



## Emergency exit

N. Biren Singh is finally shown the door, but peace in Manipur is elusive

In a long overdue decision, N. Biren Singh resigned as Chief Minister of Manipur on Sunday. It was reportedly under duress due to growing dissidence within the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government even as the Opposition Congress planned a no-confidence motion in the Assembly. The Supreme Court of India had recently sought the services of the Central Forensic Science Laboratory to provide a "sealed-cover report" on "leaked audio tapes" that it is examining, allegedly featuring Mr. Singh as an instigator of the ethnic conflict that has raged for months between two communities in the State. These proximate reasons apart, Mr. Singh's continuation was long made untenable with the ethnic conflict having shown few signs of abating, and him being seen as championing the cause of chauvinists from one group. In any case, the Union Government had, de facto, used the provisions of Article 355 to seize control over law and order without declaring its imposition. The BJP and its allies had also lost both Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 general election, indicating a fatigue in the valley and hill regions with the State government. Mr. Singh's rhetoric about the Kukl-Zo-Hmar communities, persistently accusing them of being "intruders" from Myanmar and providing a haven to "drug dealers" and illicit crop cultivators, fuelled the antipathy on both sides of the conflict, while his inability to rein in violent groups that openly brandished sophisticated weapons — many looted from police armories — created a culture of impunity. With the BJP persisting with his leadership, there was little hope for any reconciliation as civil society activists refused to engage in peace talks.

The Union government and the BJP should now make the best use of the opportunity by looking for a new leader who is unburdened by the shenanigans of Mr. Singh's rule and willing to work towards genuine reconciliation. Second, the Union government should accelerate the process of involving civil society leaders in talks, yet again, to address immediate issues such as the rehabilitation and return of over 60,000 displaced people. This will lay the ground for a holistic solution and address grievances in the hills and the valley. There are enough instruments in India's federal system that allow for creative solutions within the state-system, which have also worked well in other parts of the country in ending conflicts. But confidence-building measures and an end to wanton violence are a necessity before such solutions are mooted. Mr. Singh's resignation should pave the way for such measures and it would be remiss on the part of the government to not follow up on this quickly.

## Troubled waters

India and Sri Lanka must facilitate discussions among their fishermen

In the latest chapter of the long-standing fisheries dispute in the Palk Bay region, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 14 fishermen from Tamil Nadu's Ramathurai area on February 8 for alleged over-exploitative fishing in the Mannar. Two trawlers were also impounded. On January 27, the Navy had fired at an Indian boat near Delft Island, injuring two fishermen. With these arrests, the total number of Indian fishermen detained this year has risen to 77. Just last week, a Sri Lankan court had released nine fishermen from Karaikal, Puducherry, but one other person received a six-month prison sentence. Additionally, Sri Lankan courts have been imposing hefty fines, complicating their release. Government data over the past decade, based on responses in Parliament, show that in 2024, the number of Indian fishermen arrested in Sri Lanka crossed the 500-mark for the first time in 10 years (528). There were 787 arrests in 2014.

In a letter to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on February 3, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said that 97 fishermen and 216 fishing boats were still under the custody of Sri Lanka. Unlike in the past, when they were quickly released, recent years have seen rising convictions for violations of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and unlawful fishing. While Tamil Nadu and Puducherry fishermen often cross the IMBL, their counterparts in Sri Lanka's Tamil-speaking Northern Province, who are still recovering from the civil war, oppose their fishing methods, particularly ecologically destructive bottom trawling. Northern Sri Lankan fishermen are seeking a sustainable solution that protects their waters from over-exploitative fishing. Indian fishermen have repeatedly sought a fresh round of talks with their Sri Lankan counterparts, with the last such meeting having taken place in November 2016. The issue was also raised in the most recent Joint Working Group meeting in Colombo last October. However, the Anura Kumara Dissanayake-led Sri Lankan government appears reluctant to negotiate. New Delhi and Colombo must recognise that a fresh approach is required to break the deadlock rather than continuing with a business-as-usual mind-set. Unlike the cases of Indian fishermen detained in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, the arrests in Sri Lanka are significantly higher. New Delhi must introduce incentives to encourage Palk Bay fishermen to move away from trawling. While this shift will take time, both governments must facilitate immediate discussions on fishing conditions to find interim solutions. In the long run, through proactive diplomacy and sustainable fishing policies that this ongoing conflict can be addressed effectively.

# Gaza and Trump's 'expanding the canvas' strategy

Donald Trump, a consummate dealmaker, often relies on the "expanding the canvas" strategy to resolve intractable stalemates. Nevertheless, he made his most audacious ever deal-bid on February 4, 2025: with typical nonchalance, he wanted the Gaza Strip to be depopulated, with its 2.3 million residents being relocated to Egypt and Jordan while the United States was to take over this "demolition site" to develop it into "a riviera for the world's people". While swinging this wrecking ball over Gaza and the region at large, he also hinted that in the next four weeks, he may have another proposal for settling the West Bank issue. Both Mr. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — who was on hand — conspicuously praised Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and hinted that Saudi Arabia would soon join the Abraham Accords. This prompted MBS to promptly state that Saudi Arabia would not establish ties with Israel without the creation of a Palestinian state.

To most observers, Mr. Trump's pitch was chutzpah off his playbook of many recent grandiloquent remarks. To some others, it was a colonial land grab in West Asia, a veritable geopolitical minefield. Its maximalist opening overture seems to be designed to shock the opponent stakeholders into concentrating their minds and coming up with a more realistic counter-offer for eventual settlement on more balanced terms.

### A geopolitical reconfiguration

Mr. Trump's "truthful hyperbole" only underlined two undeniable contextual aspects. First, after a particularly brutish and violent epoch since October 7, 2023, vital but volatile West Asia is now teetering on the verge of a profound geopolitical reconfiguration. Second, with a little nudge from its friends, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia might be among its prominent architects.

The 16 months of unprecedented hostilities have demolished several long-standing shibboleths — from Israeli invincibility to the end of the Syrian civil war. The feared Axis of Resistance stands neutered for the time being, although a revival cannot be ruled out. Iran's extensive and carefully assembled strategic outreach from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean has been upended and its deterrence against Israel has been dented. While Israel has managed a pyrrhic victory, its internal and external consequences are still panning out.

The mayhem has convulsed West Asia and bequeathed the hapless region with colossal challenges which can be broadly divided into two intertwined verticals: political and economic.

Politically, the no-holds-barred conflicts and assassinations galore have left the region



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repolarised with fewer guardrails, lower mutual trust and unsated revengefulness. The regional turmoil can be further segregated into perennial schisms, crying for lasting solutions such as the Israel-Palestine question, the Iranian quest for nuclear technology, the Kurdish pursuit of national identity and the Yemeni imbroglio. Additionally, the region now also faces a "known unknown" all over again: In his second term, Mr. Trump appears as impulsive as before and more unpredictable.

Although he professes to prioritise the American economic resuscitation, Washington's global entanglements keep ceaselessly knocking at his door. Moreover, his abrasive cowboy diplomacy, his penchant for transactional short-term fixes and his propensity for overbidding are often counterproductive. Further, he may discover that the world in general and West Asia in particular are no longer where they were during Trump 1.0. The Gaza war has thrust forth the centrality of Palestinian statehood, complicating, if not derailing, his vision to expand the Abraham Accords with the inclusion of Saudi Arabia and other Arab states. He also has to contend with the growing influence of the ultra-religious Jewish groups in Israel and the HTS-led Syria.

### Economic issues

West Asia's current economic problems are two-fold. The first set is rooted in the conflicts waged over the past few years including in Gaza (rebuilding 1,70,000 houses destroyed is to cost \$50 billion), Lebanon (\$8.5 billion) and Syria (damage from a 13-year civil war is put at around \$500 billion). While humanitarian issues are urgent, a return to socio-economic normalcy would necessarily await the respective political resolutions. In many cases, the western economic sanctions also come in the way. The second regional economic problem is structural: the dependence on hydrocarbons, notoriously fickle natural resources threatened by a global consumption peak by the end of this decade. Recent Trump disruptions including walking away from the Paris climate accord, the launch of the "Drill, baby, drill" campaign and the public call for lower oil prices, make one wonder whether he is part of this specific problem or its solution. The shale revolution has made the U.S. the world's largest hydrocarbon producer, but the technology, being more expensive, is highly price sensitive. If oil prices are drastically forced down, shale technology may no longer be a renter. Further, an oil glut would dent the West Asian economies which are widely expected to bear the major burden of the huge post-conflict reconstruction.

Moreover, Mr. Trump's tariffs and sanctions blitzkrieg against friends and foes alike has not only disrupted global trade and investment flows

but has also led to the strengthening of the U.S. dollar. As most West Asian currencies are tied to the dollar, they have also risen, denting their economic competitiveness and derailing their bids to diversify away from oil.

### Spotlight on Saudi Arabia

To help cope with the multiple crises in West Asia, the U.S. and the Kingdom need to reorient their over 80-year-old alliance beyond its traditional "security in return for oil" paradigm. The Kingdom, the region's biggest economy (GDP 1.07 trillion), has come out relatively unscathed by the conflicts waging around it. It is relevant to note that the Saudi Public Investment Fund is estimated to have total assets of \$930 billion and Saudi Aramco has a market capitalisation of \$1.79 trillion. The country is led by MBS, a pragmatic young leader with an iconoclastic ambition to head the Arab and Islamic world. Apart from hosting two well-attended Arab-Islamic Summits on the Gaza conflict, he has extracted himself from the costly Yemeni civil war and normalised ties with Iran and Qatar. He has deepened links with Russia and China without antagonising Washington. With Saudi Arabia as the world's largest oil exporter, MBS has been a moderating influence on OPEC and OPEC+. A fortnight ago, Mr. Trump held a Davos videoconference that his first official international phone call after re-entering the White House was with MBS, where the Crown Prince offered to invest \$600 billion in the U.S. Mr. Trump then coolly asked him to "round off" the figure to \$1 trillion. The incident only goes to show that the Kingdom under MBS has what it takes to be a political and economic bulwark for the region.

Before the Gaza war, America's regional diplomacy was focused on Riyadh-Tel Aviv reconciliation. While MBS did not rule out joining the Abraham Accords, he played hardball by asking Washington for stiff concessions including a bilateral security treaty, access to nuclear technology and state-of-the-art weaponry. However, 16 months of scorching bloodletting in Gaza has left plenty of toxicity in its wake, making MBS now insist on a pathway towards a two-state solution, which the Israeli Parliament has officially rejected.

Despite these serious obstacles, the rationale for a Saudi-U.S. re-engagement remains intact as MBS can usefully fund the reconstruction of the war-ravaged regions and leverage Saudi Arabia's profile to persuade doubtful and sullen Arabs to see the merit of a negotiated solution. Mr. Trump's other challenge lies in coaxing the Israeli leadership to be more flexible and go beyond its survival instinct. Thus, while Trump-MBS bromance may or may not launch a trillion-dollar bilateral investment boom, their synergy would be a priceless contribution to healing the mangled West Asia.

West Asia is being reconfigured geopolitically with Saudi Arabia as one of its main architects

# India as a bridge between the Global North and South

In his address in January 2025, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, while addressing the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention, the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, said, "Today's India not only firmly asserts its own point but also strongly amplifies the voice of the Global South". Similarly, when India held the 2nd Voice of Global South Summit 2024, last August, Mr. Modi said that India aspires to lead the required reforms to take developing countries into a new, more inclusive structure of global governance.

What has influenced India's renewed enthusiasm to champion the cause of the developing world? And, how can the country influence change to become an effective global development partner?

Unlike the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), India's motivation does not appear to be based on decolonisation or strong criticism of the West. Rather, as India attempts to increase its presence in the Global South, it is simultaneously deepening its relationships with traditional partners such as the United States and Europe. The high-level visit of Jake Sullivan, the former U.S. National Security Advisor, in January, reflects this. Mr. Modi's visit to Poland, in August 2024, also shows India's attempt to create new alliances.

### The China factor argument

The cynical answer often circles back to India trying to counter China's growing global dominance. Trends of foreign direct investments in Africa indicate that India appears to be in a race with China, mainly focusing on countries which already have a significant Chinese presence. Further, industrialised countries are thought to be strategically partnering with India to contain China's rising international footprint. The Quad partnership, an on-going dialogue between Japan, India, Australia and the U.S., for a free and fair Indo-Pacific, is seen as one such attempt. However, the India-China competition does not give the full picture.

