wars already – Op Sindoor among them. While India's factual denials have left him sore, Pakistan has rubbed salve with praise and a Nobel nomination.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's and Israel's nominations came months after this year's cutoff date of Jan 31, but they'll keep Trump in the running in 2026. He might have deals in Gaza and Ukraine by then. If he doesn't, he can learn from former Japanese PM Eisaku Sato, who used the services of a businessman friend to lobby the Nobel committee, and wangled a Nobel. Bear in mind that lobbying doesn't always work. It didn't for the unnamed leader whose campaign sent 750,000 letters to the committee in the 1990s. It didn't for Clinton, despite his photo-ops in Vietnam and Ireland, and with Yasser Arafat. And it didn't for the Iranian poet who sent 18 crates of pistachios for a lit Nobel – only to get disqualified. Trump should try being subtle therefore, and if he doesn't win, he shouldn't ban other Americans from accepting Nobels.

Bystander's Dilemma

Incentives can't get strangers to help accident victims. Only trust in police will bring in change

UP govt has announced its implementation of Union road ministry's April measure – raising the ‘incentive’ for bystanders whose immediate help saves an accident victim's life from ₹5k to ₹25k. It returns focus to a scheme based on faulty logic from scratch. India's Good Samaritan rules were made in 2015 on a nudge from Supreme Court, which had sought protection of bystanders from police harassment, for helping accident victims. That's got to be good, right? Of course. But doing good can go wrong.

Consequences of getting ‘involved’ with police are unpredictable – bystanders risk becoming deer caught in cop headlights; it's all too easy to get trapped in a morass. Long loaded questioning of a Good Samaritan, pressure to become a witness, irrelevant personal details sought, getting caught in a medico-legal case, are deterrent enough. However harsh it sounds, a perception is cast in stone that helping is avoidable because of police harassment. It's one reason why bystanders and witnesses instead of helping, record horrific events – both to distance, yet ‘do something’. People will help only if there's no fear of police – an ambitious project given not an inch has moved on police reforms.

Given this, to expect that compassion or sense of duty can be *incentivised* – introduced in 2021, to end by March 2026 – by jacking up ‘prize money’ without doing anything to infuse trust in law & order machinery is looking in the wrong direction. 2015 rules have SOPs for police engagement with bystanders. How is that going? How this scheme's panned out speaks for itself – SOPs are largely ignored while incentives can't buy trust. India's appalling record on road safety and increasing fatalities remains unmoved – can promising to pay people more do anything except open a new avenue for potential fraud?

Experts anonymous

There are specialists on all subjects who tell us everything we want to know – except who they are

Jug Suraiya

Trump's tantrums on tariffs, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Israel-Palestine conflict. The predictable unpredictability of climate change.

What do all of these mean in our day-to-day lives, and how do they affect the price of onions? Busy as we are with our jobs, our household chores, our studies, our hobbies, we don't have the time or the knowhow to figure this out for ourselves.

Fortunately for us, we don't have to. There are specialists called experts who do this for us. News reports and commentaries are full of quotes from experts on all manner of subjects which you would care to name, and also not a few you mightn't.

Name, or not name, a subject and out will pop any number of experts on it, like so many Jacks-in-the-Boxes. Some subjects, such as Kashmir, have more experts than a porcupine has quills.

While some of these experts have names, the majority of them are referred to by the generic or vanilla term, ‘expert’. Sometimes experts are not called experts but ‘a reliable source who did not want to be named’.

In an age when flaunting one's identity and getting one's name into the public limelight are as compulsive an urge as the taking of selfies, such modesty on the part of experts, aka reliable sources who do not want to be named, can be deemed a laudable example of modest self-effacement.

But such anonymity has its downside. For instance, how are we to tell if an expert or a reliable source not wanting to be named, on say, climate change, is not also moonlighting as an expert or reliable source not wanting to be named on, say, the role played by Donald Trump's signature hairstyle on the dynamics of geopolitical multilateralism?

However, there are experts on experts whose expertise lies in establishing the bona fides of other experts. We know this for sure because we are told so by a reliable source who does not wish to be named...

PK's Un-Bihari Pitch

Prashant Kishor has outsider appeal against the culture of bakaiti (idle talk) shored by complex local networks. But is his idiom of productivity & personal betterment only a sales trick?

Vignesh Karthik KR

In this election cycle in Bihar, few have drawn as much curiosity as Prashant Kishor. After a decade crafting electoral wins for others, he now seeks one himself. His *padyatra* has been a feat, covering 2,697 villages across 235 blocks in 665 days. It has inspired both fascination and fatigue. And overall, his rise reflects a deeper churn in Bihar's democracy.

From dignity to delivery | Bihar's post-Mandal politics has long oscillated between dignity and development. Lalu Prasad's govt in the 1990s marked the triumph of social justice, a politics of recognition that gave voice to the backward and marginalised. Nitish Kumar's tenure sought to turn that recognition into governance, roads, and welfare, what Jeffrey Witsoe called Bihar's phase of “democracy against development”, later evolving into an effort to reconcile dignity with delivery.

Kishor now casts himself as a bridge between these phases: a self-made technocrat promising clean administration, education, and jobs. If Lalu embodied charisma and Nitish bureaucratic rationality, Kishor represents a form of techno-populism, populist in tone, technocratic in method. As he recently said, Bihar's culture of *bakaiti* (idle talk) must yield to productivity and personal betterment.

His campaign has replaced mass rallies with targeted outreach – via youth clubs, digital training, scholarship schemes for girls, and a tightly managed social-media network. Yet Bihar's democracy has rarely rewarded managerial efficiency alone; its idiom remains relational, built on proximity, persuasion, and trust.

Visibility, not power | To many Biharis, Kishor's return from the world of global institutions, UN, PMO, and multiple election war



rooms, carries the allure of an outsider who knows more than the usual players. His story, a small-town upper-caste boy from Buxar who made it on his own, mirrors the aspirations of younger voters who see migration as their only route to mobility. His slogan – “Vote for your children's future” – blends moral purpose with pragmatic appeal. By opposing prohibition and pledging to rehabilitate migrant labourers, he speaks the language of reform more than ideology.

Yet his appeal also reflects Bihar's fatigue with insiders. Voters see in him a contrast to parties grown dynastic and complacent. His popularity, then, is less about policy than projection – a fantasy of politics rebooted through technocratic competence alone.

Limits of disruption | Yet the limits of this appeal are evident. Jan Suraj is more visible than entrenched. In its debut during the Nov bypolls, it polled between 5,000 and 37,000 votes across four constituencies, enough to mark its presence, not to alter outcomes. Its impact in 2025 will depend on whether that visibility translates into booth-level strength.

Kishor's plan to field large numbers of candidates from Extremely Backward Castes and minorities may nibble at both JDU and RJD bases while attracting aspirational youth from BJP. His influence, then, may lie in reshaping the field rather than winning it. The stated goal of securing over 125 seats is best read as performance politics, an assertion of inevitability meant to build momentum.

His *padyatra* has created recognition across Bihar, but politics here is no blank slate. Networks, caste intermediaries, and local patronage still decide trust, something a long walk alone cannot command.

Youth and aspiration | Kishor's greatest resonance is among the semi-urban, educated youth, the half-

politicised generation aware of Bihar's social hierarchies but impatient with its stagnation. They see in him a figure who has transcended caste boundaries through merit, professionalism, and exposure.

He speaks to their sense of alienation as much as their aspiration, offering an image of governance unburdened by legacy. But admiration does not automatically translate into votes. Many of these young supporters are migrants outside Bihar; detached from daily political mobilisation. His challenge is to convert admiration into a functioning organisation capable of standing guard at each polling booth.

Players and the field | Kishor's rise coincides with a fluid political moment. Lalu remains the moral anchor for RJD's traditional base; Nitish, despite diminished popularity, presides over an administrative network that BJP continues to benefit from; and Narendra Modi's presence amplifies NDA's reach without necessarily localising its trust. Tejashwi Yadav, meanwhile, represents the generational transition, an RJD attempting course correction by marrying its old politics of dignity with a new vocabulary of delivery.

In this complex field, Jan Suraj functions as both disrupter and diagnostic tool. Its performance will reveal whether Bihar's electorate is ready to move beyond legacy politics or whether its enduring hierarchies will reabsorb the impulse for change.

The likelier outcome is that Kishor's campaign will not overturn the system but pressure it, forcing traditional parties to modernise their communication, candidate selection, and grassroots engagement.

Bihar's test | Ultimately, Kishor's significance lies less in his electoral tally than in what he reveals about Bihar's democracy, its fatigue with familiar hierarchies and its cautious curiosity for reinvention. His campaign taps into a desire for politics unmediated by dynasty or cronyism, yet Bihar's social arithmetic still privileges proximity and trust over technocratic promise.

The state remains India's democratic laboratory, but experiments here succeed only when rooted in its complex local networks. Kishor's Jan Suraj may not transform that equation overnight, but it has forced the conversation. The “Striding Man” of Bihar keeps walking; part technocrat, part pilgrim, marking not a new beginning, but a reminder that change here is incremental, negotiated, and never fully scripted.

The writer is a postdoctoral research fellow of Indian and Indonesian politics at KITLV-Leiden

Can Trump Tame Gaza's Fires? Probably Not

His 20-point plan is the result of growing international pressure to end the genocide. But Netanyahu continues to bomb Gazans, and Hamas doesn't intend to surrender. We are back to square one

Paola Caridi

Two crucial variables have emerged in recent days with respect to the genocide that Israel is perpetrating against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The first: time. Time is short and extremely dangerous for the fate of the Palestinian people. The second variable: the emergence of an actor that decision-makers thought was irrelevant. It's the global public opinion. This is best exemplified by the Global Sumud Flotilla that recently tried to break the illegal blockade imposed by Israel around Gaza and deliver essential humanitarian aid.

The Flotilla is the perfect representation of a socio-political actor, composed of populations and public opinion that are the real obstacles to genocide, the spur on decision-makers and the ruling classes. It's the only tool, so far, determined to stop the extermination. It indicates that the powerless, as splendidly defined by Czech dissident Vaclav Havel, are forcing decision-makers to step up their involvement in the issue of genocide that Israel is perpetrating against the Palestinian people.

Today we have Trump's 20-point peace plan that is being considered by Israel and Hamas. But the process started earlier. The mass demonstrations that took place, mainly in Europe, between late Sept and early Oct signalled a profound change in Western societies. They indicated a clear confrontation between decision-makers and the population, electoral consensus and public opinion. It's this popular pressure that is also responsible for pressing govts around the world to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis. And this was evident in the recent annual meeting of UN.

Indeed, the ritual Sept meeting of the UN General Assembly was not one of those repetitive events. Not only because of a profoundly changed political climate, but also essentially because of the US stance under



the second Trump administration. Embodied in his 57-minute speech, Trump's stance staunchly aimed to attack both multilateralism and UN itself. Furthermore, there's no doubt that the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza makes everything different, unrepeatable, and inescapable.

The real difference, however, lies in the stance of the protagonists, the leaders who represent different parts of a profoundly diverse planet, irremediably different in their checks and balances. The numbers alone tell the whole story: Compared to the 51 founding members of UN, 80 years after its birth, the number

has almost quadrupled. That a handful of countries, mostly Western, colonial powers, are not as relevant as they were in 1945. In its place is a world that differs in facts, behaviour, and objectives. And Palestine is the litmus test.

One fact stands out above all others: the question of recognising the state of Palestine. Is this really fundamental? Or is it Western bias that makes us believe it to be decisive? Three-quarters of the world already recognises Palestine statehood. And so, it's our Western perspective that leads us to believe that our belated and shameful stance is now crucial.

But the real story unfolded on the sidelines of the General Assembly, during meetings between representatives of the countries most affected by the crisis in South-West Asia. Above all, the meeting between Trump and Arab and Islamic countries, committed to finding a way to stop the genocide was crucial. Trump's 20-point plan is the result of this behind-the-scenes diplomatic work.

It's undoubtedly a neo-colonial plan, written and defined by Israel. At the same time, however, it signals a change: the need, not only for US but also for the whole world, to stop the genocide. And it is here, at this point, that the Arab and Muslim-majority countries come into play, taking on the burden of convincing Hamas to accept a plan that is, in effect, a surrender.

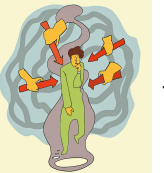
Hamas responded, as was easy to predict, by accepting the plan. It agreed to release the hostages – all the hostages – in a single exchange. It agreed not to be part of the Palestinian govt: in other words, it said yes to a technocratic govt. At the same time, however, it indicated that it is the Palestinians, in a national consensus, who must decide on their future. There is no surrender, therefore, in Hamas' official document.

The real news is that Trump has accepted this response, asking Israel to stop the indiscriminate bombing of Gaza City. This is where it all comes together: Israel has not stopped the bombing, the carnage, the killing of children, women, and families. Netanyahu has declared that his troops will not withdraw from the Gaza Strip. We are back to square one, for the umpteenth time. Just as it has been for exactly two years. The goal of the state of Israel, the state that is committing genocide, is clear once again: Palestine must not exist, either as a state or as an expression of a people. Where is the world, and what does it intend to do? The powerless, the global public opinion, have already said it very clearly: they want to stop the genocide. But what do the decision-makers want to do?

Caridi is the author of Hamas: From Resistance to Regime

Calvin & Hobbes





Sacredspace

Whenever you are about to find fault with someone, ask yourself the following question: What fault of mine most nearly resembles the one I am about to criticise?

Marcus Aurelius

Harmony Between Self And Nonself

Deepak Ranade

The immune system is a highly complex orchestration of various cells, proteins, regulatory mechanisms, checks and balances, primarily meant to protect the host against pathogens. These are microbes, such as bacteria, viruses, protozoa, and fungi, as well as other organisms that can infect and cause fatal outcomes for the host. The immune system has an inbuilt innate intelligence that is bestowed with the faculty of discrimination. An important attribute of discriminating between the self and the nonself.

The unique ‘self’ identification protocol is comprised of a highly unique configuration of a three-dimensional matrix. A fingerprint that's unique and a hallmark of identification is based on a two-dimensional matrix. The unique three-dimensional antigenic architecture is the encryption for our immune

system to identify the self at the cellular level.

Modern medicine is battling two significant villains. Cancer, which relies on the deception of the immune system and autoimmune diseases, which affect a mutinous alchemy within the rank and file of the immune system. Cancer is a kind of biological fraud. A catastrophic failure of the Immune Intelligence Agencies to detect the rogue cells, which soon multiply at an incredible pace, and finally overwhelm the host into submission. The cancerous cell very unobtrusively merges into milieu of the host. A large part of the new age biopharmaceutical regimes deploys monoclonal antibodies, which are clones of antibodies targeted against the malignant cells.

The ability to effectively camouflage and remain oblivious to the immune



THE SPEAKING TREE

system was piece de resistance of Covid-19 virus. It mastered the act of deception by causing disruption of Interferon Signaling Pathway, remodelling of cellular architecture and targeted gene silencing.

The recently announced Nobel Prize for medicine 2025, has been given to honour the work of immunologists, who have come closer to understanding the mechanism of this deception. Shimon Sakaguchi, one of the three winners, says, “I believe the time will soon come when cancer is no longer a scary disease, but a curable one.”

The interplay between the self and nonself is what life is all about. At the macroscopic level, the self involves identities generated by abstractions such as the ego, me, and mine. There is a centre in the brain, the Precuneus, that precisely demarcates the boundary between the gross body of the self and nonself or the

universe. All conflicts and misunderstandings arise from the disharmony between the perceived self and the nonself, and sustainable peace will prevail only by restoring harmony between the two.

At the microscopic, cellular level, mankind will be delivered from diseases only when we finally find the means to circumvent the deception and mutinous disharmony that plagues our immune systems. Sooner or later, there will be a paradigm shift in the treatment of agents of misery and suffering. The self has an innate intelligence that will evolve a regimen to usher in truce with the nonself and maintain its integrity. Biopharmaceuticals that are administered extrinsically might soon be harnessed from the self – autobiopharmaceuticals. The day when both the microscopic and macroscopic domains eventually realise the underlying unity of the self and non-self.

The writer is pursuing a PhD in consciousness studies

Where Metro meets the local stations

After 95 years, trains return to Colaba as Metro 3 rolls into SoBo; **mid-day** charts route where Metro trains pass railway stations



Churchgate Metro station, part of the new Aqua Line 3 corridor. PIC/RAJENDRA B AKLEKAR

RAJENDRA B AKLEKAR
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FOR the first time in decades, a rail-based transit system is entering South Mumbai. The much-awaited Mumbai Metro Aqua Line 3, running all the way to Cuffe Parade, marks the return of trains to the city's southern tip, 95 years after the Colaba station on the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway (Western Railway) shut down.

With the new line set to be inaugurated on Wednesday, **mid-day** takes a look at how the Metro will connect with Mumbai's existing suburban railway stations and other public transport links.

The Metro 3 line has been designed for seamless integration with major suburban railway hubs, including Mumbai CSMT, Churchgate, Grant Road, and Mumbai Central, offering convenient interchanges for lakhs of daily commuters.

At Mumbai CSMT, access has been provided through the common BMC subway, while at Mumbai Central, the Metro entry and exit open directly inside the railway station premises near the approach area.

At Churchgate, the Metro station is located just across the road, with entry/exit point B1 near the petrol pump behind Eros theater.

Grant Road station, too, lies conveniently across the road from the Metro stop.

Status of connectivity at other key Metro 3 stations and their proximity to suburban railway stations

Acharya Atre Chowk (Worli):

No direct suburban interchange. Nearest Western Railway stations: Lower Parel or Mahalaxmi, depending on destination.

Science Museum (Nehru Science Centre):

No direct suburban link. Nearest station: Mahalaxmi (WR).

Mahalaxmi:

Interchange available with the Monorail nearby.

Mumbai Central:

Major interchange with Western Railway (suburban and long-distance). Designed for direct Metro-to-rail access.

Grant Road: Direct interchange with Western Railway's Grant Road suburban station.

Girgaon: No direct



suburban link. Nearest stations: Grant Road (WR) or Marine Lines (WR).

Kalbadevi: Nearest suburban station is Marine Lines (WR). Not a paid interchange, but designed as the closest WR access point.

CSMT (CST Metro): Interchange with Central Railway (CR) and Harbour Line at the CSMT mainline and suburban complex.

Hutatma Chowk: No suburban platforms. Located between CSMT and Churchgate — commuters can use either station.

Churchgate: Interchange with Western Railway's Churchgate suburban terminus.

Vidhan Bhavan: No suburban railway link. Serves the Mantralaya and Nariman Point areas.

Cuffe Parade: No suburban interchange. Serves as the southern terminal, with a proposed extension to Navy Nagar under study.

The Metro 3 line has been designed for seamless integration with major suburban railway hubs, including Mumbai CSMT, Churchgate, Grant Road, and Mumbai Central, offering convenient interchanges for lakhs of daily commuters

Your handy guide to Aqua Line 3 alignment

Here's a breakdown of 11 stations that comprise final stretch of the long-awaited underground corridor

RAJENDRA B AKLEKAR
rajendra.aklekar@mid-day.com

THE Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) on Tuesday announced that the Aqua Line 3 had received approval from the commissioner of railway safety, and public operations of the line would commence on Thursday, August 9. Ahead of this, for the benefit of commuters, **mid-day** sheds light on the stations that comprise the long-awaited underground corridor.

The line has been opening in phases. The length of the entire stretch from Aarey JVLR to Cuffe Parade is 33 km, with 27 stations, 26 of which are underground stations, while one is at-grade.

