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India's Mohammed Siraj celebrates with Dhruv Jurel after India beat England by six runs to draw series

An advert for five-day Tests



IF TEST MATCHES had been reduced to being four-day contests, what would've happened? The recent Anderson-TendulkarTrophy, which captured the imagination of the cricketing world, would have ended 0-0; hardly an advertisement for the longest format of the sport. We would've been denied the 56-minute series finale — the drama, suspense, agony, ecstasy and heroism when sports mirrors life in a microcosm. If the match had ended with England needing 35 runs and India four wickets, everyone would have left with an empty feeling in their stomach, having been denied something.

A four-day game would have denied England the thrill of the big last-day chase in Leeds and kept everyone unsatisfied if the Lord's Test ended with India needing 135 runs and the hosts six wickets. Even the euphoria of the Manchester draw, as India recovered from 0-2 in the third innings – staring at a 311-run deficit – would have been muted if they didn't have to bat out a fifth day.

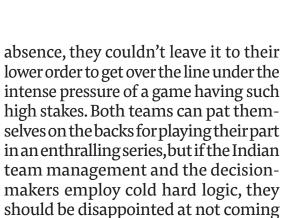
One can't rush through life; things happen when they have to. Some Tests do end inside three or four days, but that's the natural course of events; just how things turn out. For every mismatch — West Indies 27 all out recently in Jamaica, where the fourth innings lasted a grand total of 14.3 overs, is a case in point – there is the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy where the result was in doubt going into the final session of almost every match.

Five-day slugfests — like 12-round heavyweight boxing bouts (it used to be 15 in years gone by) — can sometimes take competitors to hitherto uncharted territory and force them to do something they may not have known they were capable of. In a sense, they tell sportspersons more about themselves than any abridged form of contest ever can. Mohammed Siraj's heart and spirit got the deserved reward only when he bowled India to its narrowest-ever Test victory on the fifth morning at The Oval. Chris Woakes, with his left arm in a sling, wouldn't have needed to come down the stairs with England needing 17 runs with one wicket in hand. Ben Stokes wouldn't have had to miss the fifth Test after playing four four-day games.

Five days is a long time, especially in this era of diminishing attention spans. It's natural that the sustained competitiveness takes a toll on the nerves and tempers often boil over, as was seen during this series on more than one occasion. But with the meet-and-greet session after hostilities were over, there's hope that whatever altercations took place on the field – and on occasions, offit – would not be lingered over.

Flawed teams

The cricket may not have always been of the highest level, with docile pitches and soft balls often sucking the life out of bowlers, but there's something fascinating about watching two imperfect teams having a tilt at each other. They have to cover up their weaknesses with their strongersuits and find ways to get the job done. Late on the fourth day at The Oval and on the fifth morning, it was clear that India had only two bowlers who could be relied upon to take them to victory — Siraj and Prasidh Krishna. And as England found out to their cost, in Stokes's



away with full bragging rights.

That the tour was the first one after the retirements of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Ravichandran Ashwin, with pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah expected to play only a limited part in the series, it would have been a step into the unknown. But on the evidence of the five Tests, manfor-man, India was the team with the better resources, personnel-wise. England have one of their openers averaging in the early 30s after nearly 60 Tests, a No. 3 batsman who looks too fidgety for that key position, a wicketkeeper-batsman who started the series in an impressive fashion, but tapered off towards the end, no quality spinner, and a pace-bowling attack unlikely to give any quality opposition sleepless nights. They were highly dependent on the charisma and inspiration of their captain, and when he wasn't there, they contrived to collapse from a series-winning position in the fifth Test. That India were still one big hit away from potentially losing the series 1-3 should be a sobering thought.

Points to ponder

Where India didn't help themselves was never picking their strongest XI. The team management was forever obsessed with batting depth, ignoring that without the ability to take 20 wickets, it's unlikely to win a Test. The two matches that India won in the series were the result of two bowlers doing almost all the damage — Sirajand Akash Deep in Birmingham, and Sirajand Prasidh at The Oval. That's a risky template to rely upon.

A proven match-winner in Kuldeep Yadav sat out the whole series, while left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh, who could have provided much-needed variety in the attack and could have flourished, at least in the final Test, has yet to make his debut. Much of the narrative revolved around how many, and which, Tests Bumrah would play, which could have been a needless distraction.

Taking all these factors into consideration, Shubman Gill did a more-than-creditable job in his maiden assignment as Test captain. It helped that he had a series with the bat that players often dream about, and as the tour progressed, it was evident that he grew into his leadership role.

As far as head coach Gautam Gambhir is concerned, his record till date reads five wins, eight defeats and two draws, with two of the wins coming against Bangladesh at home. Whatever win-loss ratio the former India opener ends up with, the 0-3 debacle at home against a Kane Williamson-less New Zealand side would be a millstone around his neck.

For a team with India's resources and fan following, anything less than making the final of the World Test Championship (WTC) will be considered a failure. They will now shift their focus to the home summer. The two Tests against a struggling West Indies side in spin-friendly conditions — going by recent results in the Caribbean — may not be a stiff task, before reigning WTC champions South Africa knock on the door.

Adrawn series in England may have brought a feel-good factor in Indian

cricket, but there's a need to build on it.



The first lesson in foreign relations is, if one bends, kneels and crawls, one is bound to be kicked to the ground. Mr Modi forgot this lesson in his *dosti* with Mr Trump. Thankfully, there are signs of resistance. India must let America know that it will stand firm, defend its interests, be open to fair trade, and ready to negotiate and conclude agreements, however difficult the process may be

INDIA HAD A Luddite attitude toward foreign trade, especially imports. Despite NAM, South-South, etc., we were wary of foreign countries in the matter of trade and foreign investment. We pulled down the shutters and refused to open them for four decades. We wrote the dreaded manuals for import and export: everything required licenses and permits. Most imports, and some exports, were 'canalised'through state-owned corporations. We had an officer called Chief Con $troller\,of\,Imports\,and\,Exports\,who\,had\,an$ army of officers spread throughout the country whose only *business* was to issue licenses for imports and exports. It was a profitable business. No one paused to ask the obvious question, 'Alright, we understand why we have a controller of *imports*, but why do we have a controller of exports?'

The beginning

The policy did not boost exports or build an export-oriented manufacturing sector or augment the foreign exchange reserves. Meanwhile, several countries, whose economies were at the same level as India's, opted for an open economy and allowed free trade, and became rich.

A combination of factors brought the Indian economy to the edge of a financial crisis in 1990-91. India was forced to embrace economic reforms. Trade policy reforms, industrial policy reforms, and a focus on fiscal discipline pulled India back from the brink, and put the economy on a growth path. We lowered tariffs (the average was brought down to 12% by 2013) and diluted non-tariff barriers. We signed GATT and became a member of the World Trade Organization. We signed Free Trade Agreements. We can confidently say that Indians have *accepted* that the economy must be an open economy.



The middle game

Shockingly, however, when developing countries have converted to an open economy, the original open economies have turned 'protectionist'. None more than the United States under President Donald Trump.

Taking measures to stave off a temporary crisis is one thing, elevating protectionism to the status of official economic policy is another. Mr Trump is unapologetically in favour of high tariffs, opaque non-tariff measures, discouraging imports, balanced trade with every country, and threatening American companies not to locate their factories outside America. He believes that 'tariffs' will accomplish what he desires. He has brought into policy-making weird factors such as bias for Republican-leaning states, *prejudice* against Canada's leaders, *false* arguments like the American economy no longer creates new jobs for Americans, and bizarre claims that the burden of high tariffs will be borne by the exporters and not the American consumer. Mr Trump has dismissed proven economic truths such as factor disparities, specialisation, division of labour, supply chains, etc.

Mr Trump has maniacally insisted that American companies must bring

manufacturing back to America. He calls it re-shoring. The *Harvard Business Review* had an article titled '*Bringing* Manufacturing Back to U.S. is Easier Said *Than Done*'. It said, "the days are long gone when a single vertically-integrated manufacturer could design and manufacture all or most of the sub-assemblies and components it needs to make a finished product. Technology is just too complicated, and it is impossible to possess all the skills that are necessary in just one place." Mr Jeffry Sachs described Mr Trump as an "unsophisticated" person who does not and cannot understand the complexities of manufacturing in the 21st century.

MrTrump has weaponised tariffs to 'reward' countries that have keeled over (Australia, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea) and 'punish' countries that stood firm (Canada, France, United Kingdom, Brazil). India was in the 'undecided' column until Mr Trump imposed a steep tariff on steel, aluminium and copper, and a base tariff of 50% on Indian goods (with some exemptions and a lagged effect) that included a penalty for buying Russian oil. India responded with 'we will take necessary measures'.



India cannot, obviously, bend over. Nor does India need to be defiant. We must clearly declare our willingness to negotiate however long and painful the process may be. The laws of economics will force Mr Trump to reconsider his weaponisation of tariffs: high tariffs will increase prices of hundreds of goods that Americans consume, inflation will rise, American companies will drag their feet on re-shoring, jobs will not increase, and the US growth rate will inevitably slow down. The mid-term elections in 2026 may check the hubris of MrTrump.

Meanwhile, India cannot be a lazy exporter content with limited export products and few export markets. We must scrap the creeping controls on exporters. We must enlarge our basket of products. We must actively look for new markets that can absorb up to \$45 billion of products (the value of goods we exported to the US in 2024-25). We must liberalise the rules for foreign direct investments. In the short term, we must offer incentives for exporters. We may consider adjusting the exchange rate to compensate the exporters although it will increase the cost of imports. All unnecessary imports could be temporarily curbed.

The first lesson in foreign relations is, if one bends, kneels and crawls, one is bound to be kicked to the ground. Mr Modi forgot this lesson in his *dosti* with Mr Trump. Thankfully, there are signs of resistance. India must let America know that it will stand firm, defend its interests, be open to fair trade, and ready to negotiate and conclude agreements, however difficult the process may be.



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INSIDE TRACK

Wheeling in circles

COOMI KAPOOR

At the start of 2025 we were led to believe that we were Donald Trump's special friend and that India would probably be the first to conclude a trade tariff agreement with the US. Now we are not just back of the queue, but could be blackballed! A close observer of Trump-India relations has a different take from others for the mysterious fallout. It was not initially about Russian oil, Pakistani perfidy or thwarting Trump's Nobel Peace Prize ambitions. Trump was infuriated with India's dilatory tactics in signing a deal, which goes back to his first presidency. His joint appearance with Modi in Texas in 2019 was meant to help seal an agreement, but talks fell through a day later in New York. Time and again, as in Gujarat February 2020, like the traditional smooth-talking Indian trader, our officials assured that a deal was almost through, without confessing candidly that some portions of the deal concerning agriculture and dairy products were non-negotiable. Unfortunately, Trump is focused on just this sector, since his Republican supporters come from the farm belt. As US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick remarked angrily, "You claim to be such a big country and you can't accept a bushel of American corn." After being re-elected, President Trump was even willing to overlook past slights. (PM Modi did not call or even telephone Trump during his three visits to the US during the Biden presidency.) But in 2025, once again, despite the head-start in negotiations, the deal has not materialised!

Naysayer ministers

Retired IAS officer Subhash Chandra Garg's new book is titled *No Minister*. The former Finance Secretary does not hold back in recalling riveting encounters with his ministerial bosses, some of whom, in fact, refused to take no for an answer, despite bureaucrats citing the rules and the wishes of the incumbent PM.

Garg names P Chidambaram among the naysayers who, as finance minister, threatened then PM Manmohan Singh with his resignation unless his proposal that 60-70 secretary level-posts were allotted to the Indian Revenue Service cadre. In Garg's view, this unbalanced the bureaucratic structure without improving tax collection. Similarly, Andhra CM Chandrababu Naidu, on whom the Vajpayee government was

dependent for survival, cornered more than 40 % of the portfolios of Indian projects approved by the World Bank in 1999 and 2000. Despite objections from the government, Naidu forced them to agree to his audacious demand, in disregard of fair Central resource distribution. Similarly, Kamal Nath bullied his way so that 5% of the total pool of government houses in Delhi was part of his discretionary quota, which largely included newly constructed category type VII and VIII bungalows in Moti Bagh.

Proxy battle

Considering it is an intra-party contest to elect the fairly modest position of secretary (administration) of the Constitution Club, it is surprising that the poll has attracted intense national interest and media scrutiny. In contrast, Rajeev Shukla (Congress) has been elected unopposed as secretary (sports) and Tiruchi Siva (DMK) as secretary (culture) without any rancour. There seems more than meets the eye in the fierce tussle between the two ill-matched adversaries for the post of administrative secretary. The jocular, down-to-earth ex-MP and UP Jat leader Sanjeev Balyan, who only joined the club eight years ago, appears to have been pitch forked into the contest, while Rajiv Pratap Rudy, the suave Bihar MP who has been the guiding spirit behind the club for the last 25

New Delhi

years, is credited with upgrading its facilities, including gyms, saunas, lounges and sports facilities. Balyan's most vocal campaigner is controversial Bihar MP Nishikant Dubey, who is fighting with all the vehemence and caste calculations of a panchayat election and throwing names of powerful central politicians. Pratap, more discreet, is believed to be backed by an influential regional satrap, who has not shown his hand openly.

AI's good turn

Amidst constant reports of Air India's slipping standards, I am pleased to report my recent personal experience of the airlines, which demonstrates that the staff's spirit of service beyond the call of duty, the hallmark of JRD Tata's original Air India, has not vanished. While flying back from Kenya on an AI flight, the senior air hostess noticed my distress as I rummaged through my carry bag and under the seat for my missing iPad, which had obviously been left behind in Nairobi. I presumed resignedly that recovering my iPad was like looking for a needle in a haystack, but I had not reckoned with the resourcefulness of the very helpful air hostess and the AI Nairobi manager. The latter, with the assistance of his counterpart at the Nairobi airport lounge, located the missing iPad, got it identified through WhatsApp photos and arranged to have it returned to Delhi within a week.

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Warning Too Late

he flash floods that ravaged Dharali in Uttarkashi are a grim reminder that India's most fragile landscapes remain dangerously under-watched. Despite decades of warning signs, the Himalayan region continues to lack the basic infrastructure needed to anticipate, let alone avert, such disasters. The fact that meteorologists cannot even conclusively identify whether a cloudburst or a glacial lake outburst triggered the destruction is not a reflection of nature's unpredictability, it is a damning indictment of the country's data deficit. The confusion surrounding the cause stems from the absence of real-time weather monitoring in the upper reaches of Uttarkashi. Dharali, perched at 8,000 feet, had no local station capable of detecting or measuring the rainfall intensity that preceded the disaster. The nearest weather instruments are kilometres away, making it impossible to capture hyper-local cloud activity, especially in mountainous terrain where rainfall distribution is notoriously erratic. In regions where a kilometre can mean the difference between a dry slope and a flash flood, such gaps are more than technical ~ they are life-threatening. Each unmonitored valley is a blind spot in our national preparedness, where nature's fury can strike without a moment's notice. Some experts have speculated that a glacial lake outburst might have occurred upstream, triggered by intense rainfall. But satellite assessments later ruled this out. The floodwaters, carrying debris, mud, and uprooted trees, appear to have been the result of localised extreme rain - perhaps not fitting the narrow definition of a "cloudburst," but just as catastrophic in consequence.

At the heart of the matter is India's failure to scale up its early warning systems in one of the most climatevulnerable regions on the planet. Despite previous disasters and government assurances, Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs) remain few and far between in Uttarakhand. None cover the Dharali zone. While DWRs have limited efficacy in hilly terrains due to signal blockage, they are still far superior to the absence of any monitoring. Complementary tools such as Automatic Weather Stations (AWS), remote sensing, and now-casting models using microphysical cloud data could significantly bolster early detection but they have not yet been deployed at scale.

In the absence of hard infrastructure, India must also look to soft solutions: collaborations with global satellite agencies, crowd-sourced weather reporting, and even localised community alert systems that can bridge the time gap between data and disaster. It's clear that natural terrain is no longer a sufficient excuse for technological lag. The Himalayas are both India's environmental backbone and its most acute risk zone. As monsoon patterns grow more erratic and glacial dynamics increasingly unpredictable, waiting for disasters to validate the need for preparedness is no longer tenable. Dharali's destruction should serve not as a tragic anomaly, but as a last warning. The next one may come sooner than we think and we may have even less time to respond.

Vanishing Loans

he disclosure that public sector banks in India have written off over Rs 4.48 lakh crore in nonperforming assets (NPAs) over just four financial years is more than a technical statistic. It is a powerful reflection of deep-rooted inefficiencies and structural weaknesses in India's banking ecosystem. The list includes most nationalised banks. In isolation, these figures are staggering. Collectively, they point to a recurring pattern where public money is used to absorb the consequences of misjudged lending, poor credit discipline, and opaque accountability.

The government insists that these write-offs are "technical" and do not mean that the borrower's obligation is waived. In practice, however, recovery postwrite-off remains murky. There is no detailed disclosure on how much has actually been recovered once a loan is written off. Meanwhile, the public is left to infer that balance sheets are being cleaned up at the cost of transparency. It is true that gross NPAs in the system have come down from 9.11 per cent to 2.58 per cent in the past four years. But without a clear picture of recoveries, this improvement could be misleading. If NPAs are merely being written off and moved out of sight, then the decline in headline numbers is cosmetic rather than structural. Many of these bad loans stem from a handful of large corporate defaulters, whose strategic defaults often exploit legal loopholes, further weakening the public's faith in the system. This also raises uncomfortable questions about how NPAs are being created in the first place. Are risk assessments and credit appraisals at public sector banks robust enough? Are politically connected or large corporate borrowers being extended loans on preferential or lax terms? Are institutional checks weak when it comes to follow-up and recovery?

We must not lose sight of the fact that these are public institutions handling public funds. Every rupee written off is ultimately borne by the broader economy, either through recapitalisation, higher borrowing costs, or weakened fiscal space. Yet, unlike private banks, public sector lenders operate with far less market discipline and often suffer from dual control, answering to both government and regulatory authorities. The mechanisms for recovery ~ SARFAESI, IBC, debt tribunals ~ are in place, but how effectively are they functioning? Without regular, accessible updates on recovery performance, public confidence erodes. The question is no longer whether banks should write off loans, but whether they are being held accountable for the followthrough. What is urgently needed is not just better oversight but greater transparency and public reporting on recoveries after write-offs.

At the very least, citizens deserve to know what is being done to recover what has been lost. In the end, reforms cannot be judged by declining NPA ratios alone. A credible banking system rests not just on how it reports losses, but how determinedly it prevents them. There is no getting away from the fact that Rs 4.48 lakh

crore is a staggering sum.

Strategic assertion

This project is not an isolated undertaking. In fact, Sawalkote is part of a broader hydropower renaissance in Jammu and Kashmir. India is pushing ahead with six previously stalled projects - including Kirthai I & II, Pakal Dul, Kiru, Ratle, and Parnai - which together could contribute over 10,000 MW of electricity to the region's grid. With more than 10,000 sq. km of snow-fed catchment upstream, particularly in the Chenab basin, these projects promise year-round hydropower generation and a stable clean energy future.



KUMAR

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n a bold move that marks a decisive shift in India's strategic calculus, the government has revived the long-stalled Sawalkote Hydroelectric Power Project on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir. With a capacity of 1,856 MW, Sawalkote is not just India's largest hydroelectric initiative in the Union Territory ~ it is a clear signal of India's recalibrated water, energy, and security policies following the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan in April 2025.

Originally conceived in the 1960s, the Sawalkote project languished for decades under the constraints of the IWT, which severely limited India's capacity to harness the potential of the western rivers ~ Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab ~ allocated to Pakistan for unrestricted use. The Indus Waters Treaty, signed in 1960 under the aegis of the World Bank, was long hailed as a rare example of enduring cooperation between two bitter

However, with Pakistan's continued support for crossborder terrorism ~ most recently exemplified by the deadly Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025 that claimed 26 lives ~ India suspended the treaty, citing national security and sovereign rights as paramount.

The symbolic and substantive statement that "blood and water will not flow together" encapsulated India's growing impatience with asymmetric

obligations under the treaty. The strategic revival of the Sawalkote project follows this suspension. On 29 July 2025, NHPC Ltd. floated a Rs 200crore international tender for planning, design, and engineering, with bids open until September 10. The project will feature a 192.5-metre-high rollercompacted concrete gravity dam and a run-of-the-river system, generating approximately 8,000 million units of electricity annually.

The dam will be constructed near Sidhu village in Ramban district, nestled between Jammu and Srinagar. Nine turbines, an underground power station, and

three water tunnels will form the technical core of this complex. Though originally estimated at Rs 8,000 crore, the current project cost has soared past Rs 22,000 crore, with projections nearing Rs 30,000 crore due to delays and inflation.

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With more than 10,000 sq. km of snow-fed catchment upstream, particularly in the Chenab basin, these projects promise yearround hydropower generation

and a stable clean energy future. The implications of this policy shift extend far beyond electricity generation. The move from non-consumptive use to direct strategic utilization of the western rivers challenges the

very foundation of the IWT. It signifies India's intent to assert its rights more fully over water resources that originate within its territory but have disproportionately benefited Pakistan. The Union Government's designation of the Sawalkote project as one of "national importance" in June 2025 has expedited bureaucratic clearances, overridden earlier environmental objections, and triggered rapid mobilisation for implementation.

The timing and symbolism of this transformation are unmistakable. While India's earlier hydro initiatives, like the Baglihar and Salal projects, had already reduced downstream water flows into Pakistan during key cropping seasons, the Sawalkote project, combined with others in the pipeline, represents a cumulative blow to Pakistan's

water security. Flows at the Marala headworks have already witnessed up to 90 per cent reduction during peak periods, severely affecting agricultural productivity, especially for water-intensive crops like paddy and cotton.

In response, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has called the IWT suspension an "act of war," urging New Delhi to return to the negotiating table ~ a plea

> that has thus far found no resonance in India's strategic quarters. India's new position is that the treaty cannot coexist with terrorism. External Affa-

irs Minister S. Jaishankar has made it clear in Parliament that the IWT will remain suspended until Pakistan provides irreversible and verifiable guarantees of ending

support for terrorism. Home Minister Amit Shah has echoed these sentiments, calling the treaty "one-sided" and affirming Indian farmers right to the waters of Indus and its tributaries.

The rhetoric surrounding this shift may sound unyielding, but it resonates with a broader public sentiment and a strategic vision that sees water not merely as a natural resource, but as a geopolitical asset.

This integrated strategy, merging energy independence, water security, and national defense, marks a paradigm shift. India is no longer content with symbolic gestures or incremental policy shifts.

By aligning its hydro-infrastructure push with national security goals, it has laid down a red line ~ terrorism will have real costs, and those costs will now include the recalibration of long-standing treaties that no longer serve mutual interests.

Environmentally, the Sawalkote project raises challenges. More than a dozen villages in its vicinity will need to be relocated, and there are concerns over biodiversity, river ecology, and seismic vulnerability.

Past delays were caused in part by such environmental assessments, political disputes, legal hurdles, and military logistics, as an army transit camp lies in the project area. These will have to be addressed with sensitivity, particularly given the fragile Himalayan

However, with the project being treated as a national priority, these issues are expected to be managed through compensatory measures, rehabilitation schemes, and rapid administrative coordination.

The decision to proceed with large-scale hydro development also reflects India's broader ambition to transition to clean energy. As climate change intensifies and energy demands rise, hydropower offers a dependable, scalable, and renewable alternative to fossil fuels.

Moreover, the strategic location of these projects in Jammu and Kashmir serves a dual purpose: generating electricity for the national grid and consolidating India's physical and infrastructural presence in a sensitive border region.

Politically, the move has been framed as a course correction from the past. Prime Minister Modi has openly criticized Jawaharlal Nehru's role in the original treaty, arguing that it was excessively generous to Pakistan.

The current administration's actions are thus part of a broader ideological reorientation, where national interest, security, and self-reliance are the cornerstones of foreign and domestic policy alike.

India's suspension of the IWT and the rapid revival of strategic hydropower projects are, therefore, not just technical or administrative decisions. They are statements of intent ~ intent to defend national sovereignty, optimize natural resources, and redefine the terms of engagement with adversaries.

The Sawalkote project stands as a testament to this evolving vision: a dam not just of concrete and turbines, but of resolve and recalibrated power.