India is trying to create an individual identity as an emerging power in its own right to forward

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its own strategic trade, defence, and geopolitical interests. Global South countries are disillusioned with present economic paradigms, burdened with debt and conditionalities. They are not looking for another China or a new western institution. India can fill this gap while being a bridge between the Global North and the Global South. To be successful, India needs to back up its rhetoric with the right strategies.

### Steps that India must take

The first is for India to double-down on its call for an alternate paradigm of development cooperation that is not solely top-down, dictated by the Global North. India often lays emphasis on equal partnerships with other developing countries, trying to set itself apart from traditional powers. In practice, it signals otherwise by putting forward strategies with an India-first approach.

The newly announced 'Global Development Compact' aimed at facilitating growth in the Global South, was described as rooted in Indian experiences and strategies. India's development story as an emerging power and being the world's largest democracy makes it unique. However, it does not hold all the policy answers. It would merit India to not only assert itself as a provider of knowledge but also to learn from other Global South countries to address its domestic challenges. Countries are bound to be more receptive toward a country that views them as partners. Otherwise, India may also be perceived as a big brother imposing traditional donor and recipient relationships.

Second, New Delhi has laid stress on a more human-centric approach to tackle developmental challenges. This has been defined at international fora towards promoting behavioural change via Mission LiFE ('Lifestyle For Environment'), which encourages low consumption lifestyles. While important, the need is to rebrand human-centric development in order to focus on building human resource and capacity, especially to tackle future sustainability challenges. Skill India or schemes that mainstream women into entrepreneurship,

will be attractive for countries in the Global South which are also seeking to grow their domestic industry. India's capacity building strategy has tended to revolve around the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, which implements sector-specific short-term activities. It would be more effective for longer term engagement to assist countries in creating their own institutional capacity to create a better workforce. India can leverage its experiences with micro, small and medium enterprises to foster exchanges. A focus on digital infrastructure, climate and energy solutions as well as water and food security are key areas for cooperation.

### The goal ahead

Lastly, India has called for more inclusive global governance. The nation demonstrated this intent by championing the addition of the African Union into the G-20 (in 2023) during India's presidency. India should not be content with facilitating changes in established international institutions but also learn to build domestic capacity. As India aspires to become a stronger global development player, it must establish norms, standards and systems to work with partner countries. Initially, it is beneficial to use existing institutional channels of partners such as the United Nations or Germany and France that are more experienced in development cooperation. However, the long-term goal should be for India to create its own robust domestic systems for international cooperation. Trilateral partnerships and increased engagement with new partners need to be seen as a learning by doing process, where India imbibes its experiences to scale up India-led global initiatives.

India aspires to be the 'Voice of the Global South', but it also must 'listen' to a good leader. When India spearheaded NAM, the country showed the world that there is a new, third option for developing countries. India should not miss out on an opportunity to do the same thing now.

The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The Delhi result

The defeat of the grand old party in the Delhi election should be an eye-opener to the Gandhi siblings. It is going to be a long road for the Gandhi family to get the slow train moving again.  
**Arunkumar Sadanand,**  
Chennai

The Indian electorate is, by and large, a moderately tolerant people, but it does react and flag vulgar extremities of corrupt practices. In Andhra Pradesh, this was fully vindicated in the complete defeat of the YSR Congress Party — the 'Rushikonda

palace case' in Vizag is a key example.  
**Seshagiri Row Karry,**  
Hyderabad

Interestingly, the BJP beat AAP at its own game by offering freebies. The dismal show by the Congress raises question marks about its

ability to win elections.  
**Gregory Fernandes,**  
Mumbai

**Lessons from deportation**  
It is quite unfortunate that there is hardly any Indian separate who ever says, "I will get back to my country." On the contrary, they say

they have better opportunities in Canada, Australia and Germany. The Prime Minister does not say "we will give them similar if not better opportunities." On the contrary, there is a silence over the handoffing of our people. The External Affairs Minister goes to the

extent of saying that the U.S. is following standard procedure. India must pursue development and create opportunities.  
**N.G.R. Prasad,**  
Chennai

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the postal address.

# The problem of regulating live-in relationships

Uttarakhand recently implemented a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), governing various aspects of civil life. One of the novel aspects of the UCC is that it mandates compulsory registration of opposite-sex live-in relationships, and criminalises those engaged in unregistered non-marital cohabitation. While some of the provisions on live-in relationships are well intentioned, others are problematic and potentially dangerous.



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**Well intentioned, but...**  
The biggest concerns around non-marital cohabitation tend to be the protection of the interests of the party that is rendered needy (due to childcare or other household responsibilities or a lack of independent income, for example), and of the rights of any children born to the parties. The UCC goes some way towards addressing these concerns. It declares that children born in live-in relationships will be considered legitimate, which is an improvement on the existing position of law whereby only children born through void or voidable marriages (where a marriage takes place but is legally invalid) are deemed legitimate. The essential legal remedy of maintenance in the event of desertion by a live-in partner is also provided by the law, although desertion in this context remains undefined.

Two potential problems that might arise around these provisions need consideration. First, the maintenance provision might provide a legal recourse to a woman who has been deserted. However, there is no provision for maintenance upon termination (as opposed to desertion), and termination of a live-in relationship requires nothing more than a statement of termination to be submitted to the registrar by either party. This aligns with the informal and flexible nature of non-marital cohabitation but raises its own challenges. When a live-in

relationship is terminated (without cause or scope for contestation), a woman may be left with no legal recourse despite needing continuing support. A related concern is that since only opposite-sex live-in relationships can be registered, the Uttarakhand government has left same-sex relationships entirely unprotected. Second, the very definition of a 'live-in relationship' is nebulous and overbroad. Drawing from the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and case law on domestic violence, the UCC defines a 'live-in relationship' as a relationship 'in the nature of marriage'. But live-in relationships are frequently not in the nature of a marriage. Parties may not see themselves as being 'married in all but name'. Similarly, the one-month period provided for the registration of a live-in relationship appears to misunderstand the typical nature of such a relationship which does not usually have a formal date of commencement because the transformation of a casual sexual relationship, or non-cohabiting intimate sexual relationship, into a live-in relationship tends to be fluid. This legal-social mismatch is likely to compel the registration of sexual relationships that are, in fact, casual and do not require the kind of protections the UCC offers.

**The right to sexual autonomy**  
There are graver problems with these provisions of the UCC. In *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court recognised an adult's right to positive sexual autonomy, encompassing the freedom to make one's own choices about whether and with whom to have sexual interactions. While this is not an unconditional right (being subject to the consent of the other party, laws on public decency, etc.), the essence of the right is that neither the state, nor an adult's family can interfere unreasonably with her consensual sexual choices. However, studies have demonstrated that parents and guardians, through legal (e.g.,

misuse of rape laws) and extra-legal (e.g., forms of social punishment including violence) means frequently undermine this right. Provisions regulating live-in relationships have the potential to enhance such parental control. The provisions in the UCC mandate that any live-in relationship be registered within one month of its commencement. While the age of sexual consent in India is 18 years, where either partner in the live-in relationship is younger than 21 years, the UCC states that information of the relationship will be sent to the person's parent/guardian. In addition to being an unjustified violation of the adult's right to privacy and sexual autonomy, this provision, by alerting disapproving parents/guardians to inter-caste or inter-religious relationships, in a context where honour-based violence is widespread, is dangerous.

The law also intensifies the control of the state over the sexual choices of individuals. The UCC requires that information of all registered live-in relationships be forwarded to the local police. Such a provision reflects a view of a live-in relationship as a potential law-and-order complication requiring state surveillance. This problematic understanding of the law is further reflected in the unsubstantiated criminalisation of the failure to register a live-in relationship for more than a month, or the refusal to register a live-in relationship after a notice to do so from the registrar – offences punishable by imprisonment and/or hefty fines.

In most jurisdictions which permit or mandate the registration of non-marital cohabitation, the purpose of the law is to extend welfare measures and safeguards available within a marriage to non-marital cohabitation. The Uttarakhand UCC, however, appears to conceptualise 'live-in relationships' as a problem to be solved through regulation. In doing so, the law erodes sexual autonomy and reinforces state and social control of sexual choices.

# Maharashtra: a State of uneven growth

The regional imbalance is stark and has persisted since the State's formation

## STATE OF PLAY

**Piyush Zaware**

Maharashtra, hailed as India's economic powerhouse, presents a paradox. While cities such as Mumbai, Pune, and Thane thrive as global commerce hubs, regions such as Marathwada and Vidarbha are poor and underdeveloped. This stark regional imbalance, persistent since the State's formation in 1960, has widened economic inequality and fuelled social crises, including caste agitations, farmer suicides, and rural discontent.

In 2023-24, the per capita nominal net domestic district product (NDDP) in prosperous districts exceeded ₹3 lakh, while regions such as Washim, Gadchiroli, and Yavatmal recorded per capita incomes below ₹1.5 lakh. This economic gap mirrors disparities in social and human development indicators. A recent NITI Aayog report states that in districts such as Pune and Nagpur, only 3-4% of the population is classified as multidimensionally poor, with Nandurbar and Dhule seeing alarming rates of 33% and 24%, respectively.

Marathwada's underdevelopment is compounded by its lack of industrial infrastructure. While Western Maharashtra boasts state-planned industrial clusters in places such as Chakan and Ranjangaon, Marathwada has only one major industrial hub at Waluj. This absence of industrial investment, combined with the region's reliance on agriculture, has left it vulnerable to droughts and climate variability. Agricultural distress



is further exacerbated by limited irrigation facilities, erratic monsoons, and an over-reliance on cash crops such as cotton and sugar cane, which are highly sensitive to climate fluctuations.

Farmers continue to rely on unpredictable rainfall and depleting groundwater levels, leading to distress migration and a rise in farmer suicides. Additionally, the growing demand for water-intensive crops in the face of persistent drought conditions has worsened the crisis, making the need for sustainable water management solutions all the more pressing.

Despite multiple efforts to address regional disparities, progress remains slow. Maharashtra has previously appointed two committees – the Dr. V. M. Dandekar Committee in 1984 and the Vijay Kelkar Committee in 2011 – to offer recommendations for equitable development. Unfortunately, many of these recommendations remain unimplemented, and the Statutory Development Boards, which were created to correct the developmental backlog in Marathwada and Vidarbha, remain inactive. This administrative inertia has deepened the developmental divide and bred resentment among marginalised communities.

The State Budget for FY 2024-25 reflects this ongoing imbalance. While larger shares of the divisible outlay have been allocated to regions

such as Konkan, Western Maharashtra, and Vidarbha, Marathwada continues to receive a disproportionately smaller portion of resources. While infrastructure and industrial development in Western Maharashtra have received significant investments, Marathwada struggles with basic necessities such as roads, healthcare, and education. The disparity in educational institutions and employment opportunities has led to a talent drain, as young people from Marathwada seek better opportunities in urban centres, further weakening the region's economic base.

This regional imbalance is not merely an economic issue; it is a governance challenge. To ensure inclusive and sustainable growth, the State must adopt a balanced development approach. This includes not only allocating more resources to backward regions but also expediting critical projects such as the Marathwada Water Grid and fostering industrial growth in these areas. The time for half-measures and empty promises is over. The solution lies in bold policy decisions, unwavering political will, and a commitment to ensuring that no region is left behind. Investing in human capital, sustainable infrastructure, and industrial diversification is the key to unlocking balanced growth. The prosperity of Maharashtra must not be the privilege of a few but the right of all its citizens. Only through a holistic and inclusive approach can the State move forward as a truly united economic powerhouse, where Mumbai's skyscrapers and Marathwada's fields flourish together in shared progress.

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# Centre's allocations for justice-related schemes fluctuate

Allocations for modernising State police forces are severely underutilised

## DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

The Central government has consistently reduced budget allocations to certain justice-related schemes and projects since 2019, shows the recently released India Justice Report 2023-26.

Data also show that not only have allocations reduced, but also, only a fraction of the envisaged allocations was actually spent on these schemes.

The Modernisation Fund for the State Police Forces was formed to assist special projects and schemes that would upgrade the infrastructure of States' police as well as Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems. **Chart 1** shows the Budget Estimates (BE), Revised Estimates (RE), and actual expenditure of the Modernisation Fund for the State Police Forces.

The Centre estimated a budget of almost ₹900 crore for FY19. This declined to around ₹780 crore in BE for FY21. In FY26, it has come down to ₹587.97 crore.