On October 7, 2024, a 13-km stretch between Aarey JVLR and Bandra Kurla Complex opened, and another 9 km stretch from BKC to Acharya Atre Chowk in Worli opened on May 10, 2025. The final stretch, comprising 11 stations, will open on Thursday. The line has crossed the average passenger count of 70,000 per day.

The eleven stations that will open on Thursday are Science Centre, Mahalaxmi, Jaggannath Shankar Sheth (Mumbai Central), Grant Road, Girgaon, Kalbadevi, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT), Hutatma Chowk, Churchgate, Vidhan Bhavan, and Cuffe Parade.

So far, Metro 3 commuters can travel up to Acharya Atre Chowk near the Worli BMC Engineering Hub.

Beyond this point, the Metro crosses rail lines under the existing Mahalaxmi suburban railway station, and the Mahalaxmi Metro station is at the Saat Rasta junction close to the Monorail junction on Arthur Road (south).

From there, the line proceeds to-

'Metro Line 3 will span 27 stations, several of which are located near areas of deep historical significance in the shared modern history of India and Japan — namely Fort, Colaba, and Worli'

Leila Kazi, specialist, economic affairs, Consulate General of Japan in Mumbai



The Kalbadevi Metro station on Tuesday

SERVICE TIMINGS

FIRST SERVICE

from Aarey-JVLR & Cuffe Parade
5:55 am

LAST SERVICE

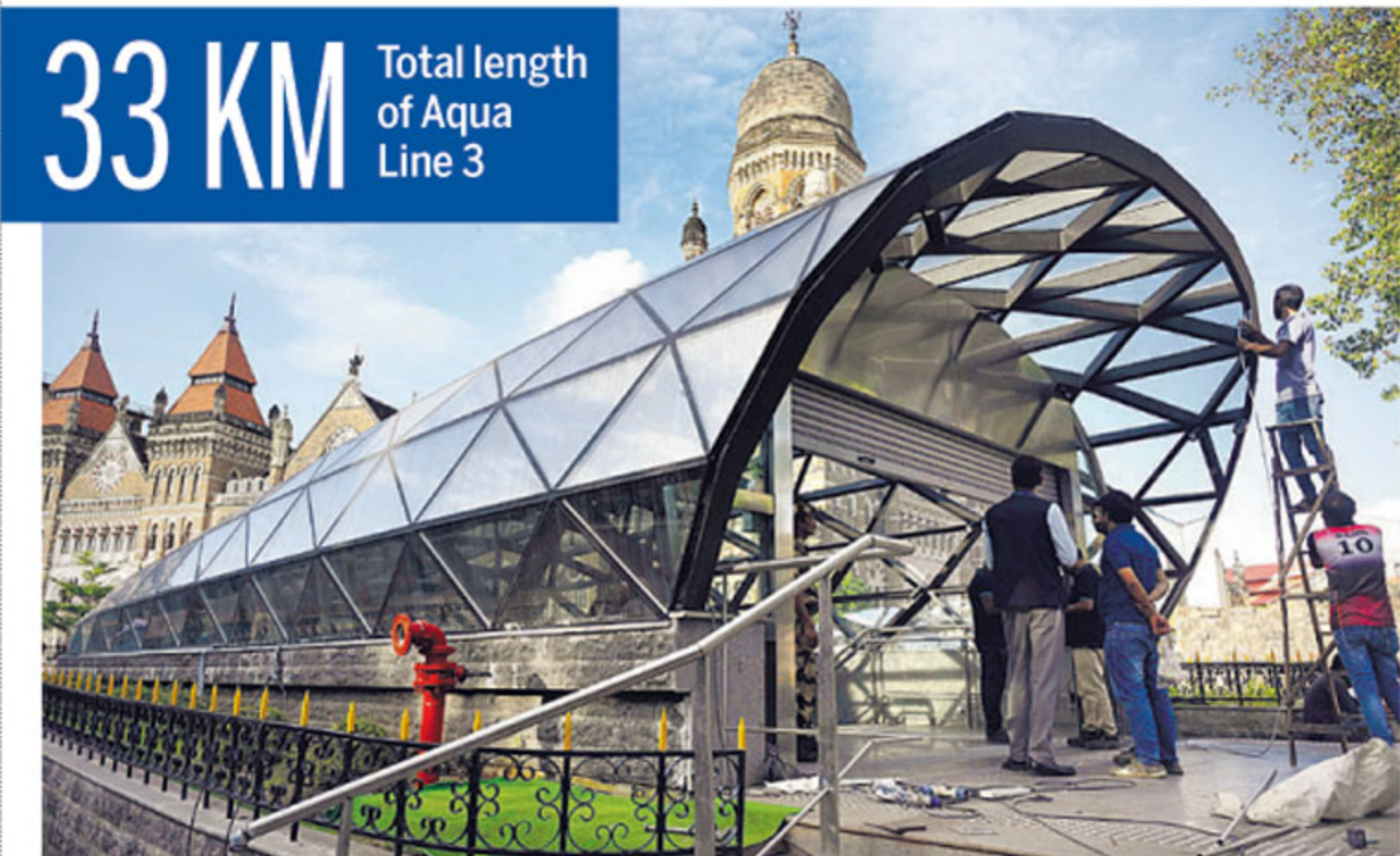
from Aarey-JVLR & Cuffe-Parade
10.30 pm ending at the terminal station at **11.25 pm**

wards Jaggannath Shankar Sheth (Mumbai Central) station. This has entry-exit points near Nair Hospital, Maratha Mandir, and Mumbai Central railway station. It then moves towards Lamington Road with a station on the main road.

The line further passes through the crowded areas of Girgaon, where it is located on the busy Jagannath Shankarshet Road at Thakurdwar and Kalbadevi at Chira Bazar to arrive under Azad Maidan at CSMT, passing under DN Road to Churchgate, moving ahead to Vidhan Bhavan and finally to Cuffe Parade.

ExpertSpeak

Leila Kazi, specialist, economic affairs, Consulate General of Japan in Mumbai, told **mid-day**, "Metro Line 3 will span 27 stations, several of which are located near areas of deep historical significance in the shared modern history of India and Japan — namely Fort, Colaba, and Worli. The modern history between Japan and India finds its roots in Mumbai, and these neighbourhoods once hosted a vibrant Japanese community and remain symbols of our shared history. Now Metro Line 3 will be connecting our shared history and future Japan-India friendship."



The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Metro station on the soon-to-be-opened Aqua Line 3. PICS/ASHISH RAJE

OCTOBER 8

Day Metro will be inaugurated

Man arrested for stealing from passengers on Mumbai-Pune bus

Stolen items include a gold mangalsutra, ₹3500 in cash, and a locker key; accused mainly targeted women and senior passengers

AISHWARYA IYER
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THE Mulund police have arrested a 32-year-old history sheeter for allegedly stealing from passengers travelling on Mumbai-Pune AC sleeper bus.

According to the police, the accused, Akash Kumar Kiritbhai Patel, who was released from jail in August for a similar offence, is a notorious criminal operating alone by posing as a passenger.

Patel is originally from Gujarat. "His modus operandi was to book AC sleeper bus tickets under fake names through mobile apps, board the bus from Borivli or Sion at night, and steal valuables from passengers' bags while they slept," said API Sunil Karande, who is the investigating officer in the case.

His primary targets were women or senior citizens, said the officer, adding that he would get down early in the morning in Pune and return to Mumbai before the thefts were noticed.

The complainant in this case is a Mulund-based man named Ajay Sondkar. He, along with his wife and two children, had booked three seats on a private AC sleeper bus, travelling to Mahabaleshwar on August 29.

During the overnight journey, his wife had placed her brown bag containing her man-



Accused Akash Patel is a history sheeter. PIC/BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

galsutra, a cupboard locker key, and ₹3500 in cash in the luggage rack above their seats. The family reached Mahabaleshwar the next morning and only realised later that the valuables were missing.

Initially assuming the items had been left behind at their Mulund home, the family checked with relatives but could not locate them. Upon following up with the travel company, Sondkar later obtained CCTV footage of the bus, where an unidentified co-passenger was seen rummaging through his wife's bag around 4.05 am on the same day.

Convinced that the man had stolen the pouch, Sondkar approached Mulund police to register a case. The stolen items — an old gold mangalsutra weighing about 28 grams,

₹3500 in cash, and a locker key — are estimated to be worth over ₹2.8 lakhs.

According to the police, since Patel was released on bail in August, he has travelled four times on the same route.

Mulund police said they managed to trace Patel using technical assistance and arrested him from Mira Road on Monday night. "All we had was unclear CCTV footage, but using technical assistance and data from the mobile app which was used by the accused to book bus tickets, we managed to trace the accused," added Karande.

Patel has over four similar cases registered against him, mostly in the Kamote area in Navi Mumbai, and police suspect there may be more unreported incidents.

"We are looking for more victims of similar offences. It's likely that many are going unreported," said an official, adding that the motive behind the crime was easy money.

"He recently got divorced and was living in a rented apartment in Mira Road. Before he started committing crimes, he had a garment business, but that failed. He has been unemployed for many years and was disturbed because of domestic and financial problems," added the official.

Police said that following his arrest, Patel is currently remanded to judicial custody, and police have managed to recover all the stolen items from him.

₹2.8L

Total value of items recently stolen by accused

A MEDIA MARKETING INITIATIVE

Navi Mumbai and Raigad win 'Best District in India' award at Physio Manthan

National recognition for innovative physiotherapy initiatives; MP Basuri Swaraj presents award at Delhi's Constitution Club

The Navi Mumbai and Raigad district branches of the Indian Association of Physiotherapists (IAP) were awarded the prestigious 'Best District in India' award at the 3rd 'Physio Manthan' National Conference held in New Delhi. The Navi Mumbai team was specially invited to Delhi to receive this honour and the award was presented by Hon. Sushma Swaraj's daughter of MP Basuri Swaraj at the historic Constitution Club of India in New Delhi. The function was graced by the presence of special guests, Shri. Anupriya Patel, Hon'ble Minister of State for Health and Women and Child Development, Hon'ble Shri. Manoj Tiwari, Hon'ble Shri. Dr. Rajiv Bhardwaj, Hon'ble Shri. Dr. Ashok



Varshney and Hon'ble Smt. Dr. Kiran Bedi. The ceremony was also attended by IAP National President Dr. Sanjiv Jha (PT), National Treasurer and Head of Women's Wing Dr. Ruchi Varshney (PT), and IAP Maharashtra Vice President Dr. Amit Girey (PT). This prestigious award is a testament to the tireless work and leadership of the Navi Mumbai and Raigad IAP branch teams including Dr. Parthiban (PT) — President, Dr. Shekhar Jambu-

re (PT) — Secretary, Dr. Nikhil Ingole (PT) — Treasurer, Dr. Parag Sanas (PT) — Executive Members, Dr. Sandeep Patil (PT.) — Executive Member, Dr. Mahua Chatterjee (PT) — Executive Member, Dr. Tejashree Dabholkar (PT) — Executive Member, Dr. Shailendra Kumar (PT) — Executive Member, Dr. Gurjit Singh (PT) — Volunteer. With this award, Navi Mumbai has set a new benchmark at the national level in the field of physiotherapy.

Government of Maharashtra
Public Works Department
North Mumbai (P.W.) Division, Andheri
Telephone No. 022-26231964
E- Tender Notice No. 38 OF 2025-26

E-mail address:- northmumbai.ee@mahapwd.com

Telephone/Fax Number :- 26231964/26205788

(Only for Registered Labour Societies in Eastern Suburb District)

E-Tender for the following work in B-1 Form is invited via online e-tendering system from the Registered Labour Societies in Eastern Suburb District Mumbai Registered with Govt. of Maharashtra in P.W.D, by the Executive Engineer, North Mumbai (P.W.) Division, Andheri (w), Mumbai-58 on behalf of Government of Maharashtra. Tender Documents can be downloaded from Government of Maharashtra portal <https://mahatenders.gov.in> The Societies which are registered within eastern Sub-urban District (East Suburb) shall be entertained.

Sr.No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost
1	Annual Maintenance to Bldg. No. 92 to 95, 104 to 112, 141 to 143 at Nehrunagar Kurla (E) Mumbai.	Rs.4998534/-
2	Annual Maintenance Work to Blue Bell Bldg. at Hiranandani Garden Powai. Mumbai.	Rs.1111399/-
3	Annual Maintenance Work to 185 Police Qrts. Devratna Nagar at Chunabhatti. Mumbai.	Rs.2529111/-
4	Annual Maintenance to 24 Constable Police Qrts, at Mulund & New Mahavir Jyot Apartment, Rachna Bldg & Hansa Sagar Apartment, Govardhan Nagar at Mulund, Mumbai	Rs.1636146/-
5	Annual Maintenance to 192 Police Qrts., Bldg. No. 1 to 4 at Chiragnagar Ghatkopar, Mumbai.	Rs.1064433/-
6	Annual Maintenance to Venna Sadan & Shrikrishan Bldg, Aasara Bldg. 'A' wing, Govardhan Nagar at Mulund, Mumbai.	Rs.1312820/-
7	Annual Maintenance to I.T.I. Bldg, Rationing office, Sanjay Gandhi Yojana office & Bhandup Police Station at Mulund, Mumbai.	Rs.1515104/-
8	Annual Maintenance to N.T. College Bldg. Compound at Mulund.	Rs.1448513/-
9	Annual Maintenance to C.T.I. Homeguard at Ghatkopar (w) Mumbai.	Rs.1069039/-
10	Annual Maintenance to Type-II, E.S.I.S. Campus at Mulund (w), Mumbai.	Rs.1784543/-
11	Annual Maintenance to Main Hospital, Kitchen & Round Bldg. at E.S.I.S. Campus at Mulund Mumbai.	Rs.3519074/-
12	Annual Maintenance to Boy's Staff office Barrack in Children Aid Society at Mankhurd.	Rs.2190443/-
13	Annual Maintenance to Balkalyan Nagari & Primary & Secondary School at Mankhurd, Mumbai.	Rs.1674490/-
14	MOW to Structural strengthening of Boy's barrack at Children Aid Society, Mankhurd.	Rs.4996893/-
15	MOW to Terrace Waterproofing "A" Type Gulistan Compound Police Qrts. Bldg. at Ghatkopar (W) Mumbai	Rs. 1516024/-
16	MOW to Providing carrying out terrace waterproofing WC Bath waterproofing on residential Bldg. No. 105 Nehru Nagar, Kurla Mumbai	Rs. 1779406/-
17	Demolation & Dismantling of existing Building No.5 at Railway Police Qrts. Ghatkopar (E) Mumbai. .	Rs. 4096334/-
18	Demolation & Dismantling of existing Building No.6 at Railway Police Qrts. Ghatkopar (E) Mumbai.	Rs. 4096334/-
19	MOW to providing and applying damp proof coat and external plaster to terrace and south side at main building, ESIS Hospital at Mulund	Rs. 2150970/-
20	MOW to providing and applying damp proof coat and external plaster to terrace and East side at main building. ESIS hospital at Mulund	Rs. 2153965/-
21	MOW to Dismantling of RCC Over head water tank & Providing fixing H.D.P.E. Syntex taki, platform to six floor terrace LHS at Main building ESIS hospital at Mulund (W), Mumbai.	Rs. 1923293/-

The Executive Engineer, North Mumbai (P.W.) Division, Andheri (W) Reserves right to Accept or Reject any offer. Conditional offers will not be accepted.

All registered contractor should note

E- Tender Submission Date- 08/10/2025 to 15/10/2025 E- Tender Opening Date — 16/10/2025

No.EE/NMD /6622 of 2025

Office of the Executive Engineer,
North Mumbai (P.W.) Division, Dadabhai Road,
Near Bhavan's College, Andheri (West),
Mumbai — 400 058.

Date :- 30.09.2025

DGIPR/2025-26/2977

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
North Mumbai (P.W) Division,
Andheri (West), Mumbai



Editor's
TAKE

An election that echoes beyond Bihar

With controversies raging over SIR, allegations flying, Bihar heads into a high-stakes election, one that could set the tone of the nation's political mood

With the election schedule announced by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, Bihar is once again swept up in the frenzy of elections. The state will go to the polls in two phases, on November 6 and 11, with counting scheduled for November 14. No election in Bihar is free from issues but this time around the role of the Election Commission (EC) itself is under scanner. The controversy surrounding alleged large-scale voter deletions through the State Information Repository (SIR) portal has ignited a political storm. The Opposition has accused the EC of siding with the BJP – an allegation that reflects the deep mistrust between political parties and the Constitutional institutions meant to serve in apolitical manner. Bihar with its unique history and caste matrix is more than just a state in India, it is a microcosm of the country's political mood. The way Bihar votes would give a sense of what the nation is thinking. As Opposition parties rally around charges of voters' name deleted from the voter list on flimsy grounds, the whole election exercise is being viewed with suspicion. The ECI has done little to calm down the tempers and has been vague and unconvincing in defending its actions. In a healthy democracy, the EC stands as the custodian of people's right to vote and their participation in the election, but right now its credibility is under siege.

The allegations that lakhs of voters – particularly from marginalised communities (often dubbed as Opposition's vote bank) – have been struck off the rolls have led to outrage and charges of electoral manipulation are being levelled against the ECI itself. The ECI so far has done little to allay suspicions. Meanwhile Bihar is just a month away from the elections and is already seeing a lot of political activity – new alignments are taking shape and many new players would also be trying their luck at the hustings. But at the core it is basically it is the caste calculus.

Caste politics has dominated Bihar from very early times, though the BJP and RSS have made inroads, but they still have a long way to go. For the BJP, Bihar is a treasure trove of parliamentary seats, and it needs to do well to remain strong in Delhi, though right now it is bereft of an electoral plank in the state. Tejashwi Yadav has emerged a crowd-puller, and Congress, which was on the fringe, has managed to register its presence with Rahul Gandhi's Bullet rallies.

It will be fascinating to see how Bihar casts its votes. With its diverse social fabric and intricate caste dynamics, the state serves as a unique political barometer, where caste alignments and Hindutva influences could once again clash and outcome would define the national politics. Thus, whatever the outcome, this election will be read as a verdict on Nitish Kumar, Tejashwi Yadav, Rahul Gandhi and PM Modi. A victory for the BJP will be seen as a reaffirmation of Modi's charisma and policies and the RSS's growing social influence; a defeat will be construed as the resurgence of regional resistance and a reassertion of democratic plurality.

RSS: A century of ideological evolution

As the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh celebrates its centenary this month, a hundred years on, it remains a powerful force in shaping India's socio-political narrative – commanding both reverence and criticism in equal measure



KALYANI SHANKAR

This month, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) celebrates its 100th anniversary, having been founded by Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in Nagpur. This centenary coincides with Vijaya Dashami on October 2.

The RSS is one of India's most powerful Hindu nationalist organisations and often faces criticism from the Opposition for promoting divisive ideas – allegations it firmly denies. The organisation describes itself as a movement focused on Hindu revivalism and social upliftment. However, it has often been criticised for viewing Muslims as adversaries.

The RSS has produced two BJP Prime Ministers – Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi – who have both led the country successfully. At an event in Delhi, Prime Minister Modi shared stories from his early days as a pracharak (campaigner) and praised the RSS for its nation-building role. He also unveiled a new coin featuring the national emblem on one side and Bharat Mata in the "Varad Mudra" on the other. It was the first time Bharat Mata appeared on Indian currency. Modi highlighted the RSS's crucial role in shaping India's vision for 2047.

While the RSS claims to be non-political, it has a significant influence on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with many of its leaders and ministers having begun their careers within the organisation. Over the past decade of Modi's rule, the RSS's ideological influence has deepened further. Opposition to the RSS is not new; it dates back to the British era and has often been politically motivated. Interestingly, for the RSS, the ultimate goal is not the state itself but the creation of a unified Hindu society.