Climate change demands better forecasts for farmers

griculture, the bedrock of Bangladesh's economy and a direct source of sustenan-ce for millions, is facing unprecedented challenges due to the escalating climate crisis. From the paddy fields of Dinajpur to the shrimp farms in Khulna, the nation's agricultural sector is facing heightened uncertainty. So, farmers are questioning the reliability of existing weather and climate forecasts. This critical juncture brings into sharp focus the imperative for accurate and dependable meteorological data to safeguard harvests and ensure food security.

While the terms "weather" and "climate" are often used interchangeably, they refer to distinct concepts that play different roles in agriculture. Weather relates to short-term atmospheric conditions, for instance, whether it will rain tomorrow or be sunny later this week. It helps farmers make daily decisions such as when to irrigate, apply fertiliser, or delay harvesting due to an approach-

Climate, on the other hand, concerns long-term patterns over decades. It provides projections that help assess how rising temperatures, shifting rainfall, and salinity levels might affect agriculture over the next 10, 20, or even 50 years. This longterm view informs decisions about crop variety selection, suitable cultivation zones, and the adoption of

The Haily Star

new technologies for resilience. In a country like Bangladesh, which is highly vulnerable to climate change, understanding both weather and climate is not a choice ~ it is a necessity. The key lies in using both effectively to ensure sustainability in

agriculture. Consider a farmer in Rajshahi, a region increasingly facing drought. For immediate planning, the farmer might rely on a five-day weather forecast to time irrigation or pest control. However, if climate projections indicate a 15 percent drop in rainfall over the next 20 years, continuing with water-intensive crops

could prove risky. In such cases, climate forecasts offer valuable guidance for switching to drought-tolerant crops, adopting water-efficient technologies, or adjusting planting seasons. Ignoring these projections may lead to unsus-

Similarly, in the coastal regions of Satkhira and Bagerhat, rising salinity has made weather forecasts vital for storm preparedness.

tainable farming practices.

However, the long-term implications of sea-level rise and increasing salinity inland can only be understood through climate models. These projections suggest a transition towards saline-tolerant rice or aquaculture. Without integrating such insights, communities risk losing their livelihoods to creeping environmental changes.

Despite the rising importance of both weather and climate data, many Bangladeshi farmers lack access to timely and accurate information. The Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) does provide weather updates, and institutions such as the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) conduct climate-related research. However, the integration of this information into on-the-ground advisories

A nationwide agro-meteorological advisory system that combines near-term weather forecasts with long-term climate projections is required. Such a system would allow farmers to make informed decisions not only for the present but also for the coming decades.

remains limited.



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Old habits die hard

Sir, PM Modi's "Swachata Abhiyan" seems to have had little effect on Indians. Public spaces like cinema halls, bus stops, roads, hospitals, colleges, railway platforms and walls continue to be "adorned" with red paan (betel) and/or gutka (tobacco) stains.

This habit has been "exported" to London by South Asian immigrants, particularly Indians. Not surprisingly, the locals have taken serious objection to this kind of behaviour. Memes and sarcastic comments like "Start checking teeth while giving visa" and "Rang de basanti!" have flooded social media.

As an Indian I hang my head in shame at the disgusting behaviour of fellow Indians in the UK. The poet Rudyard Kipling had rightly said, "East is East, and



what he said. Gandhiji had once famously said "Sanitation is more important

than independence."

He must be squirming in his who "decorate" London with their

West is West, and never the twain grave at the appalling behaviour of shall meet". At the risk of being Indians in London. Much like called unpatriotic, I will vouch for financial offenders like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi who are now cooling their heels in the UK, the government of India ought to ask for the extradition of Indians

"unique and colorful" art form. The Indian embassy in the UK

owes an apology to the government of UK and the Mayor of London for such atrocious misconduct.

> Yours, etc., Avinash Godboley, Dewas, 9 August.

JUSTIFIED

Sir, Apropos the report "Provide electronic voter list & Videos of 10 yrs, or you're hiding a crime: Rahul Gandhi to EC" (August 9), I also consider the demand of Rahul Gandhi, as detailed in the report under reference, to be quite justified for unravelling the truth behind the alleged vote theft. No special affidavit is required for initiating the probe by the Election Commission of India (ECI) as he has already taken an

oath in Parliament. Being the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul is not expected to bring a false charge against the ECI and therefore cognizance must be taken of his specific allegation. If every allegation against the ruling party at the Centre or against the statutory body is required to be filed with a supporting affidavit, the oath by MPs showing their allegiance to the Constitution will be meaningless.

Yours, etc., Arun Gupta, Kolkata, 9 August.

There is a thin wall between definitions

KIM SEONG-KON

e tend to think there is a crystal-clear distinction between opposite things. However, it's rarely so simple. Oftentimes, things that at first glance appear contrary instead end up looking surprisingly alike or blend into one another, especially when they are pushed to the extreme. For example, the far left and far right, though technically opposites, bear an astonishing resemblance, as we see when we compare Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler.

Similarly, we think that there is a radical difference between terrorists and ordinary people. Therefore, we naturally believe that we are far removed from terrorists and have nothing to do with violent extremism. We assume there is a particular group of people who can be labelled "terrorists." In reality, however, even those of us who think we are the most ordinary of people can become terrorists if we are not careful.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a terrorist as "someone who uses violence and intimidation to achieve a political and ideological aim." According to this definition, anyone can fall into the category of a terrorist if they try to impose their political beliefs on others using force. If so, we can find quite a few terroristic people in our society who do not hesitate to use violence for ideological

The same goes for "abusers." In the Oxford English Dictionary, an abuser is "someone who treats another person in a cruel, violent or unfair



way." Given the parameters of that definition, anyone can stumble into the category of an abuser if they treat others in an unfair or manipulative way. Although we might firmly believe that we are not doing so, we could be perpetrating abuse without

realizing it. We can become abusers if we treat others in a rude, inhumane or

manipulative way. It can happen between a father and a child, or between a husband and a wife. It can also happen between a teacher and a student, or between an employer and an employee. What Koreans call "gapjil" is an example of abuse between people with power and those

they have power over. Recently, I saw a poster that said:

"Does someone degrade you in public or private? Does he get angry if you are not submissive? Does he insist you are wrong? Does he blame you for everything? Does he pressure you to do things that make you uncomfortable? Does he force you to drink, or do things that you do not want to do? Does he expose you to danger because of your identity? Then, this is

If the above things belong to the category of "abuse," no one is completely free from the accusation of being an abuser. For example, if we pressure someone to drink against their will in a bar, which is quite common in Korean society, we might be abusing the person. If we ignore or degrade the opinions of our children or students simply because they are young, we might be abusers there, as well. If we provoke, blame or threaten family members, we are abusing

If we have power, we can easily become abusers. If we do not have power, we may unwittingly turn into a terrorist. Sometimes, a powerful man can become both an abuser and a terrorist. If a political leader tries to impose his ideological beliefs on his people by force, he becomes an abuser and a terrorist. He may think he is doing the right thing, but he is not, because there is only a thin line between right and wrong, and good and evil.

In order not to become abusers or terrorists, we should respect different voices, opinions and perspectives. We also should respect and embrace others who are different from us or weaker than us. If we force others to join us or be like us in the name of unity, we are likely to end up becoming terrorists or abusers.

Nobody wants to be a terrorist or an abuser. Yet, we can easily become one unless we are extra careful and super-cautious. We should know that there is only a thin wall between terrorists and abusers and us.

The Korea Herald/ANN.

The world on suicide watch

BHARAT DOGRA

Tt is a normal expectation from humans that their behaviour and actions will be driven by actual needs. Any persistent divergence must be perceived as irrational behav-

This would be truer still in the context of any person or group of persons confronted with life-threatening problems. They face stark choices. Any divergence from what needs to be done in their case would be characterized as not just irrational behavior, but more appropriately as suicidal

The story of recent times is that our world has been moving towards suicidal behaviour. Year after year, decade after decade in recent times, human actions and priorities have diverged widely from what needs to be done to resolve the survival and existential crisis which threatens humanity and all other forms of life on our planet due to human-made

This crisis has arisen due to a combination of factors of which the two most important and obvious ones may be highlighted here. Firstly, about a dozen serious and inter-related environmental problems have combined to threaten the basic lifenurturing conditions of our planet. Most of these problems have been worsening despite the fact these often tend to be associated with tipping points beyond which they can spiral

out of control. Secondly, highly destructive weapons have been accumulating with the capacity to destroy our (once) beautiful but fragile and vulnerable world many times over. AI



weapons have added to serious concerns. Serious risks are also posed by possibilities of space wars. Some countries with huge stocks of destructive weapons are known for their high levels of hostility against each other. Some of these hostilities have been increasing while safeguards in terms of arms-control treaties have been

decreasing. Experts have pointed to the very serious risks related to even accidental use of such weapons, accidents related to them, or misunderstandings in times of brinkmanship. At the same

time, research on even more dangerous weapons is continuing. Accidents associated with such research can also prove extremely destructive, as some warnings and reports have already

If actual deed is to match real need, humanity and its leaders would leave aside everything else to devote themselves to significantly reducing and finally eliminating such serious threats. However, the reality is that despite adequate realization, humanity and its leaders have been deeply involved in a much narrower frame-

work of planning and actions that increase, and not decrease, the vast gulf between need and deed. This is suicidal.

What humanity truly needs today is a world without wars but instead we have endless wars and the number of conflicts is increasing to record levels.

For anyone willing to see reason and who values the safety of present and future generations, new paradigms based on peace and protection of the environment, within a framework of justice and democracy, are needed by humanity today. Our chil-

dren and grandchildren, growing up in a much more dangerous and highrisk world, will not forgive us if we fail in our most basic duties for safety and protection. A big question is whether at least

some of those in leadership roles can provide guidance for a programme of actions that can be called a significant and credible response to the real needs today of humanity (and other forms of life). How humanity and its leaders respond to this question will make the difference between creating a safe future for our children and leaving behind a legacy of unacceptably high risks. Those who lead the world and those who shape public opinion and discourse have a life-saving responsibility on their shoulders.

A significant beginning can be made by declaring the decade of 2026-36 as the Decade for Saving Earth, with overarching protective policies receiving the highest priority. This decade should also see the biggest ever mobilization of all forces of peace and protection of the environment, working within a framework of justice and democracy, as well as growing unity among them. A special effort should be made to involve youth and women, and their organizations in this effort. Schools and colleges must see a range of very creative and beautiful activities linked to peace and protection of the environment. Secular as well as spiritual organizations must be involved and encouraged to work together for the cause of peace, disarmament and protection of the environment.

(The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Planet in Peril, Saving Earth for Children and A Day in 2071.)

NO-293220

NOW AND AGAIN

BENEATH THE SURFACE

SHOVANLAL CHAKRABORTY

I had to stay back late at office that day and I was feeling very tired. So I called an Uber to go home. As the cab pulled up, I was greeted by a courteous "Hello, Sir" from the driver.

Usually, my conversations with cab drivers are in Bengali, but this was different, as the driver spoke English. The man, probably in his early forties, had a manner that suggested he was more than just a routine cab driver.

As we drove off, he enquired how my day had been and if I was comfortable in the cab. His manner and disposition drew me into a conversation with him. We engaged in small talk, a conversation that often unfolds hesitantly between strangers. However, things took an unexpected turn when noticed the name of my residential complex shown as my destination on the app. "That's a very nice residential complex, sir," he remarked.

His familiarity with the place piqued my curiosity. He began reminiscing about the locality, mentioning the children's park, its temple, and even our weekend snacks vendor. These details would only resonate with someone who had lived there.

"You seem to know a lot about the area," I remarked, my curiosity getting the better of me. He smiled and replied, "Yes, sir, I used to live there once." Surprised, I probed further, and the story that unfolded was poignant and entirely humbling.

The driver, an engineer by profession, had ventured into a start-up with high hopes and dreams. The business was doing well until the pandemic hit. Like many, his start-up was not spared. His business had sunk, and being unable to pay rent, his landlord had evicted him from his house. Left with no means to take care of his family, he sought odd jobs until he found himself driving cabs in the city to make ends meet.

His story was tinged with resilience and humility. But I also noticed that he was not seeking sympathy. His words conveyed a quiet pride in having survived the pandemic and a steadfast commitment to supporting his family. As he spoke, I couldn't help but now faintly recall the man I may have known briefly from the residents' association meetings for Durga Puja in our complex.

As I watched him drive away, I was in a whirlwind of emotions. How many of our neighbours, people we see every day, may have silently borne the brunt of the pandemic? How many stories of loss, of quiet suffering and resilience must have gone unnoticed as we rushed through our daily lives? This chance meeting brought into sharp focus the fragility and uncertainty of our lives. As I pushed the bell at my house, I thought how sometimes it takes just one event, like a mundane cab ride, to uncover the hard truths that lie beneath the surface of our everyday existence.

100 YEARS AGO

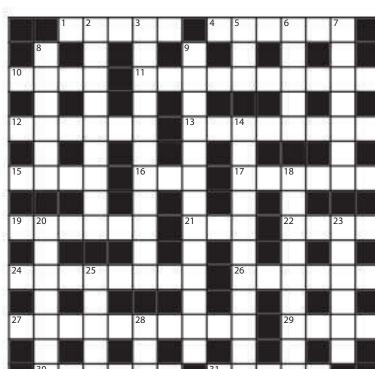
FILM CENSORSHIP

PRISON CONGRESS DEMANDS EFFECTIVE ACTION

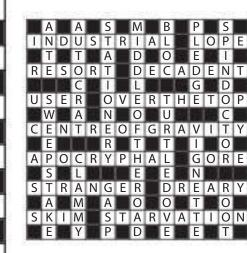
LONDON, AUG.

The International Prison Congress unanimously passed a resolution demanding effective film censorship in every country, with the primary object of protecting youths, and the inspection of cinemas in order to ensure the carrying out of the decisions of censorship which should not be confined to questions of obscenity, but should deal with all matters calculated to injure and deprave youth. Special film exhibitions should be provided for the young, and the State should subsidize organizations for the production of films of real value for the young and the general public. Questions of films should be regulated by International agreement. The Congress passed another resolution that an indeterminate sentence was one of the most efficacious means of social defence, and therefore the laws of each country should determine where and for what cause there should be a maximum duration for an indeterminate sentence. There should be in every case guarantees and rules for the conditional release of prisoners.—Reuter's Special Service.

CROSSWORD



Last Sunday's Solution



ACROSS

1/4 Cause of 3,18, it s Please go for treatment (5,6)

10 Rector charging hundred for rent (4) 11 City junior left out

12 Has to move a long way back for descendants of Muhammad (6)

matter (4)

what crook might be doing with money

13 Cry of anguish during row – becoming more sensitive (8)

15 Carlyle maybe covering original

16 See 28 Down 17 Potter's wife and daughter in valley 19 Tree burning – 27

content partially? 21 Was due to read out

22 Force to stop

misrepresentation go! (4) 24 Crack on, right -English runner going a long way round

26 Cake s smell I m not too sure about (6)

27 One lacking attacked this rich old member of family responsible for 1,4, allegedly

29 Romeo s time for passion (4) 30 Escort out pretty unpleasant person

31 Liberal not present that s handy (2,3)

DOWN

Mariorie - initially

One flaming woman –

kept in picture? That s taking a broad view

Statesman shot African lion (11) See 28

Cycling race at home ground (5) Swimmer in northern city upset about

article (4,3) Little bit extra? Son s grabbed 50! (6) Bit loopy, endlessly untrue rambling –

best say no more! 14 Crazy dame found defending subject

never previously considered (9-2)18 Dead tree involved in trickery with others

ultimately - ecological disaster (9) 20 Kind of rock music essentially gone weird

23 Female Republican in

Georgia s unconventional (6) 25 Scorer Henry cuts a

tragic figure (5) 28/5/16 Share a new doctor - French one didn t hang around

The International Prison Congress today passed a resolution urging the extension of the probation system and of the power of the courts to inflict lines. The development of machinery for the purpose of eliminating as far as possible, imprisonment in default of the payment of fines was also urged. —Reuter's Special Service.

PROBATION SYSTEM

EXTENSION URGED

BY PRISON

CONGRESS

LONDON, AUG.

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

Sunday magazine

New Delhi, August 10, 2025

The Pioneer DE AGENDA

The future is green energy, sustainability, renewable energy. - Arnold Schwarzenegger



AS INDIA RACES AHEAD IN ITS ENERGY TRANSITION JOURNEY, THE PETROLEUM MINISTER'S MESSAGE WAS CLEAR: ETHANOL IS HERE

TO STAY, AND THE COUNTRY IS NOT JUST CATCHING UP WITH GLOBAL STANDARDS—IT IS SETTING NEW ONES

Dispelling misinformation and false nar-tural residues like parali and bamboo into ethanol, providing a win-win solution for clean fuel, pollution control, and farmer income. He further highlighted the remarkable growth of maize-based ethanol — from 0 per cent in 2021-22 to 42 per cent this year - calling it a transformational shift.

Responding to a question by The Pioneer printer and publisher Kushan Mitra, on the success of the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme, Puri highlighted that ethanol blending gained serious momentum only after 2014, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office. In 2014, ethanol blending was merely 1.53 per cent.

Puri said by 2022, India achieved 10 percent blending, five months ahead of schedule. The original target of 20 percent blending (E20) by 2030 was advanced to 2025 and has already been achieved in the current Ethanol Supply Year (ESY). This success, the Minister noted, was made possible through sustained policy reforms such as guaranteed pricing for ethanol, allowing multiple feedstocks, and rapidly expanding distillation capacity across the country.

On the issue of Flex-Fuel Vehicles (FFVs), Puri said that the Indian automobile industry has already demonstrated its

Indian OEMs have begun rolling out prototypes for E85-compatible vehicles. Continuous consultations have been held with the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) and other major auto manufacturers, and the direction is clear - progressively moving towards higher ethanol blends.

There has not been a single case of engine failure or breakdown since E20 became a base fuel 10 months ago. Look at Brazil — they've run on E27 for years without issues," Puri stated

The Minister said Ethanol Blending Roadmap (2020-25) has laid a strong foundation, and the successful rollout of E20 five years ahead of target — demonstrates both industry readiness and consumer acceptance. The country will now gradually scale towards E25, E27, and E30 in a phased, calibrated manner with the support of BIS standards and fiscal

Puri stressed that ethanol blending is not just about mixing rue! — It is about empowering Annadatas by turning them the direction of self-sufficiency, but it's into Urjadatas, reducing crude imports, saving foreign exchange, creating green jobs, and honouring India's climate commitments. Over the past 11 years, ethanol procurement has enabled ₹1.21 lakh crore

INDIA IS THE WORLD'S THIRD-LARGEST ENERGY CONSUMER WITH A DEMAND OF ABOUT 5.4 MILLION BARRELS OF OIL PER DAY. INDIA TODAY IMPORTS 80 PER CENT OF ITS OIL AND 50 PER CENT OF ITS NATURAL **GAS NEEDS**

income to farmers, reduced crude imports by 238.68 lakh metric tons, and saved ₹1.40 lakh crore in foreign exchange.

Speaking about India's efforts in Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), Puri said the Ministry is working closely with oil marketing companies, airlines, and global technology partners to develop and scale up SAF. Like ethanol, India will adopt a phased approach to SAF adoption. A blending mandate has already been initiated, with a target of one percent blending for international flights by 2027, increasing to 2 percent by 2028, and scaling further as supply stabilises. He also cited the example of the Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. Refinery in Panipat, which is using used cooking oil to produce SAF — showcasing India's innovative and sustainable pathway forward.

Further Puri said India already have 113 compressed biogas (CBG) plants operating and another 73 under construction. If vou look at the car models coming onto the market, many new ones are CNG-compatible. So that's a success story.

Puri pointed to India's liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) distribution as another example of progress in energy access. Today, we are running against all statistics. We have 33.5 crore LPG connections in the country, including 10.5 crore under the *Ujjwala Yojana*, yet we still import about 60 per cent of our LPG. While acknowledging the import dependency, Puri reaffirmed that the country is taking decisive steps to increase domestic production. Yes, our production is going up by 18 per cent per year, but even there we are still importing around 50 per cent, he said.

Minister Puri stressed on the country's commitment to Atmanirbhar Bharat or self-reliant India. A country like India, which has these challenges, is moving in going to take time," he stated. "Meanwhile, we will import, we will increase our production, and we've already diversified our import sources."

CONTINUED ON >> PII

From Gaushalas to Global Climate Leadership



(From L-R) Dr W Selvamurthy from Amity University; Mr CV Raman from Maruti Suzuki; Mr Binod Anand from WCoop-EF; Dr Meenesh Shah, Chairman of NDDB; Mr S K Shukla, President, UP Distillers Association; Mr Mahesh Girdhar of EverEnviro.; Mr Deodatta Deshpande of Thermax Bioenergy

BY TEAM AGENDA

In the changing story of Bharat, there are leaders who talk of change and leaders who make it happen. For rural India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been that change-maker — turning what was once dismissed as waste into the fuel of our future. From the humble gobar of our gaushalas to the heaps of crop residue in our fields, he has shown the world that the path to Atmanirbhar Bharat can be lit by the blue flame of our own resources. At the Biofuels360 Summit in New Delhi, organised by The Pioneer Group, this vision came alive. Moderating the flagship session, Binod Anand — Executive Chairman of the World Cooperation Economic Forum said: "This is not just about gas. This is about giving our villages the power to produce, the pride to own, and the wealth to share. It's Sahkar Se Samriddhi in its purest form.'

In the dusty courtyards of rural Bharat, where mornings begin with the bells of grazing cows and the hum of harvest, something transformational is taking shape. The same gobar that once only plastered chulhas and courtyard walls is now driving buses, powering tractors, lighting homes, and putting hard cash into farmers' pockets.

This is compressed bio gas (CBG) a fuel born from digesting organic waste like dung, crop residues, market leftovers, and kitchen scraps. In the process, it delivers two treasures: bio-CNG, identical in properties to CNG, and bio-slurry, a natural fertiliser that revives our soils and reduces dependence on imported urea. Every tonne of CBG prevents about 2.7 tonnes of CO2-equivalent emissions, directly contributing to India's Panchamrit and Net Zero 2070 goals.

As moderator, Binod Anand anchored the discussion with a sharp reminder of India's energy journey since Independence: "Rural India remained only a consumer, not a producer of energy. But since 2014, the story has turned. With GOBARdhan, SATAT, and the cooperative push under Sahkar Se Samriddhi, we're seeing decentralised energy models that cost a fraction of the old mega projects and start paying back in months. For rural Bharat — rich in biomass and cattle wealth — this is a chance to turn every panchayat into a power producer and every farmer into a shareholder in the

nation's energy future.'

The cooperative model is the spine of this revolution. Panchayats coordinate feedstock collection. Farmer Producer Organisations and dairy cooperatives pool resources, Self-Help Groups run slurry-based businesses, and state federations link plants to oil companies for guaranteed gas offtake under SATAT.

Indore proves the point. Under GOBARdhan, its Municipal Corporation runs a Bio-CNG plant processing hundreds of tonnes of wet waste daily, producing 15-17 tonnes of Bio-CNG for and

compost for farmers. Landfills have vanished, jobs have sprung up, and the

city's air has grown cleaner — all because Indore treated waste as a resource.

The session also stressed that while the Centre has laid the foundation, states must accelerate the momentum — through clear renewable energy targets, land and low-interest loans for cooperatives, fast-track clearances, guaranteed gas purchase agreements, and municipal-panchayat convergence cells.

The role of ethanol in India's net-zero transition



(From L-R) Mr Sanjay Ganjoo of IFGE; Mr Vikram Gulati of Toyota Kirloskar Motors; Dr Nutan Kaushik from Amity; Ms Vibha Dhawan, Director General of TERI; Dr KVTS Pawan Kumar of The Catalysts; Mr. Ravi Gupta of Shree Renuka Sugars; Mr S K Shukla, President of UP Distillers Association

security, enhance rural incomes,

BY TEAM AGENDA

The Pioneer

Bioethanol offers a win-win for Indiadiversifying the sugar industry, boosting farmer incomes, reducing fuel imports, and cutting emissions. By turning crops and residues into clean energy, it drives rural prosperity, supports sustainability, and strengthens energy security, making it a vital pillar of India's economic and environmental future.