While these figures are for BE, RE show a drastic reduction in allocations. For instance, the ₹780 crore that was budgeted in FY21 was revised to ₹106 crore. Such over-estimations in BE and drastic downward revisions in RE can be seen across most years. In FY25, the allocation for the fund was estimated to be ₹520.51 crore and was revised in the following year to ₹160 crore.

More importantly, the amount actually spent was even lower than the RE in most recent years. Despite an allocation of more than ₹600 crore in FY23, only ₹34.7 crore was actually spent on the modernisation of State police forces. This is about 6% of the allocation. Similarly, only 20-25% of the budgeted amounts were spent in FY21, FY23, and FY24.

The newly introduced Moderni-

sation of Forensic Capacities is aimed at improving forensic testing infrastructure across the country and addressing the shortage of forensic scientists. **Chart 2** shows the allocation of funds for the Modernisation of Forensic Capacities. There was a stark increase and then a decrease in allocations over the past few years for this scheme.

The Ministry of Home Affairs also introduced the Modernisation of Prisons Fund more than two decades ago, which aims to improve the living conditions of prisoners, renovate existing prisons, and build new cells. **Chart 3** shows the budgetary allocations for it. Despite an initial increase in budgetary allocations for this scheme, which peaked at ₹400 crore in FY23, allocations have come down to ₹300 crore each in the last two years. Until FY23, the allocation was wholly utilised, after which only 44% of the budgeted fund was utilised.

Alternatively, the schemes related to the judiciary have seen an optimal utilisation of funds over the past few years. **Chart 4** shows the BE and RE of allocations to the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) from FY19 to FY25. Funds allocated to NALSA have increased since FY19, but have generally remained within the range of ₹150 crore to 200 crore, with the exception of the RE of FY24, during which it increased to ₹400 crore. NALSA has reported 100% utilisation of the budgeted amounts for all the years between 2018-19 to 2023-24.

**Chart 5** shows the BE and RE of allocations for the development of infrastructure facilities for the judiciary from FY19 to FY26. This is a centrally sponsored scheme that was developed to enhance the judicial resources of State governments. Similar to NALSA, this fund has been utilised almost to its full potential across the past five financial years, but has seen a decrease in allocation from ₹1,123.40 crore (FY25) to ₹998 crore (FY26).

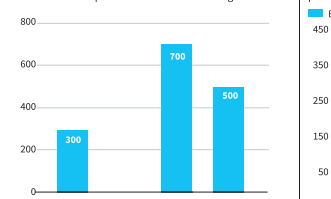
## The paper trail

The data for the charts were sourced from the Central government's Budget documents and the India Justice Report 2023-26. Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/BuSenHfQdhdO5d1>

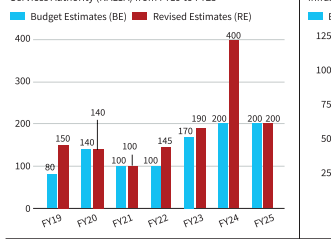
**Chart 1: Budget Estimates, Revised Estimates and Actual expenditure of the Modernisation Fund for the State Police Forces (in ₹ crore)**

Years	Budget Estimates (BE)	Revised Estimates (RE)	Actual Expenditure (AE)
2018-19	897.29	915.79	914.12
2019-20	959.8	939.79	929.58
2020-21	784.53	106.74	159.99
2021-22	668.5	240.49	170.45
2022-23	621.45	152.52	34.72
2023-24	264.12	221.16	65.28
2024-25	520.51	121.32	-
2025-26	587.97	-	-

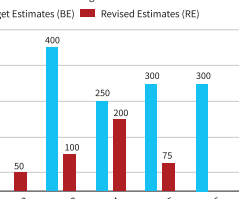
**Chart 2: The Budget Estimates of funds for the Modernisation of Forensic Capacities from FY23 to FY26. Figures in ₹ crore**



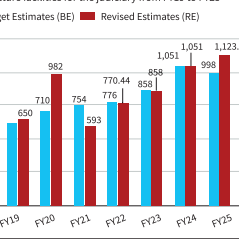
**Chart 3: The BE and RE of allocations to the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) from FY19 to FY25**



**Chart 3: The allocation of funds for the modernisation of prisons from FY22 to FY26. Figures in ₹ crore**



**Chart 4: The BE and RE of allocations for the development of infrastructure facilities for the judiciary from FY19 to FY25**



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 11, 1975

## Wilson warns against raw material cartels

London, Feb. 10: There is a growing concern in Western Capitals about the third world, raw material producing countries' "geopolitical power" – its impact, origin and consequences on the developed countries. It is a term which is very much in vogue and the members of the third world are constantly reminded that they will be only cutting their own feet if they went about organising commodity cartels, marketing associations, etc., trying to extract better prices and terms for their raw materials from the developed and richer countries.

India is still not forgiven for letting the Arabs and other oil producers to hike oil prices four times and for justifying the oil producers' decision on merit of the fact that for decades, industrialised countries exploited oil producers to build their economies on cheap oil. It may now seem that there will be growing confrontation between the third world and the developed countries on this score and the British Government has taken a major initiative to warn the raw material producing countries about the consequences of such tactics.

Last night the British Premier Mr. Wilson called for international assurances for commodity exporting countries that would stabilise raw material prices. Mr. Wilson said that unless guarantees were provided about future markets for many key raw materials, exporting countries would form cartels to push up prices. Both Mr. Wilson and the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Callaghan, intend to develop this theme at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in April.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 11, 1925

## Progress made by Australia

General Sir Wm. Birdwood was the guest of the Australian and New Zealand Luncheon Club at the Hotel Cecil in mail week. Sir Edward Lucas, the retiring Agent-General for South Australia, presided.

The Chairman, proposing "Our Guest", said that criticisms were sometimes made on the slow growth at population in Australia; but in a hundred years it had been multiplied more than 200 times; and it was greater than was the population of Canada at the end of its first century. The progress made by Australia in every direction had been extraordinary.



# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Amount of GST evaded from April to December 2024**

**1.88** In ₹ lakh crore. GST evasion of over ₹1.88 lakh crore was detected by Central GST officers during April-December 2024, the Lok Sabha was informed on Monday. In all, 132 arrests were made and recovery of ₹20,128 crore was made during the period. PTI

**Amount spent so far on PM Internship Scheme's pilot project**

**48** In ₹ crore. Around 748 crore has been spent so far for the pilot project of the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme, with the Corporate Affairs Ministry gathering feedback from stakeholders to assess its impact. The scheme aims to provide internships to one crore youth. PTI

**Students benefiting from Credit Guarantee Fund scheme**

**6.78** In lakh. The Centre has approved ₹3,019 crore under the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme benefiting 6.78 lakh students till 2024. Under the scheme, the government gives guarantee for education loans availed by students without any collateral security. PTI

**Number of companies that faced Corporate Affairs Ministry probe**

**462** As many as 462 companies came under the lens of the Corporate Affairs Ministry's regional directors for suspected fraud in the last five financial years. A total of 51 companies were under probe in 2023-24 while the count stood at 205 in 2022-23. PTI

**Number of jhuggis reduced to ashes in Himachal Pradesh**

**23** Families were rendered shelterless as a cluster of jhuggis were reduced to ashes in a fierce fire which broke out in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur, an official said. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained but there was no loss of life. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## What has the Budget offered scientists?

The Union Budget for 2025-26 provided an overall and possibly unprecedented thrust on research and innovation, especially in the private sector. The Budget's support for private sector research is expected to accelerate advancements in areas such as gene-editing, personalised medicine, and sustainable agriculture

### FULL CONTEXT

T.V. Padma

**W**hat does India's 2025-2026 Union Budget spell for India's research ecosystem? The author asked seven scientists and science administrators. Their replies are presented below, edited for clarity. *Read the full version online here: [bit.ly/scientistsbudget](https://bit.ly/scientistsbudget)*

**Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology:** The Budget provides an overall and possibly unprecedented thrust on research and innovation by setting aside ₹20,000 crore for the Department of Science & Technology (DST), and towards research in the private sector, including corporates and startups. There is a focused attempt to bring together academia, the private sector, and startups to work on national missions.

The dedicated fund of ₹20,000 crore is part of the ₹1 lakh crore corpus fund announced in the Budget of July 2024 to boost private sector R&D, especially in the deep-tech and sunrise sectors. The DST will be the nodal ministry driving this fund. This will be a major step towards creating strategic autonomy in some key technology sectors. The National Geospatial Mission has been allocated ₹100 crore for FY 2025-2026 to develop foundational geospatial infrastructure and data. The mission will help implement the National Geospatial Policy 2022, with the goal of expanding the access and use of geospatial data and making India a world leader in the geospatial sector.

The Finance Minister has announced several initiatives to boost science, and innovation in the country including the Nuclear Energy Mission, clean tech initiatives, Atal Tinkering Labs etc.

**Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology (DBT):** The Union Budget demonstrates a commitment to advancing India's biotechnology sector, which aligns closely with the DBT's objectives. The ₹3,446.64 crore allocation reflects a significant increase of 51.45% from the previous year's allocation. Recently, the government also approved the 'Bio-RIDE' scheme to foster innovation, promote bio-entrepreneurship, and strengthen India's position as a global leader in biomanufacturing and biotechnology.

The Budget's support for private sector research is expected to accelerate advancements in areas such as gene-editing, personalised medicine, and sustainable agriculture. The proposal for a light-touch regulatory framework based on principles and trust is a progressive step. Aligned with the government's 'BioE3 Policy' for fostering high-performance biomanufacturing, the National Manufacturing Mission (NMM) announced in the Budget aims to accelerate technology development and commercialisation.

The National Mission on High Yielding Seeds will focus on strengthening the research ecosystem and developing high-yielding, pest-resistant, and climate-resilient seeds. Similarly, some of DBT's initiatives contribute to self-reliance programmes, such as the mission on minor oil seeds. Another is a mission programme on "Characterisation of Genetic Resources", to sequence/re-sequence and characterise available germplasm resources of pulses.



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**N. Kalaiselvi, Director-General, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR):**

The Budget reinforces science, technology, and innovation (STI) as key enablers of national progress, aligning with CSIR's vision of advancing self-reliance and global competitiveness. The Budget's focus on public-private partnerships, industry collaboration, and technology-driven entrepreneurship will accelerate innovation in manufacturing, healthcare, and sustainability.

For agriculture and rural prosperity, CSIR's Aroma and Floriculture Missions align with the Agri-Districts Initiative, promoting value-added farming and boosting farmer incomes. Similarly, CSIR's Millets Mission supports self-reliance in the farming of pulses and oilseeds, ensuring nutritional security and climate-resilient farming. The CSIR Cotton Mission aligns with the National Cotton Mission, strengthening India's position in global textile markets.

The Indigenous Manufacturing and Smart Packaging Missions find synergy with the NMM, driving innovation-led industrial growth. The Green Hydrogen Mission, spearheaded by CSIR, supports the clean energy transition.

For youth-skilling, CSIR's Jigyasa Programme complements Atal Tinkering Labs, fostering STEM education and research exposure. The Seaweed Mission and Learn & Earn Program empowers women entrepreneurs, supporting economic inclusion. Additionally, CSIR's Footwear for Healthcare and India Footwear Sizing Program align with the leather sector's initiatives. This Budget cements CSIR's pivotal role in nation-building and reinforces STI as the foundation for a self-reliant, inclusive, and globally competitive India.

**K.S. Parthasarathy, former Secretary, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board:** The Central government's ambitious

programme to enhance the share of nuclear power to 100 GWe by 2047 and to invest heavily to support associated R&D is challenging to all stakeholders. Accepting private sector participation in the nuclear sector adds a new dimension to the programme. Success in the project to develop and install Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) is essential in India's energy transition. As per the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), SMRs are nuclear reactors with a power generating capacity of 300 MWe equivalent or less.

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) has implemented measures to regulate the safety of VVER Russian reactors, pressurised heavy water reactors of 700 MWe etc, all of which include first of its kind technologies.

AERB's reports to the IAEA Convention of Nuclear Safety reveal how openly and transparently it has been fulfilling its mandate. AERB staff updates its knowledge and expertise in safety-related disciplines associated with new technologies. It has linkages with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the French regulatory agency among others, and exchanges its experience regularly.

**C.P. Rajendran, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru:**

The Budget infuses significant funding for science and technology and for the DBT, whereas the allocation for the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research is nominal.