The RSS has been involved in some of the most debated chapters of India's modern history – from being linked to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. The organisation maintained that the mosque stood on the ruins of a Ram temple.

Last year, Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the new Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya – a milestone long associated with the Sangh's ideological vision. Despite its controversies, the RSS has shown a willingness to evolve. It now seeks to address contemporary challenges such as economic development, environmental sustainability, and social inequality. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, in his centenary address, spoke on key issues including the Indo-Pak conflict, climate change, and economic disparity.

He emphasised that the organisation's main goal for its 100th year is to strengthen Hindu



The Pioneer SINCE 1865

INTERESTINGLY, FOR THE RSS, THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS NOT THE STATE ITSELF BUT THE CREATION OF A UNIFIED HINDU SOCIETY

The writer is a popular columnist



dailypioneer



@kalyanishankar



The Pioneer

society by preserving India's cultural heritage while promoting unity and patriotism. Bhagwat called for a resilient and inclusive India, rooted in the idea of a Hindu Rashtra – where cultural and moral values guide public life – stressing unity, self-reliance, and "belongingness."

The organisation adopted its current name, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, about six months after its founding. On April 17, 1926, Dr Hedgewar held a meeting with 26 volunteers at his home, where the name was formally agreed upon after discussion.

In recent years, the RSS has witnessed rapid expansion across the country. It currently operates 72,354 shakhas in 45,411 locations, conducting daily activities in thousands of neighbourhoods. Last year alone, the organisation launched 6,645 new shakhas as part of its centenary outreach, aiming to reach every village in India. The coordination between the RSS and the BJP – including Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers, and senior ministers – remains close. Many key appointments within the party and Government are often made in consultation with RSS leadership.

The RSS has also expanded globally, establishing a strong presence in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. It has developed influential networks abroad

and frequently lobbies in support of Indian interests. According to the RSS mouthpiece Organiser, the Panch-Parivartan initiative – focusing on education, social harmony, environmental protection, family values, and economic self-reliance – will be a major area of work in the years ahead. Recent meetings in Kashi and Mathura reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to resolving disputes peacefully, through dialogue and legal means. Historically, the RSS's influence on civil society has been channelled through disaster relief, rural development, tribal outreach, promotion of Hindu festivals, and the teaching of Sanskrit. Over time, the Sangh has modernised its methods while remaining rooted in Hindutva and Indian culture.

Once known for keeping records manually in diaries and registers, it has since digitised its operations and updated its uniform – symbolic of its willingness to adapt to changing times.

As India faces 21st-century challenges such as economic disparity, social fragmentation, and national security threats, the RSS seeks to align itself with the nation's broader development goals. Looking ahead, it plans to focus on social and political initiatives while continuing to work behind the scenes – influencing policy, leadership, and ideology within the BJP and beyond.

PIC TALK



An artist paints a mural ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections in Patna.

PHOTO: PTI

Conscience: The forgotten language of divinity



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

THE PIONEER 2ND OPINION

The words conscience and conscious are often confused because they sound similar, yet they signify two entirely different realms of human experience. Conscience refers to the inner sense of right and wrong – a moral compass that guides our choices. Conscious, on the other hand, means being aware of one's surroundings, actions, and thoughts. In the Bhagavad Gita, consciousness is linked with chit – one of the three intrinsic characteristics of the soul: *sat* (eternal), *chit* (aware), and *ananda* (blissful).

This discussion, however, focuses on conscience – how it originates, how it operates, and how it can be strengthened. According to the Gita (15.7), every living being is a part of the Supreme. The soul within us is active and permeates the entire body, as seen in our ability to feel sensa-

tion anywhere when touched. One of the most vital roles of the soul is to alert us – to prompt us toward dharma, or righteous action – because it is a spark of the Divine, who Himself is dharma personified. Thus, the soul naturally directs us toward moral conduct. However, in our *jeeva roop* – the material embodiment – we possess free will, which enables us to either heed or ignore these divine alerts. The soul also carries deep desires and makes choices – essential expressions of its free will. While the soul has decision-making ability, it is not omniscient like God and may err in its judgements. Therefore, divine guidance is crucial. As the Gita (18.63) declares, God provides direction, but the ultimate choice rests with us. Without this freedom, human beings would merely be robots under divine control – a concept contrary to spiritual evolution. The quality of our decisions, however, depends on our *svabhava* – our personal nature. All beings and things in the material world are governed by the three *gunas* or modes of nature: *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance). The unique combination of these *gunas* defines one's temperament and tendencies. A person dominated by *sattva* acts with clarity and virtue, while one influenced by *tamas* is drawn toward laziness, violence, or confusion. Our associations constantly

shape these modes – exposure to uplifting sights or sounds strengthens *sattva*, while indulgence in harmful or violent content intensifies *rajas* or *tamas*. Conscience, therefore, is the voice of the soul filtered through one's *svabhava*.

Imagine a torch shining in darkness. If the light is covered by a thin white cloth, some light passes through; if covered by a thick blanket, almost none does. Similarly, when our nature is dominated by *sattva*, the soul's alerts are clear and strong, leading to wise decisions. Under *rajas*, the message becomes blurred and impulsive actions may result. Under *tamas*, the soul's voice is nearly silenced – which explains how people under intoxication or anger can commit grave crimes without remorse. To refine our conscience, we must refine our nature. This begins by cultivating *sattva* – through wholesome food, clean environments, uplifting company, and disciplined living. Yet the deepest purification happens when we turn to God. Sincere devotion and spiritual association increase the proportion of *sattva* within, making our inner light shine unobstructed. As our nature elevates, conscience becomes a steady guide, protecting us from moral error. The process may be gradual and demanding, but its essence is simple: as we purify our inner world, the divine voice within becomes unmistakably clear.

The writer is a Spiritual Teacher

JANE GOODALL: PIONEERING COMPASSION IN SCIENCE

It is the magic of women scientists, celebrating their courage in worlds long dominated by men, with Jane Goodall shining as a beacon of insight and empathy. In 1960, she stepped into the verdant embrace of Gombe Stream National Park, Tanzania, armed with little more than curiosity, patience, and reverence for life.

Amid the rustling leaves and the soft calls of chimpanzees, she quietly dismantled human hubris – the arrogance that presumes intelligence grants dominion. She watched David Greybeard fashion a twig into a termite-fishing tool, Flo grieve the loss of her infant with aching tenderness, and Fifi teach her young to crack nuts with stones – acts of ingenuity, emotion, and culture that mirrored the depths of humanity. Humans, already battered by climatic catastrophes, have compounded

the suffering of other species through reckless arrogance, disrupting habitats and inflicting stress on creatures who share this planet. Goodall's work reminds us that intelligence is not the measure of worth; empathy, humility, and ethical stewardship define true greatness. Breaking barriers in a male-dominated field without formal credentials, she triumphed through insight, courage, and immersion. Beyond Gombe, the Jane Goodall Institute and Roots & Shoots inspire millions to protect nature, care for animals, and serve communities.

Even after her death, her legacy endures – a luminous testament to the power of compassion, the beauty of coexistence, and the moral imperative to treat all living beings with wonder, respect, and unwavering care.

VIJAY SINGH ADHIKARI | NAINITAL

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | CHENNAI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Yet another tragedy, no lessons learnt

At least 20 people, including five children, were killed and many remain missing after 300 mm of rainfall in 12 hours triggered devastating landslides across Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and Alipurdur.

Rivers like Mal, Torsha, and Jaldhaka overflowed, submerging lowlands and sweeping away over 100 houses, bridges, and roads, including parts of the Hill Cart Road linking Siliguri and Darjeeling.

Five NDRF teams rescued over 40 people amid continuing downpours, while thousands of tourists remain stranded. With the red alert of the IMD still on, the Chief Minister of Bengal has announced relief and compensation – as every Chief Minister does. Experts blame deforestation and unplanned construction, calling for Himalayan zoning laws and climate-resilient planning. Similar crises in Sikkim and Uttarakhand led to the introduction of early-warning weather radars, improved slope stabilisation, and real-time landslide sensors – measures Bengal and every landslide-prone state should have adopted to mitigate the disaster. It is still not too late to take immediate action to prevent further loss of lives and property in future. Unless lessons are finally learnt, nature will continue to punish human neglect with devastating precision.

Rijiju accuses RAGA of 'India-shaming'

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday accused Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi of "India-shaming" during his remarks at EIA University in Colombia. Rijiju expressed concern over Gandhi's statements, saying, "India has strong capabilities in areas like engineering and healthcare, so I am very optimistic about the country. But at the same time, there are flaws in the system that need correction. The biggest challenge is the attack on democracy taking place in India."

To underscore his criticism, Rijiju invoked former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, praising her for never speaking ill of the country while in opposition – a period he described as one of "real democracy," where dissenting voices were heard. By contrast, Rijiju claimed that under the current BJP-led Government, opposition leaders allegedly face restrictions, leaving them "no choice but to speak outside India."

Rijiju's remarks prompted questions about the consistency of his stance, with critics pointing out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, on multiple occasions abroad, criticised India's governance and social conditions. Whether Rahul Gandhi's "bitter truth" on democracy or PM Modi's "ashamed to be born Indian" remark, such exchanges reflect nothing but dirty politics.

Karur tragedy: Who is to blame?

The recent tragedy at Karur in Tamil Nadu has yet again raised the serious question of why the country consistently witnesses deaths during mass gatherings, and why organisers and administrators don't learn any lessons but continue to flout protocols with impunity. Deadly crowd surges have become a common sight in India, especially during big religious events and rallies, which are often held in cramped areas with shoddy infrastructure and few safety measures.

There have been a number of stampedes in India over the last few decades, as events are organised without adequate preparations and proper safety measures in place. The role of authorities, and their utter failure and negligence to manage huge crowds, primarily causes such stampedes. Event organisers, including political parties, bear a significant burden of responsibility for crowd safety. While the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) released guidelines in 2014 for crowd management, organisers pay scant respect to such guidelines. By ensuring separate entry and exit points at a location, deploying adequate police and security personnel, and using a public address system for proper communication, stampedes can be prevented, saving precious human lives.

Karur stampede was avoidable: Observations from ground zero

Preventable tragedies at Karur and Bengaluru highlight systemic failures in crowd management, administrative oversight, and safety protocols. Urgent reforms, accountability, and adoption of technology like AI are essential to protect citizens during mass gatherings and political rallies

FIRST
Column



ANURAG THAKUR

The images from Karur, of anguished families and the leftover chappals scattered at the TVK rally site, will forever remain etched in my memory. What unfolded at the TVK rally on 27 September was a preventable human tragedy. As a member of the eight-member National Democratic Alliance (NDA) fact-finding committee constituted by our national president J.P. Nadda, I witnessed first-hand the devastating consequences of administrative negligence, intelligence failure, and complete disregard for basic crowd safety protocols. Forty-one innocent lives, including 18 women and 10 children, were lost in what has become the biggest stampede in the history of India's political rallies. This stampede, which claimed dozens of lives and injured many more, was not just a local calamity; it leaves an indelible national scar that demands sober, systemic answers.

The delegation included my colleagues from different states and parties and both Houses of Parliament; our objective was to seek to know the cause of such a ghastly incident, clarity on how it happened, accountability, and the possible steps to reform the rules of such rallies so that such a tragedy never repeats. When our delegation, led by senior MP Hema Malini and comprising representatives from the BJP, Shiv Sena, and TDP, reached Karur, we expected to find answers. Instead, what we encountered was a wall of bureaucratic silence and disturbing revelations. The district administration's refusal to engage with our delegation was unprecedented and deeply troubling. In all my years in public service, I have never seen such brazen avoidance of accountability. We travelled to Karur to listen to the injured, the bereaved, the first responders, and officials, and to understand what went wrong.

Our interactions with the bereaved families, the injured victims, and the eyewitnesses painted a horrific picture of systemic failure. One eyewitness told us that the venue, a narrow public road, was merely 19 feet wide, while the actor-turned-politician Vijay's campaign vehicle itself measured 12 feet, leaving virtually no space for the 30,000-strong crowd to move or escape. The mathematics of disaster were evident, yet permissions were granted without any regard for basic safety norms. It was a site waiting for a disaster of such magnitude. The dynamics of crowd surge, the crowd density, progressive col-



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lapse of the crowd due to crush, crowd behaviour psychology, ingress and egress flow rate, and the surge at the time the actor Vijay entered the spot, and other such dynamics of crowd management and intelligence seem to have been ignored altogether while allowing such a rally.

The sight of grieving families at the hospital in Karur haunts me. These were not political workers or party activists. They were ordinary citizens, including children, seemingly fans of the actor, who came with curiosity just to witness a celebrity-turned-politician.

Eyewitnesses recalled disruption to power at a critical moment, which aggravated panic. Our delegation sought a clear explanation about why power was switched off and upon whose order. Serious concerns were raised about crowd control measures, the inadequacy and positioning of police and marshals, and the preparedness of medical first response at the venue.

It is necessary to place the Karur incident in a broader national context. On 4 June 2025, Bengaluru witnessed a separate but strikingly similar crowd disaster during public celebrations outside the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium after Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL win: eleven people were killed and many more injured as crowds surged and entry gates became sites of crushing and chaos. Official responses to that incident again exposed the same

fault lines and contested narratives that emphasised organiser culpability while minimising institutional, policing, and intelligence gaps. The Karnataka government's status report placed significant responsibility on the RCB franchise and event organisers for proceeding in ways that left police and civic agencies little time to prepare, while the reporting and independent observers underlined police planning failures, late or inadequate permissions, and the absence of a coherent on-ground SOP. The Bengaluru episode is therefore not an isolated sporting accident but another example of how large crowds + poor planning + weak real-time intelligence invariably result in catastrophe.

A worrying commonality in both Karur and Bengaluru is the tendency of inquiries and public narratives to place the blame narrowly at the doors of the organisers while underplaying or sidelining the role of state institutions that plan, permit, police, and provide intelligence. In both cases, official lines and subsequent FIRs created an impression that the tragedy was primarily the organisers' fault, even as evidence and reporting highlighted severe gaps in police and administrative preparedness, delayed permissions or last-minute changes, and chaotic on-the-ground decision-making by civic agencies. That rush to single out organisers foreclosed hard questions about state capacity, accountability, and the intel-

How neglect threatens India's hidden archaeological treasures



ASHOK KUMAR

The Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC), one of the world's earliest urban cultures, continues to fascinate historians, linguists, and archaeologists. Its undeciphered script, stamped on seals and terracotta artefacts, has remained an unsolved puzzle for over four millennia. With the advent of artificial intelligence in the 21st century, the possibility of decoding this ancient script has drawn renewed global attention. While excavated ruins of this Bronze Age civilisation largely belong to northern India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, voices from southern India have recently become active in sponsoring cryptographic research, even announcing million-dollar rewards for anyone who successfully decrypts the script.

The cryptographer Bharath Rao, also known as Yajnanadevam. His ongoing attempts to decipher the script suggest that he may be close to a breakthrough. If achieved, it could fundamentally reshape our understanding of Indian history, particularly in countering the much-debated Aryan Invasion Theory. According to his work, the Indus script may in fact be an early precursor of the Brahmi script, later used to inscribe Sanskrit.

Amidst this intellectual excitement, however, lies a tragic irony. While global interest in Indus Valley research is on the rise, the actual artefacts that hold the key to unlocking these mysteries are languishing in neglect. A prime example of this paradox is the little-known Swami Omananda Saraswati Museum in Jhajjar, Haryana.

A Treasure Trove in Ruins

Founded in 1960 by Acharya Bhagwan Dev-later known as Swami Omananda Saraswati-the museum houses thousands of invaluable artefacts, some dating back over 5,000 years. Its collection includes Harappan seals, terracotta figurines, coins, copper and bronze weapons, manuscripts, and sculptures gathered from excavation sites across Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Among these is material from Rakhigarhi, the largest Indus Valley site discovered in India, along with objects described in academic



works such as Copper Hoards of North India by German archaeologist Paul Alan Yule. Yule's extensive research in the 1980s and 1990s, part of which was conducted during the museum's temporary relocation to Narela during the Emergency and afterwards, highlighted the global importance of these collections. At its peak, the museum accumulated over half a million artefacts, including 150,000 coins and 250 weapons believed to date from the Mahabharata period. For cryptographers and historians, the collection is a goldmine. The Harappan seals, in particular, could play a pivotal role in deciphering the Indus script. Yet despite this staggering wealth of heritage, the museum stands on the verge of collapse.

Broken Promises

The museum's current plight reflects decades of official neglect. In 2014, the then Chief Minister allocated `1.7 million for the construction of a new building and sanctioned a monthly honorarium of `50,000 for its director. However, within just 20 months, the honorarium was discontinued, leaving the institution once again at the mercy of dwindling resources.

Manohar Lal Khattar, who later became a Union Minister, had also praised the museum during his tenure as Chief Minister, even referring to it as the "first museum of Haryana."

Today, the museum's management rests almost entirely on the frail shoulders of its 80-year-old director, Acharya Virjanand Daivkrni. For over five decades, he has been the custodian of this vast heritage, cataloguing, preserving, and guiding rare visitors. What was once envisioned as a centre of research and learn-

ing has effectively become a "one-man museum."

A Wider Pattern of Neglect

The state of Jhajjar's museum is not an isolated case. The Pandit Surendra Mohan Mishra Museum in Chandausi, Uttar Pradesh, another privately built repository of antiquities, faces similar decay. Both institutions were born out of individual vision and public support in the 20th century, but lack of sustained state assistance has pushed them to the margins of irrelevance. Veteran scholar Professor Lokesh Chandra has often recalled how the local communities generously contributed artefacts and resources during the formative years of these museums. The founders, motivated by a deep sense of duty towards culture and heritage, built these collections not for profit but for the preservation of India's past. Today, however, these legacies are crumbling. Without institutional backing, their treasures risk falling into the hands of international auction houses such as Christie's or Sotheby's, as has been the fate of many Indian antiquities before.

Why Museums Matter

Museums are not merely repositories of artefacts; they are living classrooms of history. Properly managed, they serve as centres for research, education, and cultural tourism. For Haryana, Jhajjar's museum could have become a hub for global Indus Valley studies. Instead, its treasures remain hidden in dusty halls, vulnerable to theft, damage, and eventual disappearance. The challenges of museum management are not unique to Jhajjar. Worldwide, maintaining such institutions requires substantial financial resources for conservation, documentation, and display. In Europe and the United States, museums are often supported by a combination of state funding, corporate sponsorship, and philanthropic donations. In India, however, private museums rarely receive such support, forcing them into slow decline.

The Way Forward

If India is serious about preserving its ancient heritage, urgent steps are needed. First, the Haryana government, in collaboration with the central Ministry of Culture, must step in to provide sustained funding. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Maharshi Dayanand University, and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) should be brought on board as instit.

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Voice-led AI: Bridging India's digital divide

RAHUL GUPTA

For years, India's digital divide wasn't about access to devices, but access to essential services. While billions own internet-connected phones, millions still can't access healthcare, banking, education, or government services because the digital world was designed around screens, literacy, and interfaces that don't align with how most Indians communicate.

This is changing. Voice-led AI and large language models are transforming language into the new interface, creating an equaliser for all. If leveraged right, this shift won't just foster inclusion; it could ignite India's next wave of economic growth.

Voice as the Equaliser

By 2026, rural India will account for 56 per cent of new internet users, with women making up two-thirds of that number, according to the Internet and Mobile Association of India. Imagine a villager dialling a number, asking in their native language about government schemes, mandi prices, or doctor consultations — without apps, forms, or English. Just a natural conversation, powered by AI. This shift, driven by voice technology, removes barriers of literacy and digital navigation, making participation universal rather than selective.