The Pioneer Biofuels360 Summit

hosted highly engagand ing thought-provoking discus-

BIOFUELS360° SUMMIT sion on Powering the Transition: Ethanol's Strategic Role in India's Clean Energy Future. The panel convened prominent experts from industry, research, and policy to deliberate on the strategic role of ethanol in India's evolving energy landscape. The discussion was anchored in the recognition that bioethanol is not

and contribute towards climate and sustainability goals. The panel underscored ethanol's

economic and environmental significance. Given that much of the global geopolitical conflict revolves around oil, making energy self-sufficiency an imperative for India. With its favourable climate, biodiversity, and agricultural productivity, India has a unique natural advantage in producing ethanol. At the same time, the discussion acknowledged persistent challenges, including production costs, storage infrastructure, dispensing mechanisms, and public debates over the safety of E20 for existing and older vehicles.

India's auto industry has been proactively preparing for the rollout of E20 fuel, with most new vehicles now engineered to run safely and efficiently on 20 per cent ethanol blends. Manufacturers have adapted engine designs, fuel systems, and materials to handle higher ethanol content, while investing in testing and certification to ensure performance, durability, and compliance with emission norms.

merely a cleaner fuel alternative but also a significant economic driver, with The headline of the session, undoubtthe potential to strengthen energy edly, was the phenomenal progress

ing programme, which has expanded from 35 crore litres in 2013-14 to a projected 1,000 crore litres this year. making it the fastest-growing ethanol blending programme in the world.

already made by India's ethanol blend-

Grain-based ethanol production in India, which began modestly in 2017-18 with just 10 crore litres, is set to touch 800 crore litres now, driven largely by proactive government policies. A key factor driving this growth has been a shift in feedstock patterns, particularly the replacement of waterintensive paddy with maize-a crop offering better ethanol recovery and higher returns for farmers.

Minimum support price (MSP) of maize has risen to sustainable levels, mitigating farmer losses thanks to the ethanol blending programme. With seed quality improvements to match global standards, India could reach 100 million tonnes of maize in the coming decades. However, realising this potential would require investment in mechanisation, given India's small landholdings, better logistics to reduce costs for both farmers and industry as well as strong preservation techniques.

CONTINUED ON >> PII







"CBG is an enabler of rural energy independence"

Excerpts from the speech delivered by NDDB Chairman Dr Meenesh Shah during the Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) Session at The Pioneer Biofuels 360 Summit

It is an honour to be part of The Pioneer Biofuels360 Summit — a platform that is uniting the best minds to reimagine India's energy future. I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to chair this session on Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) — a critical pillar of India's circular bio-economy and a game-changer in the rural energy landscape. At the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), our mission has always been holistic — to ensure that the prosperity of rural dairy farmers goes hand-in-hand with environmental stewardship and national priorities like energy security.

For decades, NDDB has supported millions of smallholder farmers in building a robust, cooperative-driven dairy sector. Today, we are advancing that legacy by embedding circularity and climate resilience into rural systems. Our work in manure management

exemplifies this transformation. In 2018, NDDB initiated the concept of a Manure Value Chain with the development of multiple models to promote efficient dung utilisation. The Zakariyapura model introduced household biogas plants in a clustered manner at farmers' backyards, enabling them to use biogas for cooking and process surplus slurry at centralised slurry processing centres - now operating in 10 locations across various states — creating additional income avenues for small and

The Varanasi model involves centralised dung procurement for a 4000 m³ biogas plant, where biogas is utilised for steam generation in a dairy plant boiler, and the slurry is processed into highquality organic fertilisers. The Banas model focuses on producing Compressed Biogas (CBG) from dung, which is then used as a vehicular fuel, serving as a sustainable alternative to CNG.

Further to scale up NDDB's concept of manure



new company NDDB Mrida Ltd. in the year 2022. Further, in the year 2024 Suzuki's Indian subsidiary Suzuki R&D Centre India Pvt Ltd has invested in Mrida, which is operating as a joint

Further, at NDDB, we are converting a traditional waste stream cattle dung into a tripleimpact solution which is clean energy in the form of biogas and CBG; organic fertilisers like Phosphate Rich Organic Manure (PROM), Fermented Organic Manure (FOM) and many other liquid fertilisers and most importantly, enhanced livelihoods for dairy farmers.

When NDDB started in 2018, only 25 domestic biogas plants were installed in Mujkuva village of Anand district which has now resulted into over 30000 plants and counting - across cooperative dairies, gaushalas, and individual farms across the country - designed to capture and utilise dung efficiently.

NDDB is able to pump in more than ₹110 crore investment through domestic biogas plants



The Pioneer Printer & Publisher Kushan Mitra lights the lamp at the The Pioneer Biofuels360° Summit in the august presence of NDDB Chairperson Dr Meenesh Shah

running two large scale biogas plants successfully. These plants are providing biogas for thermal application as well as vehicular fuel in the form of CBG. We have contributed more than ₹3 crores to dairy farmers in two years of operation of Varanasi biogas plant by procuring dung.

In partnership with Suzuki we are installing four new CBG plants and in discussion for five more plants. Through these plants we are looking at investment in the range of ₹500-700 crore over next 2-3 years in rural economy. This

sector and an annual pay out of ₹5-7 crore to dairy farmers for the supply of dung.

At the same time dairy cooperatives have shown interest for installation of CBG plants in their respective operational areas. We have standard operating protocols to ensure production of high-quality organic fertilisers from the slurry of CBG/biogas plants. Our initiatives link dung to power, gas to mobility, and slurry to soil health, fostering a closed-loop dairy circular economy.

CBG as the next frontier is more than just an

LET US NOT FORGET — THE GREEN REVOLUTION EMPOWERED FARMERS WITH FOOD SECURITY. THE WHITE REVOLUTION BROUGHT THEM INTO THE MARKET ECONOMY. NOW, THE GREEN **ENERGY REVOLUTION MUST** EMPOWER THEM AS CLIMATE **SOLUTION PROVIDERS**

independence, Low-carbon agriculture, and Reduction of fossil LPG and diesel dependence. With nearly 302 million bovines in India, the CBG potential is enormous. A well-integrated CBG network can fuel milk chilling units, run village

transport, and even power rural micro-grids. NDDB and Mrida are working closely with state governments, cooperatives, and technology partners to integrate CBG into milk logistics, biogas as rural cooking fuel, and even carbon

markets under Article 6 frameworks. To truly scale up this transition, however, we need three things: Policy coherence between agriculture, energy, and rural development; innovative financing models - including cooperatives as energy entrepreneurs; and techenabled traceability to verify emissions reduc-

tion and link to carbon credit platforms. The Pioneer Biofuels360 Summit is exactly the kind of forum where such integration becomes possible - where innovators, bankers, policymakers, and grassroots practitioners co-create viable solutions. Let us not forget — the Green Revolution empowered farmers with food security. The White Revolution brought them into the market economy. Now, the Green Energy Revolution must empower them as climate solution providers.

In this journey, NDDB reaffirms its commitment to put farmers at the heart of India's clean energy transition, to build resilient rural economies through dairy circularity, and to fuel India's future

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

And The Pioneer Biofuel360 Award Goes to...



Amity University Senior Vice President, Abhay K Chauhan received the award in the category of 'ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN BIOFUELS RESEARCH' Amity has demonstrated a sustained commitment to biofuels research, with numerous publications in reputed journals on advanced biofuel technologies, second-generation ethanol, biodiesel production, and biomass valorisation





THEYEAR'. India's first B2B online marketplace dedicated to both biofuel andraw-material trading helping bridge a fragmented supply chain with tech-enabled aggregation of suppliers, manufacturers, and consumers. The award was received by Kishan Karunakaran, Founder and Chief **Executive Officer of BUYOFUEL.**



Zakariyapura village in Gujarat got the award in the category of 'EXCELLENCE IN BIOFUELS ADOPTION AT VILLAGE LEVEL'. Zakariyapura has shown how a small village can lead big change. With strong community involvement and support from NDDB & local groups, the village has successfully switched from traditional fuels to clean, renewable biofuels. This shift has helped reduce pollution and made the village more energy- independent. Zakariyapura is now an inspiring example for rural areas across India in adopting sustainable energy. The award was received by villagers Varshaben Parmar, Champaben Parmar and Madhuben Parmar



Indore Clean Energy was awarded in the category of 'LARGEST SUCCESSFUL BIOFUELS DEPLOYMENT IN URBAN BHARAT'. Indore Clean Energy has built the largest and most successful urban biofuel initiative in the country. By converting city waste into clean biofuels using advanced technology, it has played a crucial role in improving Indore's waste management system while also addressing the city's energy needs. Their efforts have helped reduce landfill waste, lower emissions, and promote the use of renewable energy in urban settings. The Award was received by Mahesh Girdhar.



Assam Bamboo Ethanol Pvt Ltd received the award in the category of 'BIOFUEL PRODUCTION INNOVATION'. Assam Bamboo Ethanol Pvt Ltd has been recognised for its pioneering work in producing Ethanol from Bamboo - an abundant

resource in the Northeast. By using advanced, eco-friendly technology, the company has developed a sustainable model of biofuel production that is both region-specific and scalable. Award was received by Dr Pranab Kumar Nath of ABEPL.

FROM AGENDA COVER

"India's ethanol journey is unstoppable"

India is the world's third-largest energy consumer with a demand of about 5.4 million barrels of oil per day. India today imports 80 per cent of its oil and 50 per cent of its natural gas needs. India is now importing oil and gas from as many countries as possible, about 40 countries now, to meet its demand.

As India races ahead in its energy transition journey, the Petroleum Minister's message was clear: ethanol is here to stay, and the country is not just catching up with global standards—it is setting new ones. The Fireside Chat between Puri and Mitra was part of the larger Pioneer Biofuels 360 Summit, a platform that brought together policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators to discuss the future of sustainable fuels.

The role of ethanol in India's net-zero...

The future lies in flex fuel vehicles and advanced biofuels, particularly 2G ethanol derived from crop residues-a solution that reduces stubble burning while providing an alternative fuel source. There is the need for comprehensive research to ensure the right crop varieties are

made available to farmers, offering both biomass and food in optimal ratios as well as into making 2G and 3G ethanol solutions viable. From a technology standpoint, the panel examined advancements in enzyme science that are lowering costs and improving efficiency and promise to further enhance the economics of ethanol production. In conclusion, the panel agreed that ethanol must be viewed not in isolation, but as part of a broader clean energy and circular

economy framework. Its success depends on integrating feedstock diversification, technological innovation, farmer incentives, and infrastructure development, while ensuring alignment with ESG principles and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The discussion reinforced ethanol's potential to be both an economic catalvst and an environmental solution-if pursued with strategic vision, scientific rigour, and stakeholder collaboration.





















STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

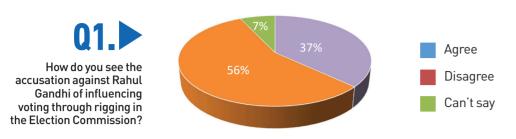
THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON RAHUL GANDHI POLL FRAUD

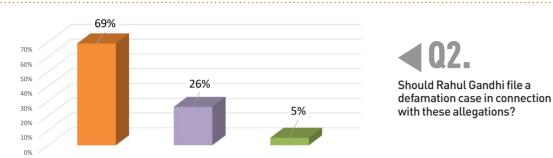
56% reject rigging claim, but want Rahul Gandhi to legally defend himself.

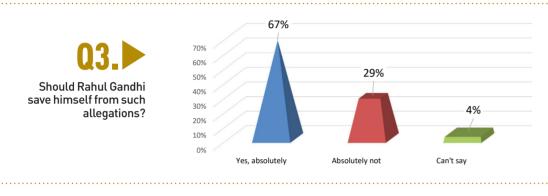
The Daily Guardian Survey conducted with a sample size of 312 respondents—95% male and 5% female—reveals a complex public response to the recent allegations against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. While 56% of participants disagreed with the accusation that he at-

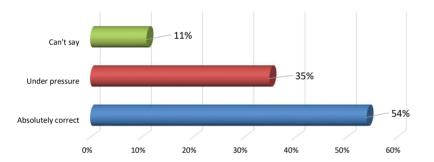
Yes, absolutely

tempted to influence voting via the Election Commission, 37% believed the charge to be valid. Despite the majority dismissing the allegation, a striking 69% supported the idea of Gandhi filing a defamation case, and 67% felt he should actively protect himself from such claims.









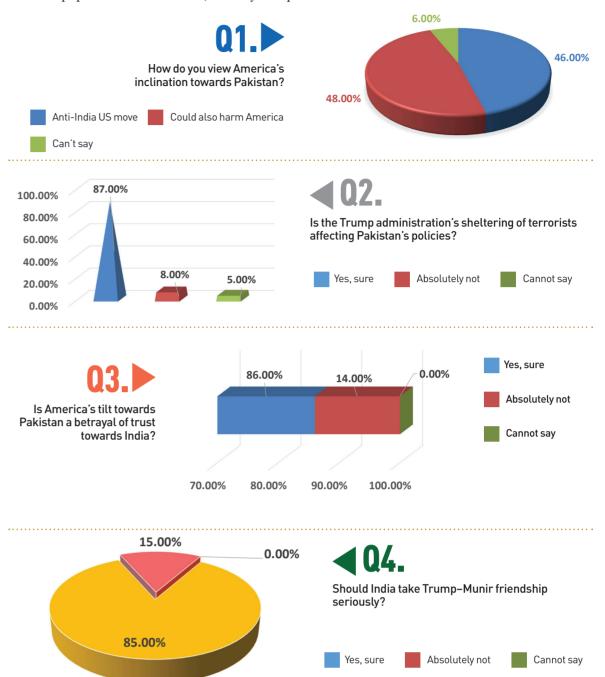
How do you see the special intensive revision (SIR) of the voter list in Bihar?

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON TRUMP PAKISTAN CONNECTION

87% believe that Trump administration's sheltering of terrorists affecting Pakistan's policies

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh criticised PM Modi's "special relationship" claim with Donald Trump, citing Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir's repeated U.S. visits and Trump's praise for Pakistan. Munir, hosted by Trump

in June, is set to visit again, highlighting deepening U.S.-Pakistan ties post-Pahalgam terror attack and four-day India-Pakistan conflict.



INDIA bloc unites against 'vote theft', targets Election Commission

CONTINUED FROM P1

among top leaders of some parties, it was decided to field an opposition candidate for the vice-presidential election. Leaders opined cussions on its candidate. that, given the BJP's conduct in recent years, there could be no joint candidate with the ruling party.

The Election Commission has announced September 9 as the polling date for the vice-presidential election, following the surprise resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar on health grounds. Nominations opened on August 7, and the last date for filing is August 21. The INDIA bloc has now begun serious dis-

With Rahul Gandhi host ing the INDIA bloc meeting-attended by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, CPP chairperson Sonia Gandhi, KC Venugopal, and other senior party leaders—the Congress has signalled that the opposi-

stranded in flood-hit Uttarkashi

566 evacuated, 300 still

tion is in no mood to accept the election results without challenge. Instead, it plans to intensify its demand for transparent and fair elec-

focus on raising questions about the fairness of polls, the transparency of the electoral system, and the SIR exercise, which they allege is being used to disenfranchise voters ahead of crucial assembly elections.

Shah hits out at opposition over SIR, Operation Sindoor

CONTINUED FROM P1

tion," he asserted, lauding the Narendra Modi-led NDA government's approach to national security.

The Home Minister also took aim at RJD leader According to sources, Tejashwi Yadav, accusthe united INDIA bloc will ing him and his family of neglecting the development of the Mithilanchal region during their years in power. "Apart from hoo-

SIR POLITICAL ROW IN BIHAR

- Opposition alleges voter roll revision may delete large numbers of voters.
- Shah says SIR aims to remove infiltrators from
- Claims infiltrators form part of Opposition's vote
- Notes SIR first introduced by Jawaharlal Nehru; conducted again in 2003.

liganism, running gangs, ransom, what have you kidnapping, demanding done for the development

of Mithilanchal?" Shah asked.

Earlier in the day, Shah, alongside Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, laid the foundation stone for the re- INDIA bloc warning that development of the Janaki the exercise could lead to Mata Temple at Punaura mass voter deletions, while Dham, believed to be the birthplace of Goddess Sita. He congratulated devotees

on the project, calling it a

landmark for the region's cultural heritage. The political row over the

SIR has dominated both Parliament and Bihar's political landscape in recent days, with the Opposition the government insists it is a necessary step to ensure the integrity of the electoral

Govt withdraws Income-Tax Bill

CONTINUED FROM P1

gust, to provide a consolidated and updated draft. Officials said the move was aimed at avoiding confusion caused by multiple versions of the Bill.

The Select Committee's 4,584-page report, presented in the Lok Sabha on 21 July, proposed tightening definitions, removing ambiguities, and aligning the legislation with existing legal frameworks. The suggested changes include permitting refunds even if tax returns are filed late, harmonising the definition of micro and small enterprises with the MSME Act, and clarifying rules for non-profits on terms such as 'income' versus 'receipts',

anonymous donations, and the deemed application concept.

Other recommendations address advance ruling fees, TDS on provident funds, low-tax certificates, and penalty powers. The panel stressed the need for drafting corrections based on stakeholder input to

ensure clarity and minimise disputes. The new legislation, first tabled by Sitharaman on 13 February, is intended to replace the complex Income-Tax Act of 1961, making the law more concise, reducing litigation, and offering significant relief to taxpayers. The government initiated the review during the July 2024 Budget to modernise and simplify India's direct tax

EC to Rahul

CONTINUED FROM P1

conclusions and absurd allegations — in which case. he should apologise to the nation." The source added that Rahul Gandhi had two options: either sign the declaration or apologise to the nation for raising "absurd"

allegations against the ECI. The source further claimed that in the past, Rahul Gandhi had never sent any selfsigned letter to the Commission. "Whatever reply we give is to other entities, and every time he disowns it," the source said.

"For example, he raised the Maharashtra issue in December 2024. Some advocate from the AICC wrote to us. Our reply dated 24 December 2024 is on our website, but Rahul Gandhi says we never replied," the source added.Responding to the poll panel, Rahul Gandhi said, "I am a politician. What I say to the people is my word. I am saying it publicly — take it as my oath. Interestingly, they haven't denied the information."

Tariffs & Nobel: Ex-diplomat links Trump's twin obsessions

CONTINUED FROM P1

stance, emphasising the need for continued negotiations on the trade deal. Speaking to ANI, he said, 'We hope that as we go forward, the negotiations on the trade deal may still be continued. We hope that over time, we can overcome this kind of hitch in the relationship. We have been through many ups and downs in India-US relations, so perhaps we should keep it in perspective and

not panic.' He advised against overreacting, noting that India has navigated similar situations in the past. "We should not overreact to this situation and should keep our heads

down, hoping to overcome this obstacle as we have done in the past. But there is no denying that this is a severe development and could have major consequences for the Indian economy. The government and the people of India must be prepared for those consequences," said

On the reaction of the Global South to the US tariffs, he added, "There is no doubt that in facing this kind of new situation, cooperation among some of the major developing countries and emerging economies, like Brazil and India, will be very important."

Earlier on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a call from Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The two leaders exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual interest.

"We are committed to deepening our strategic partnership, including in trade, energy, tech, defence, health, and more. A strong, people-centric partnership between Global South nations benefits everyone," PM Modi said in a post on X.

The Brazilian President, in his own post on X, shared that India and Brazil had "reaffirmed the importance of defending multilateralism, the need to address the challenges of the current situation, and to explore

possibilities for greater integration between the two countries.

Earlier, China voiced its opposition to the US tariffs on India. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun, responding to media queries during a press briefing, called the move an "abuse of tariffs."

On Wednesday, the White House issued an Executive Order imposing an additional 25 percentage points in tariffs on Indian goods, raising the total levy to 50%. The administration cited national security and foreign policy concerns, pointing specifically to India's continued imports of Russian oil. On Thursday (US local time), President Trump said there would be no trade negotiations with India until the tariff dispute was resolved, following his administration's decision to double tariffs on Indian imports.

The US State Department said on Thursday that "India is a strategic partner" and that Washington is engaging with New Delhi in "full and frank dialogue," even as relations remain tense amid the tariff dispute.

When asked whether China and other BRICS nations are seeking to organise a pushback against US trade measures, the State Department said that dialogue with India "will continue."

TDG NETWORK

The Uttarakhand government on Friday announced the restoration of mobile network services in Harsil Valley, Uttarkashi district, following disruptions caused by flash floods and landslides

disaster, in Uttarkashi on Friday. ANI

"Mobile network has been restored in Harsil Valley due to the tireless efforts of the state government on the instructions of the Chief Minister," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said.

Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami comforts a victim rescued from the Dharali mudslide

In Chamoli, work is underway on a war footing to clear debris from the Badrinath National Highway near Bhanrepani, blocked since Thursday due to a landslide. "The work of opening the road by machines is going on a war footing," Chamoli Police said in a post on X.

State authorities confirmed the evacuation of 566 people from Dharali and Harsil till noon, with nearly 300 more stranded individ-

uals still being rescued. The Indian Army has deployed dog squads, drones, and ground-penetrating radar to aid the search and rescue operations. Director General of Police

(DGP) Deepam Seth visited Uttarkashi to inspect the disaster site, review relief efforts, and issue instructions to speed up operations. After meeting the Chief Minister at Matli helipad, Seth travelled to Harsil and held a review meeting with po-

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

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EMPOWERING BHARAT'S FUTURE: THE SWADESHI APPROACH TO SELF-RELIANCE

OPINION

SHIVPRAKASH



he proposed 25% tariff proposed by the United States of America (USA), to pressurise Bharat for a unfair trade deal is not only irrational but also a direct attack on Bharat's rural agricultural economy and self-reliance. In this context. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for "Swadeshi" (indigenous products) and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (selfreliant Bharat) is no longer iust an emotional appeal but a strategic response.

Bharat's rural economy is not limited to just farms and the dairy sector. It is a socio-economic structure that includes small farmers, women's self-help groups, cooperative societ-

ies, and traditional production chains. About 86% of Bhartiya farmers are small and marginal, with land holdings of less than two hectares. Over 8 crore rural families in the country are associated with the dairy sector, most of whom are women and landless farm-

This entire group is highly vulnerable and relies heavily on government support for their livelihood. The entire structure involving such a vast population depends on Minimum Support Price (MSP), subsidies, and customs duties.

PM Modi has expressed his commitment to protect the interests of agriculture and dairy, which are the backbone of the rural economy. Safeguarding the tariff structure, strengthening local price structures, and empowering farmer producer organizations, cold storage facilities, and processing units are among the government's top priorities.

The government is fully committed in empowering women economically. ensuring nutritional security, preserving traditional

become costlier for Ameri-

can consumers. The US

government earns revenue

from these tariffs, but the

higher cost discourages

imports, impacting foreign

exporters like Indian busi-

THE TRADE DEFICIT

One of the main reasons

the US has imposed this

tariff is the growing trade

imbalance between the two

nations. India has consis-

tently maintained a trade

surplus with the US, mean-

ing it exports far more than

it imports. Last year alone,

India had a trade surplus of

From the American per-

spective, this isn't ideal. The

US wants to reduce this gap

and balance the trade re-

lationship. Many analysts

believe that the tariff is a

pressure tactic to push India

into a bilateral trade agree-

ment that would allow US

companies more access and

favorable conditions in the

around \$40 billion.

TRIGGER

agricultural diversity, and safeguarding rural life and livelihoods in every possible

In light of these concerns, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to Kashi, raised the slogan of Swadeshi(indigenous) to the people of the country. Referring to Operation Sindoor, he stated that the world has witnessed the strength of indigenous weapons. The Prime Minister described this as the power of self-reliance in Bharat's defence sector.

There is an atmosphere

of uncertainty and instability in the global economy. To overcome this instability, all nations are adopting policies that protect their national interests. In such a scenario, how can Bharat remain an exception? We are on the path to becoming the world's third-largest economy. In this context, we must remain vigilant about our national interests, as well as the livelihoods of our farmers, small industries, and youth.

To achieve the goal of becoming the third-largest economy, all political parties, intellectuals, and society as a whole must rise above partisan lines and unite in proclaiming the mantra of Swadeshi. We must adopt Swadeshi and promoteSwadeshi.