The importance of curiosity-driven science doesn't seem to be a major priority. Much of the funding appears directed towards mission-mode programmes such as nuclear energy, AI, private sector initiatives, etc. The government also plans to amend the Nuclear Liability and Damage Act 2010 that makes operators liable for nuclear damage. This will have serious ramifications. Many experts have raised concerns about SMRs.

The Finance Minister also announced

the expansion of the Small Industries Development Bank of India Fund for Startups with an additional ₹10,000 crore corpus to enhance the "deep-tech ecosystem" in startups focused on AI, biotech, and space technology. India had over 3,600 deep-tech startups in 2023. In that year, they raised \$850 million, reflecting a 77% decrease from 2022 due to investors' lack of confidence regarding investment returns.

Curiosity-driven research is propelled by scientists' curiosity regarding specific research questions. What I observe is a growing corporatisation of science driven solely by immediate utility. Another critical issue is the rigid bureaucracy surrounding funding, which has created significant problems over the years.

**Tapasya Srivastava, University of Delhi, South Campus:**

The Budget meets the increasing needs of health research and biomedical devices, given that the Economic Survey recognised the physical and mental harms of ultra-processed food leading to non-communicable diseases.

The percentage increase from the Revised Estimate of 2024-2025 to Budget Estimate of 2025-2026 for Central universities (4.3%) is about half of that given to IITs (8.4%), which is disappointing given the number of students and the overhauling with respect to the National Education Policy (NEP) that universities are going through. These changes require unprecedented support from the government, which is not evident looking at these numbers.

It would have been more meaningful if the Prime Minister's Research Fellowship became an interim research fellowship of a reasonable amount that replaces the abysmally low ₹8,000 non-NET UGC. The PMRF is competitive and, therefore, ends up mostly in labs with sufficient funding.

The AI bandwagon is something that all governments seem to want to rush into. The allocation has come into the Centre of Excellence in AI education and one hopes the Centre sets benchmarks for adoption in a way that truly benefits Indian society, beyond buzzwords.

With a significant number of youth struggling with mental health issues, overall health decline, reduced attention span and consumerism, the unprecedented advantage of a steady government to implement value-based learning and life skills in school education to bring about generational change appears to have been lost.

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**Soumitro Banerjee, IISER, Kolkata:**

The scientific community of India is dismayed to see the low financial allocation to sectors crucial for scientific development. The NEP-2020, adopted by the same government, recommended the expenditure on education be 6% of the GDP, which requires at least 10% of the Union Budget to be spent on education.

But since 2020, there has been no attempt to meet this target. This year the allocation is only 2.54%. This implies that through NEP-2020, the government is trying to change the structure and content of education without improving its quality. The direction of change is clear from the five-fold increased outlay for 'Indian Knowledge Systems'.

Basic science research has taken a backseat as the funding for IISc and the IISERs has been reduced. The UGC, which funds all universities, saw a drastic reduction in its budget last year (from ₹5,360 crore to ₹2,500 crore). Despite some increase this year (3% BE to BE), it is far below the pre-2024 figure. *T.V. Padma is a science journalist.*

### THE GIST

▼ The dedicated fund of ₹20,000 crore is part of the ₹1 lakh crore corpus fund announced in the Budget of July 2024 to boost private sector R&D, especially in the deep-tech and sunrise sectors.

▼ The importance of curiosity-driven science doesn't seem to be a major priority. Much of the funding appears directed towards mission-mode programmes such as nuclear energy, AI, private sector initiatives, etc.

▼ Basic science research has taken a backseat as the funding for IISc and the IISERs has been reduced.

ABSTRACT



Extent of impact: A family watches Ramayan after it was revived during the pandemic in Jammu, in 2020. AP

# How the Ramayan TV show helped shape a singular nationwide Hindu identity

In a way, the mass dissemination of a standardised story of Ram couldn't have come at a better time for the advocates of Hindutva, as it helped prime a diverse Hindu population brought up on regional variations of the epic, for the unitary ideology of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement

G. Sampath

Ahmed, Resuf, Paul Brimble, Akhila Kovuri, Alessandro Saia, Dean Yang. 2025. 'Ancient Epics in the Television Age: Mass media, Identity, and the Rise of Hindu Nationalism in India.' *National Bureau of Economic Research*, Cambridge, MA. Working Paper 33417.

The broadcast of the *Ramayan* television series happened at a pivotal moment in India's media and cultural history. It aired from January 1987 to July 1988. This was a time when television signal reception was expanding but still limited. So for a substantial mass of the population, their very first exposure to this novel medium was the televised adaptation of the ancient Hindu epic. Combined with a gigantic viewership and the religious dimension, it caused the serial to have an outsized impact on its audiences.

Exploiting this aspect – the “geographical and over-time variation in television signal strength” – to identify “the causal effects of exposure to the *Ramayan* TV show, the authors of this paper pose the question: “Can exposure to religious narratives through mass media shape cultural identities and, in turn, influence political landscapes?”

There already exists a body of research that says ‘yes’. For instance, it is not a matter of debate that the *Ramayan* broadcast aided the rise of Hindu nationalism. It did. This study, by “examining the long-term effects of the *Ramayan* broadcast on cultural, social, and political outcomes,” seeks to bridge the “several interconnected strands” of this literature. Its unique methodology hinges on leveraging variations in TV signal strength across India to track how “exposure” to the *Ramayan* serial “affected cultural norms, communal

relations, and voting behaviour in the years that followed.”

### How the show affected cultural behaviour

The paper offers three key findings. First, areas with “higher *Ramayan* exposure (higher TV signal strength in 1987) experienced significant changes in cultural practices indicating a strengthening of religious identity.” This study tracked two cultural practices – naming of new-borns, and diet in lower-caste households – and both revealed significant changes. “Hindu parents became more likely to give their newborn sons common Hindu names, and lower-caste households showed increased adherence to orthodox Hindu dietary practices (a substantial increase in vegetarianism).”

Secondly, areas with higher exposure to *Ramayan* witnessed a “short-term” increase in Hindu-Muslim communal violence through 1992.

And finally, the study found a “long-term” effect (through to 2000) on electoral outcomes, with the Hindu nationalist BJP gaining an increase in its probability of winning assembly elections in areas that had higher *Ramayan* exposure.

In this context, one question automatically comes up: how do we know if the effects attributed to *Ramayan* exposure are not also an outcome of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which was gaining steam around the same time? The authors isolate the “*Ramayan* effect” using a control variable “measuring proximity to the travelling mobilisation rallies known as the Ram Rath Yatra (held in 1990)”. By doing so, they found that the “estimated effects of exposure to *Ramayan* starting in 1987 do not appear to be confounded by exposure to the Ram Rath Yatra, the key event in advancing the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.”

### Consolidating a singular identity

Pointing out that prior to *Ramayan*'s introduction, there had never been a TV show in India with a religious theme, the paper notes that the *Ramayan* series “represented a step-function in religious TV content”. To document this quantitatively, the authors “collected data on all 176 television serials broadcast on Indian public networks since 1980”. There were zero religious shows prior to 1987. This was another factor that amplified *Ramayan*'s unique impact, given that its viewership, too, was “unprecedented in India”, with an estimated 80 million people tuning in to watch each episode.

At its peak, over 100 million viewers were watching *Ramayan* simultaneously at a time when there were only 30 million television sets in India. This is explained by the phenomenon of “community viewing” wherein people gathered in “large groups around a single television set, often in public spaces or at homes of neighbours who owned TVs”. As a result, “for the first time, all Hindus across the country saw and at the same time listened to the same thing”. The serial “introduced a congregational imperative into Hinduism” and “provided a unifying narrative that transcended local differences”.

In a way, the mass dissemination of a standardised story of Ram, an avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, couldn't have come at a better time for the advocates of Hindutva, as it helped prime a diverse Hindu population brought up on regional and linguistic variations of the epic, for the unitary ideology of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Interestingly, as the paper underscores, the political impact of the series was likely unintended by the government. “At the time of the broadcast, the national government was led by the Congress party and not the BJP” and the “primary motivation for

airing *Ramayan* was to increase advertising revenue for the state-owned television network.” In fact, the show's creator Ramanand Sagar had to contend with much scepticism from officials and lobby extensively to get the show approved for broadcast.

Based on their findings, which revealed a strengthening of Hindu religious identity as indicated by shifts to popular Hindu names for new-borns, switching to vegetarianism, and changes in long-term political preferences, the authors contend that “the content of mass media can have far-reaching consequences beyond mere entertainment, potentially shaping the cultural and political landscape of a nation for years to come.”

This empirical study is an important intervention at a time when the Indian media landscape, especially news television, is marked by the perverse phenomenon of polarising communal rhetoric beamed out to millions on a daily basis. It also opens up avenues for future inquiry.

For instance, given the rising trend of majoritarian propaganda films coming from Bollywood, how does a certain “narrative structure, character portrayal, and symbolic imagery activate particular social identities?” And how does the mode of consumption – viewing such content as a “communal experience” in a cinema hall or multiplex versus individually – affect its impact on beliefs and group identity? Such investigations could illuminate the mechanisms through which sustained media exposure to particular kinds of cultural and religious content shapes personal identity and political alignments.

As the paper concludes, “The story of the *Ramayan* broadcast serves as a powerful reminder of the responsibility that comes with the power to shape narratives and, by extension, the cultural and political future of a nation.”



FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know Your English

K. Subrahmanian  
S. Upendran

“Listen to an extract from an essay...” Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot be conscious action do anything about it. Our civilisation is decadent and our language – so the argument runs – must inevitably share in the general collapse. It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes. Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes. Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fall all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step towards political regeneration: so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers.

I am going to translate a passage of good English into modern English of the worst sort. Here is a well-known verse from Ecclesiastes: I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Here it is in modern English: Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

If you simplify your English, you are free from the worst follies of orthodoxy. You cannot speak any of the necessary dialects and when you make a stupid remark its stupidity will be obvious, even to yourself. Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change one's habits, and from time to time one can even send some worn-out and useless phrase – some “jackboot, Achilles' heel, hotbed, melting pot, acid test, veritable inferno” or other lump of verbal refuse – into the dustbin where it belongs.

“Beautiful. Who wrote it?”  
“George Orwell. The extract is from his *Pollitics and the English language*.”  
Published in *The Hindu* on May 2, 1995.

### THE DAILY QUIZ

The Super Bowl is a rare event where the sporting world and the music industry clash, with halftime shows overshadowing the game. Here is a quiz on the event

Vignesh P. Venkitesh

QUESTION 1

This pop singer was brought in to perform at halftime in 1993 following a decline in post-break viewership the previous year. Name the artist.

QUESTION 2

This artist was picked up by a helicopter from stage for her exit at the 1996 Super Bowl. Name the artist and the outro song.

QUESTION 3

Name the hit TV show and the episode which was aired as a lead-out after the game in 1996.

QUESTION 4

What was the halftime event during the first Super Bowl in 1967?

QUESTION 5

Name the artist who revealed her pregnancy to the world during her halftime performance?



Visual question:

Name the singer and his song which got a rare collaboration from nature during the 2007 halftime show. AP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's

- daily quiz 1:** This State has won the Ranji Trophy eight times. **Ans: Karnataka**  
 2. Among active cricketers, this person holds the record for the most runs in the trophy. **Ans: Cheteswar Pujara**  
 3. This batsman, during the 1948-49 Ranji Trophy season, was just nine runs short of the then batting record held by Sir Don Bradman. **Ans: B.B. Nimbalkar**  
 4. This erstwhile Test cricketer held the Bradmanque average of 98.35 after scoring 3,639 runs in the Ranji Trophy. **Ans: Vijay Merchant**  
 5. This distinction is jointly shared by Premangsu Chatterjee of Bengal and Pradeep Sunderam of Rajasthan in the Ranji Trophy. **Ans: Both of them picked all the 10 wickets in an innings. Chatterjee (10/20) and Sunderam (10/78)**  
**Visual:** Identify this bowler and the State/team he represented. **Ans: Rajinder Goel, Haryana**  
**Early Birds:** Mohan Lal Patel| Tamal Biswas| Arun Kumar Singh| Parimal Das| Sumana Dutta

Please send in your answers to  
dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

### Word of the day

**Malapropism:**

the unintentional misuse of a word with one that sounds similar

**Synonym:** misstatement

**Pronunciation:** newsth./live/ malapropismpro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /mələpəˈrɒzɪzəm/

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



## SCIENCE

# Cross-blood transplant performed on a patient with Bombay blood

His mother donated her kidney, though she did not have the Bombay blood group. And doctors in Chennai, who had performed cross-blood transplants for close to two decades, were willing to cross the Rubicon and pulled off what not long ago might have looked like a sheer miracle

Ramya Kannan

**I**t was in his blood that the 30-year-old male should create history. Literally.

In mid-2024, the patient underwent a kidney transplant. Though he was relatively young for a transplant, that's not where he stands unique. He had the extremely rare Bombay blood group, which prevented him from receiving organs or even blood transfusions from anyone who didn't have the same blood group running through their veins.