Sovereign AI as the Foundation

For this revolution to scale, India cannot rely solely on global technologies. Large language models are not built for India's 1,600 dialects or the cultural subtleties that shape communication. This is why sovereign AI infrastructure is crucial. Initiatives like the Bhashini project and start-ups such as Sarvam AI are developing models that not only understand Indian languages but also capture their rhythm, tone, and nuance. Beyond convenience, ensuring that AI solutions process data within national frameworks will foster trust — especially in a world increasingly concerned with data sovereignty.

Applications Across Key Sectors

The applications of voice AI touch every pillar of India's growth. In healthcare, AI-driven helplines could handle first-level triage, alleviating the strain on India's doctor-patient ratio of 1:1,511. In agriculture, AI could provide small farmers with real-time updates on prices and weather — digital farming alone could unlock \$65 billion in value. In banking, secure voice transactions can bring financial services to millions of first-time users, aligning with the RBI's push for inclusion. In education and jobs, students from rural areas can ask questions in



regional languages, receiving personalised career guidance without the need for English-heavy interfaces.

The Next Leap

India's growth has always been about scale. The first leap connected people via mobile phones. The second leap built digital participation through UPI. The next leap will focus on inclusion, where access is defined not by income or literacy but by the simple ability to speak and be understood. This is more than an upgrade; it's a transformational shift. According to Deloitte, the mobile economy could contribute \$1 trillion to India's GDP by 2030 — but only if it includes every citizen. With over 400 living languages and a massive rural market, voice-led AI is the backbone of this growth. India's Voice AI market is already valued at \$1.8 billion by 2030, but the real multiplier effect will come from culturally rooted, sovereign solutions that scale across the nation.

The question isn't whether advanced technologies can bridge the digital divide — they already can. The real question is how quickly India can build the infrastructure, trust, and design thinking to make it universal.

If we succeed, the divide won't just close; it will become a multiplier — translating digital access into empowerment, opportunity, and growth for every Indian.

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BIHAR'S TRUTH

With the sounding of the poll bugle in Bihar — the state will vote in two phases with the results of the assembly elections being declared on November 14 — the attention of the public and the pundits will turn from the Election Commission of India's fractious Special Intensive Revision of Bihar's electoral rolls to the business of politics on the ground. A number of intriguing questions make Bihar's political territory rich for speculation. For instance, would Bihar grant Nitish Kumar, at the helm for two decades despite changing sides often, another shot at power? Apart from whispers about declining health, Mr Kumar's ability to envision a new future for the state seems to be exhausted. The Bharatiya Janata Party, which has eroded the Janata Dal (United)'s electoral reach considerably, is itching to pocket Bihar on its own even though it has decided to fight this election under Mr Kumar's banner. The prime minister's personal appeal welded to its muscular — polarising — *Hindutva* credentials will be the BJP's main electoral thrust. This election will also be an existential test for the principal challengers, the Rashtriya Janata Dal and its allies that include the Congress. The RJD, with Tejashwi Yadav leading the charge, will attempt to mobilise the disenchanted youth and stitch together a caste coalition that is expansive and inclusive. It would also be interesting to watch whether Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraa Party manages to make a mark by tapping into the subterranean demand for a fresh political face.

But there is a larger story in Bihar, one that none of the state's political contenders is eager to tell for fear of exposing its own failures. This story is that of the state's socio-economic decline since Independence. Some of the figures would make for dispiriting reading for Bihar's well-wishers. Bihar's annual *per capita* income is well below the national average; it ranks ninth in terms of youth unemployment, has a poor labour participation rate, and accounts for a large percentage of outmigration among the youth — this undermining of the demographic dividend is shocking; the school drop-out rate is significant; the fertility rate, a tell-tale sign of laggardly economic development, is high. This election will be yet another opportunity for political parties to offer a way for Bihar to rid itself of its spots. But going by history, it could well turn out to be another opportunity lost.

BITTER PILL

The quality of some Indian drugs has come under scrutiny, once again, after cough syrups led to the deaths of at least 12 children across Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The deaths were allegedly caused by high levels of diethylene glycol — a chemical that can cause kidney failure and death when ingested even in small amounts — in cough syrups. This is not the first time cough syrups made in India have caused fatalities in children. DEG-tainted cough syrups have claimed dozens of young lives in Jammu, Bihar, Chennai and Gurugram. In recent years, Indian cough syrups have been linked to child deaths in Uzbekistan, Iraq and The Gambia, revealing regulatory gaps in India's pharmaceutical industry. This is worrying because India produces one in every five generic medicines consumed globally and supplies vaccines to more than 150 countries. Such instances of Indian-made medicine failing to meet international safety standards are not only an embarrassment but they also damage New Delhi's diplomatic capital.

The problem facing the country is a combination of structural impediments and poor regulatory oversight. The Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 divides responsibilities between the Centre and the states: while the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation handles approvals for new drugs and oversees imports, state regulators are responsible for manufacturing licences and routine inspections. This dual structure has led to duplication, delay and, more dangerously, dilution. State drug controllers vary widely in capacity and capability. The CDSCO itself has been stretched thin. With roughly 3,500 inspectors nationwide overseeing nearly 10,500 manufacturing units, inspection frequency is woefully inadequate. In this context, the government's proposal to introduce safety and quality standards on a par with global norms — the Indian Pharmacopoeia Monographs — to reinforce India's reputation as a global leader in drug manufacturing is heartening. But merely having laws is of no use when they are flouted with impunity. Take, for instance, the laws on prescription medicines. A probe in Rajasthan after the recent deaths showed that children are often prescribed and given medicines meant for adults: is there then a nexus that involves physicians, dubious drugs and regulators as well? It is also well-known that prescription drugs like painkillers are sold over the counter. Mandatory audits of each drug sold against valid prescriptions — a practice that is commonplace in developed countries — can go a long way towards not only preventing deaths by overdose but also checking antimicrobial resistance.

SCRIPSI

‘Life changes in the instant.’

JOAN DIDION

Ladakh needs respect, not patronage Centre, not frontier

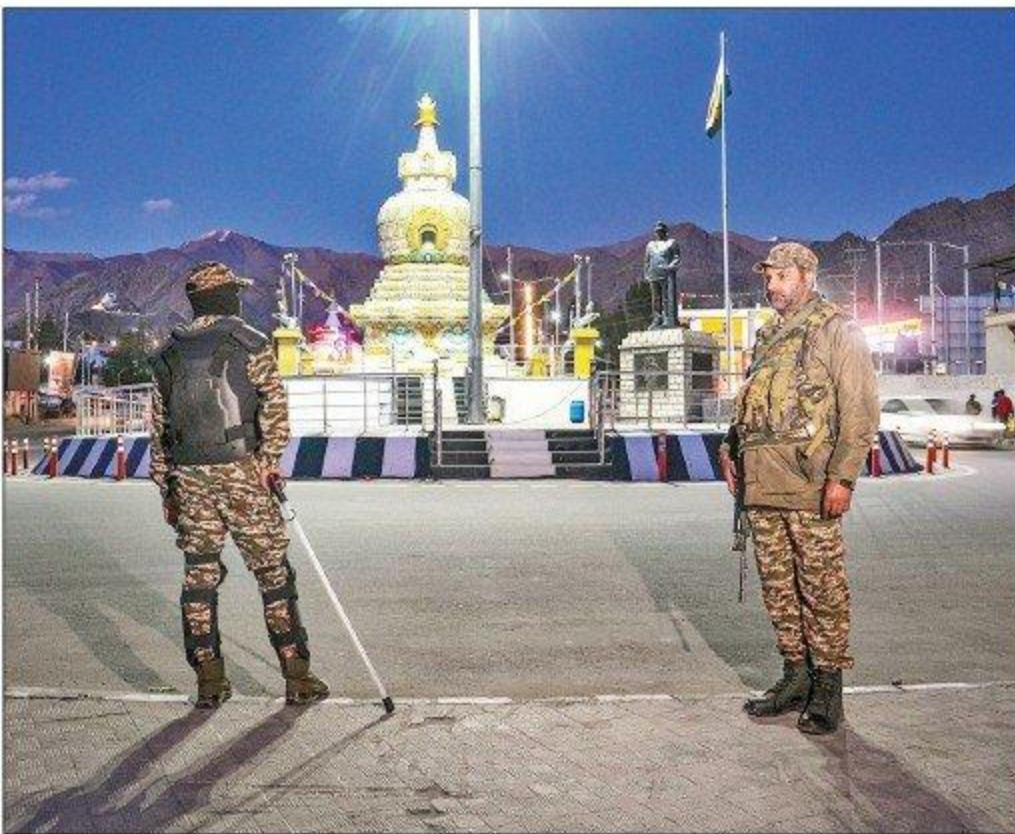
AMITABH MATTOO

There is always more to Ladakh than meets the eye or the camera. The tourist's lens, the bureaucrat's memo, even the strategist's map flatten a region that resists simplification. The current discourse, whether triumphalist or alarmist, after the recent protests and killings, fails to capture the paradoxes and quiet resilience that define this high-altitude civilisation. To understand Ladakh is to grasp its contradictions: once the crossroads of Inner Asia, now cast as a periphery; a people at once fierce and contemplative; a society tiny in number but vast in diversity; an economy torn between pashmina and power; and a polity emancipated from one centre only to find itself captive to another. This is an attempt to deconstruct Ladakh; not as a postcard paradise or a geopolitical pawn, but as one of the most fascinating mirrors of the region's encounter with modernity.

Few recall that Ladakh was once a centre, not a margin. For centuries, caravans from Yarkand, Tibet, Kashmir and Baltistan converged on Leh, where salt, silk, turquoise and pashmina changed hands. Ladakh was a bridge of civilisations where Persia met Tibet, Islam met Buddhism, and the Himalayas connected rather than divided. The Dogra conquest of 1834 and British cartography turned that fluid crossroads into a fixed frontier. The Great Game made Ladakh a buffer among empires; Independence made it a borderland among nations. Highways now link Leh to Srinagar and Manali, but they also mark its disconnection from the trans-Himalayan world it once animated. Remoteness, then, is not geographic but political: the outcome of being defined by others' maps and fears. The tragedy is that a land which once linked civilisations is now treated as an outpost to be administered, secured and photographed.

Ladakh is India's paradox of faith and sacrifice, a land of monks and martyrs, of those who meditate and those who guard the passes. From 1947 to Kargil and Galwan, Ladakhis have shed blood for the Republic even as their monasteries radiate peace. Helena Norberg-Hodge once called Ladakh an "ancient future", a society whose wisdom lay in restraint. Yet restraint here coexists with resolve. A monk at the Hemis Gumpa once told me, "We can chant for peace and still defend the mountains." That duality of compassion and courage defines Ladakh's spirit. Its calm is not passivity but discipline; its non-violence, moral strength. Beneath composure lie pride and pain.

To outsiders, Ladakh appears uniform: mountains, monasteries, monks. The reality is far richer. Within barely three lakh people live multiple ethnicities and faiths: Baltis, Buds, Arghons, Shias, Sunnis, Buddhists and the nomadic Changpas. Dialects shift from val-



ley to valley; even Buddhism divides into Gelugpa and Drukpa traditions. This pluralism was long Ladakh's strength. Leh's Buddhists and Kargil's Shias coexisted through shared hardship — of altitude, cold and isolation. Modern politics, obsessed with binaries, has flattened this diversity into caricature: Leh *versus* Kargil, Buddhist *versus* Muslim, loyalist *versus* dissenter. Yet Ladakh's unity lies not in sameness but in endurance.

Before the bureaucrat and the ballot box, Ladakh had its own participatory governance. Each village elected a *goba* or headman to oversee irrigation, land and labour. Disputes were settled through a traditional system, where elders mediated and reconciliation mattered more than punishment. Monasteries and mosques served as civic centres, moral anchors as much as spiritual ones. This mosaic of local institutions ensured that order flowed upward from consensus rather than downward from decree. Survival in the cold desert demanded cooperation, the essence of democracy before its name. Bureaucratic modernity, instead of building on these indigenous systems, displaced them with distant hierarchies and impersonal files.

For centuries, Ladakh's wealth was spun from the undercoat of the Changthangi goat. Its pashmina sustained livelihoods and linked the region to Kashmir's shawl-makers and to global markets. The softest fibre in the world emerged from the harshest landscape. Today, a new promise beckons in solar and wind energy. Ladakh is being reimaged as India's renewable-energy hub. Once it exported warmth; now it will export electricity. Yet if this shift replicates old patterns of displacement, extraction, profit without participation, it will repeat history's injustices. The true wealth of Ladakh lies not in watts or wool but in its wisdom, the art of living lightly on the land.

When Article 370 was abrogated in

2019 and Ladakh became a Union territory, Leh erupted in joy. After decades of neglect under Srinagar, emancipation seemed at hand. But euphoria soon gave way to disquiet. Unlike Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh was granted no legislature. Four MLAs disappeared and authority shifted to a lieutenant-governor and distant bureaucrats. In place of autonomy came administration. Ladakhis today find themselves neither under Srinagar nor empowered in Leh but governed by circular. Bureaucratic rule has united Leh's Buddhists and Kargil's Shias in a rare solidarity. Their joint demand for Sixth Schedule protections for land, jobs and culture is not rebellion but reason. Delhi must listen before silence hardens into alienation.

Ladakh is Buddhist yet martial, remote yet central, austere yet plural. It stands at the intersection of empires and at the frontline of climate change. Easy narratives — paradise, frontier, trophy — fail to capture its depth. What endures is a civilisation negotiating with modernity while preserving balance and humility.

In the 1930s, Pandit Sridhar Kaul, known as Dulo Kaul, was appointed as education officer in Leh and he did, more than most, in spreading education in Ladakh. He came from Kashmir not as conqueror or contractor but as teacher, carrying books instead of guns. That gesture symbolised an era when engagement meant enlightenment, not control. Today, New Delhi must recover that spirit. Ladakh's future will not be secured by tourist slogans or megawatt dreams but by partnership, by recognising its people as custodians, not clients.

To understand Ladakh is to see that its contradictions are its strength: blood and Buddhism, pashmina and power; centre and periphery. It does not need pity or patronage; it needs respect, the respect due to a civilisation that still teaches the world how to live in peace on the edge of the sky.

A quiet revolution

UPASNA MISHRA

A group of 17 obscure elements has become the centrepiece of a quiet revolution in the high-stakes arena of global technology and energy. Rare Earth Elements power everything, from the smartphone and the electric vehicle to the guidance systems of advanced defence missiles and the generators of wind turbines. For decades, the global supply of these critical minerals has been dominated by China. India, however, is an emerging protagonist.

India is endowed with an estimated 6.9 million metric tonnes of proven REE reserves. Coastal stretches in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal are rich in monazite sands, which account for nearly 75% of REE reserves. These sands, of viable rare earth oxide grade, provide a ready feedstock for a domestic processing industry. Subsurface explorations have also revealed promising traces of Heavy Rare Earths in carbonatite complexes in Rajasthan. Furthermore, an unconventional but massive resource lies in the fly ash from India's coal-fired power plants. Over 160 million metric tonnes of this ash generated annually contains recoverable REEs.

India's weakness has not been in mining but in the complex, value-added process of separating these tightly bound elements and manufacturing end-products. The Government of India's National Critical Mineral Mission has these limitations in renewed focus, with the Indian Rare Earths Limited, a public sector unit, expanding its separation capacity in Tamil Nadu. But the real game-changer is the active promotion of public-private partnerships. Under the Production-Linked Incentive Scheme, consortia like Tata Chemicals-IIT Madras are being funded to establish pilot plants for advanced separation techniques. India's research ecosystem is also buzzing with innovation. From developing genetically-engineered microbes, selectively extracting REEs from low-grade ores, to pioneering hydrometallurgi-

cal recycling of end-of-life magnets and lamps, Indian laboratories are focusing on green and sustainable extraction methods.

India has astutely woven critical minerals into its diplomatic fabric. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has a critical minerals partnership and this framework is already delivering tangible outcomes. Australia is co-funding joint exploration and processing projects in Odisha; the United States of America is supporting advanced research programmes in Indian labs to optimise processing and minimising environmental impact; Japan has pledged investment to establish large-scale magnet manufacturing facilities in India.



To catalyse private investment, the government has undertaken significant regulatory reforms. Approval timelines for mineral concessions have been slashed and a suite of fiscal incentives, including royalty rebates and tax benefits, has been introduced. Environmental regulations have also been rationalised to facilitate integrated waste management within mining zones. A specialised National Curriculum for Critical Minerals Engineering has been launched across premier institutes. Partnerships with global universities like Japan's Tohoku University are ensuring that India's next generation of engineers is trained at the cutting edge of this specialised field. With global REE demand projected to grow at 9% annually, India aims to meet 15% of global light rare earth and 7% of heavy rare earth demand by 2030. Calcutta and eastern India, a region with a rich industrial heritage and a long coastline, have the opportunity to become a hub for the new-age mineral and technology industry.

By mobilising its reserves and building a complete domestic value chain, India is emerging as a reliable and democratic alternative in the global supply chain of REEs, reinforcing its position as a leading power in the age of technology.

Upasna Mishra is a PhD scholar, School of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Jadavpur University

Contentious view

■ Sir — The former chief justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, recently described the erection of the Babri Masjid as a "fundamental act of desecration" in an interview. This statement has sparked significant debate, especially considering the Supreme Court's 2019 verdict, which did not conclusively establish that a temple was demolished to build the mosque. The Archaeological Survey of India report, cited in the judgment, found evidence of a pre-existing structure beneath the mosque but did not confirm its religious affiliation or purpose. It is concerning when a former judge presents historical speculation as fact. Judges, both current and former, should exercise care when commenting outside the courtroom. One cannot help but feel that Chandrachud has stirred the hornet's nest in an attempt to garner publicity for his upcoming book.

Sadiq H. Laskar, Guwahati

■ Sir — The Supreme Court's 2019 Ayodhya verdict emphasised that land disputes must be decided on legal principles, not belief. While some claim that faith is enough to establish ownership, the court clearly found no evidence that the mosque was built on a demolished temple. The ASI report itself did not show demolition or destruction consistent with a grand temple. Personal interpretations of history cannot override judicial reasoning. While judges have the authority to overrule or clarify



Carb fest

■ Sir — An Indian Council of Medical Research-India Diabetes study has found that most Indians are essentially running on rice and *roti*, with 62% of daily calories coming from carbohydrates. Protein is woefully missing from Indian plates. It is remarkable that a country once defined by hunger has now managed to be both overfed and undernourished. The government's enthusiasm for millets and sugar-awareness drives are commendable but they amount to decorative solutions to a structural problem. The real issue lies in how food habits are shaped — by tradition, price, and misplaced notions of what a "complete meal" looks like. Until nutrition is treated as science, the country will keep piling its plate with carbohydrates and think that it is a nutritious meal.

Sreemoy Ghose, Calcutta

decisions through proper legal channels, public statements should not undermine settled judicial conclusions.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee, Faridabad

■ Sir — Revisiting the Ayodhya verdict serves no constructive purpose. The Supreme Court clarified that historical wrongs cannot be used to oppress the present.

The ASI report did not show temple demolition and the 2019 judgment balanced faith with legal evidence. Efforts should focus on enforcing the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 and encouraging communal harmony. Reopening the Babri Masjid debate risks inflaming tensions and undermines decades of legal and historical analyses. Stability and the

rule of law must take precedence over centuries-old events.