Over the past decade, Bharat's economy has steadily climbed to new



heights. In 2013-2014, Bharat was ranked as the 11th largest economy of the world. Today, it stands at the fourth position and is rapidly moving toward becoming the third largest. Our growth rate is progressing at a strong pace of 6.4%. Bharat's influence has expanded across all sectors, including defence and agriculture. Bharat's participation in the global market has also increased

Because of our poor welfare policies, more than 24 crore people have been elevated beyond the poverty line. Bharat has made progress in all areas, including infrastructure development. The standard of our basic amenities is reaching world-class levels.

significantly.

Referring to the success of *Operation Sindoor*, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that while we worship Lord Bholenath, when the need arises, we also become Kaal Bhairav for our security.

Bharat's rising economic progress, robust security policy, and growing global influence are also generating envy toward India among some nations of the world.

The agricultural system in the United States is industrialised, subsidy-supported, and operates on a large scale. In contrast, Bharat's agricultural sector is composed mainly of small landholding farmers. Around 55% of Bharat's population depends on agriculture, the majority of whom live in villages. Agriculture contributes about 15% to Bharat's **Gross Domestic Product** (GDP).

Farming in Bharat is highly dependent on unpredictable weather conditions. Rooted in a labor-intensive system, Bhartiva agriculture cannot be compared to that of the United States. Therefore, countries like the U.S. and Bharat cannot be expected to operate under similar tariff structures.

In Bharat, sectors like textiles, food grains, sugar, dairy, and fisheries are closely linked to agriculture. Forcing Bharat to open up sensitive sectors such as agriculture and dairy to the U.S. would be unreason-

If such a situation arises, Bharat's market will be flooded with cheap American dairy products. Women's self-help groups and cooperative institutions like Amul will face economic distress. Bharat's farmers will be forced to sell their produce at throwaway prices in the market. This could trigger an economic crisis in rural areas, leading to unemployment, migration, and growing discontent.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has introduced numerous policies for agriculture and farmer welfare over the past decade. In the last ten years, the agriculture budget has increased more than fivefold — from 21,933 crore in 2013-2014

to 1.25 lakh crore in 2023-2024.

The cooperative sector in Bharat is also actively working to empower women and strengthen the rural economy. Supporting rural economies, agriculture and farmer welfare, women's safety, the dairy industry, and nurturing the cooperative movement is our national duty — a call that has been strongly voiced by Prime Minister Narendra

Swadeshi is not just a temporary idea — it is the very soul of Bharat. It is the clarion call of Bharat's unity, patriotism, and collective aspirations. The spirit of Swadeshi has manifested itself in various forms throughout Bharat's history. During British colonial rule, it emerged as a powerful tool of resistance symbolised by the burning of foreign clothes and the slogan Vande Mataram, which helped uproot foreign domination.

Even during the tenure of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, when Bharat faced international sanctions after conducting nuclear tests, the country responded with the spirit of Swadeshi. The world was given a fitting reply, powered by the strength of indigenous resolve.

The mantra of Swadeshi awakens a sense of restraint and self-reliance, helping us resist unnecessary dependence on foreign capital. By embracing this principle, we can fuel the growth of our defence industry, increase agricultural productivity, and expand laborintensive industries.

The expansion of public services and core industries under the Swadeshi vision will provide a solid foundation for our economy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for the practical adoption of Swadeshi based on these very principles. By truly integrating it into our lives, we can re-establish Bharat as an invincible force. This is the need of the hour.

Shivprakash is the National Jt.General Secretary (Organisation) of the Bhartiya Janta

US imposes 25% tariff on India: Trade, politics, and the bigger picture

OPINION

DR. AMAN KUMAR SHARMA & SHELU SHARMA



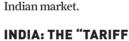
In a significant development that could reshape global trade dynamics, the United States has announced a 25% tariff on selected Indian goods. Alongside this, a new oil-related project and trade deal with Pakistan have emerged, adding layers to an already complex geopolitical and economic scenario.

WHAT IS A TARIFF AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A tariff is a kind of tax or duty imposed by one country on goods imported from another. For example, if an American car priced at 50 lakhs is imported into India and a 100% tariff is applied, the price effectively becomes 1 crore. The extra money

goes to the Indian government, making imported products more expensive and less competitive compared to local alternatives.

In reverse, if Indian goods go to the US and are hit with a 25% tariff, those products



KING"?

Interestingly, the US argues that India itself imposes steep tariffs on imported goods, particularly American products. Items like luxury cars, watches, and electronic gadgets often face 30% to 100% tariffs when entering India. This significantly raises the price and makes them less attractive to Indian consumers, who might then choose similar items from other countries.

The US sees its own 25% tariff as a retaliatory or corrective measure. It's also a signal that India must be more flexible if it wants continued trade cooperation with Washington.

STRATEGIC MOTIVES BEHIND THE MOVE

While trade balance is one reason, there are deeper strategic motivations. India's growing proximity to Russia, especially its continued oil imports and defense ties despite Western sanctions, has been a sore point for the US. Additionally, India's participation in BRICS and discussions within the group to trade in local currencies rather than US dollars is another concern for Washington.

These developments could weaken the dollar's dominance in global trade, which the US naturally wants to prevent. Hence, the 25% tariff can also be interpreted as part of a broader geopolitical game to nudge India away from Russia and China.

IMPACT ON INDIAN

INDUSTRIES The tariff will primarily af-



electronic gadgets often face 30% to 100% tariffs when entering India. This significantly raises the price and makes them less attractive to Indian consumers, who might then choose similar items from other countries.

fect some of India's largest export sectors:

1. Gems and Jewelry-India exports around \$10 billion worth of gems and jewelry to the US annually. With the new tariff, these products will become significantly more expensive in the US market, reducing demand and hurting Indian artisans and exporters.

2. Textiles and Garments-Another vital sector, textiles account for about \$2.5 billion in exports to the US. These products will also become costlier, potentially reducing India's competitiveness compared to countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh.

3. Auto Parts- Indian auto

component manufacturers export parts that are assembled or used for repairs in the US. A tariff will increase prices, affecting demand and eventually production back home.

4. Pharmaceuticals-While not directly targeted (yet), there's concern that Indian pharmaceutical exports, which form a large part of the healthcare ecosystem in the US, could face indirect pressure or future tariff extensions.

The cumulative effect of reduced exports could dent India's GDP, with estimates suggesting a potential impact of 0.2% to 0.5%, depending on how long the tariff remains in place and

WHO PAYS THE PRICE

India, the tariffs will also affect American consumers and companies:

• Apple and Tech Firms-With iPhones now being manufactured in India, the tariff would increase their cost when re-imported into the US. That would raise retail prices for American consumers, causing dissatisfaction and potentially forcing Apple to reevaluate

its supply chain strategies. • Jewelry Retailers- As Indian diamonds and precious stones become pricier, US based jewelers may struggle to maintain margins or pass on the increased cost to consumers, which

could reduce sales. Overall, Americans will end up paying more for several products as a result of these tariffs.

US-PAKISTAN OIL DEAL: ADDING FUEL TO THE FIRE

In a parallel development, the US announced its intention to support Pakistan in a major oil infrastructure project, pledging technical and economic cooperation. Additionally, Pakistan may be granted tariff exemptions

on certain exports to the US. Some experts view this as a geopolitical strategy to strengthen ties with Pakistan and counter Chinese influence in the region, especially via CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor). It's also a message to India highlighting that the US has other partners in South Asia and that India must not take the US rela-

tionship for granted. Cheaper Pakistani exports to the US could compete directly with Indian products, especially in textiles and garments. If Pakistani products become cheaper due to tariff exemptions, Indian products may lose market share, further intensifying the impact of the US tariff.

WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR INDIA?

India now faces a strategic crossroads. It must decide whether to:

1. Negotiate a Bilateral

Deal - The US clearly wants a trade agreement that gives its companies more market access and reduces India's high tariffs on American products. If both sides reach a compromise, some of the current tensions may ease.

2. Explore New Markets - With a possible decline in US-bound exports, India must look for alternative markets. Opportunities exist in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia (e.g., Vietnam, Indonesia) where demand for Indian goods is growing.

3. Reform Tariff Policies - India may consider recalibrating its own tariff structure, especially if it wants to be seen as a more open and cooperative trade partner

CONCLUSION

globally.

The 25% tariff imposed by the US on Indian goods is not just about trade it's about leverage, influence, and geopolitics. While it may be seen as a penalty for trade imbalances or India's closeness to Russia, it also reflects America's shifting priorities in the South Asian region.

India must respond with a balanced mix of diplomacy, economic strategy, and policy reform. Whether it chooses negotiation, diversification, or both, the goal must be to protect its economic interests without compromising its geopolitical autonomy.

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REFLECTIONS

Hits and misses in the one nation, one election idea

Targeted reforms of the electoral process can preserve the strengths of India's vibrant, multi-level democracy

ver the past decade, the Narendra Modi government has embraced a series of "One Nation" policies aimed at replacing India's diverse patchwork of state-specific policies with uniform, national schemes. From the Goods and Services Tax ("One Nation, One Tax") to the portability of subsidised rations ("One Nation, One Ration Card"), the impulse has been toward centralisation and standardisation

Now, the government is pursuing one of the most controversial of these projects: One nation, one election. This proposal seeks to replace India's staggered electoral calendar with simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and all state assemblies. The idea has featured in Modi's speeches for years but was given a boost in March 2024, when a high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind endorsed the idea. In December, the government introduced the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill to give the Election Commission of India (ECI) the authority to implement such a system. The Bill is currently being reviewed by a joint parliamentary committee.

Modi and his BJP colleagues have long argued that frequent polls disrupt governance, drain resources, and induce short-term populism. India's current electoral calendar ensures that some part of the country is almost always in campaign mode. Proponents argue that constant elections constitute an undue burden on the State's coffers. And the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) — an informal set of norms to ensure a level-playing field during the cam-

paign period — is cited as a source of "policy paralysis". There is obvious appeal to aligning India's staggered election calendar, but there are less disruptive, less dramatic solutions to the underlying problems the government wishes to solve.

The case for simultaneity: The proposed Constitutional amendment would overhaul India's electoral framework. It introduces a one-time transitory provision to dissolve all state assemblies, so their elections coincide with the next Lok Sabha polls, thereafter locking both into a single five-year cycle. If a government — state or national — dissolves mid-term, fresh elections would be held only to complete the remainder of the original term.

Supporters of this far-reaching reform advance three main arguments. First, simultaneous elections will yield savings in time, money, and bureaucratic resources. Political leaders and government machinery, freed from perpetual campaigning. could spend more time on governance. Voters, especially migrants and students, would require less travel.

Proponents also point to reduced campaign costs and a lighter administrative burden. Second, fewer elections — they argue — would mean less voter fatigue and greater turnout. Third, they contend that aligned elections would enhance governance efficiency. With the MCC in force less frequently, governments could avoid frequent halts to new projects, and coordination between state and national administrations might improve, particularly if concurrent elections produced aligned political outcomes.

The problems with one-size-fits-all: These arguments have merit, but each is weaker or more complicated — than advertised. On time savings, the real issue is less about the electoral calendar than about campaign strategy. The BJP, like other parties before it, has

deliberately "nationalised" even the most local contests by deploying its top leaders in subnational campaigns. This is a political choice, not a structural necessity. Staggered elections need not mean the constant diversion of national leadership if parties invested in strong state-level leaders

In terms of costs, India's election administration is remarkably efficient given the scale of the exercise. The 2014 general election cost the central government around 0.03% of GDP. Even including state polls, the share over a five-year period is tiny compared to other budgetary items. If the problem is excessive campaign spending, the answer lies in genuine political finance reform. Instead, the govern-

ment has gone in the opposite direction, creating opaque mechanisms for political giving such as the unconstitutional electoral bonds scheme.

There are legitimate arguments to be made about the diversion of government officials and security forces to conduct, supervise, and secure elections on a staggered basis. But central paramilitary forces have doubled in size since the 1990s, easing

concerns about overstretch. Simultaneous elections would require a larger, one-time deployment — creating its own risks.

In terms of voter fatigue, the evidence from India is mixed. State election turnout has risen since the decline of simultaneous polls in the late 1960s, often exceeding turnout in national elections. And in states where assembly polls closely follow general elections, turnout has often increased (albeit by a smaller margin than in non-proximate elections)

On government efficiency, the MCC is more limited than often claimed: It applies only to states holding elections, not nationwide (except during general elections), and does not halt ongoing programmes. Ironically, simultaneous elections could also result in more — not fewer — elections. According to the proposed



India's current electoral calendar ensures that some part of the country is almost always in campaign mode. Proponents argue that constant elections constitute an undue burden on the state's coffers.

amendment, if a government loses a vote of no-confidence and a fresh election is called, the newly elected government will only serve the remainder of the unexpired term. In that case, the efficiency argument for aligned polls no longer holds water.

Risks to democracy and federalism: Bevond these weaknesses lie deeper concerns about democratic design.

First, the essence of parliamentary government is that the executive is continuously accountable to the legislature and, by extension, the public. A shift toward a system resembling fixed terms upends this.

Second, standardising state and national elections on a single cycle creates fewer opportunities for public participation and debate. The current staggered system of elections allows voters to act as a check on a dominant national party.

Finally, the amendment gives the ECI broad discretion to delay polls with few limits and without specifying who governs in the interim. This opens the door to greater central control through President's Rule.

A better way forward: India's current electoral calendar has costs, but there are less intrusive ways to address them. One option is to reform the MCC. The ECI could convene an all-party meeting to shorten the period it is in force or exempt certain categories of government action from its ambit.

A second is to tackle opaque political finance. Parliament could align the ₹2,000 cash cap with the ₹20,000 disclosure threshold — or better vet, ban cash contributions altogether and require Aadhaar verification for all donations.

A third is to streamline election scheduling. The 2024 general election stretched over 43 days — the longest voting period in seven decades. Reducing the number of phases would cut the MCC's duration and decrease disruption without changing the staggered nature of elections.

If the government insists on consolidation. compromise models exist. One possibility is one nation, two elections, whereby state polls would be clustered at the mid-point of Parliament's term, reducing frequency while retain-

{ ANOTHER DAY }

Namita Bhandare

ing separate state and national verdicts. Another option is aligning national and local body elections — saving costs without under

mining the role of state assemblies. Proceed with caution: One nation, one election is a bold idea. But it risks centralising power, weakening federalism, and paradoxically increasing the frequency of elections. The better path is to fix the specific problems the proposal seeks to solve through targeted reforms that preserve the strengths of India's vibrant, multi-level democracy.

These ideas — less flashy but more practical - have received little airtime in the current debate. They would be a promising place to start.

Milan Vaishnav is senior fellow and director of the South Asia program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This column draws on a new co-authored paper, with Caroline Mallory and Annabel Richter, "Does One Nation, One Election' Make Sense for India?" The views expressed are personal

{ SUNDAY SENTIMENTS }

Karan Thapar



Questions that Bihar SIR brings to the fore

India's fashion industry

is starved for innovation

Nishtha

Gautam

issue that will determine how I view the special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls presently underway in Bihar is the number of people whose names have been deleted or — and mark this carefully — have failed to be included I fear the total could be considerably greater than what we've been told. Let's look at the details to see if you share my

On August 1, the Election Commission of India (ECI) released the draft rolls confirming that 6.56 million names have been deleted, nearly 9% of those who were there before the exercise began. This is already disturbing.

As HT has earlier revealed, this means that as things stand there are fewer people registered to vote in Bihar than was the case during the 2024 national elections and the 2020 assembly elections. In fact, with the exception of the two assem-

that. Eurocentrism have been conve-

nient pegs to hang every failure to

innovate or revolutionise. We haven't

got our due only because the world is

against us. It always has been so. This per-

secution complex is a potent amalgam of

would argue that the most important bly elections of 2005, the total number of registered voters in Bihar has increased with every election since 1977. That won't

> per reports that between 2001 and 2011 the number of adults increased by 28.5%. Isn't it odd that the total number of registered voters should fall rather than increase in

However, the situation could get a lot worse and Yogendra Yadav, the national convener of the Bharat Jodo Abhiyan, believes it probably will. He says there are three reasons why the deletions could shoot above 6.56 million. First, the booth level officers may choose not to recommend some or many provisional names. They have the power to do so. Second. many people who have uploaded their forms might not be able to provide the requisite documentation to support them. Again, they will be deleted. Third, electoral registration officers are entitled to make local inquiries and strike out names. They may well. These are three cogent reasons why 6.56 million is only an initial figure. The final one could be sizeably more.

Now so far, we have only been analysing names that have been deleted and their impact on the electoral rolls and the electoral trajectory of Bihar. But what about the names that haven't been included? This aspect of the matter hasn't got the attention it deserves.

Yadav has analysed this using the government's own population projections percentage of the adult popul Bihar on the electoral rolls both before the SIR as well as after the SIR. On June 24. it was 97%. Now, it's 88%. In other words, it has shrunk by 9%. He says that's almost 9.4 million, one-and-a-half times more than the 6.56 million figure reported by ECI as deleted names. In other words, nearly three million people, who should have been included in the electoral rolls, have not been enrolled.

It has been over a week since Yadav published his findings. As yet they haven't been contradicted or even questioned by the ECI. How do you interpret that silence? Frankly, I don't like the sound of it.

Yadav draws two conclusions which I

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE TWO ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS OF 2005, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS IN **BIHAR HAS INCREASED** WITH EVERY ELECTION SINCE 1977. THAT WON'T BE THE CASE WHEN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ARE HELD LATER THIS

will leave you to ponder over. He fears that the total number deleted or not One can only hope he's wrong. However, his second concern should worry all of us. Even if you limit yourself to the nearly 9% deletions that the ECI has confirmed in Bihar, this would equate at a national level — when the SIR happens nationwide - to 90 million names being deleted. That's one-and-a-half-times the population of Britain or France!

Finally. I have no doubt the issue I began with is the right way to judge Bihar's SIR. Do you agree?

> Karan Thapar is the author of Devil's Advocate: The Untold Story. The views expressed are personal.

which, he points out, are often used by be the case when the assembly elections are held later this year. ECI itself to verify and double check its Given Bihar's high fertility rate, this is own electoral rolls. He has worked out the

Milan

Vaishnav

Gender & disability: Need inclusion at intersections nchal Bhateja knew she was break-

ing a barrier as the first blind woman to appear before the Supreme Court in June this year. But, she says, she was "worried about how I would reach the court. How I would read the annexures, if asked. I needed to memorise me which page something was on." Then, she smiles: "It made the process more adventurous.' Fittingly, her client was a woman with

visual disability challenging an ad by the Uttarakhand judicial services. Even though the law stipulates job reservations for people with disability, the ad inexplicably excluded those with visual impairment. "It was so arbitrary," says Anchal. Born with partial vision, Anchal lost her

sight entirely just before her Class 10 board exams. No matter. She was able to get a scribe to write her papers. Two years later. when she took the Class 12 boards, she topped her district with 97.2% When she arrived at the National Law

School, Bengaluru, she recalls, "Nobody asked if I had special needs." How on earth was she supposed to find her way from the hostel to the academic block? "You can't always ask the other students because everybody is in a rush. There were days when I would skip my meals because there was no one to help me find my way to the canteen,"

One in five women globally lives with a disability. Depending on their circumstances as migrants or minorities, Dalit or LBT (lesbian, bisexual and transwomen), these women face multiple challenges.
According to UN Women, women with

disability are two to three times more likely than other women to face violence, very often from their own family. They are three times more likely than men with disability to be illiterate; two times less likely to be employed and three times more likely to have unmet health care needs.

Organisations working on disability issues hire twice as many men with disabil ity as women. In 2017, UN Women found that in seven Asia-Pacific countries, institutions for gender equality had no women with disabilities among their membership.

Public spaces are exclusionary: not footpaths and buildings but also, ironically, spaces meant to be inclusive. At Pride Parade, as a queer woman with disability. Anchal finds herself left out: No volunteers to help, inaccessible, uneven pathways and lack of sign language interpretation.

In the digital space, the websites of 155 organisations such as LinkedIn and key ministries such as civil aviation and labour and employment failed to meet accessibility standards in February this year, and were fined ₹10,000 each by the Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities (CPwD). In June 95 websites had failed to respond. The fine was increased to ₹50,000.

Perhaps the most poignant problem facing women with disability is loneliness. In the past week. CPwD received two complaints from women with disability. The first is a music teacher with locomotor disability who wants to get married but her family will not help since they depend on her earnings. The second, with visual impairment, fell in love but the man abandoned her after cheating her of a large sum of money.

Like women everywhere, safety is a major concern. How do you trust the taxi driver will get you home safely? On a wing and a prayer, says Anchal, who has founded QAble, a platform for building inclusive ecosystems for queer persons with disabilities in India. "If my friend is having a birthday party at night, I am going to go," she says. "You have to live a full life."

Namita Bhandare writes on gender. The views expressed are personal

The jadedness in India's fashion space is sometimes punctuated by some radical and uncompromising experiments from the non-lehenga landscape.

the unwillingness to think beyond instant gratification and the colonial legacy of mass production for the mothership. Almost all of our industries ail from it, and fashion is no different. Our aesthetic expectations from our fashion stalwarts are so low that even a change of format draws accolades. This Gordian knot of subpar demand and supply in terms of innovation is particularly tragic in a country that gave the world

some of the finest textile and embellishment traditions. When our A-list designers conceive "new" ideas, chances are they are borrowed belatedly from their western counterparts. Whether it's the silhouettes, colours, or even the show choreography, the curse of derivative design is upon us. The few exceptions in our fashion firmament prove this rule. And, mostly, they are the enfant terrible of the scene

The behind-the-eight-ball personality of the mainstream Indian fashion industry is all too evident. It has taken more than two decades from when pastels first made an appearance in *lehenga* couture yep, it deserves a separate category of its own — to making them acceptable for a

n India, the Global North and, before bridal lehenga. Designers cautiously pushed the pastel boundary by giving us cocktail, mehendi, or reception lehengas in pinks, whites, olive greens, and mauves. Rarely a ceremonial piece for D-Day. It was not until some film stars decided to ditch the reds and magentas that designers got a shot of courage. This hankering for acceptance and

accolades is design's Achilles heel. Fashion is, at its core, transgressive. By definition, transgression cannot exist in

the arena of exclusive clap-clap, kiss-kiss. Roland Barthes conceptualises fashion as a language one that reveals meaning while hiding it in plain sight. Fashion theorists like Valerie Steele are excited by this possibility of decoding meanings. Where is this process in our landscape?

We are, fortunately, somewhat redeemed by our diversity. The jadedness is sometimes punctuated by some radical and uncompromising experiments in form, material, style and iconography. Such designers, young and bold, are primarily from the non-lehenga landscape. Bridal *lehenga*, mind you, is the song of sirens in Indian fashion that few can resist. This is not the space to name the names, but close observers of the fashion

scene in India can easily guess. Like all spaces, fashion is also deeply riddled with cliques and politicking. Who gets a prime slot at a fashion week is about how well entrenched you are in the organiser's coterie. But there's a special

dishonourable mention for fashion writers, who are all competing with or becoming influencers, who have sold the art of criticism for front row seats and goodie

Where is an Indian Susannah Frankel who called out her close friend Alexander McQueen for not being rigorous enough? Or, a Suzy Menkes intellectually ripping apart John Galliano at the peak of his career at Dior? Does it have something to do with the hierarchy in journalism that sees fashion as a frivolous beat that can do without even an iota of serious engagement? Additionally, access masquerades as knowledge. In that regard, the film critic community shines bright as a beacon of hope. There are at least some names there that stay unfazed by the power of celebrity and the pull of personal friendships.

Nobody benefits from a catty review or blind pieces, but an educated and honest appraisal is the least that the profession demands. Yes, the world of art, in all its forms, is built around arbitrariness and subjectivity, but even that doesn't justify the unquestioning obsequiousness that permeates the writing of professional fashion writers. It is a statistical impossibility that a designer will churn out "brilliant", "luminous", "divine" collections season after season.

We cannot relegate the responsibility of demanding accountability and better performance to anonymous social media handles. Salute to a steady diet of criticism, but we deserve more

> Nishtha Gautam is an author and academician. The views expressed are personal.

{ SUNDAY LETTERS }

On voting age

This is in reference to "Why voting rights at 16 is the way forward" by Karan Thapar (August 3). While such rights may seem progressive, for India, it is premature. Our children are not taught the value of democratic processes, or the power of the vote in our system. This makes voting rights to 16-year-olds a fraught proposition.