But then that's exactly what he did: his mother donated her kidney, though she did not have the Bombay blood group. Doctors at MIOT International in Chennai, who had performed cross-blood transplants for close to two decades, were willing to cross the Rubicon into a sector with no precedence whatsoever: no one had attempted a cross-blood match on a Bombay group patient ever before.

## A sheer miracle

In a recent paper published in the peer-reviewed journal *Kidney International Reports*, the team that worked on the transplant – Rajan Ravichandran, Yashwanth Raj T., and Kanakaraj Arumugam – chronicled for posterity how a team of doctors in Chennai pulled off what not long ago might have been put down as a sheer miracle. "It was impossible for Bombay blood group patients to receive blood or organs from another blood group, until it was not," senior nephrologist Dr. Ravichandran explained.

The story he believes begins nearly two decades ago, when he was trained in Japan to perform cross-blood transplants, referring to the transplantation performed when donors and recipients have different blood types. In 2010, he and his team at MIOT Hospitals used a kidney from a donor with B blood group on a recipient with O blood group, successfully. Using a special procedure called double filtration plasmapheresis (DFPP) developed by the Japanese, the team had the patient discharged in a week and back at his software job in three months' time.

"The most essential requirement in transplantation is a blood group match – ideally, the patient's own blood group, or in the event it is not available, any group for which his blood does not carry antibodies," Dr. Ravichandran explained.

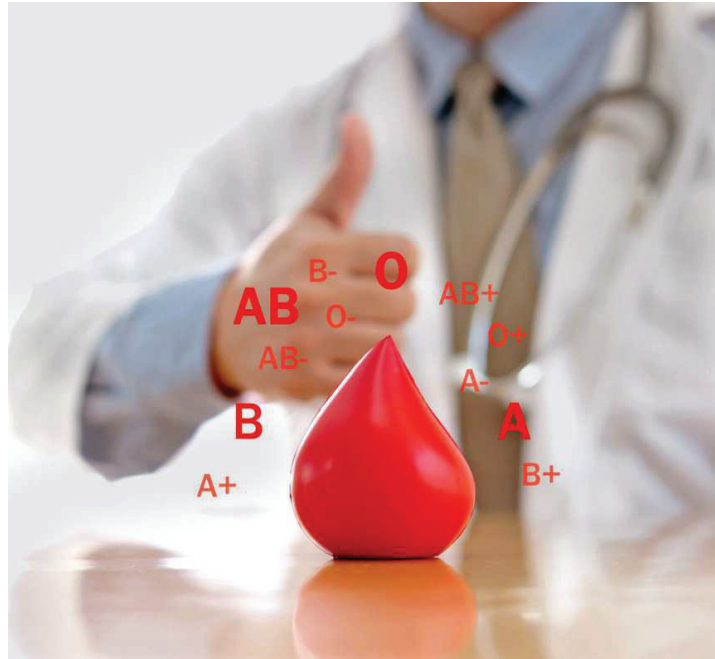
Antibodies are used by the body to detect and neutralise foreign bodies, while antigens are proteins or carbohydrates found on the surface of red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets, and they determine blood type.

## The Bombay blood group

The Bombay, a.k.a. HH, blood group is a rare blood group first discovered in Mumbai in 1952 by Y.M. Bhande. The key differences between the Bombay blood group and the common ABO blood groups lie in the presence (or absence) of the H antigen, which is the fundamental building block for the ABO blood group system.

In normal individuals, the H antigen serves as the base structure for building A and B antigens. In Bombay blood group individuals, the gene responsible for producing the H antigen is mutated or absent, so neither A nor B antigens can be formed.

As the authors detailed in the paper, Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+7Bu5n7ipQ3h0Dg1>



The Bombay, a.k.a. HH, blood group is a rare blood group first discovered in Mumbai in 1952 by Y.M. Bhande. Representative image. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO  
Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F>

Therefore, these people cannot receive blood transfusions from any ABO group, including type O, which has the H antigen. They can only receive blood from another Bombay blood group donor. Its prevalence is about 0.0004% (one in 4 million) of the total human population. While it drops to one in a million in the European population and one in 10,000 in Mumbai, the act of finding a donor is still daunting.

## Clinical challenges

It was daunting for this index patient as well. The issue was not to find a donor for a kidney; his mother was eager to donate hers; the nub was that his body would reject it outright because they had differing blood groups. "We decided that it was time to use the principles of cross-blood matching that we use for the ABO type here as well. We assumed it was a similar situation and decided to use the Japanese technique of DFPP," Dr. Ravichandran said.

"Once you identify the Bombay blood group, you know he has anti-H antibodies. Firstly, we measure anti-A and anti-B antibodies in the blood as we do in the case of ABO cross-blood matches. Here, additionally, you have to measure the levels for anti-H antibodies too, and titrate the levels. The next step is to give a monoclonal antibody injection to the patient to deplete B cells that produce antibodies," he said.

As the authors detailed in the paper, Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+7Bu5n7ipQ3h0Dg1>

**In normal individuals, the H antigen serves as the base structure for building A and B antigens. In Bombay blood group individuals, the gene responsible for producing the H antigen is mutated or absent, so neither A nor B antigens can be formed. Therefore they cannot receive transfusions from any ABO group**

the clinical challenges in such a scenario, even among those with rich cross-blood transplant experience in ABO, include determining a safe anti-H antibody titre cut-off, sufficient enough to stop the body from rejecting the organ from the donor.

Notably, there is no precedence for this, so one had to, again, assume a safe level of antibody concentration. There is a high risk of hyper-acute rejection as anti-H antibodies are more potent than anti-A or anti-B antibodies.

"After determining the titre (levels) of antibodies, we started plasmapheresis, which again removes the antibodies in the blood, lowering the chances of rejection. This was combined with immunosuppressive IVIG [intravenous immunoglobulin] to further suppress antibodies, thereby preventing hyperacute rejection of the organ."

Every alternate day, the team measured the level of antibodies in the patient. "Normally for anti-A and anti-B,

we consider a 1-in-16 concentration of antibody to be an ideal safe point to start transplant. It starts at 1-in-256, we then bring it down, lower the antibodies present. In anti-H there just is no cut off, so we made a few assumptions," he said.

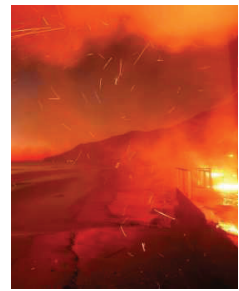
## A new hope

At what was assumed to be a safe, no-rejection antibody titre, the transplant surgery was performed. The team scoured the State for units of Bombay blood group units, just in case the patient might need it during transplant surgery, since cross-blood transfusion is not possible. However, he did not need it. The surgery was a breeze, and there were no complications during or after surgery, the doctors said.

While there is no published literature regarding accommodation of anti-H antibodies by the graft, as it had not been tested before, in this patient the doctors seemed to have achieved a no-rejection antibody titre status, and there was no rejection. The first two weeks, which are also crucial to decide if the organ will be rejected, also passed without incident, the doctors said.

Six months later, the patient is well and able to resume his pre-transplant activities, grateful at how the impossible became possible for him – and hopefully, for others in the Bombay blood group as well, if they are ever to require a transplant.

(ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in)



The Palisades Fire burns through a beach front property, in California on January 8, 2025. AP

## Is global warming accelerating?

Associated Press

The world warmed to yet another monthly heat record in January, despite an abnormally chilly US, a cooling La Nina, and predictions of a slightly less hot 2025, according to the European climate service Copernicus.

The surprising January heat record coincides with a new study by a climate science heavyweight, former top NASA scientist James Hansen, and others arguing that global warming is accelerating. It's a claim that's dividing the research community.

January 2025 globally was 0.09 degrees C warmer than January 2024, the previous hottest January, and was 1.75 C warmer than it was before industrial times, Copernicus calculated. It was the 18th month of the last 19 that the world hit or passed 1.5 C above pre-industrial times. Scientists won't regard the limit as breached until global temperatures stay above it for 20 years.

By far the biggest driver of record heat is greenhouse gas buildup from the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas, but the natural contributions to temperature change have not been acting as expected, said Samantha Burgess, strategic lead for climate for the European weather agency.

The big natural factor in global temperatures is usually the natural cycle of changes in the equatorial Pacific Ocean waters. When the central Pacific is especially warm, it's an El Nino and global temperatures tend to spike. Last year was a substantial El Nino, though it ended last June, and the year was the hottest on record.

El Nino's cooler flip side, a La Nina, tends to dampen the effects of global warming, making record temperatures less likely. A La Nina started in January after brewing for months. Just last month,

**It was the 18th month of the last 19 that the world hit 1.5 C above pre-industrial times. Scientists won't regard the limit as breached until temperatures stay above it for 20 years**

climate scientists were predicting that 2025 wouldn't be as hot as 2024 or 2023, with the La Nina a major reason.

But Hansen, the former NASA scientist now at Columbia University, said 2025 could break 2024's records. In a study in the journal *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, Hansen and colleagues said the last 15 years have warmed at about twice the rate of the previous 40 years.

"I'm confident that this higher rate will continue for at least several years," Hansen said in an interview.

There's been a noticeable temperature rise even when taking out El Nino variations and expected climate change since 2020, Hansen said. He noted recent shipping regulations that have resulted in reduced sulphur pollution, which reflects some sunlight away from the earth and effectively reduces warming. And that will continue, he said.

University of Michigan environmental dean Jonathan Overpeck, who wasn't part of the Hansen study. "There seems little doubt that global warming and the impacts of climate change are accelerating."

But Princeton's Gabe Vecchi and University of Pennsylvania's Michael Mann said they disagree. Vecchi said there's not enough data to show that this isn't random chance. Mann said that temperature increases are still within what climate models forecast.

For feedback and suggestions for Science, please write to [science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Daily page'

## THE SCIENCE QUIZ

### There are more minerals on earth than are dreamt of in our geology

Vasudevan Mukunth

#### QUESTION 1

Tanzanite is a strikingly blue variety of calcium aluminium hydroxyl sorosilicate crystals. Its colour is the result of small amounts of X present in the crystal – in the same way that some tunicates display a vivid blue colour thanks to metalloproteins called vanabins. Name X.

#### QUESTION 2

Zirconium and Y are very rarely found in the same natural compounds because the processes that create and accumulate them are very different. This is what makes the mineral pair very hard to find. Most of the currently known deposits of the mineral occur in Myanmar.

Name Y.

#### QUESTION 3

In pure form, this mineral has the chemical formula NaAlSi<sub>3</sub>O<sub>8</sub>. It's tough, dense, and doesn't weather easily. Its green form is highly valued in China. It's formed only in the subduction zones of continents, where rock is transformed to contain new minerals under very high pressure. Name the mineral.

#### QUESTION 4

When angular, hard-edged rock fragments become cemented together by powdery rock, you have breccia. Name the mineral found in the Dhofar 2800 meteorite that crashed in Oman in 2000 later identified as lunar breccia.

#### QUESTION 5

Ekanite is one of the very few minerals

on the earth that are naturally radioactive. It occurs mostly in Sri Lanka. It's hard to find because, in a process called Z, the radioactivity slowly but progressively degrades the crystal structure. Name Z.

Answers to January 30 quiz:

1. First computer virus that 'escaped' to other networks – **Ans: Elk Cloner**
  2. First virus for the IBM Personal Computer – **Ans: Brain**
  3. Code that mutates its algorithm when it runs – **Ans: Polymorphic code**
  4. Code that rewrites itself to perform new functions – **Ans: Metamorphic code**
  5. Worm believed to have disrupted Iran's nuclear programme – **Ans: Stuxnet**
- Visual: **John von Neumann**  
First contact: Viswanadha Rao Batchu | K.N. Viswanathan | Dalbeer Singh | Ashish Nair | Joe V.R.