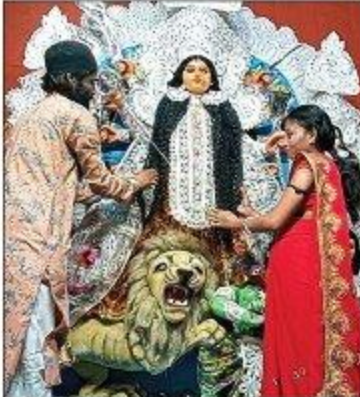
G. David Milton, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

For all

■ Sir — Uddalak Mukherjee makes a pertinent point in "Everyone's goddess" (Sept 28). Contemporary India has witnessed troubling attempts to narrow cultural participation in festivals. A Muslim singer was recently interrupted during a Ram Navami concert because zealots objected to his presence. Such acts undermine the very spirit of shared culture. In contrast, history provides better examples: Akbar's patronage of multiple faith traditions created festivals that encouraged common celebration. Durga Puja's ability to bring together diverse groups is part of this inheritance. Plural spaces need defending not through abstract theory but through everyday practice of inclusion.

Sourjya Chakraborty, Calcutta

■ Sir — Festivals often become canvases for public art.



All are welcome

Durga Puja's themed *pandals* resemble Mexico's Day of the Dead altars where memory and creativity merge. The scale may differ but the principle is similar: art born from ritual, yet shared by all. In Bengal, artists transform ordinary lanes into temporary museums. These are not private collections but spaces for everyone, cutting across the lines of class and community. This universality of art is what helps Durga Puja transcend religious barriers.

Swapan Samanta, Calcutta

■ Sir — In 1970s and the 1980s, Durga Puja was celebrated with utmost devotion. Even on Sashthi evening, many *pandals* used to remain incomplete. Both believers and atheists used to visit *pandals*. But this has changed in the recent decades. The commercialisation of Durga Puja has ruined its syncretic nature.

Kajal Chatterjee, Calcutta

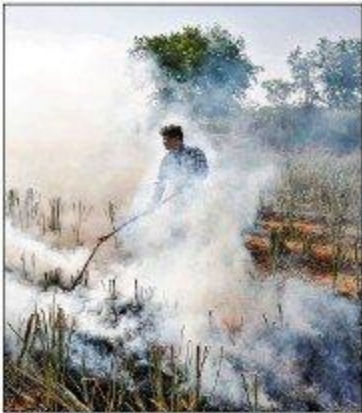
Lax laws

■ Sir — India's environmental crime statistics create a misleading impression ("Grey details", Oct 6). Between 2018 and 2023, 89-96% of cases of environmental crime fell under tobacco and noise pollution laws. These statutes do not tackle air pollution, water contamination, or wildlife offences. Meanwhile, states with serious air pollution, such as Delhi and Punjab, reported zero prosecutions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act in 2023.

Convictions under core environmental laws remain minimal. Counting allied offences as environmental crimes misrepresents the country's actual enforcement of laws designed to protect nature.

Bhagwan Thadani, Mumbai

■ Sir — India's environmental laws exist, but implementation lags far behind. Convictions under the laws that matter most are almost non-existent. Enforcement is slow and agencies like the National Green Tribunal and Pollution Control Boards



Criminal laxity

cannot always impose criminal penalties. To address pollution, wildlife crime, and forest destruction, authorities must act decisively and consistently. Otherwise, environmental violations will continue with little deterrent effect.

Koustabh Sengupta, Calcutta

Letters should be sent to:
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THE TIP

Don't take multivitamins indiscriminately. They may not always improve health and can even backfire

The Telegraph

WELLNESS

CALCUTTA WEDNESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2025

Ginger Debate

This rhizome has been the go-to remedy for digestive issues for centuries. But is it really effective and in what form? **Melinda Wenner Moyer** goes looking for answers

Ginger contains two pungent compounds — gingerol and shogaol — that are thought to ease nausea by blocking nausea-related pathways in the gut and brain, effectively stopping “the vomiting centre inside the brain from getting switched on”, said Megan Crichton, a researcher and dietitian who studies ginger at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia.

Some limited evidence also suggests that ginger supplements may ease symptoms by speeding up the rate of stomach emptying, said Dr Keshab Paudel, a pharmacologist and physician who studies ginger at the Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine in Florida, US.

Much of the research on ginger and nausea has used supplements containing dried ginger root powder, Crichton said, which has been shown to help ease nausea in people who are pregnant, receiving chemotherapy or coming out of surgery.

In a 2025 review of studies, for instance, Dr Paudel and his colleagues found that pregnant women who consumed between 500 and 1,500 milligrams of ginger supplements per day had improved nausea symptoms, but they did not vomit less. And in a 2024 clinical trial of about 100 adults in chemotherapy, Crichton and her colleagues found that when participants consumed 1,200 milligrams of ginger root powder per day with food, starting on the day they started chemotherapy and for four days afterward, they experienced less nausea than patients who took a placebo.

There is little research on how ginger may help with more acute cases of nausea, such as those from stomach bugs, hangovers or motion sickness. And little is known about ginger's effectiveness with other stomach ailments like indigestion or irritable bowel syndrome.

One small study from 2023 did conclude, however, that it could help with symptoms of functional dyspepsia, a type of chronic indigestion. Parti-



ISTOCK.COM/DUSAN ATALJIC

pants reported less heartburn, upper abdominal pain and burning, and excessive fullness after eating.

Ginger is available in many forms. You can eat it raw or as a spice, drink it in tea or soda, suck on it in a lozenge or swallow it in a capsule. But there is very little data on how the various forms compare when it comes to soothing the stomach.

Dr Joshua Forman, a gastroenterologist at the University of Maryland St. Joseph Medical Center in the US, often recommends that his patients with nausea try ginger supplements. They offer more consistent dosing than raw ginger or foods and drinks with ginger in them, he said, and are better tolerated by people who don't like the taste.

People who take blood thinners, immunosuppressants and blood pressure or diabetes drugs should check with a doctor before consuming ginger regularly

He recommends taking 500 milligrams twice a day to treat nausea resulting from a chronic issue, such as morning sickness, or from short-term ailments such as stomach bugs, hangovers and motion sickness, even though there is less research on how well ginger works in those contexts.

It's possible that other ginger-containing products like ginger-flavoured ales, teas and candies may help ease nausea, but very little research has been conducted on them. And they are often less concentrated than supplements, so you may have to consume more to get the same effect, Crichton said. She found, for instance, that you would need to eat 3.5 ounces of candied ginger — or between two and four typical servings — to get the same amount of ginger as in a 300-milligram supplement.

And some ginger-flavoured foods and drinks may not contain much ginger at all. In a 2017 study, Crichton and her colleagues found that two popular ginger teas provided only 0.04 and 0.15 milligrams of

ginger per serving. Dr Forman warned that the same could be true of some ginger ales, which might only contain ginger flavouring. “Be careful and read the label,” he said.

Although ginger in any form is generally considered to be safe, Crichton said, people who take medications including blood thinners, immunosuppressants and blood pressure or diabetes drugs should check with a doctor before consuming ginger regularly. Although serious side effects are rare, people may find that they burp more after consuming it.

That said, ginger has few side effects and is supported by some science, Dr Forman said — it's “a valuable arrow to keep in the therapeutic quiver”.

NYT/NS

Collagen supplement eases joint pain



YOUR HEALTH
DR GITA MATHAI

Q I suffer from joint pain and was advised to take collagen tablets. Do they work?

Collagen is an essential protein that supports skin, hair, nails, bones, joints and muscles. As we age, natural collagen production decreases, which may contribute to joint stiffness and discomfort. Certain foods — such as bone broth and the skin of chicken, fish or pork — do provide some collagen. Collagen supplements can help reduce joint pain and improve bone density. They are usually well-tolerated and rarely cause serious side effects. However, some people may experience bloating, indigestion, diarrhoea, headaches or light-headedness. In rare cases, allergic reactions can occur.

Sudden clumsiness

Q At 60 years of age, I have become clumsy. I often find myself dropping things.

Clumsiness may be due to side effects of certain medications, age-related muscle weakness, peripheral neuropathy (loss of sensation in the fingers and toes), conditions such as diabetes or hypertension, or even poor vision. Any contributing factor needs to be evaluated and corrected.

You can benefit from strengthening your muscles and practising simple balance exercises. Information of which is readily available online.

Probiotic capsules

Q I started taking probiotic capsules because I read that they are good for health. Instead, I developed bloating and diarrhoea.

These side effects are relatively common with probiotic capsules. They are usually mild and temporary. However, if you are taking other regular medications or are immunosuppressed, it is best to check



ISTOCK.COM/TOP VECTORS

The writer has a family practice at Vellore and is the author of *Staying Healthy in Modern India*. If you have any questions on health issues, please write to yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in

with your physician first. Probiotics are naturally present in foods like curd and traditional pickles.

Knee ache

Q I have knee pain, and my friends advised me to rest to recover. But the pain has become worse.

Knee pain is common as people age because the knee undergoes wear and tear over time. Strong muscles around a damaged knee can help support it. The quadriceps and hamstrings can absorb some of the shock typically cushioned by the cartilage and meniscus, especially if these structures are weakened or damaged.

Rest and painkillers may temporarily reduce discomfort, but they do not solve the problem. In fact, prolonged rest often worsens weakness and stiffness. Start with gentle strengthening exercises under the guidance of a physiotherapist. Gradually, you should progress to active strengthening routines and perform them regularly. This will improve support, reduce pain and help you stay mobile.

Fruit ban

Q I have type 2 diabetes and have been advised to avoid fruits.

Not all fruits are bad for you. In fact, eating whole fruits in moderation can help control blood sugar. Whole fruits are filling, release sugar slowly and contain antioxidants, vitamins and anti-inflammatory agents. They also provide fibre, which helps with regular bowel movement. Eating one to two whole fruits a day (not fruit juice) is safe and may even be beneficial.

Blocked ears

Q My ears are often blocked with wax.

Earwax prevents bacterial infection and protects the ear canal and eardrum. You may have used earbuds or hairclips to push the earwax further into the ear, causing it to block the ear. Wax usually comes out on its own. If you have exceptionally hard earwax, put wax-dissolving drops or mineral oil into the ear canal once a week. However, this should not be done if you have a perforated eardrum or some other ear problem.

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सिस्वा टोली, नामकुम, राँची-834010 (झारखण्ड) <http://www.jutranchi.ac.in>
Letter NO. JUT/VCS/05/2025/1240(A/D) /Ranchi, Dated: 27-09-2025

Notice

Jharkhand University of Technology (JUT), Ranchi invites online applications from eligible candidates for the appointment of Need-Based Assistant Professors in the light Directorate of Technical Education (Under Deptt of Higher and Technical Education), Govt. of Jharkhand, Letter No.983 Dated 11.09.2025, at B.I.T., Sindri, Dhanbad as per Govt. resolutions letter no 1040 dated 10.03.2023.

For more details visit please visit the official website: www.jutranchi.ac.in
In case of any query drop an email to registrarjut@gmail.com

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Registrar (I/C)
Jharkhand University of Technology,
Ranchi, Jharkhand

PR 363448 Jharkhand
University of Technology(25-26)#D

झारखण्ड सरकार
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, जामताड़ा

सूचना

इस कार्यालय द्वारा आमंत्रित निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या- WRD/MID/JAMTARA 3F2/ 2025-26 दिनांक- 03.10.2025 जिसका Pr.No. 363167 Minor Irrigation (25-26) D, द्वारा दिनांक- 04.10.2025 को विभिन्न समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित किया गया था। उक्त सभी निविदाओं को अपरिहार्य कारणों से रद्द किया जाता है।

PR 363167 Minor कार्यपालक अभियंता Irrigation (25-26)_D लघु सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, जामताड़ा PR 363474 (Minor Irrigation)25-26*D

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
DIRECTORATE OF FLORICULTURE SRINAGAR KASHMIR
Tel: 0194-2474234 Fax - 2482032 email:- kash.flor@jk.gov.in

Sub:- Extension Notice No. 03

In view of no response, the Bid Submission end/ opening date (Online) of technical bids in respect of e-NIT No. 28 of 2025 dated: 14.08.2025 invited by this office under endorsement No. DOFK-GSOTNDR/19/2025/E-7745644/e-NIT-28 dated: 14.08.2025 with regard to “**Outsourcing of entry ticketing system of Eidgah Park Srinagar**” is hereby extended as per the details given below:-

1. Bid Submission End date & time	23.10.2025	up to 02:00 PM
2. Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	27.10.2025	At 02:00 PM

Other terms & conditions shall remain same as laid down in the concerned e-NIT.

Sd/-
Accounts Officer
(Member Secretary)

No.: DOFK-GSOTNDR/19/2025/E-7745644/e-NIT-28
Dated: 07.10.2025
DIPK- 6910/25 Dated: 07.10.2025

GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA
Executive Engineer Office,
P. W. Division No. 1, Thane
Parking Plaza Building, 8th Floor, Service Road,
Off Eastern Express Highway, Near Jupiter Hospital,
Thane (W) - 400601
email: thane1.ee@mahapwd.gov.in Phone : 022-25369293

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 28 OF 2025-2026
INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The Public Works Department Government of Maharashtra has taken up the project “Maharashtra Roads Connectivity for Inclusive Growth Program (MRCIGP)” through 23 EPC work Packages spread over 15 Districts. The Expression of Interest for consultancy packages for Program Management Services-III (PMS-III) is invited. All detailed information is available on <http://www.mahapwd.gov.in> and <http://csm.adb.org> websites.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
P.W. Division No. 1, Thane

No./TD/No.1/Tender/8688
Office of the Executive Engineer
P.W. Division No. 1, Thane (W)
Eastern Express Highway
Date - 03.10.2025
ROC/2025-26/NO-5/C-2972

झारखण्ड सरकार
पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, हजारीबाग

अल्पकालीन ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट सूचना
ई-निविदा प्रसंग सं० :- RCD/HAZARIBAG/870./2025-26
दिनांक :- 06.10.2025

1.	कार्य का नाम	पथ प्रमण्डल, हजारीबाग नैरोयोजना मद अंतर्गत हजारीबाग-बड़कागाँव-दण्डवा-छेलारी-बीजुपास पथ SH-07 के कि०मी० (33+855) पर अवस्थित उच्चस्तरीय सेतु के काउन्टरबैल, गार्डरैल एवं एग्रोप पथ में Restoration कार्य (वित्तीय वर्ष 2025-26)
2.	प्राकृतिक राशि (रुपये में)	₹ 1,10,00,000.00 (एक करोड़ दस लाख रुपये मात्र)
3.	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि	03 (तीन) माह
4.	वेबसाइट पर निविदा प्रकाशित होने की तिथि एवं समय	14.10.2025 10:30 AM
5.	निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	21.10.2025 12:00 Noon
6.	निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	24.10.2025 12:30 PM
7.	निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले का नाम एवं पता	कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय, पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, हजारीबाग।
8.	प्रोक्योरमेंट पदाधिकारी का सम्पर्क नं०	8709320541
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Confusion over voters

Bihar SIR remains mired in controversy

THE Bihar Assembly elections are just four weeks away, but the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the state's electoral rolls continues to be under judicial scrutiny. The Supreme Court has told the Election Commission of India (ECI) to provide details of 3.66 lakh voters excluded from the final rolls that were published on September 30. The SIR has witnessed a lot of number-crunching ever since the ECI launched the 'clean-up' exercise on June 24. At that time, the count of electors in Bihar was 7.89 crore. The total dropped to 7.24 crore in the draft list that was issued on August 1 — the names of 65 lakh voters were removed on various grounds, including death, migration and duplication. The final list has 7.42 crore voters: 21.53 lakh names have been added to the draft list, while 3.66 lakh have been deleted, resulting in a net increase of 17.87 lakh.

The SC has rightly observed that the additions and deletions have caused confusion. The ECI needs to promptly answer some questions to allay the concerns of political parties and other stakeholders. Among the voters newly added, how many are there whose names were removed earlier? What were the grounds in both cases? And what were the reasons for the exclusion of voters from the final list? Thanks to the court's intervention, the SIR has seen a degree of transparency, especially when the list of 65 lakh deleted names was made public after initial dilly-dallying by the poll panel.

It's baffling that the ECI has not shared the number of illegal immigrants whose names were presumably struck off from the Bihar rolls. Citizenship — or the lack of it — had been cited as a key issue when the SIR was rolled out. Clearly, the Bihar exercise has not been flawless. The ECI would be well advised to address all the shortcomings before it initiates a pan-India SIR.

Nomore 'VIP' postings

Punjab schools get a fair deal, finally

THE Punjab Government's decision to end 'VIP' or choice postings for teachers is a welcome assertion of fairness. The state has long struggled with an inequitable deployment of educators — a problem that goes beyond administrative convenience. Thousands of rural and border schools are reeling under crippling staff shortages, while urban schools often have a surplus. This imbalance has a direct bearing on students' futures. Recent data reveals that about 2,667 primary and upper primary schools in Punjab do not meet the Right to Education norms for teacher strength, and ASER 2024 found only 34 per cent of Class III children in rural areas could read basic text. It is not surprising that where teachers are fewer or multitasking across classes, exam results have collapsed. In some Class 10 government schools, pass rates have sunk below 20 per cent.

The cause and effect are clear: fewer teachers mean larger classes, weaker supervision and little room for remedial attention. When one teacher handles multiple classes or subjects, attention vanishes and learning suffers. Burnout and absenteeism follow and the gap between urban and rural learning widens. For years, arbitrary transfers, temporary duties and political patronage have skewed postings. The damage is compounded when merit postings and rural incentives are ignored, leaving disadvantaged districts further adrift.

The decision to end arbitrary transfers must be followed by transparent, data-driven rationalisation. Teachers' postings must be linked to student-teacher ratios and local needs. Plus, there is a need for incentives for remote service, regular training and timely recruitment; they are also not luxuries but necessities if the demographic dividend is to be attained. Education equity begins with staffing equity. A child's home address should not decide whether s/he can learn algebra or just wait for a teacher to show up.

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1925

Music outside mosques

WE can understand the feeling which found expression in the resolution adopted by the All-India Hindu Mahasabha at its recent meeting at Delhi on the subject of professional music before mosques. By this resolution, the Mahasabha placed on record its emphatic condemnation of the imposition of unprecedented restrictions on the carrying out of Hindu religious observances, which had resulted in the abandonment of Ramlila, Dussehra and other celebrations by Hindus at several places; it deplored the fact that at such places, the officials should thus have failed in the discharge of the Government's obligation to secure to every community in India the peaceful observance of its religious rites, ceremonies and festivals; and recorded its opinion that the magistrates had exceeded their powers under the law and that the prohibitory orders issued by them were entirely unjustified, illegal and provocative of communal conflict. Another part of the resolution expressed the opinion of the Mahasabha that the Muslim opposition to Hindu music at the several places was not based on any real religious feeling but was due entirely to communal zid, and that in so far as the Muslims at all those places had insisted on stopping the playing of music by the threat of force or by requisition of the authority of the Government, they had disregarded the settlement arrived at the Unity Conference held at Delhi in September 1924. So far as the first part of the resolution is concerned, we are in complete agreement with the Mahasabha. We consider that in most, if not in all, cases referred to in the resolution, the interference of officials and the prohibitory orders issued by them were without any justification.

The Sir Creek story of a chance missed

India, Pakistan came very close to resolving the dispute nearly two decades ago



SHYAM SARAN
FORMER FOREIGN SECRETARY

THE India-Pakistan boundary dispute over Sir Creek in the Rann of Kutch has flared up again. Pakistan is building fortifications on its western bank, presaging a more aggressive posture. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh issued a stern warning last week, saying that any Pakistani misadventure in the Sir Creek area would invite a severe Indian response that "could change both history and geography." That sounds ominous, but it is in line with the ongoing escalatory narrative on both sides.

This dispute had come very close to resolution in the India-Pakistan Composite Dialogue during 2005-07 when relations between the neighbours was perhaps in their most hopeful and constructive phase. That phase is being recalled to make the point that diplomacy is worth keeping in play even when dark clouds are hovering over us.