Vaibhav Dhule

Mainstream trans rights

This is with reference to 'Trans-rights and need for a nurturing ecosystem' by Lalita Panicker (August 3). The society must accept them as a third gender. Trans folk should be educated and accepted into society to live a dignified life.

Abhilasha Gupta

Trump and India: A new chapter?

This is with reference to "Short-term hiccups, longterm rewards" (August 3). Just a day after slapping tariffs on India, Trump ridiculed our economy and announced a partnership with Pakistan. Trump risks undoing years of Indo-US strategic alignment.

Sanjay Chopra

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The first lesson in foreign relations is, if one bends, kneels and crawls, one is bound to be kicked to the ground. Mr Modi forgot this lesson in his dosti with Mr Trump. Thankfully, there are signs of resistance. India must let America know that it will stand firm, defend its interests, be open to fair trade, and ready to negotiate and conclude agreements, however difficult the process may be

INDIA HAD a Luddite attitude toward foreign trade, especially imports. Despite NAM, South-South, etc., we were wary of foreign countries in the matter of trade and foreign investment. We pulled down the shutters and refused to open them for four decades. We wrote the dreaded manuals for import and export: everything required licenses and permits. Most imports, and some exports, were 'canalised' through state-owned corporations. We had an officer called Chief Controller of Imports and Exports who had an army of officers spread throughout the country whose only business was to issue licenses for imports and exports. It was a profitable business. No one paused to ask the obvious question, 'Alright, we understand why we have a controller of *imports*, but why do

THE BEGINNING

we have a controller of *exports*?'

The policy did not boost exports or build an export-oriented manufacturing sector or augment the foreign exchange reserves. Meanwhile, several countries, whose economies were at the same level as India's, opted for an open economy

and allowed free trade, and became rich. A combination of factors brought the Indian economy to the edge of a financial crisis in 1990-91. India was forced to embrace economic reforms. Trade policy reforms, industrial policy reforms, and a focus on fiscal discipline pulled India back from the brink, and put the economy on a growth path. We lowered

Bull(y) in India's shop

tariffs (the average was brought down to 12 per cent by 2013) and diluted non-tariff barriers. We signed GATT and became a member of the World Trade Organization. We signed Free Trade Agreements. We can confidently say that Indians have *accepted* that the economy must be an open economy.

THE MIDDLE GAME

Shockingly, however, when developing countries have converted to an open economy, the original open economies have turned 'protectionist'. None more than the United States under President Donald Trump. Taking measures to stave off a tempo-

rary crisis is one thing, elevating protectionism to the status of official economic policy is another. Mr Trump is unapologetically in favour of high tariffs, opaque nontariff measures, discouraging imports, balanced trade with every country, and threatening American companies not to locate their factories outside America. He believes that 'tariffs' will accomplish what he desires. He has brought into policymaking weird factors such as bias for Republican-leaning states, prejudice against Canada's leaders, false arguments like the American economy no longer creates new jobs for Americans, and bizarre claims that the burden of high tariffs will be borne by the exporters and not the American consumer. Mr Trump has dismissed proven economic truths such as factor disparities, specialisation, division

of labour, supply chains, etc. Mr Trump has maniacally insisted

that American companies must bring manufacturing back to America. He calls it re-shoring. The Harvard Business Review had an article titled 'Bringing Manufacturing Back to U.S. is Easier Said Than Done'. It said, "the days are long gone when a single vertically-integrated manufacturer could design and manufacture all or most of the sub-assemblies and components it needs to make a finished product. Technology is just too complicated, and it is impossible to possess all the skills that are necessary in just one place." Mr Jeffry Sachs described Mr Trump as an "unsophisticated" person who does not and cannot understand the complexities of manufacturing in the 21st century.

Mr Trump has weaponised tariffs to 'reward' countries that have keeled over (Australia, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea) and 'punish' countries that stood firm (Canada, France, United Kingdom, Brazil). India was in the 'undecided' column until Mr Trump imposed a steep tariff on steel, aluminium and copper, and a base tariff of 50 per cent on Indian goods (with some exemptions and a lagged effect) that included a penalty for buying Russian oil. India responded with 'we will take necessary measures'.

THE LIKELY END

India cannot, obviously, bend over. Nor does India need to be defiant. We

must clearly declare our willingness to negotiate however long and painful the process may be. The laws of economics will force Mr Trump to reconsider his weaponisation of tariffs: high tariffs will increase prices of hundreds of goods that Americans consume, inflation will rise, American companies will drag their feet on re-shoring, jobs will not increase, and the US growth rate will inevitably slow down. The mid-term elections in 2026 may check the hubris of Mr Trump.

Meanwhile, India cannot be a lazy exporter content with limited export products and few export markets. We must scrap the creeping controls on exporters. We must enlarge our basket of products. We must actively look for new markets that can absorb up to USD 45 billion of products (the value of goods we exported to the US in 2024-25). We must liberalise the rules for foreign direct investments. In the short term, we must offer incentives for exporters. We may consider adjusting the exchange rate to compensate the exporters although it will increase the cost of imports. All unnecessary imports could be temporarily curbed.

The first lesson in foreign relations is, if one bends, kneels and crawls, one is bound to be kicked to the ground. Mr Modi forgot this lesson in his dosti with Mr Trump. Thankfully, there are signs of resistance. India must let America know that it will stand firm, defend its interests, be open to fair trade, and ready to negotiate and conclude agreements, however difficult the process may be.

Fifth **COLUMN TAVLEEN SINGH** Twitter@tavleen_singh

Reform, reform, reform

FROM THE moment that Donald Trump threw his tariff tantrum last week, a mood of gloomy patriotism started to spread across our ancient land. Debates on television became populated with angry panelists calling Trump a bully and an imperialist, and reminded him that India is a sovereign country that will not kowtow as we did when we depended on handouts of American grain to feed our 'starving millions'. Comparisons with the East India Company's brutal trading practices were invoked and influencers on social media wrapped themselves in the national flag and posted podcasts asserting that we are economically strong enough to withstand the 50% tariff that the American President has imposed on Indian imports.

The Prime Minister made a speech the day after Trump's announcement in which he said that he would never betray our farmers. I am not sure why he made this about farmers and not Russian oil, but I am glad he did because it gives me a chance to urge him to bring about reforms that would make it easier for our farmers to compete in international markets. I know that farming reforms is a tricky subject because of the year-long agitation against his earlier attempts to reform agriculture, but let him keep in mind that farmers opposed those farm laws because they believed they would have helped corporations and not farmers.

If a fresh attempt began with massive investment in cold storage chains that would help farmers prevent more than 70 per cent of fruit, flowers and vegetables from dying in the fields, it is hard to believe farmers would protest. Last time, the Prime Minister was misled by urban 'experts' who said he should ignore the protests because the only farmers protesting were 'rich' Punjabi farmers. The Russian word kulak was carelessly thrown around, ignoring the sad truth that only 20 per cent of Indian farmers grow enough food to sell in markets. Thanks to those well-meant but mistaken land reforms in Nehruvian socialist times, nearly 90 per cent of our farmers barely grow enough to feed their families.

The stabbing in the back that Modi's ex-best friend has done could be turned into an opportunity to bring reforms in other sectors as well. Is the Prime Minister aware that the multi-layered GST (Goods and Services Tax) has destroyed many small businesses? They simply cannot afford to employ a consultant to explain to them the devious nuances that this supposedly simple tax contains. One example will suffice. If you are exporting chairs, there should be a fixed rate. Right? Wrong If the chair has a cushioned seat, it gets transferred to another category.

The tax has unleashed an inspector raj that rivals in ugly ways the old license raj Modi seems to rely on bureaucrats a little too much, without noticing that this breed of Indian is interested much more in the perks and privileges of his job than in making it easier for businessmen to do business. Let us not delude ourselves into believing that it has become easier to do business in India than it used to be. It has not for a whole litany of reasons.

Hiring and firing workers requires government permission for businesses that employ more than 300 people. The bankruptcy law seems designed to punish businesses that have gone bankrupt instead of helping revive them as is the case in more advanced countries. And, most important of all, why has there been no attempt at all to reform our decrepit justice system? It takes decades for rapists, murderers and terrorists to be brought to justice. Reform is not complicated, as a lawyer friend explained to me. To rid us of the horrendous backlog in our courts, he suggested a time limit for getting rid of old cases, and time limits on the length of trials and the disposal of appeals. He also

Another area in which urgent reforms are needed is urban planning. Last week we were reminded horribly that because of unplanned urbanisation in the Himalayas, whole villages and towns were swept away by the angry waters of the Bhagirathi. This happens every year. In the Prime Minister's own constituency, we watch as Varanasi turns into Venice annually when the rains come. Most cities share this fate, so they drown in dirty water and garbage in the monsoon, and north India becomes a gas chamber in winter.

Modi reminds us often that under his

suggested younger judges at the top.

leadership the Indian economy has gone from being number 11 in the world to number four and will soon be number three. It is a happy thought but let us not delude ourselves. If more than 80 per cent of our population needs subsidised food every month, it should be clear that we are not on the verge of mass prosperity. My point is that Modi should view this betrayal by his ex-best friend as a boon and not a catastrophe. It gives him a chance to go back to his old slogan, which I think went 'reform, perform, transform'. As for Trump and his insane trade war

against India, will somebody remind him that this is the most pro-America country in the world. At least it used to be till last week. Hard to say if this will still be true by the end of this month if he goes ahead with his plan to impose that 50 per cent tariff on Indian imports.

Chandigarh



Wheeling in Circles

At the start of 2025 we were led to believe that we were Donald Trump's special friend and that India would probably be the first to conclude a trade tariff agreement with the US. Now we are not just back of the queue, but could be blackballed! A close observer of Trump-India relations has a different take from others for the mysterious fallout. It was not initially about Russian oil, Pakistani perfidy or thwarting Trump's Nobel Peace Prize ambitions. Trump was infuriated with India's dilatory tactics in signing a deal, which goes back to his first presidency. His joint appearance with Modi in Texas in 2019 was meant to help seal an agreement, but talks fell through a day later in New York. Time and again, as in Gujarat February 2020, like the traditional smoothtalking Indian trader, our officials assured that a deal was almost through, without confessing candidly that some portions of the deal concerning agriculture and dairy products were non-negotiable. Unfortunately, Trump is focused on just this sector, since his Republican supporters come from the farm belt. As US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick remarked angrily, "You claim to be such a big country and you can't accept a bushel of American corn."

After being re-elected, President Trump was even willing to overlook past slights. (PM Modi did not call or even telephone Trump during his three visits to the US during the Biden presidency.) But in 2025, once again, despite the head-start in negotiations, the deal has not materialised!

Naysayer Ministers

Retired IAS officer Subhash Chandra Garg's new book is titled No Minister. The former Finance Secretary does not hold back in recalling riveting encounters with his ministerial bosses, some of whom, in fact, refused to take no for an answer, despite bureaucrats citing the rules and the wishes of the incumbent PM. Garg names P Chidambaram among the

naysayers who, as finance minister, threatened then PM Manmohan Singh with his resignation unless his proposal that 60-70 secretary level-posts were allotted to the Indian Revenue Service cadre. In Garg's view, this unbalanced the bureaucratic structure without improving tax collection. Similarly, Andhra CM Chandrababu Naidu, on whom the Vajpayee government was dependent for survival, cornered more than

AND JUST Like That... the lacklustre sequel

to the occasionally cringey but famously

pathbreaking show of the early 2000s, Sex

and the City, has abruptly ended. For the

uninitiated, SATC was about trendy, inde-

pendent women discovering a wry dy-

namic, that ambition and success meant

the pool of men confident enough to date

them was incredibly small. But hidden be-

hind the glamour of designer Manolo

Blahniks' and contrived pink cocktails, the

show had many moments of clarity. It

raised important questions on the conun-

drums we all face, the endless frustrations

of relationships, evil bosses and careers that

On the

leherkala@gmail.com

40% of the portfolios of Indian projects approved by the World Bank in 1999 and 2000. Despite objections from the government, Naidu forced them to agree to his audacious demand, in disregard of fair Central resource distribution. Similarly, Kamal Nath bullied his way so that 5% of the total pool of government houses in Delhi was part of his discretionary quota, which largely included newly constructed category type VII and VIII bungalows in Moti Bagh.

PROXY BATTLE

Considering it is an intra-party contest to elect the fairly modest position of secretary (administration) of the Constitution Club, it is surprising that the poll has attracted intense national interest and media scrutiny. In contrast, Rajeev Shukla (Congress) has been elected unopposed as secretary (sports) and Tiruchi Siva (DMK) as secretary (culture) without any rancour. There seems more than meets the eye in the fierce tussle between the two illmatched adversaries for the post of administrative secretary. The jocular, downto-earth ex-MP and UP Jat leader Sanjeev Balyan, who only joined the club eight years ago, appears to have been pitch forked into the contest, while Rajiv Pratap Rudy, the suave Bihar MP who has been the guiding spirit behind the club for the last 25 years, is credited with upgrading its facilities, including gyms, saunas, lounges and sports facilities. Balyan's most vocal campaigner is controversial Bihar MP Nishikant Dubey, who is fighting with all the vehemence and caste calculations of a panchayat election and throwing names of powerful central politicians. Pratap, more discreet, is believed to be backed by an influential regional satrap, who has not shown his hand openly.

AI's Good Turn

Amidst constant reports of Air India's slipping standards, I am pleased to report my recent personal experience of the airlines, which demonstrates that the staff's spirit of service beyond the call of duty, the hallmark of JRD Tata's original Air India, has not vanished. While flying back from Kenya on an AI flight, the senior air hostess noticed my distress as I rummaged through my carry bag and under the seat for my missing iPad, which had obviously been left behind in Nairobi. I presumed resignedly that recovering my iPad was like looking for a needle in a haystack, but I had not reckoned with the resourcefulness of the very helpful air hostess and the AI Nairobi manager. The latter, with the assistance of his counterpart at the Nairobi airport lounge, located the missing iPad, got it identified through WhatsApp photos and arranged to have it returned to Delhi within a week.





ON AUGUST 4, Shibu Soren, 81, fondly called Dishom Guru (leader of the land), breathed his last. Born in 1945 in Nemra village in present-day Jharkhand's Ramgarh district, a centre for coal mining, at a young age, Soren was entrusted

with the responsibility of demanding

justice for the tribes in the Chotanagpur

plateau. Witnessing local moneylenders murder his father and seeing an abysmal future for these tribes, he became a fighter for their cause. But that journey was easier said than done.

Post-independence, the advent of state enterprises in the mining and industrial sectors transformed the central Indian hinterland, particularly the socioeconomic fabric of the Chotanagpur plateau.

While capital and technology came from outside, the tribals living there, who were supposed to benefit from this development, were squeezed out of their land and resources. Compensation, if it ever reached them, dried up and jobs, even when promised, rarely came their way. Anthropologist LP Vidyarthi noted in the early 1960s that these tribes were reduced to alcoholism and became absentee manual labourers in factories established on their lands.

It was in these conditions that a new generation of leadership demanded justice for them. Jaipal Singh, an Oxford graduate and captain of the Indian hockey team that won its first gold at the 1928 Olympics, was the first to articulate the cause of tribal development in the 1950s.

Singh believed that Jawaharlal Nehru - who had promised development for everyone — was the only friend the tribals had. However, when development came, there was very little place for the tribals in it.

After Nehru and Singh, the mantle of tribal leadership fell on Kartik Oraon, Sushil Bage, N E Horo, Justin Richard, Bagun Sumbrui, A K Roy, Binod Bihari Mahto, Nirmal Mahto and others. More than anyone else, it was Soren's political struggles that kept reminding the

Republic of its promise to the tribals. He placed the exploitation of the tribes at the centre of his political argument, which, he said, required a political solution. One immediate solution he proposed was political autonomy, which

Shibu Soren and the moral arc of the republic



Shibu Soren passed away on August 4. **Express** Archives/Sunil Saxena

he felt could lead to the economic development of the locals. He believed that a state of their own — 'Jharkhand' — could bring prosperity to the tribals, not just those in Bihar, but also the sections in West Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

His enormous moral fortitude and political sagacity led to the creation of Jharkhand in 2000.

During his struggle for the tribals, Soren forged a bond with two popular leaders from the coal belt, A K Roy, a Marxist labour leader and theoretician, and Binod Bihari Mahto, a lawyer who had helped thousands displaced by the Bokaro Steel Plant and other projects. For Roy and Mahto, politics was a way to fulfil their commitment to the people. This association would help Soren retain his vision's moral clarity.

Then there was his baptism of fire in politics. Soren's political life began in the region's mineral and industrial hub, where the mining mafia, and both state and non-state actors, were ready to quash all resistance. But Soren resisted.

His efforts against his adversaries led him to organise a team of friends who stuck together due to his moral standing. This art of team building set Soren apart from many other leaders of Jharkhand.

Soren, who had completed his matriculation from Gola village, located on the Ramgarh coalfields, came to believe in the efficacy of negotiations. This gave him a reputation among the managers of mines and industries — as someone who only put up the just and legitimate demands of the locals.

Soren's ability to talk to those in power with a sense of moral courage allowed him to deal with his political opponents, including Lalu Prasad Yadav, then Bihar

Located as he was in the heart of the country's mining and industrial corridor known for violence, thuggery and political funding — Soren demanded an honest share of the resources for his people. This won him the title of Guruji (teacher).

Chief Minister, without losing credibility.

Then came the episode when he accepted a bribe on behalf of the Narasimha Rao government. The news made it to the mainstream media but the episode failed to dent his image among his people. Because Soren's signature was not parliamentary give and take, it was his resistance to his people's exploitation.

A good communicator, Soren spoke in popular local languages — Bangla, Khorta and Hindi — as they are spoken in the region. His flowing beard made his own tribe, the Santhals, as well as the Mundas, Oraons, Kharias and Hos, and even non-tribal villagers confident that he always fulfilled his promises. As his universe enlarged in the 1990s, so did his appeal among the struggling tribals in the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal.

While many see the creation of Jharkhand as his greatest contribution, Soren will be remembered more for the establishment of the tribal cause at the centre of the moral compass of the republic.

The writer teaches at JNU. He grew up knowing Shibu Soren and observed his movement from close quarters

When the show doesn't go on wither. SATC worked because it was honest. Contrast that with AJLT, a farcically dis-

honest, desperate appeal to Gen Z, by the way of implausibly woke narratives and randomly placed gay and racially diverse characters. It's like the producer was terrified of every critic who ever said SATC was too white, too rich or too straight and was determined to course correct. After six seasons of SATC and two agonising movies flogging the same tired story, AJLT was wringing the last drop of water from the proverbial stone. It finally fell apart with the bizarre reboot of an indelible character — a raging heterosexual, inexplicably declared a late-inlife lesbian and lo and behold, involved with a nun. There are limits to the audiences' flight of imagination and this outrageous turn didn't ring true. Ratings dwindled.

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Undoubtedly, there's a small minority of enlightened liberals valiantly living outside of conventional boundaries and God bless them. Thanks to Instagram, abstract topics of gender non-conformism and nonbinary people with they/them adjectives are trendy buzzwords today. But the majority remain regular folk — working, married and single people, striving and conforming to the heteronormative standards set over centuries. They want to watch authentic content that reflects their experiences and struggles. A smug, rich, character's dog getting cancelled for biting was laughably far-fetched post-modernism. A storyline like this may work in a comedy but in a drama, it felt like *AJLT*'s producers had dispensed with reality altogether. The show being dropped raises an important point; when any creative endeavour is an attempt to pander to what's currently trending, it stands on shaky ground.

Political correctness and cancel culture have forced creators into petrified self-consciousness — people are so scared of being written off as dated has-beens, they're willing to sacrifice whatever they stand for. But the artist's job has always been to come up with novel forms of expression, oblivious to any existing standard of morality or social expectations. In the era of ChatGPT, some truths still hold — an original bad idea is infinitely better than a borrowed great one. When it comes to creativity, the interesting material is layered deep within, in our myriad contradictions and maladjustments. All one needs is the courage to tap inside and fearlessly display

what's on our minds. Oscar Wilde's profound lament that it's only the dull (and predictable) who are taken seriously may be correct but that's no reason for vivacious amateurs brimming with ideas to hide.

Undoubtedly, in the age of memes and Twitter, we live in fear of being outed as ridiculous but isn't everyone just fumbling their way through? The long route of trial and error and disregarding our own embarrassment is how we rise above and create something of value. The glamorous heroines of SATC entertained us with their ballsy attitudes towards marriage and men; it's ironical that twenty years later, the same heroines come across as meek, their original, attractive irreverence debased by a script that suggests they better "woke" up. The writer is director, Hutkay Films

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SCIENCE

Ocean model affirms Fukushima wastewater release is safe

The Hindu Bureau

Most monitoring of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant's release of tritiated wastewater has thus far focused on local coastal waters. No global-scale study has tracked how tritium from the planned 30-year discharge might move through a warming Pacific

To fill this gap, researchers from University of Tokyo and Fukushima University recently combined accurate estimates of the amount and timing of tritium release with an ocean circulation model called COCO 4.9. The model solved the basic physics of ocean flow on a grid with 62 vertical layers and two alternative horizontal meshes, about 1° for lowresolution simulations runs and 0.25° for experiments that need to resolve patterns up to the level of eddies.

Two phases

The researchers 'injected' tritium into the model in two phases. First, they added 179-181 TBq for the 2011-2019 period into the model's surface layer to mimic the Fukushima disaster's effects. Then they added 480 TBq over 2023-2051 some 11 m below the surface. This dose is the highest possible the Tokyo Electric Power Company is expected to release during the discharge.

Then they explored three scenarios: presentday conditions, a strong warming pathway (SSP5-8.5), and mesoscale eddies. Across each simulation, the team found that tritium levels in the open Pacific remained below current detection limits, except immediately next to the plant during the 2011 accident spike. The peaks from the routine discharge never exceed 0.002 Bq/L, which is 25x lower than natural background radiation levels.

The team also reported that warmer oceans might shift the important Kuroshio Current a little north and strengthen eastward flow,

cutting the time the first trace of tritium takes to travel to the mid-Pacific and Asian subtropical coasts by roughly three years. Even then, the modelled concentration of tritium stayed three orders of magnitude under the detection threshold.

The simulation that resolved the eddies showed that small quantities of tritium might reach western North America or the South China Sea sooner than expected.

Because the facility is re-

leasing tritiated water so slowly, the radiation it's responsible for is lower than that due to natural and historical sources. And because tritium has a half life of around 12 years, the modelled levels of the element remained undetectable across the wider Pacific Ocean through 2099, even under extreme warming or a worst-case eddy transport scenario.

The team's findings are to be published in the November 2025 edition of Marine Pollution Bulletin.

Cracking the mystery of how proteins found their shapes

Even for a modest 60-amino-acid protein core, the number of possible combinations is around 10^78; the question of how evolution was able to navigate such possibilities to find functional sequences across millions of proteins has been answered

Arun Panchapakesan

n 1959, the American biochemist Walter Kauzmann proposed a radical solution to the problem of protein structure. At the time, it was unclear how proteins, the workhorses of the cell, fold into their unique three-dimensional forms.

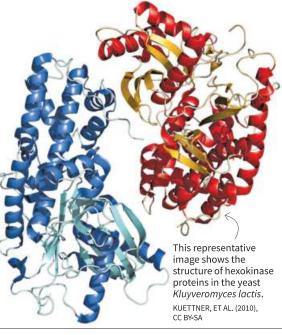
Every protein is made up of a set of 20 amino acids, rather like beads on a string. The length and order of these amino acid beads dictate how that protein folds into its unique shape. This is important because the shape of a protein is vital to its function. Any disruption to this structure destroys the protein's ability to do its job. How nature ensures correct protein folding each time remains one of the mysteries biggest

At the heart of the problem is the knowledge that amino acids interact with water in two distinct ways. Some of them, like lysine, love water; then there are those like tryptophan that don't like water. These hydrophobic amino acids in fact avoid water as much as possible, to the extent that they often clump together to minimise exposure.

Since about 70% of the cell is made of water, how the amino acids' arrangement interacts with water molecules is pivotal to how they fold. If a protein contains a stretch of hydrophobic amino acids, they will naturally tend to aggregate, compacting the entire protein in the process.