Visual: Name this mineral, thus far found only in Serbia. Its chemical formula is very similar to that of kryptonite as described in the 2006 film *Superman Returns*. DUNGDCDUNG (CC BY-SA 4.0)

# 12 THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE  
ONE GOOD THING ABOUT MUSIC IS THAT WHEN IT HITS YOU, YOU DON'T FEEL ANY PAIN. — BOB MARLEY

## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA  
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### GOOD RIDDANCE

Biren Singh's resignation was long overdue. Whoever replaces him has their task cut out: Restore lost trust

**N**BIREN SINGH'S RESIGNATION as the Chief Minister of Manipur, 21 months after the ongoing Meitei-Kuki ethnic conflict erupted in May 2023, is belated. The need has finally moved in Manipur — Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla has accepted his resignation and asked him to continue in office until "alternative arrangements" are made, an outcome starkly different from June 2023, when Singh's resignation letter was torn up by supporters outside his residence. While Singh's removal had long been a key demand of the Kuki-Zo-Hmar groups, the Centre let him continue in the hot seat. By all accounts, he could not stand the pressure from some of his own party's MLAs eventually. His decision to quit comes only five days after the Supreme Court ordered a central forensic lab to analyse audio tapes, purportedly connecting the dots between Singh and the ethnic violence that convulsed his state. Singh may have seen the writing on the wall, but with no clear consensus on a successor, the Centre may be left with no choice but to impose President's Rule amid the uncertainty. It must know, however, that it has no time to lose in firming up a plan for Manipur; the state cannot be left.

At least 250 have died and 60,000 displaced, who continue to languish in more than 350 relief camps, because of the ethnic violence that Singh's government failed to bring to an end. He abdicated his responsibility to resolve the conflict, and failed to present himself as a fair and impartial chief minister committed to the welfare of all Manipuris. Now he leaves behind a state that has been re-militarised after years of attempting to move away from insurgency. In a recent statement, the Ministry of Home Affairs acknowledged that the deteriorating situation in Manipur has contributed to a rise in insurgency across the Northeast. In this context, Singh's departure is a necessary step for a new start, serving as an implicit admission of the state government's failure despite the presence of thousands of central security forces.

The crucial question now is who will take charge and how they will address the ongoing conflict. The BJP leadership must carefully select a successor capable of bringing all sides back to the negotiating table. Regardless of who takes over, however, there are significant structural challenges. The immediate priority must be demilitarisation, including the swift disarmament of insurgent groups to prevent further violence. Thousands of looted arms and ammunition, still unaccounted for, must be recovered. The larger goal, moreover, is to restore the lost trust between the Meiteis and Kukis. Ethnic conflict cannot be resolved through force. The fault lines that existed before May 2023 have, over the past 21 months, deepened to the extent that neither Meiteis nor Kukis can venture outside their respective zones of dominance. True normalcy will not be achieved merely when the violence subsides, but when members of both communities can return home and live without fear or prejudice.

### TURNING ON THE HEAT

Chhattisgarh is stepping up the fight against Maoists. It must not lower its guard, ensure that civilians are not in harm's way

**S**INCE DECEMBER 2023, when it assumed office in Chhattisgarh, the Vishnu Deo Sai government has mounted a concerted offensive to neutralise Maoist insurgents. According to the state government's records, nearly 280 militants have been killed by security forces, more than 1,000 Maoists have been arrested and 925 insurgents have surrendered. In the latest crackdown on Sunday, the security forces targeted a Maoist stronghold inside the Indravati National Park in Bijapur district. Thirty-one insurgents were reportedly killed in the operations, which made use of police camps in the vicinity of the forest. In the past year, the security forces have used these base camps as launchpads for attacks on Maoist strongholds. These have ended the security vacuum in parts of Bastar and restricted the movement of insurgents in their erstwhile strongholds, including their headquarters in Alubijmahar and South Bastar.

The recent operations have been enabled by greater coordination between the security forces from the state and the Centre, including the BSF, CRPF, and ITBP. The fact also is that in the last 15 years or so, left wing extremism has been running out of steam. From being "the greatest internal security threat to our nation" — as the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described it in 2009 — Maoism is today restricted to a few pockets in Chhattisgarh and adjoining areas of Maharashtra. The number of Maoist-affected districts has come down from more than 220 in the early 2000s to less than 40, with violence largely being reported from about 20 districts. The Maoist movement is no longer much of a force in its erstwhile strongholds in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Bihar. South Chhattisgarh's geography — a forested area bordering Maharashtra, Odisha and Telangana, with poor transport and communication facilities — and the economic deprivation of the people did allow the insurgents to gain some foothold. However, here too, their constant recourse to violence and failure to recognise the strength of democratic institutions worked against the insurgents. In the last five years, the cadre base of the Maoists has shrunk sharply.

Chhattisgarh has been a late entrant in anti-Maoist operations. In the first decade of this century, the state witnessed precious time on civilian militias like the Salwa Judum before course correcting to train its police force and reaching out to the people with welfare measures. The state government must not lower its guard. But even as it turns on the heat against insurgents, it must take care to ensure that civilians are not in harm's way. Failure to take such precautions could mean playing into the hands of the Maoists.

### NOT FOR BEGINNERS

Even a decade of performing in India couldn't prepare Ed Sheeran for what happened when he tried busking in Bengaluru

**I**NDIA IS NOT for beginners. So goes a viral meme featuring a selection of images: A man getting his beard shaved on a bike parked by the side of a road; another riding a cow down a busy street; a notice at a petrol pump that reads "you can't get petrol in plastic bottles here". Even beyond the stereotypes, the uninitiated should anticipate sights and experiences that happen, as the 1998 song featuring Gheena put it, "only in India". On Sunday, another image — of international pop star Ed Sheeran being interrupted by a beat cop while busking on Church Street in Bengaluru — joined the ranks.

But Sheeran, who began his career busking in the UK and has since done surprise performances across the world, is no stranger to India. He marked his concert debut here in 2015 and has returned several times. He has collaborated with many Indian artists, even singing in Hindi, Telugu and Punjabi. Yet, the country managed to take him by surprise when, despite permission to perform — as he claimed in a statement later — his street concert was unceremoniously ended when a cop pulled the plug on it. This is hardly a one-off experience for international artists. In 2015, comedian Jerry Seinfeld's first-ever performance in India was cancelled over parking issues in Mumbai. Another comic, Trevor Noah, was late to his own show in Bengaluru after getting stuck in a traffic jam and had to call off two shows over technical issues. In India, the biggest of stars should be prepared for humbling experiences, whether at the hands of a cop or just plain uncontrollable circumstances.

The lesson, for Sheeran and others, is that in India, even a decade is not long enough. Sheeran, it turns out, is still a fumbling beginner. But finally, like he said in his statement, "it's all good" — after all, it can be constructive to have an everyday moment. In India, there is no dearth of them.



VANDITA MISHRA

THE NARENDRA MODI-LED BJP and the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP — Delhi's victory and vanquished — rose to national prominence at about the same time. The Delhi 2025 verdict represents a new turn in the story of two parties, and two policies.

After 2014, the Modi-BJP rearranged the political vocabulary by, broadly, dividing the political party's appeal to voters into two categories: One, the public provisioning of private goods alongside cash transfers and subsidies that reach into households to touch individual *labharthi* (beneficiaries). Two, the projection of larger wholes that offer belongingness, be it *desh* (nation) and *desh-in-videesh* (India in the world), or *Hindu samaj* (religious identity). And a kind of religious nationalism that combines the two narratives and sets up an Other or Others (Muslim and left-liberal "urban Naxal") to define itself in opposition to.

The space that stretches between the beneficiary household and the larger imagined community could be occupied, in no particular order, by issues of *mehngai* or price rise, corruption, farmers' concerns, unemployment or *berozgari*.

It is not that this didn't happen earlier. But there was a difference after the BJP reset the political field. Earlier, too, parties targeted individual voters through actual and proposed schemes but the BJP's remaining of the citizen into the "labharthi" carried the ring of a ceremonial remaining with political consequences. Similarly, parties had invoked larger wholes in the past — of class, caste, regional identity — but the BJP's religious nationalism succeeded in making them look smaller and paler. It did so by tapping into dormant or long-simmering emotions and impulses that had not been fully confronted or addressed by mainstream politics.

When the AAP burst onto the political scene in 2012, fought its first election in 2013, almost in tandem with the rise of the Modi-BJP at the Centre, it was a party born of a national "anti-corruption" movement. But it was also a party of, by and for the city — the Anna Hazare movement had become a critical selfie moment for Delhi.

The AAP, too, tweaked the political imagination and script. It gave the issue of corrup-

## Sabka shahar

AAP lost the city plot. BJP inherits building blocks of what could become a new layer in the political vocabulary

tion, always-already present in public conversation, a new currency. It opposed the BJP while playing the Hindutva card on terms set by the BJP. But more importantly, between the *desh* and individual *labharthi*, it brought in the mindscape of the city.

Of course, this was not always an act of intentional politics. Far too often, in fact, it seemed that the AAP saw in Delhi only a stepping stone to its national-level ambitions. But because of the circumstances of its birth, and almost despite its own blind spots and overreach, Kejriwal's party introduced a missing middle tier in politics.

Again, it wasn't as if the city wasn't a part of the political imagination earlier. But it was only waveringly so. The city has generally got short shrift in national and especially north Indian politics dominated by the larger numbers of rural voters and what has been generally seen as their more fundamental needs. Urban issues have long been eclipsed, or lobbied into the court of patchily empowered local urban bodies.

The new party born in Delhi talked of the city, and in it, focused on the government school and mohalla clinic. In a burgeoning city of migrants, to ease arduous struggles for acquiring a foothold, it gave electricity and water subsidies — this was a class of voters whose concerns were so far marginalised in the prevalent ways of seeing urban spaces as populated only by middle and upper classes. In a city on the move, it provided women bus rides for free.

The AAP made the city — and parts of it that live most precariously — visible in the political discourse. And because the city was Delhi, less the place where people were born in, and more the place to which you were going, the task of politics was not just to help fashion a home for the citizen, but also a safe house for her aspirations and dreams.

The AAP's challenge, therefore, lay in addressing the real city with its *bill, sickle, panni, kachra*—sewage and *padhai* problems. And to create the infrastructure for freedom and anonymity and upward mobility in the imagined city. Over two terms, it managed more or less, and less and less increasingly.

In the last two elections, the people voted the AAP for Delhi, even as at the

Centre they supported the BJP. Eleven years later, as the Delhi scorecard shows, a large enough section of the people feels that the AAP let them down in its custodianship of the city. At the same time, however, the 2025 election campaign affirmed that the middle tier in the political imagination, the space the AAP was a creation of and which it helped shape, is here to stay.

It was audible in the insistent voter refrain about the need for more hospitable and efficient, less dishevelled and cramping, public spaces — voters spoke of the necessity of smoother roads, better sewage systems, cleaner air and neighbourhoods. It was heard in the what-not queries about the mohalla clinic and renovated government school. It was there in the exasperated if rhetorical question asked by young and old in the unauthorised colony and middle class enclave: Didn't Kejriwal promise to make Delhi like London and Paris?

These concerns made themselves heard over and above the signs of boredom and desire for change, the markers of growing Hindu consolidation, and agitation over what some call subsidies and others label as "freebies".

It will now be the BJP's challenge to tailor its politics to the city. The easy bit will be the cash transfer and subsidy — the Modi-BJP has released that part nationally and in other states, for instance with the Ladki Bahin Yojana that was declared the match-winner in Maharashtra most recently.

But going ahead, it will need to remember that the city is more than the sum of its individual parts — and in comparison to the nation, more urban and concrete. The city requires, to begin with and most of all, a respect for a publicness that is inclusive and encompassing. Where caste and religion may matter but are also made less imperative — by the need to move ahead, the imperative not to stop to dwell.

The AAP failed to live up to its opportunity. The BJP would do well to recognise that the AAP has given its successor just Delhi's hot seat but also the building blocks of what could become — if it is open to the possibility — a new layer in its political vocabulary.

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KURT JÄGER

ON AUGUST 23, 2023, India made history when it became the first country to land a spacecraft near the moon's south pole. The mission not only marked India's emergence as a space power but also highlighted its growing capacity for innovation. It was also a testament to how global trade, collaboration and advanced technologies boost ambitious achievements, propelling nations to new heights. The same principle applies beyond space exploration, extending to economic partnerships that harness expertise, investment and innovation.