During my tenure as India's Foreign Secretary (2004-06), India-Pakistan negotiations were focused on two issues on which both sides had agreed that an "early harvest" was possible. One was Siachen and the other was Sir Creek. The latter was considered relatively easier to resolve.

The Sir Creek dispute had originally erupted between Kutch and Sindh in 1908 over what was then known as 'Ban Ganga'. In 1914, the British colonial government in Bombay, which had jurisdiction over Gujarat and Sindh, issued a resolution that had contradictory provisions with respect to the alignment of the boundary along the creek. In paragraph 9, it



FLASHPOINT: Pakistani fortifications in the Sir Creek area have elicited a sharp response from India. (PTI)

located the alignment along the eastern bank of the creek favouring Sindh. In the very next paragraph, it accepted the mid-channel of the creek as the boundary on the grounds that the creek is navigable most of the year. Pakistan obviously takes the earlier paragraph as being operative. India insists on observing the Thalweg principle in defining the alignment along the mid-stream channel. The Indian case is strengthened by the fact that in 1925, boundary pillars were installed in the midstream, several of which still exist.

Why is the alignment so important? Most of the Sir Creek area is salt-laden marshland with little habitation. The resolution of the land boundary is critical because the agreed-upon land terminus point will serve as the baseline from which the maritime boundary in the Arabian Sea will be drawn. A change of only a few kilometres at the mouth of the creek would shift the maritime boundary line, potentially affecting thousands of square kilometres of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Continental Shelf under the jurisdiction of each country. The EEZ is believed to contain significant oil and gas reserves and rich fishing grounds. The coun-

When the Siachen deal fell through, Pakistani interest in the Sir Creek agreement also evaporated.

try that gains the most seaward area would acquire greater rights over these vital resources.

A compromise proposal was discussed during the 2005-07 phase of the Composite Dialogue, which involved technical discussions between the naval hydrographers and surveyors of the two countries. The hydrographers used scientific mapping to narrow the dispute over the undefined maritime area at the mouth of the creek to a more limited triangular zone. This zone was created by drawing lines from a mutually agreed

point in the ocean to the coastline according to each country's proposed land alignment. A possible compromise involved a land-for-sea swap. If India accepted the Pakistani alignment — the eastern bank boundary of the creek — it would be compensated with a larger share, reportedly 60 per cent, of the residual undefined triangular maritime zone. If the Indian alignment was accepted in the creek, Pakistan would be compensated with a bigger share (reportedly 60 per cent of the zone). The principle was accepted by both sides, though it was left to the political leadership of the two countries to decide the actual terms of the compromise.

This was an innovative approach aimed at an overall balance, based on give-and-take for which the credit must go to the naval hydrographers of India and Pakistan. They began with a joint survey of the Sir Creek area from November 2006 to March 2007. This resulted in a "Common Map", which was important for creating an agreed baseline enabling a follow-through on the compromise. The Pakistani side was looking for a "package solution" covering both Siachen and Sir Creek. When the Siachen deal fell through, Pakistani

interest in the Sir Creek agreement also evaporated.

This episode demonstrates that the two adversarial states have the capacity to negotiate mutually acceptable solutions to some of the difficult outstanding issues — if they have the political will.

The current state of India-Pakistan relations does not favour any diplomatic engagement that could even begin to address these issues. The absence of engagement and the deteriorating state of bilateral ties have led to these issues becoming even more complex and intractable than they already were. The Indian decision to keep the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance is an example.

We should acknowledge that after Operation Sindoor, Pakistan has broken out of its extended diplomatic isolation and this has put new pressure on India. What may be tactical moves on the part of the US under President Trump may over time result in a changed strategic landscape for India. One should not take comfort from the prevailing calculation that China's "iron brotherhood" with Pakistan would put a real limit on US dalliance with Pakistan and prevent a return to India-Pakistan hyphenation in its foreign policy.

From 1960 to the end of the 20th century, both the US and China had maintained a strategic partnership with Pakistan through phases when US-China relations were deeply confrontational and when they were united in a common alliance against the Soviet Union. Even during the Cultural Revolution in China, the Americans never objected to Chinese material and military support to Pakistan, and Beijing never criticised similar American support to Islamabad. Convergent interests in a local theatre may coexist within a larger strategic confrontation. This has not happened yet, but we should be alert to that possibility. In that context, a cautious re-engagement with Pakistan may provide India with much-needed, even if modest, room for manoeuvre.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The only sensible & intelligent way of resolving differences & clashes of interests is through dialogue. — The Dalai Lama

Khushwant Singh's humour lives on

RAHUL SINGH

THE Khushwant Singh Literary Festival, named after my father, is scheduled to take place from October 10 to 12 in the tony cantonment hill station of Kasauli. This annual event reflects some of his values and concerns. One was the importance of free speech in our democracy, while standing up to authority. In other words, speaking truth to power. At the end of his hugely popular weekly column, *With Malice To One And All*, he used to have a tailpiece joke, often of the 'Santa Banta' kind, usually sent by *Santarjis* themselves.

One day, I was sitting in his room when he got an officious letter from a prominent Sikh organisation. "Stop publishing Santa Banta jokes in your column", it ordered, or words to that effect. My father was in the habit of replying to every letter he got — and he received dozens every day — by a simple handwritten postcard (those were pre-Internet and pre-smartphone days). He pondered, and then reached out to take a postcard from the stack on his table. On it he scrawled just three words in reply: "Go to hell!" He never heard from them again.

On another occasion, he criticised LK Advani in front of a large gathering at New Delhi's India International Centre soon after the BJP leader's divisive Rath Yatra. Yet, Advani remained his admirer and used to turn up at his birthday, uninvited. He was one of the first to pay a visit to offer condolences after dad's death.

My father did not even take himself seriously. He published letters from his detractors in the dailies or weeklies where he worked as the Editor. And he loved showing a letter he had received from someone abroad who must have been infuriated by his views. The envelope was simply addressed, "Khushwant Singh, Ba***d, India". Displaying the envelope gleefully, he would tell his friends, "Look, even the Indian postal authorities know where to find me!"

Humour was a mainstay of his character and amply reflected in his writing. Once, when he was the Editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, he got a call from Nargis. "Nargis, the famous Nargis, the actress?" he asked. "Yes", she replied. "Can I come and see you in your office?" The next day, she imperiously walked through the corridors of the weekly magazine's office — the staffers watched with their mouths agape.

"My son is studying at Sanawar School and I would like to be there for its Founder's Day, but all hotels in the area are booked," she explained. "I'm told you have a bungalow in Kasauli, and if nobody is staying there, I was wondering if I you could give it to me for two or three days."

My father thought for a few moments and, eyes twinkling, replied, "Of course you can stay there, provided I can tell my friends that Nargis slept in my bed." She broke into peals of laughter and later shared this story with her many friends. Narrated first at least four decades ago, this anecdote has gone viral on social media. Good humour never dies.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Growing intolerance

Apropos of 'Elderly lawyer tries to hurl shoe at CJI Gavi over insult to Sanatan'; the shocking act is a shameful reflection of the growing intolerance corroding our national fabric. When even the educated and supposedly enlightened sections of society resort to such uncivil behaviour, it signals a dangerous moral decay. This mindset stems from blind religious fanaticism, political manipulation and a deliberate assault on reason and constitutional values. India's strength lies in its tolerance, diversity and respect for differing opinions — not in emotional outbursts and mob-like reactions. Such disgraceful conduct against the head of the judiciary undermines the dignity of law. The nation must wake up to this rising tide of irrationality before it drowns our collective sanity.

BS KAKKAR, JALANDHAR

Judge's off-the-cuff remarks

It's understandable that the remarks made by the Chief Justice while dismissing a plea regarding the reconstruction of a Lord Vishnu idol may have caused anguish, but the lawyer's aggressive reaction cannot be justified. It is essential to maintain decorum and respect the judiciary, even when disagreeing with judicial verdicts. While judges are expected to make decisions based on the law, it's essential for them to be mindful of their words. Unpleasant remarks made in court can have far-reaching consequences and may be perceived as biased or insensitive.

AJAY BAGGA, HOSHIARPUR

Do not ruffle religious feathers

Apropos of the shoe hurling episode towards the Chief Justice by a senior advocate of the Supreme Court, it has once again highlighted the psychology of the educated and law-abiding citizens regarding their religious sentiments. Though the episode is shameful, it has raised a question mark on the role of the most senior judicial officer who made unnecessary comments on the religion of a particular person. People in seats of power must acknowledge sensitivity of issues before passing unsolicited comments.

NAVNEET SETH, TALWANDI SABO

Politicians with scientific temper

Apropos of 'China owes a lot to its engineers'; what and where is the problem with the Indian system that we don't figure among the developed nations? The world's most populous and stable democracy with abundant availability of men, material and natural resources, with efficient leaders like Nehru, APJ Abdul Kalam and Manmohan Singh at the helm in the past, can plan and execute projects well. China has changed the face of the nation at tremendous speed by bringing quality education. We need a political leadership with scientific temper, foresight, nationalism and integrity beyond compare.

BM SINGH, AMRITSAR

Rare glimmer of hope

With reference to 'Gaza war', based on President Trump's 20-point ceasefire plan, the ongoing indirect talks between Israel and Hamas have offered a rare glimmer of hope for peace in the war-ravaged territory. Nevertheless, the proposed Hamas's disarmament and its exclusion from governance, the recognition of Palestinian right to self-determination and statehood, and Israel's intensified shelling and airstrikes pose a challenge to these negotiations. India has welcomed this bold diplomatic initiative as peace and stability in West Asia would provide significant economic and strategic benefits and protect its foreign policy, energy security and diaspora, and improve the fractured relations with the US.

DS KANG, HOSHIARPUR

Barber, the match-maker

Apropos of 'The village barber was a class apart'; till about five decades ago, the barber, just like a wanderer, made his presence felt in homes and *mohallas*. Instant shave and hair-cut, coupled with head massage, were done at your doorstep. Another important role of a barber, especially in villages and small towns used to be that of a 'matrimonial agent', for which all families relied on his advice. As he was fully acquainted with the details of most families, he was considered the most reliable match-maker. The opening up of salons have undermined the stature of the old-world barber.

VK ANAND, CHANDIGARH

IAF at 93 : Balancing power, technology & reform



AIR MARSHAL AMIT TIWARI (RETD)
FORMER AOC-IN-C,
CENTRAL AIR COMMAND

As part of the 93rd Air Force Day celebrations, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, addressed a press conference in Delhi on October 3. The event was significant, marking both the completion of his first year in office and his first major media interaction since Operation Sindoor. During the briefing, the Chief covered a wide range of topics, including the Indian Air Force's role in Operation Sindoor, future strategic plans, operational readiness, theaterisation, indigenisation and training requirements.

The conference could, on one hand, be seen as a victory lap following Operation Sindoor's success; on the other, it was a signal of deterrence to adversaries and a message to policymakers about the steps needed to maintain the IAF as a credible offensive instrument for advancing national interests. While the Chief addressed a broad spectrum of issues, I would like to high-

light a few key aspects.

Given the geopolitical environment in the subcontinent and the fact that India, a nuclear power, has territorial disputes with both China and Pakistan, who are also nuclear powers, no form of contestation can be ruled out. These could range from full-scale wars on one or two fronts to limited border clashes, *salami*-slicing tactics and coercive probing by China as well as persistent low-intensity infiltration and proxy warfare from Pakistan.

Any future conflict is likely to span multiple domains simultaneously, such as land, sea, air, subsea, space, electronic and information warfare and cyberspace. India must, therefore, be prepared to meet any challenge to its national security. The IAF is the only service that, by virtue of its inherent qualities, can operate seamlessly across all these domains.

Recent operations such as the Balakot airstrikes in 2019 and Operation Sindoor in 2025 have demonstrated that the air force has emerged as the offensive weapon of choice. This raises a relevant question: why has the IAF been consistently chosen for such tasks? The selection is based on its inherent operational attributes of mobility, flexibility, reach and speed, which enable timely, precise and effective response. Moreover, as the Chief



OMNISCIENT: The IAF is the only service that can operate seamlessly across all domains. PTI

brought out, with limited exposure, the IAF retains the advantage of striking and disengaging with minimal risk of escalation.

In addition to kinetic capabilities, the IAF also provides air dominance, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) as well as offensive and defensive electronic warfare support. These are not limited to aiding air power alone; they also assist other services in achieving their objectives, thereby supporting broader national security interests.

In this context, discussions around theaterisation should move beyond the allocation of aircraft and systems

While self-reliance is vital, it must not come at the cost of technological relevance.

across various commands. A more fundamental question for proponents of theatre commands should be whether theaterisation would actually help the IAF achieve national objectives.

According to open-source reports, the IAF deployed 72 aircraft for the initial strike in Operation Sindoor. Coordinating such a large-scale, time-sensitive operation likely required drawing resources from across its 30 squadrons, ensuring aircraft readiness, armament and pilot preparedness.

Introducing an additional layer of decision-making through theatre commands may have implications for

operational agility and responsiveness. It is, therefore, important to assess whether such structural changes will support or hinder the IAF's ability to meet national objectives.

The next issue pertains to indigenisation. The Chief of the Air Staff noted that the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) is expected to make its maiden flight in 2028 and may enter production by 2035.

These timelines are based on estimates provided by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), which has historically experienced significant delays, often exceeding a decade in new aircraft development. Consequently, India may acquire a fifth-generation fighter by 2035, while its adversaries are likely to have progressed to sixth-generation platforms or beyond, the development of which is already underway.

This raises concerns about technological relevance. Fifth-generation fighters are network-centric and rely heavily on secure data connectivity for operational effectiveness. China has reportedly studied these vulnerabilities extensively and has developed capabilities to disrupt Link 16, a key data-sharing network used by the US and allied forces.

This forms a critical element of China's anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD)

strategy, aimed at isolating combat aircraft from their networks and intercepting them.

In response to such challenges, the US is developing sixth-generation fighters designed to operate independently of external networks, supported by autonomous Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA).

In this context, the strategic utility of fifth-generation platforms warrants careful evaluation. Policymakers may need to consider whether collaborative development efforts could enable India to leapfrog directly to sixth-generation capabilities using contemporary technologies.

While self-reliance in defence manufacturing is a desirable objective, it must be balanced against operational requirements and national security imperatives. In conflict scenarios, technological parity or superiority can be decisive; delays or mismatches in capability may carry significant strategic costs.

As the IAF celebrates its 93rd anniversary, policymakers must reflect on the fundamental rationale for maintaining an air force and consider whether the decisions made today would take us towards that basic aim.

Meanwhile, I am sure the IAF will continue to do what it does best, which is to protect our country.

Trump's Gaza plan leaves two-state issue unclear



VAPPALA BALACHANDRAN
FORMER SPECIAL SECRETARY,
CABINET SECRETARIAT

PRIMA FACIE, US President Donald Trump's 20-point proposal for peace in Gaza might resemble President Ronald Reagan's two-track peace plan for Lebanon, announced in September 1982. Moved by "American public outrage and a phone call from King Fahd," Reagan called up Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and curtly told him to stop the heavy bombing of PLO positions, which was destroying much of Lebanon's infrastructure. Simultaneously, he enlisted Syrian help to stabilise the region.

However, there are vast differences. While the Reagan plan stated that its goal was to "reconcile Israel's legitimate security concerns with the legitimate rights of the Palestinians", the Trump plan excludes Hamas, the elected government in Gaza (2006), from "any role in the governance of Gaza, directly, indirectly, or in any form."

True, the Trump plan speaks of "a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood — recog-

nised as the aspiration of the Palestinian people." There is, however, no mention whether the US would accept a two-state solution.

Similarly, while the Reagan plan permitted PLO leader Yasser Arafat and 14,000 PLO fighters to depart to Tunisia with their weapons between August 21 and September 1, 1982, no such permission will be given to Hamas. After the release of Israeli hostages, Hamas will have to decommission its weapons and seek amnesty.

Point 6 mentions that Hamas members "who wish to leave Gaza will be provided safe passage to receiving countries." It is not clear whether they could keep their weapons. It is quite apparent that no Arab country would welcome armed Hamas cadres on their soil.

As in 1982, most Arab countries have backed the Trump plan. The only difference is that while their support in 2025 is overt, the help provided to the US by Syria in 1982 in stabilising Lebanon was covert, according to the secret papers of the late Abdul Halim Khaddam, then Syrian Foreign Minister. His files would shed light on a US-Syria agreement on the formal entry of Syrian forces into Beirut and their presence there until 2005 to stabilise Lebanon following Arafat's exit.

Under the Trump plan, which also echoes the February 2024 Biden plan, the US would work with Arab and international partners to



INTRIGUE: The framers do not seem to recognise layers and layers of political manipulation in the region.

develop a temporary International Stabilisation Force (ISF) to be deployed in Gaza. The ISF would train and support "vetted Palestinian police forces" in Gaza and consult with Jordan and Egypt, "who have extensive experience in this field."

Next, Gaza would be governed under the two-tier "temporary transitional governance" of a technocratic, "apolitical Palestinian committee", responsible for delivering the day-to-day running of public services and municipalities for Gaza. This committee would be selected from "qualified Palestinians" and international experts. Its oversight and supervision would be by a new international transitional body called the Board of Peace, which would be chaired by Trump, with oth-

The most striking part of the new plan is the exclusion of the United Nations, except in aid distribution. Is this to please Israel?

er members and Heads of State to be announced, including former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

This body is supposed to establish the framework and funding for the redevelopment of Gaza until such time as the Palestinian Authority can complete its "reform programme", as outlined in various proposals. Here, a mention is made of "President Trump's peace plan in 2020" and "the Saudi French proposal", which it is hoped "can securely and effectively take back control of Gaza."

This body would set up "modern and efficient governance with best international standards that would serve the people of Gaza which would be conducive to attracting investment."

The most striking part of the new plan is the exclusion

of the United Nations (UN), except in aid distribution. It says: "Entry of distribution and aid in the Gaza Strip will proceed without interference from the two parties through the United Nations and its agencies, and the Red Crescent, in addition to other international institutions not associated in any manner with either party." Is this to please Israel?

There are many imponderables here. First, would the transitional authority dismiss the entire Hamas-led bureaucracy in Gaza? A similar 'de-Baathification' of Iraq's army and the dismissal of its existing administrative structure in 2003 by US presidential envoy L Paul Bremer created chaos in the country and helped create ungoverned territories in the region, leading to the global menace caused by the dreaded Islamic State (IS).

Second, the framers of the Trump plan do not seem to recognise layers and layers of political manipulation, intrigues and miscalculations in that region. Lying hidden in Khaddam's secret archives are Arafat's plans to continue fighting in Lebanon for another six months, but he was let down by Soviet Union (KGB). The reason? Arafat's refusal of a Soviet request to undermine Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's regime to spread Soviet/Communist influence in Iran. As a result, Soviet Ambassador Alexander Soldatov in Beirut bluntly told Arafat to leave Beirut.

Third, after Arafat's departure to Tunisia, Israel's Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, who had orchestrated and led the 1982 invasion, vainly boasted it as "a crushing defeat, a blow from which it will be hard (for them) to recover."

Fourth, after 1982, Syria and Iran would strengthen their alliance, which led to the birth of Hezbollah and its cooperation with Hamas — once encouraged by Israel itself — leading later to repeated Gaza wars. Trump's plan does not seem to recognise Iran's role in that region and how it can be countered.

India has been a marginal player in all these developments. Its failure to take a strong stand on the indiscriminate Israeli bombing of civilians leading to 67,160 deaths, including at least 19,424 children, has been a point of regret among the traditional allies, including Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who wondered how India could sell weapons to Israel. The signing of an investment treaty on September 8 with Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich added to the criticism.