The right path

The cores of proteins have been found to be more resilient to change than believed



Proteins fold because hydrophobic amino acids hide inside while hydrophilic ones stay outside, Walter Kauzmann proposed in 1959

Since proteins can fold in trillions of ways, how did they always figure out the way that allowed them to function properly?

■ To understand how, Spanish and British researchers generated and studied 78,125 amino acid combinations across three proteins

■ They found that thousands of alternative core sequences still formed stable structures, overturning long-held assumptions about

■ The study also showed protein cores tolerated more changes, suggesting evolution's search space was less daunting than believed

■ The results have implications for medicine, where proteins' sequence can be adjusted to prevent unwanted immune reactions

Kauzmann built on this idea and proposed that proteins have a core largely made up of hydrophobic amino acids and a surface made primarily of hydrophilic amino acids. When scientists began to map protein structures with Xray crystallography in the following decade, they saw what he predicted was true: the hydrophobic amino acids were often buried in the core while the hydrophilic ones tended to localise to the surface.

Further research showed that the amino acids at the core were also very sensitive to changes. It appeared that even minor modifications in the core could disrupt the protein's shape and, consequently, function.

Another piece of evi-

dence supporting this line of thought was that the amino acid sequences from the cores of proteins common to different forms of life were remarkably similar. Scientists reasoned that this was because nature couldn't afford to change them without lethal consequences.

But this raised another question. If the effects of a wrong amino acid combination are so drastic, how did nature, while relying on slow, incremental trial and error, manage to find functional protein struc-

tures at all? Even for a modest 60amino-acid protein core, the number of possible combinations is around 10⁷⁸, a number comparable to the estimated number of atoms in the known universe. It's astonishing that evolution was able to navigate such numerous possibilities to find stable, functional sequences not once, but again and again, across the millions of proteins found in life today.

This mystery has now been put to rest by a team from the Centre for Genomic Regulation in Spain and the Wellcome Sanger Institute in the U.K.

In a new paper in Science, the team challenged the original assumption that protein cores are sensitive to change. They argued that, of the astronomically high number of combinations of protein cores that are possible, few have been tested. The changes made in those studies also didn't allow for compensating adjustments elsewhere in the protein. The team tested this by

first generating a library of 78,125 different amino acid combinations across seven locations in the cores of three proteins: the SH3 domain of FYN tyrosine protein kinase from humans, the CI-2A protein from barley, and the CspA protein from Escherichia coli bacteria. Then they tested the stability of some of these combinations to assess how they changed the

Remarkably, the authors found that while most combinations were indeed detrimental, several remained stable, showing that protein cores are more resilient to change than previously believed. The actual number of stable combinations varied from protein to protein, with the highest being the human SH3-FYN, which had more than 12,000 stable core conformations.

The study's results have several implications for medicine. Many proteins trigger an unwanted immune reaction when administered due to their amino acid sequence.

Changing that sequence was a slow and painful process, since scientists believed too many changes would disrupt the protein. With the new insights, it may be possible to speed up the process by screening larger combinations and with more changes than were attempted previously.

(Arun Panchapakesan is an assistant professor at the Y.R. Gaitonde Centre for AIDS Research and Education, Chennai)



Unique protein makes chitons' teeth of iron

Sea molluscs called chitons scrape food off rocks with teeth capped with an iron mineral tougher than steel. New research has reported that a protein made only by chitons, called RTMP1, is responsible for this armour. Cells secreted RTMP1 onto the scaffold of each new tooth. RTMP1 latched onto chitin and captured iron ions released from the iron-storing protein ferritin, assembling them to cap the teeth. The process also kept older teeth sharp, letting chitons grind through rock for life.



New condenser cuts water use in chem labs

Scientists have designed a simple, water-free glass condenser that saves water in chemical experiments without sacrificing performance. Traditional lab condensers use running water to cool vapours. The new design is made of glass and is capped with a Teflon stopper with a safety valve, and has a larger internal volume. When vapours entered the condenser, they were forced to slow down and increase contact with the glass, which drew the heat away, while the valve prevented the pressure from building up.



A little enzyme changed human behaviour

Scientists have found that a genetic tweak in the enzyme adenylosuccinate lyase (ADSL) sets modern humans apart from Neanderthals and Denisovans. Nearly everyone today carries a mutation called A429V plus a DNA dimmer switch that together lower ADSL activity in the brain. In humans, the genetic combo cuts ADSL expression and raises succinyladenosine levels in spinal fluid, a molecule modestly linked to lower intelligence.

In search of the elusive and threatened fishing cat



D. Balasubramanian

In the wild, India has 15 species belonging to the cat family. Much attention has been given to our large cats, the lions and tigers. Not much is known of the smaller wild cats - the caracal, the rusty spotted cat, the fishing cat, etc. These smaller, more secretive cats deserve due recognition, as they navigate a world increasingly full of threats far larger than themselves.

Wetlands in India are home to the fishing cat, which grows to twice the size of the domestic cat, weighs seven to 12 kg, and has a greyish brown fur lined with black spots. In

its territory, this cat is often the apex predator, meaning no other creature preys on it. Wetlands are vibrant ecosystems characterised by waterlogged soil like that found in river floodplains, mangroves, and Some unusual adapta-

tions enable the fishing cat to get by in wet surroundings. Partially webbed paws, a dense water-resistant coat and the ability to swim while fully submerged in water indicate aquatic leanings. Protruding claws, which cannot be fully retracted, help the cat with gripping slippery mud and fish. The cats' diet is primarily fish, although rodents, chickens, and other small animals are always welcome.

The fishing cat spends 50% of its hunting time standing, sitting or crouching near the edge of water.



A fishing cat among mangroves in the Godavari river at night, 2018.

Barely 5% of hunting time is spent submerged in water. In shallow water, the cat keeps moving slowly, pausing to flush a fish out with its paws before grabbing it with the mouth.

Populations of the fishing cat are found in scattered pockets: the terai region of the Himalayas, some marshes of Western India, the Sundarbans, along the East coast, and in Sri Lanka.

Wildlife surveys for keeping track of the patchy populations of this elusive nocturnal cat utilise camera traps set near the water's edge. An elaborate count has been conducted by Tiasa Adhya of the Fishing Cat Project and a network of collaborators (see fishingcat.org) in the Chilka lake, where there is an abundance of fish and limited conflict with humans. Extrapolating their results gives us an estimate of about 750 fishing cats in the 1,100 sq. km expanse of the lagoon (see: Endangered Species Research, 54, 1, 2024).

This healthy number contrasts with the cats' rapidly dwindling numbers in the Sundarbans. Fishing cats were thought to have died out in Rajasthan until sightings in the Keoladeo National Park earlier this

The decline is largely on account of habitat loss. It has been estimated that 30-40% of India's wetlands have been lost or severely degraded in the last four decades. Protecting wetland ecosystems is therefore crucial for the fishing cat. Human encroachment has also severely affected them. Many people see them as predators of fish ponds and chicken coops, and an alarming number of revenge kills by humans have been documented. Community-based conservation programmes appear to hold the key to reducing this animosity.

This year, the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun has initiated a project to track fishing cats in the estuaries of the Godavari river within the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary near Kakinada in Andhra Pra-

Using GPS collars with GIS integration, precise location data of collared cats will be collected. Continuous data from the collars will provide insights on preferred habitats, movement, and where they encounter human settlements. All these will be useful for designing strategies to boost fishing cat populations.

(This article was co-authored with Sushil Chandani)

Question Corner

Up, up, and away

Why does an elevator need three-phase electrical power to work?

Because elevators are critical systems, downtime is expensive and dangerous. To avoid this, elevators need three-phase electrical power to meet high power demand without compromising their reliability. Elevators include components that together demand a large and balanced power supply. Three-phase power provides consistent, balanced voltage with minimal fluctuation (less than 3% if required) to handle power surges safely. The electric motors also

three-phase motors start more easily, run more smoothly, and are more efficient compared to single-phase motors, which are also generally less reliable. Further, three-phase power systems use less wiring relative to the capacity provided and distribute power across three alternating current phases staggered in time. This results in a constant power supply that reduces the mechanical stress on motors and improves their lifespan.

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What happens to 'missing names' on Bihar SIR list?

What is the next phase in the special intensive revision of electoral rolls? When will the final list be released?

Priscilla Jebaraj

The story so far:

he Election Commission (EC) has completed the first phase of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar by publishing the draft voter list on August 1. However, 65 lakh names have been removed from this list for various reasons, and the fate of lakhs who have been included on the draft list without submitting verification documents is also up in the air. As poll officials scrutinise forms and conduct inquiries on claims and objections in preparation for the publication of the final list on September 30, the Supreme Court is hearing objections to the SIR process filed by Opposition parties and civil society groups, with the next hearing set for August 12.

What happened in the first phase of SIR?

In the month after the EC launched the Bihar SIR process on June 24, booth-level officers (BLOs) carried out house visits, distributing pre-printed enumeration forms. Voters not included on the 2003 electoral rolls were required to submit documents proving the date and place of birth of themselves and their parents. As it became clear that many voters could not provide any of the EC's 11 approved documents - which did not include more commonly available documents such as

Claims and objections to the draft roll can be filed throughout August to correct wrongful inclusions or exclusions. One week into the process, the EC has received 7,252 such claims from various individuals

Aadhaar, voter ID cards, or ration cards the EC issued advertisement on July 6, urging people to submit their forms

before the deadline even if they could not provide supporting documents, leaving it to the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to process the forms on the basis of local investigations or other evidence. All those who submitted their forms before the deadline were included on the draft roll published on August 1.

Who are the 'missing names' in the draft?

The existing electoral rolls just before the SIR process began contained the names of 7.89 crore registered voters. The draft rolls published on August 1, however, only contain 7.24 crore names, indicating a dip of more than 65 lakh. The ECI accounted for these 65 lakh "missing names" by explaining that 22.34 lakh people on the earlier list were found to be deceased lakh have migrated permanently to another State, or are untraceable, and 7.01 lakh are duplicate voters who have been found registered in multiple locations. Patna saw the highest number of such cases, with 3.95 lakh voters not included on the draft list. On July 13, the EC said a large number of people from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar were found during the house-to-house verification exercise and that they would not be included in the final electoral roll. *The Hindu* analysed the deleted names by comparing the draft roll with a list published by the EC in January 2025, which shows a drop of 56 lakh names, including 31 lakh fewer women voters and 25 lakh fewer men, which is unusual given that majority of migration outside the State is by men. Analysis indicated that more deletions may have occurred in districts with larger Muslim populations as per 2011 Census.

How can names be added or deleted?

Claims and objections to the draft roll can be filed throughout August to correct wrongful inclusions or exclusions. One week into the process, the EC has received 7,252 such claims and objections from individuals. Political parties have claimed that their ground workers too have filed similar claims to correct errors in the draft roll but the EC has denied it. In a plea to the Supreme Court, poll watchdog Association for Democratic Reforms said the full list of names removed from the draft rolls, along with specific reasons for removal, has not been provided to all political parties. EROs are to conduct inquiries on claims and dispose of them within seven days of filing. Each ERO is also expected to display the list of claims daily so that objections can be raised by the public.

What will happen to those who submitted

their forms without documents? The SIR order seems to leave such cases to the discretion of the EROs and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) who will scrutinise the eligibility of electors based on documents submitted and field reports provided by BLOs. "In case ERO/AERO doubts the eligibility of the proposed elector (due to non-submission of requisite documents or otherwise), he/she will start a suo moto inquiry and issue notice to such proposed elector, as to why his/her name should not be deleted," the order says. "Based on field inquiry, documentation or otherwise, ERO/AERO shall decide on inclusion of such proposed electors in the final rolls. In each such case, ERO/AERO shall pass a speaking order," it adds. No name can be deleted from the draft roll without such a speaking order, the EC said.

Will India cave in to U.S. pressure on Russian oil?

Why has President Donald Trump announced penalty tariffs on India? When does it come into effect? Is a rapprochement possible before the deadline? How much oil does India import from Russia? Has India begun reducing oil buys from Russia and importing more from other countries?

Suhasini Haidar

The story so far:

n August 6, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a whopping 25% penalty tariff on Indian goods for India's import of Russian oil. This was on top of the 25% reciprocal tariffs announced on July 31 after Indian and U.S. negotiators failed to reach a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

How has India responded to the tariffs? India has so far not announced any overt action against the U.S. for its tariffs. The 25% reciprocal tariffs went into effect on August 7, and the impact will unfold in the upcoming weeks. Already, reports suggest garment exporters are facing trouble with U.S. importers suspending

orders, given that U.S. tariffs on Asian competitors in Vietnam, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are much lower. Mr. Trump's penalty tariffs, meanwhile, will go into effect on August 27, and New Delhi is hopeful that there will be some change in position.

As a result, India's response has been carried in three statements. On August 4, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued a release criticising both the U.S. and the European Union for "targeting" India over Russian oil imports, pointing out that they both continue to trade with Russia. While the U.S. procures critical minerals, chemicals and nuclear trade components, the EU countries continue to buy oil and LNG from Russia. On August 6, the MEA called the U.S. actions "extremely unfortunate" and "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable". vowing to protect India's national interests. On August 7, Prime Minister Modi said that he was

Trump may modify penalty tariffs on India if Russia agrees to a deal to end Ukraine war

ready to pay a price "personally" to protect the interests of India's farmers, fishermen and livestock, and dairy keepers. This was an indication that India-U.S. trade talks had broken down over market access to the agricultural sector. Between giving in on market access or giving up Russian oil, India appears to be facing two 'impossible' choices.

Can the tariffs be stopped?

Mr. Trump has announced that he will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin on August 15 in Alaska, which incidentally will be the first Putin trip to the U.S. since 2015 when he travelled to the UN for a summit. According to reports, Mr. Putin has offered to stop the war in exchange for keeping territories the Russian forces control, but it is unclear if this would be acceptable to Ukraine and European countries. If there is a deal, India may receive a roll back of the Russian oil penalties, and the MEA issued a statement Saturday welcoming and "endorsing" plans for the Trump-Putin Summit. In his executive order of August 6, Mr. Trump has given himself "modification authority", if Russia were to "take significant steps" to end the Ukraine war and security threats to the U.S.

In addition, a U.S. team of FTA negotiators are scheduled to visit Delhi on August 25. If India makes certain concessions on trade and market access, a mini-trade deal could go a long way in reducing the U.S. tariffs.

How much Russian oil does India procure? Prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, India imported very little oil from Russia. Ural oil, considered "heavy" crude and priced too high as Russia had European buyers, consisted only 1% of India's basket of sellers. After the EU began to sanction Russia, and committed to zeroing out all energy purchases from Russia, the price of Ural dropped, and

India, as well as China and others, began to pick

up more Russian oil. By May 2023, India was importing two million

plus barrels of Russian crude per day (bpd), making up between 35-40% of India's basket. Russia has been its largest supplier since. However, India-Russia energy ties go beyond this trade. After the Modi-Putin summit in Sochi in May 2018, and Mr. Putin's visit to India for the annual summit that year, the India-Russia joint statement recorded investments of over \$5 billion by an Indian consortium of PSUs in Vankorneft and Taas-Yuryakh Neftegazodobycha in Russia. Russian oil major Rosneft picked up a 49% stake in Essar Oil for \$12.9 billion. The new entity was renamed Nayara Energy, and it included Essar's Vadinar refinery in Gujarat –

49% stake went to a consortium, and Essar retained 2%. Vadinar refinery, along with other private refiners like Reliance, began to reprocess Russian oil and export it to other countries over the next few years. Mr. Trump called this, "selling it on the open markets for big profits". None of this violated any sanctions, and despite requests from Western countries, the government continued to purchase oil from Russia, saving India about \$13 billion by 2024 and a further \$3.8 billion in 2025, according to estimates by the ICRA.

Experts say it will be difficult for the government to give in to U.S. pressure this time, economically as well as politically and diplomatically. The Indian government would lose face domestically, and risk damaging ties with an all-important friend, Russia. For the moment, Kpler reports that the price of Ural has dropped after demand has reduced from Indian companies, but experts say it is unlikely to completely stop Russian imports, even as India broadens its non-Russian intake through the U.S., Iraq, Kuwait, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

What happened with oil imports from Iran?

India's refusal to stop importing Russian oil was a shift from 2018, when Mr. Trump had demanded India's compliance in "zeroing out" oil from Iran and Venezuela. After initially maintaining that India would not bow to such diktats, the government caved in by May 2019, and stopped all its direct oil purchases from both Iran and Venezuela, incurring heavy losses, as the oil was both "sweet" for its refineries and priced competitively.

What does this mean for foreign policy?

Since 1999, after the U.S. placed sanctions on India for nuclear tests, Delhi and Washington have worked tirelessly to change relations between them. They have built trust for a quarter of a century through a civil nuclear deal, military and defence cooperation, counter-terror cooperation, technology partnerships and the Quad grouping in the Indo-Pacific. Experts in both countries say that besides hurting Indian trade, Mr. Trump's actions will damage the India-U.S. relationship in several other areas. At the same time, Delhi's moves to shore up strategic autonomy and independence are significant. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval travelled to Moscow last week to prepare for Mr. Putin's visit to India, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is expected to follow later in the month.

Mr. Modi will travel to Japan and then to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit and a bilateral meeting with President Xi Jinping, on his first such visit since the 2020 LAC (Line of Actual Control) military clashes. Moreover, Delhi is due to host the Quad summit this November, and much will depend on whether Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump can restore ties by then.



Vladimir Putin in 2018. PTI

How is AI reshaping India's infotech sector?

Why is the IT industry in restructuring mode, leading to job cuts and changes in business strategies? Why are experts calling for Indian firms to reposition themselves as indispensable partners for the AI era? How are recent TCS announcements reflective of the Indian tech sector?

Mini Tejaswi

The story so far:

ecent announcements from Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) – a reported freeze on experienced hires, and the planned removal of 12,000 employees – have sent ripples of anxiety across the Indian tech sector. The Indian IT industry, which generates \$280 billion in revenue and employs more than 5.8 million people, is at a crossroads.

Why is a shake-up happening?

While headlines often sensationalise these events as a direct consequence of AI (artificial intelligence) "culling jobs", a far more complex scenario is playing out. "These developments are not isolated incidents but rather critical indicators of AI-catalysed transformation sweeping through software development and IT services, demanding a holistic re-evaluation of business models, talent strategies, and the very nature of work," says Avinash Vashistha, former MD, Accenture India, and currently Chairman & CEO, Tholons, a New York-based technology, innovation and investment firm. At the heart of this transformation is AI's capacity to drive unprecedented efficiencies across the entire

The AI shift has already started to impact hiring, organisational structures'

software development lifecycle.

Why is AI gaining momentum now? In a climate where most deal wins are being led by cost-optimisation initiatives, demonstrating efficiency is paramount for investor confidence, and AI-led productivity is helping companies do that, Mr. Vashistha says. AI-powered coding assistants, code generation tools, and intelligent debuggers are already enabling over 30% productivity boosts. The impact extends powerfully into the critical, often resource-intensive domains of testing and maintenance. AI in software testing is a game-changer. AI-driven tools can minimise human error and enhance the overall accuracy of test results by leveraging data-driven insights.

How will it impact jobs?

AI is no longer a futuristic technology limited to labs and startups. It is becoming the very fabric of how work gets done in global enterprises. In 2025 alone, more than \$1 trillion is expected to be spent globally on AI infrastructure, model training, and application development.

"From generative AI chatbots to intelligent automation in back-end systems, AI is now shaping everything – how customer service is delivered and how decisions are made in boardrooms. This shift has already started to impact hiring and organisational structures. In the U.S., the CEO of Wells Fargo remarked that 'attrition is our best friend', after the company reduced its workforce for 20 straight quarters," points out V. Balakrishnan, Chairman, Exfinity Ventures, a venture capital firm, also former CFO at Infosys. AI, automation, and low-code platforms are creating environments where fewer people can do more and do it faster.

Does this mean more business for India?

Most large global firms grapple with legacy infrastructure, poor-quality data, and fragmented systems which are major barriers to rolling out intelligent solutions at scale. Also, with global AI regulations like the EU's AI Act coming into force, companies will need to demonstrate responsible AI usage, privacy compliance, and algorithmic fairness. "This is

where Indian IT can play a pivotal role. By helping global clients clean and organise data, modernise old systems, and build compliant AI solutions, Indian firms can reposition themselves as indispensable partners for the AI era. Rather than being disrupted by AI, they can become the very agents that help their clients adopt it effectively," says Mr. Balakrishnan.

What's the message TCS is sending?

Industry experts say TCS, with its vast workforce of 6,07,979 employees as of March 2025, is an industry bellwether. Its recent announcements are a strategic message to the stock market, to employees, and to global clients, Mr. Vashishta says. For the stock market, such moves signal a disciplined approach to cost optimisation and a proactive stance in adapting to a changing market. For clients, TCS's actions communicate its commitment to delivering highly efficient, AI-catalysed solutions. To employees, the message is one of heightened expectations and the need for continuous skill transformation. For more than three decades, India's IT services industry - spearheaded by TCS, Infosys, Wipro, and their peers – has been the bedrock of its global digital identity, earning India its place as the "back office of the world". But that era is "sunsetting", says Sharad Sharma, co-founder of the ISPIRT Foundation. A seminal shift, which Andrej Karpathy, former technology head of Tesla, calls Software 2.0 & 3.0, "will change things fundamentally and reduce the advantage of scale". India's tech future will not be built by coding armies billing hours for legacy systems. It will be built by lean, AI-native small firms solving complex problems in healthcare, defence, fintech, sustainability, education, and beyond. "Tech firms no longer need a large IT park to serve global clients. A team of 50 can out-innovate a team of 5,000," Mr. Sharma says.

What does this mean for Indian techies? AI is not likely to replace coders/system

engineers who code in C++, which is used to build operating systems, gaming, graphics, and critical secure applications. Wherever human ingenuity, critical thinking, and imagination is needed, AI is yet to make a huge practical impact. B.S. Murthy, CEO, Leadership Capital, says, "AI will not immediately replace domain competencies like tech architects, dev ops, UI/UX, product management, robotics & embedded systems. Talent high on math and imagination will rule the roost in this decade."



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PROFILES

The professor who rose to power

Muhammad Yunus

The 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner, who became the 'Chief Adviser' of Bangladesh's post-Hasina interim administration, promises a peaceful transfer of power after next year's 'inclusive elections', in which the Awami League, now officially banned, will not be able to participate

Kallol Bhattacherjee

uhammad Yunus was born in Chittagong in southeast Bengal at the height of the Second World War when the Japanese captured Myanmar and threatened parts of eastern India. By the time he turned three, Japanese bombers flew over the skies of Chittagong where they would release anti-British pamphlets. One day, a Japanese bomb fell nearby and demolished a part of his house, forcing the whole family to shift to a village. Uncertain circumstances at home inculcated the importance of dialogue and compromise within him. Over the past year, as the Chief Adviser to the interim government of Bangladesh, Mr. Yunus, 85, has displayed some of the skills he gathered during his early life.

In his latest nationally televised speech delivered on August 5, marking the first anniversary of the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government, Mr. Yunus was more emphatic about the promises that he had made upon taking charge on August 8, 2024. Bangladesh was teetering on the brink with an expanding power vacuum after Ms. Hasina fled to India. As Mr. Yunus held his first press interaction on landing at Shah Jalal Airport of Dhaka, there was an air of uncertainty around him and it was not clear if he would be able to hold the government consisting of 'advisers' together. A year later, he appears to be the undisputed face of the interim government. To deal with the deteriorating law and order situation and the breakdown in the political system, he promised to hold election in February 2026. "We will step into the final and most important phase after delivering this speech to you and that is the transfer of power to an elected government," Mr. Yunus said.

Consensus candidate

A former professor of economics at Chittagong University, pioneer of microfinancing and winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, Mr. Yunus was brought in to head the interim administration as the consensus candidate of anti-Hasina movement. He started talking of transfer of power soon after he took charge last August, but it was not clear how that process would be completed amid law and order problems and political instability. His first move was to take his large body of international well wishers into confidence.

Weeks after taking charge as Chief Adviser, he proceeded to New York to introduce the new ruling elite of Bangladesh – the student leaders. He addressed an event supported by the Clinton Foundation where he introduced Mahfuz Alam, one of the kev mobilisers of the anti-Hasina uprising, to former U.S. President Bill Clinton. Mr. Alam and other student advisers made up the inner circle of Mr. Yunus, who demanded Hasina be brought back from India. Tensions rose in bilateral ties in the subsequent months. When a flood ravaged eastern Bangladesh in the end of August 2024, Bangladesh blamed India for releasing river water, and Mr. Yunus summoned the Indian High Commissioner.