The economic ties between the four European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) and India hold immense potential. The EFTA countries may have small markets, but they are world leaders in advanced technologies and major foreign investors. EFTA industries excel in areas such as precision engineering, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals and financial services — sectors that align with India's growth ambitions and innovation-driven economy. These strengths position EFTA as a valuable partner in supporting India's technological advancement, sustainability efforts and investment landscape.

The recently signed EFTA-India Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) opens the door to long-term cooperation. The launch of the EFTA desk in India on February 10 marks a step beyond typical trade facilitation. Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029v1n2VR86R7OKH6g8D0F>

## NOT A DEAL, A RELATIONSHIP

India-EFTA trade agreement opens the door to long-term, multifaceted cooperation

tion; it represents a commitment to an ambitious, win-win partnership that challenges both sides to think bigger, aim higher and go beyond business as usual.

Even before the TEPA has formally entered into force, its impact is visible. Its signing was not merely the conclusion of a negotiating process; it's the beginning of a new era of partnership. Businesses on both sides are preparing to capitalise on the agreement's benefits, including reduced tariffs, streamlined customs procedures, enhanced intellectual property protections and a framework for sustainable trade practices. EFTA businesses are also preparing to grasp fully the medium and long-term investment opportunities in India, recalling the shared goals in the TEPA of investing USD 100 billion and creating 1 million jobs in India over the next 15 to 20 years.

The momentum has become evident this week, with more than 100 EFTA businesses visiting India to explore the opportunities it offers. Such proactive interest is the result of deliberate efforts by the EFTA states to raise awareness of the TEPA's potential and benefits. Events and outreach activities have laid the groundwork for increased collaboration.

The EFTA desk will be pivotal in turning these opportunities into results. From facilitating partnerships to guiding regulatory frameworks, the EFTA desk will serve as a critical resource for businesses navigating the complexities of a new market.

The TEPA allows both EFTA and India to go beyond the traditional rationale of trade agreements. For EFTA, this means sharing cutting-edge technologies, innovation and expertise with India's vibrant economy. For India, it means creating progressive and sustainable conditions to welcome large-scale investment and collaboration from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

What makes the EFTA-India partnership unique is its long-term focus. This is not merely a transactional arrangement to improve market access, but the basis for a long-term relationship grounded in trust, shared values and a vision for mutual growth. The EFTA desk embodies this commitment by fostering connections that benefit economies and societies of all parties, not just economically but socially and environmentally as well.

As we celebrate the opening of the EFTA desk, we are reminded that this is just the beginning of a promising process, just as Swiss precision technology played a crucial role in India's moon mission, Norwegian and Icelandic expertise in renewable energy can support India's green transition. Building a transformative win-win partnership will require sustained joint efforts. EFTA is committed to working alongside India to unlock new opportunities, drive innovation and contribute to the sustainable prosperity of our societies.

The writer is secretary-general, European Free Trade Association  
Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+7bu7SenHpQdhi0dGt>



## FEBRUARY 11, 1985, FORTY YEARS AGO

### STATE POLLS

THE PRIME MINISTER, Rajiv Gandhi, launched his party's poll campaign with slogans of a cleaner public life and a fair deal for women and youth. He said there should be amicable relations between the Centre and states for balanced development. States like Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh with non-Congress (I) governments were economically "moving in reverse gear", he said.

### REBELS EXPELLED IN MP

THREE FORMER MINISTERS, eight sitting MLAs and a former MP were among 112 Congress (I) rebels expelled from the party's primary membership for contesting against party nominees for the coming Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh. According to a PCCU release, Congress rebels are contesting against party nominees in 90 of the state's 320 Assembly seats.

### ARMS FLIGHT

THE ZAIRE CARGO aircraft carrying arms from Portugal to India, which was forced to land at Tiruvardur airport because of a fuel shortage, was allowed to leave. A defence ministry official told Reuters that the plane carried mainly ammunition for security forces fight-

ing separatist Tamil guerrillas in the north and east of the country.

### GOLD SMUGGLING

MOHAMED ALI ABDI, second secretary in the Somali embassy here, will shortly be sent back as he was apprehended at the Central Warehousing Corporation (Gurgaon Road) for trying to smuggle 2,000 tolas of gold, valued at more than Rs 50 lakh, in his household articles. Abdi, who arrived last year on his first posting, in his confidential statement said he was "duped" by the proprietor of Capital Refrigeration, Vijay Kumar Gajral, into smuggling gold from Hong Kong.



# THE IDEAS PAGE

## I won't celebrate AAP's defeat

It could be argued that cutting AAP to size was necessary for genuine pro-people and secular politics to emerge. But BJP's victory takes it closer to complete political dominance



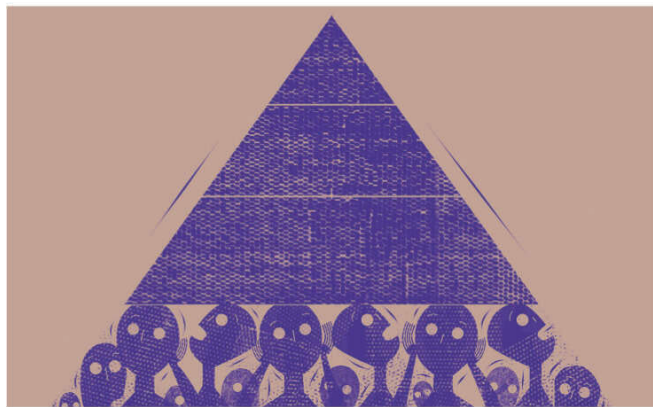
**DESHKAAL**  
BY YOGENDRA YADAV

"AB TO AAP khul kar bolie," nudged a TV anchor, goading me to join the jilted-at-the-altar band of former AAP leaders. Messages of a "bitter-sweet victory", only a shade more subtle than the cringe-worthy pot shots by Kumar Vishwas or Swati Mailwal's gloating, had started floating on WhatsApp among ex-AAPians. As I refused to partake of this mood, another TV anchor wondered if I was keeping the doors open for rejoicing my ex-colleagues! "No way," I told her, with a trace of exasperation.

Just cannot join this celebration of the defeat of AAP in the Delhi assembly elections. Not that I have forgotten the canard and the insults that some of us were put through in the Stalinist purge in AAP a decade ago. It is just that I cannot allow my personal experience to overshadow the big picture of which the BJP's victory, and AAP's loss, in Delhi is a piece. It's not about me, or about the Aam Aadmi Party and its leaders. It's about the "aam aadmi".

This election was a referendum on the last decade of AAP rule. And the verdict is a resounding "no". The BJP happens to be the beneficiary of this negation. True, the margin of AAP's defeat in terms of popular votes is just 3.5 per cent, much smaller than the seat tally might suggest. It is not hard to imagine conditions under which it could have been reversed. If the mass media had shielded the AAP leadership from corruption charges, as it routinely does for the BJP leadership. If the Election Commission had ensured that the Delhi elections were held before the Budget, or lived up to its promise to not allow the Budget to target Delhi voters. If the LG had not prevented the Delhi government from going ahead with cash transfers to women, as in MP, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. If AAP and Congress had worked out an electoral understanding. If not an alliance. Any one of these could have swung over 2 percentage points of votes towards AAP and flipped the headlines.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that there was a strong "anti-incumbency" that is not fully captured in the story of vote shares. The CSDS-Lokniti survey registers deep disillusionment with the ruling party on many fronts that mattered a lot to the people — development, roads, cleanliness, sewers and drinking water. The satisfaction rating of the state government was much lower than that of the central government and Arvind Kejriwal's personal popularity was lower than his party's vote share. Shockingly for a party that rose to power on an anti-corruption plank, nearly two-thirds of Delhi voters believed that the AAP government was "fairly" or "somewhat" corrupt. Clearly, many Dilliwalas who voted for AAP did not like it very much. If they had an option, if the BJP had a credible CM candidate or if the Congress appeared more viable, the referendum could have shown a more pronounced swing against the AAP. Yes, the AAP deserved its electoral drub-



CR Sasikumar

bing. Yet there is nothing to celebrate here. Indeed, anyone who stands for constitutional democracy must worry and reflect.

I worry, not because I am an admirer of AAP and its leadership. Frankly, the party that came to transform politics had accepted, within the first couple of years, the given rules of the game of politics. It is fair to say that in the Supreme Leader's personality cult, concentration of all powers in one person, cloak-and-dagger games played out by his coterie, their cynical double-speak and contempt for an ordinary worker, the AAP proved no different from the mainstream parties it sought to replace. A hostile media did hype up the "sheesh mahal" of the CM, but it could do so because this was so much at odds with the Gandhian claims of the leadership. The courts may not have indicted AAP leaders in the liquor scam, and may never find legal proof, but the scam was no figment of the imagination and did rob the AAP of its moral high ground. Worst of all was the AAP government's silence during the Delhi riots, its complicity in bulldozer action and active competition in dog whistling aimed at the hapless Rohingya minority — all as acts of conscious political strategy to out-nimble the BJP's Hindu majoritarianism.

I worry, not because I am convinced by the "Delhi Model" claims. The AAP government did bring public education to political limelight and improved the physical infrastructure of government schools, even though the gains in the quality of education remain debatable. Mohalla clinics were a good idea whose execution left a lot to be desired. Free electricity and free bus rides for women demonstrated a political will to prioritise the welfare of the poor, though the same amount could have been used for long-term structural improvements in the rural areas. Better. AI models can be developed with much less money. This is the Delhi Model did little for improving the urban infrastructure, the condition of Dilli dehar, waste management and addressing water and air pollution. A partial improvement in some respects, but not a model by any means.

I worry because the defeat of AAP could signal the political erasure of the "bottom of the pyramid" from the policy and politics of the city-state. For all its limitations, the AAP offered protection to the vast majority of Dilliwalas forced to live an unauthorised existence. It assured the poor, recent migrants and Dalits that their numbers would be respected, that they could be heard. The coming of the BJP — with the agenda of world-class city, riverfront and all — could mean an invisibilisation of Delhi's real majority. The victory of the likes of Kapil Mishra and Ravinder Negi is bound to sanctify bigotry and leave Muslims more vulnerable than they already are.

I worry because the defeat of AAP could signal the political erasure of the "bottom of the pyramid" from the policy and politics of the city-state. For all its limitations, the AAP offered protection to the vast majority of Dilliwalas forced to live an unauthorised existence. It assured the poor, recent migrants and Dalits that their numbers would be respected, that they could be heard. The coming of the BJP — with the agenda of world-class city, riverfront and all — could mean an invisibilisation of Delhi's real majority. The victory of the likes of Kapil Mishra and Ravinder Negi is bound to sanctify bigotry and leave Muslims more vulnerable than they already are.

I worry because a victory in Delhi takes the BJP one step forward in its quest for total political dominance. This may well be the beginning of the BJP's attempt, backed by the obedient governmental agencies, to vanquish this irritant and a potential challenger for ever. The BJP's victory would end up legitimising a decade of illegitimate interference in the functioning of NCT government by the Centre through the LG. This victory pushes under the carpet the partisan conduct of the Election Commission and the absence of anything like a level playing field during the elections.

I also worry because the failure of the AAP experiment could shut the door for attempts at alternative politics for some time to come. Someone could argue that cutting AAP to size was necessary for genuine pro-people and secular politics to emerge in the city and the country. Indeed, there is a vast constituency of marginalised Delhi that would be looking for its political voice, if AAP vacates this space. But in real life, there is no guarantee of it and when this space may be meaningfully occupied by an alternative force. Till then, anyone who enters public life promising honest politics would invite a smirk. That is why I worry. And so should you.

The writer is member, Swaraaj India, and national convener of Bharat Jodo Abhiyaan. Views are personal

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The festering polarisation and rising extremism threaten to undermine the very ideals that fuelled Bangladesh's July uprising." — THE DAILY STAR

## A reckoning in Manipur

Can the BJP set aside its short-term electoral interest and restore normalcy in the state after chief minister N Biren Singh's resignation?