True, the White House has acknowledged India's support to the Trump plan as "a viable pathway to long-term and sustainable peace, security and development for the Palestinian and Israeli people, as also for the larger West Asian region."

Views are personal

QUICK CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1 A travel document (8)

5 Distort (4)

9 Browning-yellow military cloth (5)

10 Outrage (7)

11 Everything is in readiness (3,7,2)

13 Natural ardour (6)

14 Overbalance and fall (6)

17 It is hardly surprising (6,6)

20 Small crown (7)

21 Composure (5)

22 Low-pitched brass wind instrument (4)

23 Contemptibly mean (8)

DOWN

1 Foot soldier's heavy spear (4)

2 Small onion-like vegetable (7)

3 Load marking on ship's side (8,4)

4 Strive against (6)

6 Prestige (5)

7 Uncontested victory (8)

8 To humble (4,4,1,3)

12 Unquestioning (8)

15 First in importance (7)

16 Wrap in bandages (6)

18 Pulsate (5)

19 Be dependent (4)

Yesterday's solution

Across: 1 Trump card, 8 Evoke, 9 Inflammation, 10 Cognac, 11 Ceased, 12 Overturn, 15 Whodunit, 18 Runway, 20 Favour, 21 In doubt, 22 Eerie, 23 Role model.

Down: 2 Range, 3 Mullah, 4 Comedown, 5 Detour, 6 Round-up, 7 Mercenary, 11 Crow's feet, 13 Entrance, 14 Convert, 16 Usurer, 17 In toto, 19 Amble.

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MEDIUM

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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CALENDAR

OCTOBER 8, 2025, WEDNESDAY

■ Shaka Samvat 1947

■ Aashwin Shaka 16

■ Aashwin Parvatisht 23

■ Hijari 1447

■ Krishna Paksha Tithi 2, up to 2:23 am

■ Harshana Yoga up to 1:33 am

■ Ashwin Nakshatra up to 10:45 pm

■ Moon in Aries sign

■ Gandmoola up to 10:45 pm

FORECAST

SUNSET: 06:20 HRS

SUNRISE: 06:20 HRS

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

18:00 HRS

06:20 HRS

CITY

MAX

MIN

Chandigarh

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New Delhi

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Amritsar

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Bathinda

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Jalandhar

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Ludhiana

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Bhiwani

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Hisar

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Sirsa

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Dharamsala

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Manali

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TEMPERATURE IN °C

PM MODI TO VISIT MAHARASHTRA TODAY

TOD NETWORK
MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to visit Maharashtra on 8-9 October 2025, during which he will inaugurate key infrastructure projects, engage with business leaders, and host the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Keir Starmer, who is on his first official visit to India.

On 8 October, PM Modi will arrive in Navi Mumbai and undertake a walk-through of the newly constructed Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) at approximately 3 PM. At 3:30 PM, he will formally inaugurate the airport and dedicate various projects in Mumbai, addressing the gathering on the occasion.

Security has been beefed up in Mumbai and neighbouring Navi Mumbai ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to inaugurate the Navi Mumbai International Airport on Wednesday, police officials said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

The prime minister will inaugurate phase one of the airport and final phase of Mumbai Metro Line-3 during his two-day Maharashtra visit beginning Wednesday.

Modi will also host UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer in the city on Thursday.

Police in both the cities are on high alert in view of the presence of the two top leaders, said a senior official.

Besides local police, personnel of the Special Protection Group (SPG), Special Protection Unit (SPU), Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) and traffic police have been deployed as part of the security arrangement, he said.

In the meantime, banned Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) has

threatened to disrupt Modi's visit by hoisting the flag of so-called Khalistan at the Metro inauguration function.

After reaching Navi Mumbai on Wednesday, PM Modi will undertake a walk-through of the newly-built airport, an official release said.

He will inaugurate the airport around 3:30 pm, and also launch or dedicate to the country various infrastructure projects besides addressing the function.

On October 9, Modi will host Starmer in Mumbai. They will attend the CEO Forum and 6th edition of the Global Fintech Fest, the release said.

Maha govt announces Rs 31,628 cr package for flood-hit farmers

TOD NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday announced a compensation package of Rs 31,628 crore for farmers who suffered massive losses due to rains and floods, asserting that the total assistance will be Rs 48,000 per hectare.

The government will announce a loan waiver in due course, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said, adding that a comprehensive memorandum on the losses suffered by farmers was being prepared for submission to the Centre.

Opposition parties have dubbed the relief package "hollow" and "too meagre" to help agriculturists rebuild their lives, and demanded a more "robust"

assistance as well as a concrete rehabilitation plan.

"This is a comprehensive compensation package of Rs 31,628 crore for farmers who suffered massive losses in recent rains and floods."

"This package represents an unprecedented effort by the state government to stand firmly with every affected citizen and farmer in this time of crisis," Fadnis said while addressing a press conference after chairing a cabinet meeting, flanked by his deputies Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar.

The government will provide Rs 47,000 in cash and Rs 3 lakh through aid under the Employment Guarantee Scheme for every hectare of farmland damaged by floods, he said.

PM Modi's 24 Years: BJP hails journey of service

TOD NETWORK
NEW DELHI

BJP leaders on Tuesday hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 24 years in public life as that of "service, dedication, public welfare and nation building" with Home Minister Amit Shah calling him a "karma", saying he has proved how leadership can transform people's life when "nation first" is the vision and "developed India" is the mission.

Prime Minister Modi on Tuesday began his 25th year as the head of government, asserting that improving the lives of people and contributing to the progress of this great nation have been his constant endeavour.

He noted in a series of posts on X that he had taken oath on this day in 2001 as Gujarat's chief minister for the first time and emphasised on the changes first his home state and then the country witnessed on his watch.

Shah hailed Modi's 24 years as the head of the government and said he dedicated his 24 years to the nation and public service.

"This day is very significant for the entire country, when a 'karma yogi' devoted to public service with selfless spirit took the constitutional oath, considered people's problems as his own and began resolving them, and these problems kept turning into history," the home minister said in a post on X in Hindi.

He said that in these 24 years, Modi has proved how one leadership can bring transformation in the lives of crores of people when the vision is 'nation first' and the mission is 'developed India', be it transforming the farmers, women, industry and education of Gujarat or ensuring the country's security, welfare of the poor and upliftment of all sections, he added.

BJP president J P Nadda

said that from an ordinary worker of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the country's 'pradhan sevak', Modi's 24-year public service is an exemplary journey of "service, dedication, public welfare and national resurgence".

With 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas', Prime Minister Modi has uplifted the lives of crores of deprived people and given India a new identity on the global stage with the country's strategic security.

"On the completion of 100 years of India's Independence, Modi ji's vision of building a 'developed India' by the year 2047 inspires millions of workers to remain dedicated to their continuous duty," the BJP chief said in a post on X.

"It is our collective fortune that under his leadership, we have received the excellent opportunity to serve the nation," he added.

India's first private gold mine in Andhra to start full production by Oct 2025

ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI

Even as the prices of yellow metal i.e. gold is touching a new high and India being the second largest importer of the same, India's first large-scale private gold mine located in Andhra Pradesh is all set to commence full-scale production from October 2025.

The first large-scale private gold mine is located in Andhra Pradesh's Jonnagiri, Erugudi, Pagadirey villages in Kurnool district that is backed by mining magnate B Prabhakaran and his family, who are spearheading the Jonnagiri project through Thiriveni Earthmovers, Prakar, and Lloyds Metals and Energy Limited.

The company said that over 70 per cent of shares in Geomysore Services (India) Pvt. Ltd. is held by Prabhakaran, Managing Director of Thiriveni Earthmovers

and Lloyds, and his family through Thiriveni Earthmovers, Prakar, and Lloyds as major shareholder while Deccan Gold Mines Ltd. holds only 27.27 per cent of shares in Geomysore Services India Ltd.

The project, developed by Geomysore Services India Ltd had received environmental clearance in June and July.

The company said that Jonnagiri project will be India's first large-scale private gold mine since Independence.

Presently, when the gold prices are soaring high, this mine has the potential to reduce India's import bill, conserve precious foreign exchange reserves, and make the country self-reliant in terms of gold production.

"Thus, the mine will contribute to providing more stability to the Indian economy by providing greater security against gold price fluctuations globally,"

it said.

Presently, India produces only around 1.5 tonnes of gold.

Once fully operational, the Jonnagiri project will produce around 500 kg of gold per annum, it said, adding that the yield will be gradually scaled up to nearly 1 tonne annually with all statutory clearances, which will make a significant addition to domestic gold production of the country.

The company said that Jonnagiri project has received all major statutory approvals including Environmental Clearance (EC) and Consent to Operate (CTO) from the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board for 0.3 MTPA capacity ore processing and 0.4 MTPA mining operations. The construction, erection and commissioning of the process plant is completed and currently the trial runs are in progress.

Congress condemns Rae Bareilly Dalit lynching, blames BJP govt

ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday dubbed the "brutal and cruel murder of a Dalit man in Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly and as a 'grave crime' against the country's Constitution.

In a joint statement, the Congress leaders condemned the brutal attack saying that after 2014 mob lynching, bulldozer injustice and mob justice have become a hallmark of this time.

The Congress leaders



LOP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi

stated that in our country there is a constitution that recognizes every human being as equal. "We have laws that guarantee equal protection, rights, and expression for every citizen," they said.

"What happened in Rae Bareilly is a grave offense

against the Constitution of this country, a crime against the Dalit community, and a stain on this country and society," the Congress leaders said.

They highlighted that the number of crimes against Dalits, minorities, and the poor has risen beyond mea-

sure in the country.

"This violence is most prevalent against the marginalized, the Bahujan, who lack adequate participation and representation," they said, citing examples of brutality and crime against Dalits and women in Hathras, Unnao, death of Rohith Vemula, urinating on a tribal man in Madhya Pradesh's crimes against Dalits and tribals in states of Haryana, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh.

The Congress leader pointed out that every incident is a mirror of the increasing insensitivity of our society, administration and ruling powers.

Centre holds stubble management meet

MANOHAAR KESARI
NEW DELHI

Every year, Delhi is hit by pollution after Diwali, and not only are neighboring states held responsible for this stubble burning, but, a lot of political mileage is also invested in this issue. A high-level meeting on stubble management was held on Tuesday at Krishi Bhawan in New Delhi. Union Agriculture Minister Shriyash Singh Chouhan and Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav were joined via video conferencing by Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurneet Singh Khuddian, Haryana Agriculture Minister Shyam Singh Rana, Uttar Pradesh Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi, and Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

The meeting discussed concrete steps to reduce air pollution caused by stubble burning, including better utilization of paddy straw, awareness among farmers, financial assistance, effective monitoring, crop management, and diversification. Union Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi, Director General of the Indian Council



Agriculture Minister Shriyash Singh Chouhan

of Agricultural Research, Dr. M.L. Jat, and senior officials from the ministries also attended the meeting.

The Agriculture Ministers of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh initially briefed the Agriculture Minister Shriyash Singh Chouhan on the status of stubble management in their respective states and stated that stubble management plans are being implemented with full vigor and vigilance. They stated that the entire department, including officials and staff, is engaged in the work diligently.

The Haryana Agriculture Minister stated that farmers in the state are being encouraged to avoid stubble burning through financial assistance, which has had a significant impact. This has prompted

Kannababu accuses govt of blocking YS Jagan's Narsipatnam visit

RAJ KIRAN BATHULA
HYDERABAD

YSRCP senior leader and former minister Kurasala Kannababu launched a sharp attack on the ruling government, accusing it of creating deliberate hurdles to obstruct YSRCP President and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's scheduled visit to Narsipatnam on October 9.

Kannababu said despite all the efforts to stall the programme, YS Jagan's tour will take place as planned. Owing to heavy rains in North Andhra, Jagan will travel by road from Visakhapatnam Airport to Narsipatnam Medical College, he clarified. "No amount of restrictions, notices, or intimidation can stop YS Jagan's interaction with the people," Kannababu asserted.

Taking a dig at the administration, Kannababu said the government's attitude reflects fear and insecurity

over Jagan's growing public support. He criticized the police for citing security concerns and failing to make arrangements for a leader with Z-plus security cover. "If the police say they cannot ensure the safety of a Z-plus protectee, it only means there is no law and order in the state," he remarked.

Kannababu accused the government of panicking at Jagan's rising popularity and resorting to intimidation tactics. "The state is trembling at the massive response Jagan is receiving everywhere. Instead of respecting democracy, the government is suppressing his tours through restrictions," he said.

Drawing a comparison with the past, Kannababu recalled how Chandrababu Naidu, while in Opposition, conducted several tours in Kandukur, Guntur, and Pileru, where stampedes occurred, yet no restrictions were imposed then.

Karnataka: Sudden sluice gate opening at Markonahalli dam claims six lives

TOD NETWORK
TUMAKURU

At least six people drowned after the sluice gate of the Markonahalli dam suddenly opened, sweeping them away on Tuesday afternoon, police said.

The victims, residents of BG Palya in Tumakuru town, were part of a group that had gone to the dam for a picnic when the incident occurred.

According to Tumakuru Superintendent of Police Ashok K V, 15 people had travelled from BG Palya to Madipalya and decided to visit the dam, as Tuesday was a public holiday.

"Seven people had entered the downstream of the dam as the water level was low. Suddenly, the water flow increased, and they were swept away," Ashok told reporters.

Two bodies have been recovered so far, while four others remain missing, police said, adding that search operations are ongoing.

India hosts first trust & safety festival

ABHINAVANANDAN MISHRA
NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday hosted the inaugural Trust & Safety India Festival (TASI) 2025 in New Delhi, bringing together policymakers, technology leaders, academics and civil society representatives from over 15 countries to discuss challenges and opportunities in building safer digital spaces.

The two-day forum was inaugurated by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and is jointly organised by the Centre for Social Research (CSR) and the Trust & Safety Forum. It is recognised as an official pre-event to the Government of India's AI Impact Summit 2026, scheduled for February next year. Addressing the gathering, Jaishankar said technology's "promise and perils have always been two sides of the same coin," and called for a balanced approach to AI governance with strong safeguards to protect citizens. He said India bears "special responsibility" as many nations,



EAM S. Jaishankar

particularly in the Global South, look to it for leadership.

Discussions at the festival covered a range of issues including tackling online child sexual abuse material (CSAM), combating misinformation and deepfakes, supporting survivors of non-consensual intimate image sharing, ensuring youth digital well-being, and addressing scams and abuse in encrypted spaces.

Dr. Ranjana Kumari, Director of CSR and Chairperson of the Alliance for Trust and Safety, said the festival represents "a movement for shared accountability and collective action," highlighting India's role as the world's largest democracy in promoting equitable digital governance.

Encounter breaks out in Rajouri district of Jammu

TOD NETWORK
RAJOURI

An encounter broke out on Tuesday morning between terrorists and security forces in the Kandi area of Rajouri district, intensifying counter-terror operations in the Pir Panjal region.

According to officials,

a joint team of the Indian Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police, and CRPF launched a cordon-and-search operation after receiving credible intelligence about the presence of terrorists in the dense forest belt of Kandi. As the security forces descended on the suspected hideout, terrorists opened fire, triggering a

fierce exchange of gunfire. Sources suggest that 2-3 terrorists are believed to be trapped in the forest area. The operation is being conducted under heightened security, with additional reinforcements sought to seal all possible escape routes. The thick forest cover and rough terrain are reported-



File photo

edly making the encounter challenging, but forces are maintaining a tight cordon to ensure the terrorists do not slip away.

Senior police and Army officials are monitoring the situation on the ground. "The operation is still underway, and intermittent firing is continuing," an officer

confirmed, adding that the priority is to neutralize the terrorists while minimizing collateral damage.

The Kandi forests of Rajouri, known for their difficult terrain, have witnessed several terror-related incidents in recent years, as infiltrating groups attempt to exploit the natural cover.

This encounter comes amid a heightened security grid in the Jammu region following multiple reports of movement of terror modules across the Pir Panjal range.

Authorities have appealed to locals to stay indoors and avoid venturing close to the operation site until the area is fully sanitized.

OCTOBER RAIN DROPS TEMP, TRIGGERS WATERLOGGING, TRAFFIC SNARLS IN CITY

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Dense dark cloud blanketed the national capital on Tuesday as early October rain brought down the mercury by several notches after a hot weekend. However, the downpour also sharply reduced visibility and caused traffic jams and waterlogging in several areas. At Palam Airport, visibility fell from 6,000 metres at 1.30 pm to 1,200 metres by 5 pm, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Many parts of the city appeared gloomy during the day as rain continued to lash the city, brought on by the impact of a western disturbance. Till 5.30 pm, the Palam weather station recorded 41.6 mm of rainfall, while Ridge recorded 37 mm. The city's primary weather station at Safdarjung recorded 5.8 mm of rainfall, according to IMD data. The change in weather also caused a sharp dip in temperatures.



A woman with her child visits India Gate amid heavy rainfall in New Delhi.



Vehicles stuck in heavy traffic after heavy rain at Akshardham.

Commuters waded through rain near RK Puram, in New Delhi.

The city's maximum temperature settled at 29.8 degree Celsius, 4.4 notches below normal. A sharp drop from Sunday's high of 36 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature today was 21 degree Celsius, 1.3 notches below normal.

Tuesday's heavy rains brought traffic movement to a crawl across several parts of Delhi, leading to long snarls and severe inconvenience for commuters. Key arterial stretches were choked as waterlogging worsened congestion at multiple points. Delhiites took to social media platform X to flag the

situation and appeal for immediate intervention from traffic authorities. "There is a huge traffic jam on the Dwarka Expressway from Bannoli and Chhawla. Kindly take

City airport sees 15 flight diversions due to rains

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

As many as 15 flights were diverted at the Delhi airport on Tuesday due to heavy rain in the national capital, according to an official. Heavy rain lashed several parts of the national capital on Tuesday afternoon. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued yellow and orange alerts for Delhi, forecasting moderate rainfall accompanied by light thunderstorms and lightning. The official said that out of the 15 flights, 8 were diverted to Jaipur, 5 to Lucknow

and 2 to Chandigarh. "There's a heavy downpour over Delhi at the moment, causing some temporary disruption to flight schedules. If you're travelling today, please be aware of potential delays and allow additional time for your journey, especially with traffic moving slower than usual. "We're monitoring the situation closely and will get you airborne as soon as possible," IndiGo said in a post on X at 6.26 pm. At 4.41 pm, Air India, in a post on X, said rain may impact flight operations to and from Delhi on Tuesday.

The city's primary weather station at Safdarjung recorded 5.8 mm of rainfall, according to IMD data. The change in weather also caused a sharp dip in temperatures.

According to traffic police officials, movement was hit in several stretches due to persistent rain and accumulation of water in low-lying areas. Long queues of vehicles were reported from Arya Samaj Road in Patparganj, Bara Tooti Chowk in Sadar Bazar, Old Rohtak Road, Shadipur Metro Station, and many more stretches. Congestion also affected commuters heading towards the airport, with heavy traffic reported from Connaught Place to Dhauha Kuan.

Delhi BJP ST morcha slams Mamata over attack on leaders in WB

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP's ST Morcha workers on Tuesday denounced West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over an attack on party leaders in Jalpaiguri in a protest they held near Banga Bhawan.

Two West Bengal Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders - Maldaha Uttar MP Khagen Murmu and Sili-guri MLA Shankar Ghosh - were injured on Monday after being attacked by a mob in the West Bengal district while they were visiting the flood and landslide-hit Nagrakata.

Addressing the protesters, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva, said the at-

The BJP protesters tried to reach Banga Bhawan on Hailey Road but were stopped by the police at a barricade.

tack was result of Banerjee's appeasement politics.