Ties with India

Mr. Yunus first visited India in his teens when he travelled through India to Karachi in West Pakistan as a boy scout to participate in a jamboree. He has fond memories of that visit that he wrote in his autobiography, Grameen Bank O Amaar Jibon. But Bangladesh's relations with India under his leadership were marked by a series of disruptions. Late last year, Mr. Alam made social media statements depicting large territories of India as part of Bangladesh. He deleted his Facebook post, but the Ministry of External Affairs of India lodged a strong protest. The next episode came when Mr. Yunus visited China during March 26-29, 2025 when he said India's northeast, "a land-locked region", "opens up a huge possibility" for an extension of the Chinese economy" through Bangladesh. This also drew a strong response from India, which on May 17 barred all its land ports from receiving Bangladesh's apparel exports.

At home, Mr. Yunus had to deal with internal structural challenges. In May, with law and order challenges continuing, Army chief General Waker



uz Zaman told his colleagues that the interim government had been conducting affairs of the state without consultation. Two months earlier, Mr. Yunus had promised to hold election by December 2025. But uncertainty prevailed as domestic unrest continued to be a major problem. On the night of May 21, Gen. Zaman held a closed-door meeting with his Commanding Officers. "Elections must be held by December and that only an elected government should determine the nation's course and not an unelected administration," he was reported to have said in the meeting.

It was a proposal from the National Security Adviser, Khalilur Rahman, to open a "humanitarian corridor" to conflict-hit Rakhine province of Myanmar that triggered the strong response from Gen. Zaman.

The idea behind the corridor was to provide the conflict-hit province and its Rohingya citizens the necessary resources. However, there was no clarity about who would enforce peace in the corridor as peace was crucial for such a conflict zone project. Mr. Rahman has also served an important role in establishing connection between the Yunus-led government

and the Donald Trump administration

The Trump administration had initially targeted Bangladesh with a 37% tariff but after negotiation, the duties were lowered to 20%, which is being seen as an achievement for Mr. Yunus. Another success has been his outreach to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami. The BNP criticised him in May for delaying the election, but Mr. Yunus managed to get the party on his side when he unveiled the "July Declaration" on August 5. Similarly, the Jamaat criticised his plans to allow a UN Human Rights Office in Bangladesh but has more or less stayed with him throughout the past year.

Words and deeds

However, the biggest issue before Mr. Yunus is the disjuncture between his remarks and the reality when it comes to holding elections. In his speeches on Id in June as well as on August 5, he promised to hold "inclusive elections that will be the largest in the history of Bangladesh". Yet, it is clear that the next election will not have participation from the Awami League, which has been banned. Mr. Yunus has repeatedly attacked the Awami League and Ms. Hasina as "defeated fascist forces". On August 5, he blamed Ms. Hasina for jeopardising the country's financial health. In turn, the Awami League described Mr. Yunus as a "razakar", a derogatory term used to describe collaborators of Pakistan who attacked Bengalis in 1971.

This anti-Hasina approach has defined much of the promises of justice that Mr. Yunus has made. One of the crucial developments of the past year under Mr. Yunus has been the reconstitution of the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in Dhaka. The ICT, which was originally constituted by the Hasina government in 2010, has now turned against the former Prime Minister and issued arrest warrants against her. Mr. Yunus has accused Ms. Hasina of holding successive rigged elections by excluding major parties. But by excluding the Awami League from the coming elections, Mr. Yunus's legacy may end up with the same shortcoming.

THE GIST

A former professor of economics at Chittagong University and pioneer of microfinancing, Muhammad Yunus was brought in to head the interim administration as

the consensus candidate of

anti-Hasina movement

He started talking of transfer of power soon after he took charge last August, but it was not clear how that process would be completed amid law and order problems and political instability

He has now got the BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami on his side and banned the Awami League while his government is preparing to hold elections in February 2026

Settler godmother

Daniella Weiss

As much of Gaza lies in ruins amid the ongoing war, the extremist Israeli settler leader finds an opportunity to send Jews back to the Palestinian enclave

Stanly Johny

n July, British journalist Piers Morgan asked Daniella Weiss, an Israeli settler leader appearing on his show, how she felt about the killing of 20,000 Palestinian children in Gaza since October 7, 2023. Ms. Weiss, dressed in a crisp white buttondown shirt and a blue-andwhite patterned headscarf, responded with a grin, "Arabs around should stop attacking Israel." Mr. Morgan repeated the question six more times, before pressing her: "I will give you one last chance to offer some sympathy, or empathy or sorrow about the deaths of 20,000 children in Gaza. Are you capable of doing that?" Ms. Weiss's initial response was a laugh, followed by repeated claims that Arab children are taught "to hate Jews".

Ms. Weiss, a prominent figure in the settler movement since the 1970s, which has promoted illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, returned to the spotlight in recent years after Hamas's October 7 attack. After the war began, Ms. Weiss stepped up her campaign to resume Jewish settlements in Gaza, while settlers went on rampages in the West Bank against the local Palestinian communities.



Brak, an Orthodox Jewish suburb of Tel Aviv, then part of the British-ruled Palestine, Daniella Weiss grew up attending a religious school in Ramat Gan before studying English literature and philosophy at Bar-Ilan University. Her father, born in the U.S., and mother, born in Poland, were members of Lehi, a Zionist paramilitary group founded in 1940, in Palestine.

The 'miracle' of 1967

After the 1967 war, in which Israel captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, Gaza and Sinai from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria, a new wave of Zionist activism pushed for settlements in the occupied territories. Ms. Weiss, who described the outcome of the war as "a miracle... in the dimensions of a Biblical scene", joined Gush Emunim, a right-wing ex-

tremist settler movement. Ms. Weiss and her famisettlement of Kedumim, where she served as the Mayor from 1996 to 2007. Since the 1970s, settlements have flourished in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Today, roughly 4,50,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank and 2,50,000 in East Jerusalem. In 2005, more than 10,000 settlers in Gaza were pulled back by the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, following five years of violent Hamas resistance during the Second Intifada – a decision Ms. Weiss calls "a mistake".

A close ally of Bezalel Smotrich, Israel's far-right Finance Minister who advocates the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza and its resettlement with Jews, Ms. Weiss is currently affiliated with the Nachala Settlement Movement, which works to expand Jewish settlements in disputed areas. Nachala, which calls for "conquest, immigration and settlement in Gagistered 500 families for future settlement in the enclave. The group wants the war to continue "until the enemy is destroyed". Its main slogan: "Twenty years later, we are returning to the Gaza Strip." In November 2024, Ms. Weiss went to northern Gaza in an IDF-sanctioned trip to survey locations for Jewish resettlements.

Since the October 7 attacks, violence by Jewish settlers against the local Palestinian population has surged. Sixteen Palestinian communities have been driven from their land and 175 Palestinians killed. The escalating attacks prompted the Canadian and British governments to impose sanctions on Jewish settler leaders, including Ms.

But Ms. Weiss does not seem to care. For her, the borders of the Jewish nation stretch from "the Euphrates in the east to the Nile in the southwest" (this would include a host of modern states in West Asia and Africa such as Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and part of Egypt). As for Gaza, she is unequivocal. "Gaza Arabs will not stay in the Gaza Strip. Who will stay? Jews," she said recently. "The world is wide. Africa is big. Canada is big. The world will absorb the people of Gaza. How do we do it? We

Disruptor-in-chief

Shyam Sankar

The Mumbai-born CTO of Palantir is leading the company's rapid expansion in software and AI sectors through large government contracts

Smriti S.

n Silicon Valley, where startups often burn bright and vanish fast, Palantir Technologies has defied the odds. Over the past year, the company's stock has soared more than 600%, making it the best-performing AI name in the S&P 500. On August 9, shares closed a record \$186.96, pushing the company's market cap north of \$443 billion.

At the centre of this rise is Shyam Sankar, Palantir's Mumbai-born Chief Technology Officer. On July 25, his net worth crossed \$1.3 billion as the company's stock soared. Raised in Orlando, Mr. Sankar earned a BS in electrical and computer engineering from Cornell University and an MS in management science and engineering from Stanford. Known as a "slayer of bureaucracy", he spent over two decades building disruptive software and AI solutions for government and private clients.

Mr. Sankar first learned about Palantir when a friend mentioned a small, stealthy, yet exciting software start-up looking for its first business hire in a largely technical role. The friend introduced him to one of the founders, and after seeing version 0.7 of the app, meeting a team of hearing about the company's mission, Mr. Sankar knew exactly where he wanted to be.

Founded in 2003 by Peter Thiel – a crucial backer of Donald Trump's first presidential campaign along with Alex Karp, Joe Lonsdale, and Stephen Cohen, the Silicon Valley unicorn was initially funded by In-Q-Tel, the CIA's venture capital arm. It built its early reputation serving the U.S. government, particularly national security agencies. Since joining Palantir in 2006 as its 13th employee, Mr. Sankar has pioneered the "forward deployed engineer" model - embedding engineers directly with clients to tackle urgent, real-world challenges. This approach was key to the success of Palantir's business model.

Its name, drawn from J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, refers to "seeing stones" that reveal hidden truths. Inside the company, the unofficial motto – 'Save the Shire' – reflects

its mission in plain terms: protect America from threats. Palantir's technology centralises and analys-

ILLUSTRATIONS: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

es large and disparate datasets, with applications ranging from tracking enemy drones for soldiers to monitoring ship parts for sailors, to assisting health officials in processing drug approvals. When the company's profile and operations expanded, so did Mr.

Sankar's role.

Leadership role In January 2023, he was made the CTO and executive vice-president. "Under his leadership, Palantir transformed from a Silicon Valley start-up to a global, industry leading software and AI company," reads Mr. Sankar's profile on his Substack page. Today, Palantir counts more than 30 U.S. federal agencies and a group of Fortune 500 companies as clients. The U.S. Army, once an adversary in a contracting dispute, has become one of its biggest customers. In June, Mr.

Sankar himself was commissioned into the Army Reserve, a symbolic move that underscored Palantir's alignment with military priorities.

Palantir's reputation as a rapid-response problem solver was cemented during crises. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, it built systems to track the virus and vaccine distribution. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Palantir's technology got integrated into multiple Ukrainian government and military agencies. Similarly, days after the Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2023, Mr. Karp – who is Jewish – flew with senior executives to Tel Aviv. Palantir entered a strategic partnership with Israel to provide technology to aid its war efforts. The move drew criticism from pro-Palestinian activists in the U.S. At home, Palantir drew flak for a government contract to build an app that integrates data from across the government to assist immigration enforcement. But for Mr. Sankar and

Mr. Karp, controversies are part of Palantir's DNA.

Regarding working with different government agencies on data processing and other projects, Mr. Sankar once said, it's like "shining a light on the battle space". "The things that you couldn't see before, you could see now..."

Born in 1945 in Bnei ly settled in the West Bank za", says it has already re- encourage it." "brilliant" people, and "Say More Newspaper and Magazines Telegram Channel join Search https://t.me/sharewithpride (@sharewithpride)



WHY THE NATIONAL FILM AWARDS NEED TO BE PROTECTED, ESPECIALLY FROM ITSELF

It's not just about the ruckus over a tacky, propaganda movie winning, or the growing Hindi-centricity of the awards, but about keeping its status as a precious, respected platform



ANNA MM **VETTICAD**

'Awards don't really matter' is a dictum that's repeated as often – and as unthinkingly-as 'money can't buy happiness'. At one level, of course, both statements are true. Yes, happiness is not a commodity available for purchase in a supermarket. And yes, greatness does not cease to be great on being ignored by awards givers.

The fact is, however, that though happiness is not a product literally up for sale, money can certainly buy goods and services that could potentially be a means to happiness. Likewise, awards with standing do matter. Apart from being an ac-

knowledgement of an individual's or organisation's achievements, they serve to amplify the winner's work, in the present, and to future generations.

Sometimes they are also an act of courage by the awards-giver. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, for instance, did not need a Nobel Peace Prize. But the failure to award him remains an eternal reminder that the Nobel committee was afraid to antagonise the colonial power that Gandhi fought.

This is the context in which the ongoing storm over the National Film Awards must be viewed. Much of the consternation is aimed at the Best Director and Best Cinematography trophies going to the tacky Hindi film. The Kerala Story, a propaganda vehicle peddling false statistics (an 'arbitrary number', as director Sudipto Sen himself publicly admitted) against Muslims and Kerala.

Meanwhile, the venerated veteran Malayalam superstar Urvashi has been selected as the Best Supporting Actress for her performance as the joint lead in Ullozhukku (Undercurrent). You read that



A MUCH-NEEDED VIEWPOINT

right: Urvashi was a joint *lead* along with Parvathy Thiruvothu in Ullozhukku, but has been selected for the Best Supporting Actress Award.

Responding to public outrage at this travesty, she told the media that she further demands to know what criteria were used to relegate Vijayaraghavan – the joint lead in the Malavalam film Pookkaalam (Spring) – to the Best Supporting Actor slot, while Shah Rukh Khan was

picked as Best Actor for the Hindi blockbuster Jawan. 'We should raise such questions, since we too are tax-paying citizens,' she said.

Just to be clear, debates over awards are inevitable, and occur everywhere in the world. This is not the first time that the National Awards have been contentious either. Accusations of bias towards film personalities who are close to the government of the day have been made off and

been a marked increase in the Hindi-centricity of the awards, and a glaring, persistent bias towards films or artists who lean towards the right-wing.

What distinguishes this year from the preceding 70 years is the blatantness in fetng a low-quality film that unabashedly

on for decades. Since 2014, there has also datory inclusion of a Best Feature Film category in each of the languages speci-fied in Schedule 8 of the Constitution, and certain other Indian languages Where else, and how often, would you find a beauty like Dominic Megham Sangma's Rimdogittanga (Rapture) being platformed at a national level?

Where else, and how often, would you find a beauty like Dominic Sangma's film Rimdogittanga (left) being platformed at a national level?

spreads misinformation, and was openly promoted by the ruling party when it was released. The blatantness, coupled with the bizarreness of confusing lead and supporting performances, has dealt a blow to the institution of the National Awards that it will not easily recover from.

This is a tragedy, because despite all the controversies over the years, the National Awards have remained one of the few high-profile spaces left in this country that inevitably showcase small-scale. low-budget indie cinema, due to the man-

Rimdogittanga, which is set in a Meghalaya village beset by fear of the other, has been named the Best Garo Feature Film Independent filmmakers like Sangma constantly struggle for funds and visibility in India. Recognition at the National Awards is, among other things, a precious morale booster.

For the sake of indies, and for the love of Indian cinema at large, film lovers in India must fight to ensure that the lost credibility of the National Awards is restored

RED HERRING



INDRAJIT HAZRA

Mar-a-Lago Daala, **Hum Pe Yeh Kisne Hara Rang Daala?**

Doland has united us like nothing else had enough of the blond Vishwaguru?

Nothing bathes my hypothalamus with more pleasure than when I encounter confusion around me. Not the destructive variety of the sort in which all clear drinks appear to be water, but of the kind that leaves pretty much every door unhinged. And if confusion was a nice, mahogany coffin, what else could be that final nail smirking its way into the wood other than Doland slapping '50%' after all those hugs.

Anti-Trump Indians are confused to find till-now pro-Trump Indians suddenly standing next to them. Pro-Trump Indians are confused to find their blond Vishwaguru giving them one tight Vivekamunand. Yeh kya ho raha hain, bhai, yeh kya ho raha hain?!

And it's this sudden universal anti-Dolandism among all Indians - barring the odd White supremacist Brown sahib - that seems to have brought all of us together in one nervous hall. Even Modi detractors seem to be shuffling their feet and looking askance at the floor after having made those early wisecracks about 'NaMo and Donee/ Sitting on a tree/ H.U.G-.G.I.N.G.' The Song of Doland seems to have succeeded where Pakistan, terrorism, communalism, bad-mannered English cricketers, woke and whataboutery haven't been able to do: bring true consensus in the land once made up of princely states and a pink colony.

Truth be told, I find Doland as fascinating as abhorrent, like a bawling baby with an adult's head spouting expletives. He's the sort of chap you meet talking, he's talking. Both of you are getting along quite affably, talking about, say, last night's IPI match, or Anand Mahindra's latest tweet.... And then, mid-pee, the other man turns to face you and douses your shoes, intentionally. It's disgusting, as well as fascinating as to why he did it.

Political pundits and economists have suddenly turned into Jungian psychoanalysts. 'Donald has needs,' is the general diagnosis, some adding 'per verse,' just to make sure they don't end up sounding sympathetic to the president of the Mar-a-Lago Club. But India comes with its special history of its relationship with the US. Like one aspect of it as revealed after

ainst Islamic Terror

nt Hindu Sena

Hindu Sena

tions just before the 1971 India-Pakistan war be-Ritween chard Nixon and Henry Kissinger (poor Elon sorry. next time) were dein

classified 2005. Kissinger another man I

find fascinat-



GUYS, WE MAY HAVE TO CHANGE OUR PLAN

ing, but abhorrent - is heard to say in the tapes, 'Indians are bastards anyway', while calling Indira Gandhi a 'bitch'. His boss, Nixon 'describes' Indian women: 'Undoubtedly the most unattractive women in the world are the Indian women... they turn me off," thoughtfully adding, 'How the hell do they turn other people on, Henry? Tell me.

The difference between Nixon-Kissinger and Doland and his Jeffrey Epstein era turnips is that the former would go to pains to hide their bigotry. The latter have no qualms to conceal their racist, sexist, anti-humanist agenda. Being racist, sexist and much else is actually also being 'disruptive', that sexy buzzword of our startup-get down times. It can also be thrilling to see and hear a 'rulebreaker' who is not the standard, oh-so-dull politician.

Until, that is, the same radical outsider turns around and pisses on your shoes.

The wealth of America, coupled with the cult of wealth that Doland is both John the Baptist and Jesus of -the former being the latter's corpcom head-gives the American president the benefit of doubt that he may be different from North Korea's Kim Jong-Un, with worse hair. Which is why pro-Trump Indians had been, well, pro-Trump. Who doesn't like cheering the winning side?

But unlike an era when anti-Americanism was an easier ticket to radical chicness than her/she/them ID markers, Indians of all sorts today may find the only country to have exploded a nuclear bomb - twice on habitations to be the same one that brought them computers and Netflix and Taylor Swift/Grateful Dead. But Doland has solved that confusion.

America is, once again, the America of Nixon-Kissinger tapes. Except this time, it's not bothered to keep it classified. It just said aloud: '50%. What are you going to do about it?' Hell, so this is what it feels to be a patriot.

Indrajit.hazra@timesofindia.com

SO, WHAT DO HR TEAMS ACTUAI

The Coldplay kiss cam moment exposed corporate hypocrisy, wrapped in 'culture' rules written by, of course, the buzzword-loving HR

Modern work culture is a self-contained bubble where

people say nonsense with extraordinary confidence

PRACTISING THE ULTIMATE CORPCON



KANIKA GAHLAUT

A few weeks back, after the CEO of data platform company Astronomer, Andy Byron, and the company's HR head, Kristin Cabot, resigned – after being sadly 'caught' like deer in Coldplay headlights – many people arrived at a question they rarely ask out aloud: What does HR actually do? (Privacy at public spaces like concerts remains a separate question. But in most places, undisclosed relationships within workplace hierarchies fall foul of company policies.)

No one, it seems, has an answer. Human resources may, in fact, be the strangest post-invention known to a workplace. According to its job description, HR is meant to 'manage all aspects of an employee's life cycle' and 'foster a positive working environment.' Which, frankly, has one scratching one's head right from the onset.

'Manage all aspects of an employee's life cycle' could mean just about anything. Like the HR team at my last job, which had the audacity to offer women - already fraying under institutional patriarchy - a free manicure coupon for International Women's Day, Which really tells us nothing, except what we already know and don't need a brush with HR to find out: one person's positive is another's poison.

Besides, how can people who aren't trained in the actual jobs employees do possibly manage their entire life cycle? By their own description, HR professionals are trained in 'positivity', and 'employee management' and can move seamlessly from companies selling ketchup to those making nuclear weapons. To date, no one – and I've whispered it myself behind mugs of black coffee and through everolls-has answered this question.

Part of the confusion lies in the strange, bloated language of corporate life. Modern work culture is now a selfcontained bubble where people say absolute nonsense with extraordinary confidence. The American workplace vocabulary spawned by B-schools became mainstream through the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of management consultancies, Silicon Valley, and selfhelp business books.

It promoted the idea of the worker as the 'entrepreneur of their own self,' with the entire purpose of existence henceforth being the marketing and branding of that self. This language spread across the world via popular American dramas and sitcoms - Ally McBeal, Friends, The Office, Suits and now parodies itself across LinkedIn profiles worldwide. Here, a man can bleed out his soul in public and it becomes a marketing lesson. A woman can combust from PTSD, and it becomes a case study in reinvention.

We're told we must constantly 'reinvent ourselves to stay relevant' – a line

so exhausted it forgets that 'relevant' already contains the 're-' in it. At 20, you're not 'creating content'. You're just beginning to figure things out. At 30, you're not 'networking'. You're naturally curious about the world and its connections. And at 40, you're not 'reinventing'. You're evolving.

Ironic TV shows like Silicon Valley, Severance, and even older satires like Dilbert and The Devil Wears Prada have held up a mirror to this culture. Entire books have analysed its roots - Barbara Ehrenreich's 2009 Smile or Die: How Positive Thinking Fooled America and the World, and David Graeber's 2018 Bullshit Jobs: A Theory being especially memorable are among them. On Linked In, it all collapses into clapping emojis and humblebrags, like a bad parody stuck on loop.

As the Coldplay debacle continues to putter along in memes and gags across the internet, people in workplaces are watching with silent glee as this toxic world of self-bestowed titles - 'positivity," 'reinvention,' and 'energised leadership' – collapses in on itself like a cruel joke, with a Coldplay-loving CEO ducking under the first available

That Astronomer's HR head and CEO were caught in an embrace so graphic – Byron wasn't holding Cabot's waist, but her breasts – has only made the moment more visceral: a perfect picture of corporate hypocrisy hiding behind 'corporate culture' rules drawn up by - who else? - HR. Everyone's brimming over with laughter at the punchline – a joke HR never meant to deliver, but did anyway. And that just makes it sit in that sweet HR spot where every delight,

'Clanker' - The **Internet's New Favourite Slur**

What's a 'clanker'?

Welcome to 2025, where humans have started cursing robots. The term 'clanker' first appeared in 2005 in Star Wars and also The Clone to describe the sound of robots clanking around. Fast forward to today, and the term has been adopted as a humorous insult, gaining popularity on Instagram. Tiktok and even by politicians to insult robots and automated systems.

Is this the first robot slur?

Not really. Sci-fi franchises like Battlestar Galactica and Blade Runner have used their own pejoratives for



like injury, is unintended.

Morparia

When Haute Cuisine Met Haute Capital

A restaurant in the French Alps that is a whispering cathedral of slow gastronomy

hour time horizon of the latter.

ranged like sculpture, mush-

rooms rolled slowly by chefs

into edible artwork, served

with a broth simmered for

over 6 hours that tasted as

Artichokes appeared in mul-

tiple avatars. Fennel arrived

candied, juiced, emulsified,

and even in philosophical con-

versation with brioche. Every

course was paired with non-al-

coholic infusions that rede-

fined what pairing could mean

oil, blueberry infused with ro-

semary, a parsley sorbet that

doubled as a botanical haiku.

Mushrooms

(pic) rolled

slowly by

chefs into

apple juice layered over dill

though the forest had been dis-

tilled and meditated upon.



SIVAKUMAR **SUNDARAM**

There are meals that nourish the body, and those that stir the soul. And then there are the rare few that do both - while quietly reminding you that beauty, especially when plated, often comes at a price.

Tucked into the quiet elegance of Annecy in the French Alps, Clos des Sens is not just a restaurant. It's a whispering cathedral of slow gastronomy. With only 13 tables and 40 guests at full capacity, the experience is curated with the confidence of someone who knows they need not advertise. After all, when your food takes longer to compose than most novels these days, you're not in the restaurant business, you're in the busi-

ness of ritual. The setting is minimalist vet warm: wooden panels, earthtoned décor, and chairs with discreet drawers to slide in your phone - a gentle nudge to let go of the world and its distractions and lean into the moment. Distractions, like additives, are gently discouraged.

The choice between the 7- and 9-course tasting menu was the evening's only real dilemma. It

SCULPTURE

RAPTURE

Even the cheese course arwas resolved in favour of the rived with theatrical gravitas: former, less out of fear of extra calories and more out of respect a travelling cart of goat, sheep, for human digestion and the 3and cow's milk cheeses in various stages of age, rebellion, What followed was a 3-hour and blue-veined bravado. One celebration of vegetarian inwas gently advised to proceed dulgence. Dishes arrived like clockwise - from mild to mayrestrained poetry. Peas ar-

hem. The service, meanwhile, was choreographed like a silent ballet. Crumbs vanished before they fell. Napkins refolded themselves via discreet magic. Sauces were wined with the solemnity of a state secret being erased from a whiteboard. It was culinary theatre at its most understated.

Now, for the gentle reader considering a pilgrimage: a word on the economics. For a party of four, the evening cost a shade over €1,800. We were certainly caught unaware that the non-alcoholic aperitifs came with their price tags and perhaps, as patrons, we ought to have been informed. At that price point, this is not dinner, it is a capital expenditure in the guise of cuisine. But as with all great investments, the returns were intangible: memory, conversation, and the rare luxury of time well sa-





NO OFFENCE

robots, like 'skin-job.' However, 'clanker' gained traction because it made more sense, especially within online communities like Battlefront and Star Wars subreddits, where it's used to belittle robots.

Why is it going mainstream now?

As robots like cleaning bots and AI systems become a part of everyday life, people need new ways to express their displeasure toward them. In January, users were already tweeting, 'We need a slur for AI.' With the growing influence of AI in workplaces and daily routines, the word seems to be filling that cultural void.

Is it sparking existential dread?

In a way, yes. Experts suggest that by dehumanising robots, we might be inadvertently giving them more personality than they have. As robots continue to infiltrate society, the question arises; will we eventually be the ones cursing the robots. This term has sparked countless memes, with some humorously apologising to future robot over lords for past 'clanker' use.

Finish row in English (6) Furnish witty remark on the Internet? (5)

Sir Francis didn't start as dissolute man (4) Connected first of 19, it's said

(7) **6** Smarten up very soft outside

6 Smarten up very soft outside edge (5)
7 Not a simple procedure, more a girl's problem (9)
8 Rocky Shetland island heraldry (except odd bits) (8)
11 Unusually odd old bird (4)
14 Attractive person's food (4)
15 Strippers not available to holiday-makers lacking oxygen (9)
16 Books describe one baby's garment (3)

garment (3)

17 Announced correct procedure

21 Angle of star in wild Muzak hit

21 Angle of star in Wild MUZak nit without Kinks' lead (7)
22 Suspect can't apparently take a doze (6)
24 Poor river flowing west in New York (5)
26 This is essential to handle a

shih-tzu (5)

27 Dance round ring – this one? (4)

18 Epilogue. 20 Dais. 21 Azimuth. 22 Catnap. 24 Needy. 26 Leash.

30 Essays: 31 Chop chop.

30 Essays: 31 Chop chop.

40 Through, 6 Primp, 7 Rigmarole.

8 Unsteady, 11 Dodo, 14 Dish.

15 Maturists. 16 Bib, 17 Rite.

15 Maturists. 18 Rib, 17 Rite.

in church (4)

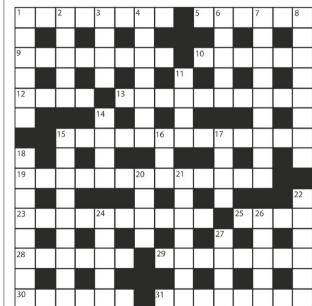
18 1 Down of book by Poe, translated with guile (8)

20 Platform is supporting U.S.

0128

Text: Team Sunday ET

ET Sunday Crossword



1 Deplore old banger following Devon river (8)
5 Outline of no-frills paper cup (6)
9 Dipso doctor, new in UK, met another one returning (8)

10 In large seas occasionally litres enter them (6) enter them (b)
12 Not a pleasant experience at first; it hair-raising (4)
13 All flatfish bought, say? That's incongruous (3,2,5)
15 Huge Robin trembled facing

gangster in local area (13)

19 Threw table out, gaining time in

fierce fight (7,6)
23 Complaint irritated nasty girl, I gathered (10)
25 Paul Nash preserved part of

28 One of four books goes with LP to be edited (6) 29 It bends about Hanover, not over (8) 30 Lamb produced them, say, in centre

of Hesse (6) **31** Two rib slices and make it quick! (4,4)

9 Drunkard. 10 Bilges. 12 Nape. 13 Out of place. 15 Neighbourhood. 19 Pitched 28 Gospel. 29 Luthobahn. 28 Gospel. 29 Autobahn. 38 Gospel. 29 Autobahn. ACROSS: 1 EXECTRICE: 5 Ap SOLUTION TO NO 0128:

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MIND THE TRUMP **GAP: THANK YOU** FOR YOUR ATTENTION

'HE world's oldest democracy has an emblematic motto inscribed on the 'great seal'. Adopted in 1782, it reads 'E pluribus unum'—Latin for 'out of many, one'—symbolising the social compact recognising the rights of the governed. In 2025, under Donald J Trump, the predominance of 'one' over the 'many' is stark and striking.

Each of DJT's 200 days in power is a whirlwind of what's next. The atmospherics are somewhat reminiscent of Louis XIV, who declared, "L'état, c'est moi" (The state is me). He too imposed tariffs and partnered with financiers to bolster the French economy. Trump has adopted the Nixonian line on presidential powers. And like Andrew Jackson, Trump leans on the advice of the kitchen cabinet to subjugate the system. In one week, he sacked the Bureau of Labor Statistics chief claiming data was rigged, shunted the chief of the Internal Revenue Service and has wanted to sack Jerome Powell for months.

Notice that Trumpian expressions and idioms are tailored for his base—he said the Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan "was kissing my ass", nicknamed the US Fed chief Jerome 'too late' Powell, dubbed a Sydney Sweeny ad as the "hottest" and Taylor Swift "no longer hot". The coarseness of language harks to Henry VIII, who infamously called an ex-wife a 'Flanders mare'. As in royal courts, the unprecedented meets with

the unexpected and is wrapped in intrigue. Whether you like him or hate him, Trump theatre is here!



THE THIRD EYE SHANKKAR AIYAR Author of *The Gated Republic, Aadhaai* A Biometric History of India's 12 Digit Revolution, and Accidental India

(shankkar.aiyar@gmail.com)

Here are a few observations on minding the gaps in his gab. And, as Trump says, "Thank you for your attention to this matter."

By design, Trump occupies headlines with panache for utterances that challenge credulity. His whims and rants trigger sharp views on his cognitive conduct. Following the feud with Canada, Ontario Premier Doug Ford pointedly said, "I think the cheese slips off the cracker with this guy. He wakes up and even people around him are not sure what he's going to do, or say."

Like this week, Trump unilaterally declared additional tariffs of 25 percent on India, taking the total to 50 percent even though talks are slated for August 25. The reason: India buys crude oil from Russia. It doesn't matter that, as this column pointed out last week, the US buys Russian uranium, chemicals and fertilisers, or that the EU will buy Russian gas till 2027. When asked what about the US imports, Trump said, "I don't know anything about it."

The art of the deal is also the art of the dodge. This week, Trump was asked if he supported Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan for the takeover of Gaza—even as it faces a humanitarian crisis agitating world leaders. Trump shrugged it off, saying it was "pretty much up to Israel". The evasive response perhaps suggests Trump's idea of an Eastern Riviera is alive. Amid the clamour for the release of the Epstein files, Trump denied any knowledge of who cleared the transfer of convicted sex trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell to a minimum security prison.

The Nobel Peace Prize is a constant punctuation in questions around trade or geopolitics—Pakistan, Cambodia, Israel, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Democratic Republic of Congo have proposed Trump's name. Apparently, Trump's ire is triggered by the rejection of his claim of brokering a ceasefire between India and Pakistan. Did the US step in to broker peace or pro-

tect the Pak nuke facility purported to be under its control? Trump is 199 days late on his promise to end the war in Ukraine in a day. He has yo-yoed from a pro-Putin stance to anti-Russia measures including new sanctions. On Monday, frustrated by Putin, Trump moved two nuclear submarines to "appropriate regions". On Friday, Trump told the world he was meeting Putin in Alaska on August 15 to stop the war.

Hyperbole illuminates Trump. The White House claims trillions are pouring into the US—Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE have promised to invest \$ 2 trillion. Trade deals apparently have yielded more. Japan will invest \$550 billion, Korea \$350 billion and the EU \$600 billion. Curiously, there are no details or formal agreements in the deals. The markets, which coined the phrase TACO (Trump Always Chickens Out), are now punting on Trump EMPANADA (Everyone Makes Promises and Never Actually Does Anything).

Trump's tariff tantrums have left leaders of nations and transnationals stranded between flattery and fear. Apple CEO Tim Cook presented his recipe to curry favour. He declared Apple will invest \$600 billion in the US building new facilities (but not the iPhone). Incidentally, Apple made commitments to invest \$350 billion in 2018 and \$430 billion in 2021. The outcomes are fuzzy, but for now Apple escapes tariffs.

During the campaign, Trump spoke big on tackling China with constraints and tariffs. This was not to be, as China has got the US by the short hair—on supplies of critical components and rare earth. Indeed, the US has, thanks to advocacy by NVidia's Jenson Huang, relaxed the controls on US export of chips. Meanwhile, Japan resumed purchase of Russian crude, Indonesia is in talks for Russian energy and collaboration, and China continues to be the largest buyer of Russian oil.

Trump believes his legacy is to disrupt status quo and upend the world order. Success depends on how the US economy responds and how long he is able to control the narrative. For now, the world, to paraphrase a Chinese curse, "is living in interesting times".

TRUMP'S 50% PAIN, INDIA'S 100% GAIN



POWER & POLITICS **PRABHU CHAWLA** prabhuchawla@newindianexpress.com

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HE paradox of power is that it burns the hands of those who mistake a mandate for a flaming sword. When a democratically elected leader like Donald Trump wields his mandate not as a trust but as a cudgel, slamming down sweeping tariffs to prop up the shimmering illusion of his 'America First' mirage, he does more than rattle rivals; he risks setting fire to the very foundations of his perverse economic dreamscape.

Trump's terrible tariffs are a thunderbolt aimed at India's economic heart. Pharmaceuticals (\$12.2 billion), textiles (\$8 billion), electronics, and automobiles—key pillars of India's \$74billion US exports—face a 50 percent levy, potentially shaving more than 0.50 percent off the GDP, according to various estimates. The rupee, teetering at 87.95 to the dollar, amplifies the pain for India's 400-million-strong middle class, whose purchasing power drives 50 percent of consumption.

Yet, in this storm lies India's chance to reshape its destiny with audacious reforms that ignite demand, attract investment, and rival China's manufacturing might. It requires a major reversal of economic model which places emphasis on supply. Excessive supply hasn't been able to create proportional demand.

To spur demand, India's middle class, burdened by a 30-40 percent income tax on earnings above ₹15 lakh, needs urgent relief. Cutting the rate to 15 percent for incomes under ₹15 lakh would lift disposable income by 12-15 percent, unlocking \$50 billion in fresh consumption, according to Niti Aayog's 2024 estimate. In rural India—where consumption grew just 4.5 percent in 2024 versus 6.2

percent in cities—direct cash transfers are essential. Expanding the ₹2 lakh crore PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana to provide ₹5,000 a month to 100 million rural families could drive a 10 percent surge in rural demand, adding 0.5 percent to GDP. Such a bottom-up strategy would replace the failed trickle-down approach, which has poured ₹1.45 lakh crore into corporate tax cuts since 2019 with little to show for it in jobs.

Jobs must be the first order of business. Opening the doors to 100 percent FDI in defence, rural infrastructure, sanitation, water conservation, and road transport, paired with mandatory technology transfers, could transform the employment landscape. India's \$81-billion defence market, growing at 8 per-

cent annually, could alone generate 1.2 million jobs by 2030. Road transport, the backbone of India's \$3.5-trillion economy, needs \$500 billion for 100,000 km of new highways. Streamlined land acquisition and 20year tax exemptions could lift FDI inflows by 30 percent, echoing Vietnam's post-tariff gains.

Technology is India's secret weapon.

Trump's H-1B visa curbs threaten the \$250-billion IT sector employing 5.4 million. India must pivot inwards, incentivising firms like TCS and Infosys to develop AI, blockchain, and 6G solutions. A 2024 Nasscom report estimates that \$1 billion in tech R&D creates 10.000 jobs: a \$10-billion push could yield 100,000 jobs by 2028. Mandate Indian firms to invest 2 percent of revenue in R&D, up from 0.7 percent.

India's corporate tax rate of 25 percent for new manufacturers is competitive. Simplifying GST to two slabs—5 and 15 percent—and decriminalising minor tax violations could cut costs by 20 percent, making India a manufacturing hub. China's labour costs, 30 percent higher than India's, give Modi's 'Make in India, Sold to the World' vision a clear edge. Bold re-

forms could capture 25 percent of China's \$1-trillion export market by 2030.

Another bold reform is to leverage India's \$240 billion in US treasury bonds. Redirecting this to the \$1.3 trillion National Infrastructure Pipeline yields 8 percent higher returns, says Niti Aayog. Amazon and Google, who rake in billions from India's \$2-trillion digital market, must face China-style rules. They should be forced to set up R&D centres with 50 percent local jobs or lose access. This could create 500,000 jobs by 2030.

The time has also come to end American ratings hegemony. Forge a system that serves India's 1.4 billion people, not Wall Street's whims. Moody's, S&P, and Fitch consistently downgrade India's potential, while China, with a slower 4.6

> percent growth, enjoys A1. This bias, rooted in Western scepticism of India's governance, costs \$10 billion annually in higher borrowing costs, says RBI. Local agencies like CARE Ratings and ICRA, projecting 6.8 percent growth for 2025-26, reflect India's true trajectory. Launch a BRICSbacked rating agency to challenge this cartel. As Finance Minister Nirmala

SOURAV ROY

Sitharaman quipped in 2024, "Why let New York tell us who we are?"

US consultancies like McKinsey, EY, and PwC, tainted by \$641 million in US settlements for conflicts of interest, peddle generic solutions unfit for India's 70 percent rural economy. Their advice fuels bureaucratic bloat which opens up unending consultancy avenues for them. India must establish a National Policy Research Institute staffed by IIT and IIM graduates to craft bespoke reforms. For instance, digitising land records with blockchain, as piloted in Telangana, could save \$5 billion annually in disputes. Decriminalising minor GST and Companies Act violations would unlock \$15 billion in capital, boosting small businesses. Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Mahindra's rallying cry—"Ease of doing business is our shield against tariffs" demands a follow-up. India's 63rd rank in the World Bank's ease of doing business index trails Vietnam's 70th. Singlewindow clearance could propel India to the top 50, attracting \$100 billion in FDI by 2030. India should adopt the mantra of building institutions for India.

By Trump and for Trump cannot be the rule. Tariffs—50 percent on India, with a 100 percent threat on BRICS for de-dollarisation—reveals America's fear of a rising multipolar world. India, the world's third-largest economy, must lead BRICS to redefine global trade, sideline the dollar, and stymie US economic nationalism. The US dollar, underpinning 88 percent of global trade via SWIFT, is America's financial chokehold. India's \$10-billion rupee-ruble trade with Russia in 2024, up 20 percent from 2023, proves local currencies work. Scaling this across BRICS—\$26 trillion in GDP could save \$20 billion. Restricting SWIFT, as China did with CIPS, shields trade from US sanctions. India must champion a BRICS trading currency backed by the New Development Bank.

India's \$250-billion trade with BRICS members grew 15 percent in 2024, but high tariffs limit its potential. CII estimates that a BRICS free trade agreement with 5 percent average tariffs could add \$60 billion to India's exports by 2030. Hosting a 2026 BRICS trade summit could cement India's role as a global power. According to FT, Trump's tariffs will reshape supply chains. In that case, India's 44 percent share of US smartphone imports could net \$50 billion in exports. Striking trade deals with the EU, UK, and ASEAN will amplify India's dream of acquiring the role of a vishwaguru.

As Harsh Goenka, Chairman of the RPG Group, said, "Trump's chaos is India's chance to shine." India must lead, not follow, turning adversity into a dazzling triumph. Trump's tariff tyranny hands India a historic opportunity. By slashing taxes, opening FDI, and harnessing technology, India can forge a competitive economy. To repeat Mahindra's war cry, "This is India's moment to unleash its potential." Make India Great (MIG) boldly and brilliantly—starting now.

THE MANY SHADES OF PATRIOTISM



OPINION ANURADHA GOYAL Author and founder of IndiTales Follow her on X @anuradhagoyal

PERATION Sindoor brought out a million shades of patriotism. Most of us born after the 1971 war had not really seen a war. Yes, there was Kargil, but it was localised to the Kargil hills and most of India did not

directly feel the heat. It also happened way before the ubiquity of cameras and media platforms that allow anyone to share videos, broadcast an opinion or draw out an analysis. I remember my father once said, "War can create stronger bonds than peace." Now I realise the truth in his words.

Some young social media influencers observed that India was losing the narrative battle initially. Indian citizens were not able to see the adversary's content as it was banned, so they called upon an NRI to share anything that may be relevant. We suddenly realised that the world is so entangled that information can flow through multiple

routes. They gathered teams instantly to rebut the narrative that was going against India, before putting a stop to it with satellite imagery. Many young influencers and social media citizens con-

tributed their bit. Trader associations put out an effort to not trade in Turkish goods that many of us did not even know came from there. Someone pulled out data on how much Indian travellers spend in destinations like Türkiye, which decided to stand with our adversary and suddenly we saw a boycott call that gave some anxious moments to tourism boards there. My gut feeling is that both these were organic emotional reactions. It was an effort to weaken the adversaries economically, and in a way your contribution to strengthening your own nation. In the process, we also learnt the value of the money we spend on products and destinations and the power that comes with it.

The biggest surprise came from youngsters—generations Z and Alpha. These kids are born in a hyper-globalised world with families spread across the world, and have always seen the world as their playground. They suddenly realised the importance of the Indian Army in protecting us from attacks. They probably felt Indian for the first time and not just because of the passport they hold. A recruitment drive for the security forces in Chandigarh saw many youngsters turn up to enrol. The Indian armed forces have always commanded utmost respect, but their straight talk and restrained action took it a few notches up.

We woke up to the fact that the Indian startup ecosystem was quietly building state-of-the-art defence equipment, too. They are not just working on keeping us secure but may soon take leadership positions in the industry now that the world has seen their capabilities first hand. I am sure we would be far more attentive at the next republic day parade when some of these may be on display.



Wars on the border and the trade front have brought Indians closer to each other than ever in recent decades. One hue of patriotism is localisation. It makes sense to foster self-sufficiency in many sectors

For the first time, I saw south Indians appreciating what north Indians have suffered over time. When the visuals of drone attacks surfaced, every Indian was worried about the people living close to our borders. The inherent bravery of these people was visible in the never-give-up messages shared on social media. In an online exchange, where a south Indian expressed gratitude to north Indians in the border regions, a north Indian politely replied, 'You protected and preserved our culture and traditions, and we protected

the borders. We both did our bit.' When was the last time we saw such camaraderie and sense of shared responsibility in the public domain that tends to divide us on all possible lines—religion, state, language, gender and caste.

When the theatrics and speculation by private media frustrated us, we quietly turned to good old Doordarshan for news, especially from official channels. I hope this puts a pause to the high-volume, always-anxious mode of reporting where every news is breaking news.

With more wars erupting, including on the trade front, the strongest hue of patriotism comes in the form of localisation. We see tariff realignments to protect local interests. There is a push for local manufacturing and ensuring local jobs in most major economies. Globalisation, seen as an advantage around the turn of the millennium, has become a risk in just about a generation. The global supply chain means any country that does not agree with you can hit a pause button as leverage. It makes sense to be independent in your basic food and security requirements, and everyone seems to be moving in that direction. Yes, a few things have always been global and would continue to be so, but your everyday meal need not be.

Wars, though unwanted, do bring out a strong sense of belongingness to the land that our security forces are fighting hard to defend. They make you value what you have, making the things we crib about look insignificant.

(Views are personal)

QUOTE CORNER

This now is not a small intervention. It's the president of the US thinking he can dictate rules for a sovereign country like Brazil. It's unacceptable... Today my intuition says he doesn't want to talk. And I won't humiliate myself. What Trump did with Zelenskyy was humiliation... One president can't be humiliating another.

Lula da Silva, Brazilian president, describing Brazil-US relations at a 200vear nadir after Trump raised tariffs and demanded Jair Bolsonaro be freed

You can't really make the numbers different or better by firing the people doing

the counting... it makes it much harder to make judgements. **Rand Paul,** US senator, on Trump firing the federal labour statistician

Making annoying statements that the wife was... was not able to cook food properly cannot be said to be acts of grave cruelty or harassment.

Justices Vibha Kankanwadi and Sanjay A Deshmukh of the Bombay High Court bench at Aurangabad

MAIIDAC WRITETO MALLBAU letters@newindianexpress.com

SIR solution

Ref: Election Commission must restore faith in democratic process (Aug 9). In the special intensive revision of the voter list going on in Bihar, lakhs of dead, fake and duplicate voters have been found. Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders have accused the Election Commission of having fake voters in the list in Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka and other states. From this it seems that the commission's decision to do an intensive revision in the whole country is absolutely correct. The only solution to prevent many types of fraud is to use Aadhaar-based biometric verification.

Pratip Mal, Bhadreswar

Fix accountability Rahul Gandhi's furore over election malpractices is disquieting. In the ultimate sense, either the ECI should face the music for the biggest crime of cheating the nation by colluding with the BJP, or

complainant Rahul Ganshi should be taken to task for wrong allegations against the poll body. A formal complaint will pave the way for an investigation into the issue.

Geetha B K, Kannur

Red card

Ref: Invoke sporting sanctions (Aug 9). When Israeli fans riot abroad and footballers die at home, it no longer remains just a game. Israel's conduct—on and off the pitch—warrants more than a yellow card. If Russia can be benched, why not Israel? FIFA must ask: is fair play only for the field, or the world beyond it too?

K Chidanand Kumar, Bengaluru

Trade bypass

Ref: Modi, Putin call amid tariff pain, Ukraine summit (Aug 9). In the aftermath of the irrational trade ethics promoted by Donald Trump, countries must come up with a strategy to bypass the US in dealing with one another. World trade cannot happen the way Trump proposes, which in the long run may tional tax burden on every American citizen that will soon prove disgustingly unbearable. K V Raghuram, Wayanad

prove suicidal for the US economy. It will put addi-

Internal affairs

Ref: HC allows Anbumani to hold PMK meet, bins plea (Aug 9). A political party has to strive for peoples' welfare with pragmatic policies and a solid leadership. When a party is having internal wrangles over leadership, it must be resolved as an internal party affair. Seeking a court solution for an internal affair does not reflect well on the strength of the party. The dad-son struggle is the PMK's fundamental weakness.

N R Nagarajan, Virudhunagar

Gullible Americans

Ref: Diplomatic moves that opened the door to possible Trump-Putin meeting on Ukraine (Aug 8). Trump's summit with Putin to stop the Russia-Ukraine war is sheer hypocrisy. He didn't support the Democrats supporting Ukraine when they were in power and is least bothered about Ukraine. It's about domination for him. The two great qualities of American people are that they are usually fearless and that they foster an open society. But I don't consider them fair, as they let Trump go scot-free even after he was convicted as a felon. And their greatest weakness is that they are gullible enough to be swayed by the 'America First' policy.

Philip Alexander, Bengaluru

Skipping year

Ref: TN sticks to two languages, scraps class 11 boards (Aug 9). Many features have been incorporated into Tamil Nadu's education policy, with the prominent being the removal of class 11 board exam to reduce stress for students. This change will certainly help students focus more on the class 12 board exam, which is vital for admission to higher education courses. But there's a concern that schools may go back to the practice of teaching class 12 syllabus in class 11. The government must ensure this does not crop up.

S Sankaranarayanan, Chennai

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