"Appeasement politics has blinded Mamata Banerjee. This time, the people of Bengal will give her a befitting answer," he said, referring to the next Assembly elections in the state.

The BJP protesters tried to reach Banga Bhawan on Hailey Road but were stopped by the police at a barricade.

AAP supremo Kejriwal gets Lutyens' Delhi bungalow

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal is expected to move to his new accommodation, 95, Lodhi Estate bungalow, around Diwali, provided the renovation is completed by then, party sources said on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, the party said that he has accepted the central allotment and will soon shift with his family, more than a year after he resigned as the Delhi chief minister.

Kejriwal is entitled to a central government bungalow since he is the chief of a national party.

"After nearly a year, Kejriwal has been allotted an official bungalow by the Centre. The Delhi High Court



Arvind Kejriwal, leader of the Aam Aadmi Party, is seen smiling.

rapped the central government over the matter. He was entitled to a bungalow since he is the convener of a national party," AAP national media in-charge Anurag Dhanda told PTL.

According to an official in the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), the bungalow will be handed over to the allottee once renovation is finished.

Kejriwal will be Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's neighbour at his new lodging,

Kejriwal is expected to move to his new accommodation, 95, Lodhi Estate bungalow, around Diwali

earlier occupied by a former IPS officer. Last month, the Delhi High Court pulled up the Centre for delaying in allotting a residential accommodation to Kejriwal in the national capital. Kejriwal lived at 6, Flag Staff Road, in Civil Lines while he was the chief minister. The BJP had wanted that bungalow's renovation a big election issue in Delhi, calling it a "Sheesh Mahal", and vowing that its chief minister will not move into it.

AAP protests against attack on CJI B R Gavai in Supreme Court



AAP leaders were carrying portraits of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, in New Delhi.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday protested in east Delhi's Mayur Vihar against the attack on Chief Justice of India (CJI) B R Gavai a day ago. Carrying portraits of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, party workers led by AAP Delhi unit president Saurabh Bharradwaj and MLA Kuldeep

Kumar raised slogans of 'Jai Bhim'.

The protesters shouted "Halla Bol" and "Chief Justice Ka Apmaan Nahi Sabhega Hindustan" to denounce the attacker, a 71-year-old lawyer. Bharradwaj carried a garland of shoes.

In an unprecedented incident, a lawyer attempted to hurl a shoe towards CJI Gavai in his courtroom

in the Supreme Court on Monday.

The Bar Council of India suspended lawyer Rakesh Kishor's licence in the wake of the attack.

The CJI, who remained unfazed during and after the incident, asked the court officials and security personnel to "just ignore" it and to let off the errant lawyer with a warning.

Make road safety rules in six months: SC to states, UTs

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed all the states and Union Territories to frame road safety rules within six months by regulating the movement of non-motorised vehicles and pedestrians in public spaces.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and K V Viswanathan directed all the states and UTs to frame such rules under Sections 138 (1A) and 210D of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

"We direct all the states and UTs to formulate rules under Section 138(1A) of the Motor Vehicles Act within a period of six months, if not



already framed, for the purpose of regulating activities and access of non-mechanical propelled vehicles and pedestrians to public places and national highways.

"We direct all the states and UTs to formulate and notify rules under Section 210D of the Act within a period of six months, if not

already framed, for design, construction and maintenance of standards for roads other than national highways," the bench said. The directions came on a petition filed by Coimbatore-based surgeon S Rajasekaran, who highlighted the large number of road accidents in India.

24-yr-old killed, 2 others hurt in Mangolpuri

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A 24-year-old man was killed and two others injured after a dispute over an old enmity escalated into a stabbing spree in outer Delhi's Mangolpuri, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place around 10.30 pm on Monday after a heated argument broke out between Rahul alias Kukku (24) and Ritik alias Himanshu (24), a senior police officer said. During the confrontation, Ritik allegedly slapped Rahul, who later returned with a knife and attacked the former, inflicting injuries on his thighs and hips, the officer said.

Delhi Police seizes Rs six-crore worth of red sandalwood, arrests two smugglers

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has seized 10 tonnes of red sandalwood worth Rs 6 crore and arrested two smugglers with international links, an official said on Tuesday.

The sandalwood was allegedly smuggled in from Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh for illegal export to China and other South Asian countries, where the wood is valued for its medicinal properties, DCP (South-east) Hemant Tiwari said at a press briefing.

The officer said the operation was launched based on intelligence inputs shared by Andhra Pradesh Police



AAP leaders in New Delhi.

about the movement of red sandalwood logs stolen from Tirupati in August. "An FIR had been registered in Tirupati in connection with the theft. During investigation, some accused arrested by Andhra Pradesh Police disclosed that the stolen logs had been transported

to Delhi," the DCP said. Acting on the lead, a joint team of Delhi Police STF and Andhra Pradesh intelligence unit conducted a raid at a godown in Tughlakabad on Monday. "During the raid, around 9,500 kg of red sandalwood logs were recovered and

two persons -- Irfan from Hyderabad and Amit Sampat Pawar from Thane in Mumbai -- were arrested," the DCP said.

The accused acquired the red sandalwood logs from Andhra Pradesh in the first week of August and concealed them in trucks to transport them to Delhi, he added. The seizure was one of the largest recoveries of red sandalwood made in Delhi, the officer said.

The accused planned to smuggle the consignment to foreign markets, particularly China and South Asian countries, where red sandalwood commands a very high price for its medicinal and commercial value.

Delhi Govt to develop 17 urban forests to curb air pollution, extend green cover

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government is set to transform 15 scattered patches of vacant land across the national capital into dense urban forests, called 'Namo Vans,' to enhance the city's green cover and combat air pollution. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa and other key officials, held a meeting in this regard.

Officials said that these

Namo Vans will cover an area of over 177 acres. And after their development, along with two Miyawaki forests, there will be 17 urban forests in the national capital. The work is likely to commence soon, with the plantation planned from November.

"These new forests will not only enhance the beauty of the national capital but also create much-needed green spaces for our residents," Sirsa told PTL.

"We are taking every possible step to make Delhi



greener and reduce pollution. These dense green zones will serve as natural lungs for the city," he said. Stretching across the North and South Forest Divisions, the Namo Vans

will come up in Sathbari and Maidan Garhi in the South, and Shahpur Garhi, Alipur, B4 Narela, Manupur, G7 and G8 Narela, Barwala in Sector 32 Rohini, Pehladi Pur Bagar in Sector

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa and other key officials, held a meeting in this regard.

30 Rohini, Pansali in Sector 32 Rohini, Mahamud-pura Mazri A in Rohini, Pansali in Sector 31 Rohini, and Sector 32 Rohini in the North.

Presently, tenders have been floated, with bids to be evaluated and awarded soon, Sirsa said.

The two Miyawaki forests will come up in south-west Delhi. As many as 3.5 lakh saplings of native species will be planted in Kharkhari Jatmal (2.44 hectares) and Jainpur (4.54 hectares), both located near Najafgarh, where one of them will be named after

Guru Tegh Bahadur. Miyawaki forests, which are 30 times denser than regular forests, were pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki in the 1980s. In these forests, saplings are planted closely to form a dense ecosystem that promotes faster growth and higher carbon dioxide (CO2) capture. Officials said that while a Miyawaki plantation will appear dense in six to eight months, creating a conventional forest will require several years.

"If plantation cannot commence in November due to low temperature, then we will carry out plantation from February," a forest official said.

In September, CM Gupta announced that the Namo Vans would be created across the national capital to combat air pollution.

The initiative is part of a larger push to create more green spaces in Delhi while addressing pollution and ensuring environmental sustainability for future generations, officials said.

*Are right and wrong convertible terms,
dependant upon popular opinion?*
William Lloyd Garrison

Brand
Goa

Yachts & cruises: Sailing in style & celebrating adventure at sea

BUSINESS SPACE

BHARATI PAWASKAR

The tourist season begins in Goa in October. The silvery beaches and blue sea here attracts tourists, drawn towards the scenic beauty of this tiny State, they not only prefer to spend vacations but also plan occasions of celebrations.

A new trend to celebrate

A new trend of spending fun time with family and friends on rented yachts and cruises has been witnessed in Goa in recent years. These yachts offer a combination of luxury and adventure to people from various walks of life. Friends throwing a birthday party, romantic couples wanting to have their pre-wedding shoots or celebrate wedding anniversaries, newly married couples who want to go for honeymoon getaways or just a family outing together – all of them want to enjoy a unique experience onboard a yacht or a cruise – though it comes pricy.

Multiple players

Several agencies in Goa offer yachts on rent and their charges depend upon the amenities provided and the number of guests that will be onboard. There's everything – from music systems to food and beverages, to bedrooms and washrooms. Given on an hourly basis the rent varies anything from Rs 8000 to Rs 36,000 or even more for two hours. While the yachts are smaller and have a carrying capacity of 15 or less, the cruises can carry even 150 persons at a time.

Yachts are preferred for personalised occasions where less number of people can be on board. For a larger gathering a cruise is booked where dinner parties can be organised for 50, 100 or more people. Yachting is a mix of calmness and excitement in the sea waters. Whether one wants a peaceful cruise at sunset, thrilling water activities, or fancy parties on a yacht, Goa offers all of these. Many types of boats, from modern ones to traditional Goan ones, allow the experience of yachting.

There are around seven to eight players in the Goan yachting business and all of them operate from North Goa. Most of them offer similar services, though Yacht Life Goa was the first to start the business in the State of Goa. Started In 2019, Yacht Life Goa has one of the largest fleets of luxury yacht charters in Goa, featuring six premium vessels, including India's first 150-ft super yacht, RA 11 and a Leopard 39 sailboat, among others. The yachts operate in the rivers only, with certain exceptions like Leopard 39 that moves out to the deep sea.



Goa's tourism thrives with yachts and cruises offering luxury, adventure, and unique experiences. People enjoy private events, romantic getaways, and family outings on the water

"We have six yachts under us. RA11 is used for per head parties once in a while. There may be many agents across Goa, but Yacht Life Goa stands apart as we own our fleet. What others rent, we operate," says Zyrell Fernandes, COO at Yacht Life Goa, adding, "We operate 24 hours a day, offering exclusive yachting experiences along the River Mandovi. Each of our yachts is equipped with water, beverages, and light snacks, apart from add-on services like drone shoots, professional photography, decorations, and curated celebrations."

"Our yachts are booked by premium clients who value quality, privacy, and elevated experiences. We cater to individuals, families, and groups seeking exclusive and memorable moments on the water. Our yachts operate from the base at the COP Jetty in Panaji across the Mandovi River and adjoining backwater routes," shares Jervis Braganza, partner at Yacht Life Goa.

Driven by passion

For Yacht Life Goa's founder and director Leon Nicholas Fernandes, it was a passion project, driven by his love for the sea and adventure. "At Yacht Life Goa, we're not just offering

yachts, we're curating experiences that define what it means to live the good life by the waters of Goa," boasts Leon, a Goan, born and brought up in Goa who always felt a deep connection to the water.

"What began as a personal pursuit has now evolved into a full-fledged company built on passion, service, and authenticity and values that continue to shape every experience we offer," says Leon who, before entering the yachting industry, had worked in the media business where he developed a sharp understanding of storytelling, hospitality, and audience experience.

These are fully crewed luxury yachts with onboard hospitality staff offering catering and beverage service. There are decoration setups, music and lighting options along with add-on experiences such as photography, drone shoots, and event curation. The types of occasions celebrated on yachts are birthdays, anniversaries, proposals, casual cruising and private sails as well as early morning sailing experiences. The price packages start at Rs 10,000 onwards and can go up to several lakh, depending on the yacht and experience chosen. Our 70% of the clientele is domestic, while 30% are internation-

al tourists, states Zyrell.

More than yatches

Apart from yachts, there are dinner and sunset cruises too, giving an unforgettable cruising experience of a night out. People celebrate special occasions or simply seek a unique way to enjoy their evening with close friends and family. The cruises offer dinners too with Goan as well as international cuisine while gliding along the serene rivers. These cruises offer a unique dining experience with a backdrop of shimmering waters and stary skies. There is also live music, traditional dance performances, suited for romantic evenings, family gatherings, or corporate events.

Sunset cruises offer a spectacular view of the sunset moment when the golden rays of the sun are seen diving into the waters leaving an orange hue in the sky. There are light snacks, beverages to choose from. It's a memorable evening providing a tranquil escape from the hustle and bustle in the town, and giving a quiet moment to connect with nature. Many solo travellers too, enjoy the 'me time' spent on the sunset cruises floating amidst the rivers in Goa.

Beyond the clinic, @suite_succes creates content that challenges tourist stereotypes

CANDID TALK

SHAILESH SHRIRAM TANPURE

By day, he's an obstetrician and gynaecologist caring for patients in Goa. Beyond the clinic, Dr Suyash Mandurkar – better known on Instagram as @suite_succes – explores the world through travel, food and creative storytelling. Born and raised in Pondy, he believes in living life to the fullest, whether through medicine, movement or meaningful experiences.

Travel and content creation

Travel has been a part of me since a very young age. Over time, my idea of travel evolved from simply visiting places to truly exploring and experiencing them—exploring their culture, people, history, and food. Photography is my hobby, but gradually, as the trend of making video content came up, that's when I shifted towards videos and loved the process. That's how my journey as a creator began.

Exploring food and culture

Cuisines tell a lot about a place, the people, and the culture, and that's what makes me try out special and local cuisines of different



places. The restaurants and food places I showcase through my content mostly offer a special cuisine with a unique experience. Now, in today's world, you get global cuisines from different regions and countries coming up quickly and competing with our old and local gems as well. We in Goa have the

luxury of finding so many options at our disposal, but at the same time, to keep our local traditional cuisines and cultures relevant in the market, we put in an effort to promote such places whenever we get the opportunity.

with brands that align with these principles. For me, content creation is simple: if I genuinely like something and believe more people should know about it, I share it. Trends come and go, but I try to remain true to my interests so that the process remains both authentic

and enjoyable.

Content philosophy

My content is always centred around unique and meaningful experiences—whether it's a hidden stay, a cultural story, or a special dish. I prefer collaborating only

Showcasing the real Goa

As a proud Goan, I also want to showcase the real Goa—our culture, traditions, and hidden gems that often remain overshadowed by tourist stereotypes. From showcasing local practices to sharing bits of Goan history, I want people to see Goa beyond what meets the eye.

Health and wellness journey

Apart from travel, I am deeply passionate about health and fitness. Post-COVID, I became a certified health and wellness coach. I run a dedicated page Health Fit By Dr Suyash (@healthfitbydrsuyash) to spread awareness about strength training, flexible lifestyles, and debunking common myths around health and fitness. My goal is to make fitness accessible, practical, and sustainable for everyone.

Guiding principles

I strongly believe that content creation is a powerful medium—when done honestly, it can make a real difference in people's lives. My guiding principles are simple: stay true to yourself, create content that adds value, and most importantly, enjoy the process. For me, it's always about striking a balance between passion, creativity, and authenticity.



FARMERS' CORNER

SATEJ KAMAT

Discovering Goa's rural charm through the eyes of its farmers

My days in the agriculture department are full of humbling experiences with grateful farmers who went out of their way when an officer satisfied all their queries, doubts and demands. I recall one incident while I was handling additional charge of Valpoi (Sateri Zone). We used to get farmers from faraway places who visited the town for their requirements early in the morning and returned home for lunch. They used to complete all their banking, official and market works within the time available to them in between the bus departure timings.

I remember meeting a farmer from Zarme village located at the foot of the hillocks from the neighbouring Karnataka State. He had applied for a subsidy pertaining to stone wall fencing and support price for legumes as well as paddy, but till date he was not able to get it even after multiple visits. On examining his records available in the office, a duplicate paperwork was initiated by the staff and his work was done within a week's period. The farmer during his next week visit was visibly happy as his issue was finally resolved. He invited me in person to visit his village to show the lifestyle of its inhabitants.

I landed at the village Zarme in the morning. The farmer was waiting for me. He took me around his village which was famous for the Zatra of Thieves who were buried in the soil after they were slaughtered by the villagers as per the age old tradition. The village was bestowed with nature's gift of a peaceful environment surrounded by hillocks, natural stream, lush paddy fields and cattle rearing business to sustain their livelihood.

This farmer had a couple of jersey cows which he purchased with the government subsidy issued under the Kamdhenu Scheme. He used to deliver the milk to the nearby collection centre every morning. Apart from this, he cultivated legumes and paddy in his small field which he sold in the market and got a support price subsidy on it. In order to make his ends meet, he had rented a small portion of his house to an NGO wherein his wife worked during the odd hours as they had a big family to support. They managed to earn between Rs 35,000-40,000 per month which was sufficient to sustain them.

His family served me simple but freshly cooked food on banana leaves with fish-curry and a leafy vegetable found in the surrounding hilly terrains. It was indeed a lovely lunch sitting with the farmer's family and would not be forgotten soon. The villagers here would catch stone crabs (Khadapacho Kullyo) and freshwater fish (Pitol) during the rainy season which are quite delicious to eat.

My farmer friend requested me to stay overnight in his humble dwelling. As the darkness falls early in such remote areas where the connectivity is down, we had an early dinner and went to sleep. This is a way of life all over in similar villages in the countryside surrounded by hills and the livelihood as observed from close quarters.

There comes learning from the villagers and farmers how to live in harmony with nature and avoid polluted food. The way the villagers shared their precious moments – be it festivals or other occasions was indeed appreciable. The village seemed content in the simple living of its people. Goa offers a slice of such peaceful village life even today, if only one travels to the hinterlands to experience the beauty of nature and the people living here. Hinterland tourism aims at offering such experiences to the people from other States and nations. A quiet day in the life of a villager can be anyone's day and it is bound to leave lasting imprints to cherish for life.

BRIEFS >>

Global NASA Space Challenge: 230 participate through Goa Chapter



From using AI for discovering new Exoplanets to finding locations of sharks from Space, and from developing Stellar Storytelling Apps to urban planning were some of the highlights of the challenges that Goan teams worked on during this global NASA Hackathon 2025. The NASA International Space Apps Challenge, world's largest annual global two day hackathon, concluded on October 5. In Goa, the first-ever in-person space technology hackathon was organised by the Directorate of Higher Education, government of Goa at the Goa State Council for Education, Research & Training in Porvorim. Goa's centre for this hackathon received tremendous response with 38 registered teams with 230 individual team members. These teams hailed not just from Goa but also from Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh. Out of these 38 teams, four teams will be selected for competing in the final Global NASA Hackathon. The Panaji event winners will now participate in the global judging round, carrying the pride and innovation of Goa to the international stage. A total of 28 teams attended the main physical event. The participants hailed from 13 institutions. Out of 16 NASA themes, the most fiercely contested were 'A World Away: Hunting for Exoplanets with AI' and 'Will It Rain On My Parade?' To maximise innovation, the hackathon featured dedicated on-site mentorship by Kunal Korgaonkar from BITS-Goa, Nazia Sheikh and Venkatesh Gaonkar from Government College Borda, Alvyn Abranches from Don Bosco College, Panaji.

SRS Vedic Mathematics Academy trains over 1 lakh students by Sept 2025

SRS Vedic Mathematics Academy, a Goan institution from Mangeshi has taught Vedic mathematics to over 100000 students through 1587 workshops conducted over the last 19 years. Students from Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala learnt this high speed Vedic mathematics which is useful for regular mathematics and competitive exams. "The simple techniques have proved to be useful in answering competitive exams, in regular Mathematics and also everyday life wherever calculations are required," stated founder of SRS Vedic Mathematics Academy, Sagar Ram Sakordekar who has also trained over 1000 teachers from schools, colleges with the support of SCERT and Goa Board.