**KHAM KHAN**  
SUAN HAUSING

IN WHAT APPEARS to be the only honourable option left to avoid an inglorious exit and a loss of face for his party, the BJP, N Biren Singh resigned as the Chief Minister of Manipur on February 9. Unlike the staged resignation-reversal drama of June 30, 2023, when Singh could divert the state's attention from Rahul Gandhi's visit to the state, the Governor's prompt acceptance of Singh's resignation this time demonstrates the hollowing out of his populist politics and the BJP national leadership's acceptance of his political liability. Faced with an open revolt from a considerable number of members within the BJP in the Valley areas, and the withdrawal of support by the National People's Party (which has seven MLAs) in November 2024, Singh and the BJP could not afford to face an imminent no-confidence motion in the eighth session of the Assembly, which now stands cancelled.

Singh's resignation marks both the unravelling and the culmination of tensions inherent in his populist politics and leadership style. In his overweening ambition to reinvent his political image and project himself as a *palung* (father)-like figure in the eyes of Meitei ultranationalists, Singh had initially used his political skills to co-opt pliable hill tribal leaders to overcome his fragile position during his first term in office (2017-2022). Despite the comfortable majority the BJP won in the 2022 assembly election, he faced formidable rival power centres within the BJP led by Biswajit Singh and Konthoujam Govindas Singh. To offset these challenges, he embarked on an aggressive populist drive to rejuvenate Meitei indigenous politics centred around the revival of Sanamahiim. Given that the BJP — and for that matter the Sangha Parivar — has always seen indigenous politics as a threat to its Hindu nationalist agenda, this revivalism was never considered a threat to the Sangha's cultural agenda or the BJP's electoral interest in the state.

However, large-scale mobilisation of Meitei youth around this politics and the rise of two social and cultural organisations, namely the Meitei Leupum and Arambai Tengkol, had reactivated an in-surgent space. The appropriation of this space by proscribed armed militant groups, including the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and the Kangleipha Communist Party (KCP), became evident as these organisations either turned into their proxy foot soldiers or their activities and agendas overlapped.

The dangerous portent this held for the legitimacy of the Indian state became evident in January 2024, when at the Kangla Fort when 38 elected Meitei representatives were reportedly asked by Arambai Tengkol, under duress and against their constitutional oaths, to commit them-

selves to aggressively push an ultranationalist Meitei agenda. The BJP grudgingly realised the dangerous gamble of such a localised populist politics — such an event could be used to revive the indigenous past of a sovereign Kangleipak in ways that bolster the secessionist agenda of the Valley-based proscribed armed groups.

This, and the leaked tape where Singh's alleged role in perpetuating the violence in the state was apparently revealed, seriously dented his image. The Supreme Court's admission of a petition in early November 2024 and the direction on February 3 to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Hyderabad, to furnish its report in a sealed cover by mid-March, put Singh under an unenviable public spotlight and made his position made his position increasingly untenable and indefensible. Singh's growing disenchantment with Singh's leadership became apparent two days before his resignation, when thousands of Meira Paibis reportedly staged demonstrations in Imphal demanding that he quit. Their disappointment was over Singh's inability to shield the "village volunteers" in the Valley areas — a euphemism for congresses of trained armed youth from police arrests and criminal prosecution by central agencies. The large-scale mobilisation of the youth as village volunteer forces across the divide had radicalised them and incentivised the return of militancy in the state to unprecedented levels.

Despite armed mobilisations and massive deployment of the Centre's paramilitary forces in the state, law and order continue to remain precarious. As exhaustion sets in across the divide after 21 months of violence, there is an increasing demand for fiscal responsibility and accountability in the government. What is also interesting about Singh's resignation is that it opportunities the transformation of factional politics within the BJP in Manipur. As the viral resignation photo demonstrates, it is evident that Singh has succumbed to taming and co-opting two formidable rival power centres, represented by Biswajit Singh and Konthoujam Govindas Singh. The arrival of a new rival power centre represented by Khemchand, Satyabrata Singh, and Thokchom Radheshyam Singh may give a new window of opportunity to the BJP. It is not immediately clear if this rival power centre is a viable and stable alternative to Biren Singh's leadership.

Although the BJP has avoided President's Rule in the state, the extreme polarisation may impel a shift in political gear if the party is seriously committed to restoring trust in the Indian state and its institutions. A moderate leader that cues to an ultranationalist Meitei agenda or concedes to a separate administration as demanded by the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar groups is likely to receive popular backlash from both sides of the divide. The big question is: Can the BJP use the opportunity offered by Singh's resignation to set aside its short-term electoral interests and prioritise restoring normalcy to Manipur? The jury is still out.

The writer is professor and former head, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. He is also a senior fellow, Centre for Multilevel Federalism, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi



**ANUJ BHATIA**

## In Paris, an opportunity

After DeepSeek, what India must do to be more than an also-ran in the AI race

ADAM OSBORNE, WHO developed the first successful portable computer, the Osborne 1, predicted that his company would reach \$1 billion in sales by 1984. However, his company collapsed in just over two years, and Osborne Computer Corp went bankrupt. Very few remember Osborne and his contribution; instead, the credit for making the personal computer mainstream goes to Apple's Steve Jobs. That's the nature of tech — it evolves quickly, and it often hard to predict who will come out on top.

A similar story played out with a small AI startup from China, DeepSeek, which spooked big tech investors on Wall Street last month with its generative AI chatbot, a direct rival to ChatGPT. It introduced a new approach to building AI models with fewer resources through reverse engineering, one that fundamentally challenges how US tech companies have been approaching AI development.

The question may have now is: Where does India stand in the global landscape? With Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other major world leaders attending the AI Action Summit in Paris, much is riding on how India positions itself in the global AI landscape.

DeepSeek's approach holds a lesson for India, besides being a source of hope. It shows that it is possible for India to kick-start its AI development journey on its own terms, without investing billions of dollars into

Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2Vrh6RGI0KH6oB40F> global payment system — but that's about it. For India to succeed in AI, it needs to focus on two key areas. First, adopting a long-term AI-first approach, with an emphasis on developing AI technologies and creating tech platforms locally, while aiming to export these innovations globally. This means building AI technology from scratch — completely indigenous and not reliant on OpenAI or Google. India can score a lead in AI only if the government, institutions, and domestic companies come together to invest in research, create an ecosystem, and develop the right AI infrastructure. AI is complex and technical and requires a mix of programming, mathematics, and statistics. These skills are necessary to analyse data, develop efficient algorithms, and implement AI models. It requires smart people with the right technical skills, patience, and a long-term vision.

Similar to what China has done, India needs to set multiple smaller goals after identifying the sectors that require the most attention. However, achieving these goals may take years, and the right policies can accelerate progress. In the immediate future, India's greatest opportunity (which China does not have) lies in its geopolitical strategy, particularly in the context of AI. India stands to benefit the most by being a strategic ally of the US, ensuring a continued semiconductor supply and kick-starting the development of AI technologies. The second step, and perhaps the most im-

portant, is to collaborate on developing AI technologies, meaning India must work closely with the US and Europe and establish joint ventures (JVs) so that its local companies have equal representation. However, while venturing AI, India also needs to be a part of creating a specific framework around responsible AI development and use.

Perhaps it is also time for India Inc. to come together, create AI research labs spread across the country, and operate them independently. They should hire PhD-level students from IITs and other top technical institutions, pay them well so they stay in India, and let them develop and build foundational AI models while working on future AI technologies beyond LLMs. India needs to realise that any nation that manages to scale up AI, democratise it, and generate developer interest — so they can reproduce and modify model weights and methods — is the one that will control the narrative and lead the AI arms race. Not to mention, LLMs are a sort of operating system — similar to Apple's iOS and Google's Android — on which developers can build new applications. With China aspiring to be the global leader in open-source AI, and the US's best models being closed-source, the former has a better chance to expand AI at a much lower cost. But in tech, anything is possible, and India could jump in if it plays its cards right.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### AAP'S DEFEAT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "The Delhi quake" (IE, February 10). The AAP's defeat is a setback not only for its own aspirations but also for regional parties aiming to replace Congress as a national alternative to the BJP. A key reason for the loss is the AAP's persistent confrontation with the Centre — largely driven by its ambition to establish itself as a national force. For the BJP, this victory should serve as a reminder that winning over Delhi requires more than communal polarisation. Responding to the city's aspirations would be a more effective strategy.

Viswath Singh, Lucknow

### BROKEN PROMISES

This refers to the article, "What Kejriwal couldn't do" (IE, February 10). AAP touted its 2020 manifesto as 'Kejriwal Ka Guarantee Card'. Going by the track record since 2015, of the 70 promises made, Kejriwal has delivered fully only on 11, while the rest are either not fulfilled or at best only partially fulfilled. Flagship schemes are stuck in the tussle with the LG. He failed to keep his promises of cleaning the Yamuna, ensuring clean tap water for every household, and upgrading Delhi's roads to European standards.

SS Paul, Nadia

### UNREST IN DHAKA

THIS REFERS TO the editorial "Dhaka must act" (IE, February 10). The protesters' call for a 'bulldozer procession' against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence has an uncanny similarity with the idea of a bulldozer justice, which in India was censured by the Supreme Court. Vandalism is a criminal act. The role of Yunus's interim government is to restore normalcy and hold free and fair elections. Any suggestion that the Awami League be banned from contesting elections is to subvert citizens' constitutional right to choose the next government.

LR Murmu, New Delhi

### MANIPUR CM

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Chorus growing, Manipur CM finally quits; Assembly on hold" (IE, February 10). Biren Singh's departure highlights not only a personal failure but also the broader political and institutional shortcomings that have allowed the situation to spiral out of control over the last two years. Furthermore, the delay in resolving the crisis now leaves both communities angry, with mistrust and resentment at a high. A sustainable solution will require more than just political compromise — it demands genuine reconciliation.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

BJP set to take power: recalling Centre vs AAP govt in Delhi

APURVA VISHWANATH NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 10

OVER THE past decade with the Aam Aadmi Party in power in the national capital, there has been a constant legal tussle between the Centre and the Delhi government over the state's 'unique constitutional status'...

Constitutional scheme

Article 239 of the Constitution, which deals with the administration of Union Territories, envisages a power structure in which a President governs a UT through an administrator or Lieutenant Governor appointed by her.

However, for certain UTs, Article 239A provides for a dual power structure, with a legislative Assembly — either fully elected, or

partly nominated by the President and partly elected — and a Council of Ministers as well as an L-G appointed by the President. There are currently three UTs with an Assembly — Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Until last week, all three were ruled by parties that are a part of the Opposition in the Centre. This sets the stage for some conflict. And nowhere has this conflict been as relentless as in Delhi, given its status as the national capital and the AAP's national ambitions.

The legal tussles

In 2015, when the AAP returned to power in Delhi with a huge majority, the Union Home Ministry issued a notification stating that the L-G, 'shall in respect of matters pertaining to Public Order, Police, Land and Services, exercise powers and discharge the functions of the Central Government, to the extent delegated to him time from time by the President'.

While Article 239AA gives the Union Government power over public order, police, and land in Delhi, the Centre explicitly shifting the control of the bureaucracy (services) to the L-G was significant. The Delhi government immediately moved the High Court. But a decade and multiple court rulings later, this legal issue is still pending before the SC, virtually crippling the governance of the national capital.

EXPLAINED LAW

Court rulings In 2016, a two-judge Bench of the Delhi HC ruled in favour of the Centre regarding the 2015 notification.

When the Delhi government moved the SC in appeal, the issue was referred to a larger Constitution Bench since it required the interpretation of Article 239A(3) (a). This provision states that the Delhi Assembly has the powers to make laws on aspects in the State List and the Concurrent List like any other state, except

for land, public order, and police. Two Constitution Benches of the SC have twice — in 2017 and 2023 — accepted the Delhi government's position over that of the Centre, and held that the former has legislative and executive powers over administrative services in the national capital.

Responding to the Centre's argument that since no UT has power over services, Delhi too could not exercise such power, the SC in 2017 reiterated that Delhi's constitutional scheme is a sui generis (unique) model, and is not similar to any other UT. A smaller two-judge Bench was to apply this ruling to actual cases — this Bench delivered a split verdict, leading to another round of litigation.

A second Constitution Bench in 2023 reiterated that while 'the legislative and executive power of Delhi over Entry 41 (services) shall not extend over to services related to public order, police and land. However, leg-

islative and executive power over such services such as Indian administrative services, or joint card of services, which are relevant for the implementation of policies and vision of NCT of Delhi in terms of day to day administration of the region, shall live with Delhi.'

This prompted the Centre, in May 2023, to bring an amendment to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act extending the L-G's powers to transfer and appoint bureaucrats posted to Delhi. Under the new law, a body comprising the Delhi CM, the Chief Secretary and Principal Home Secretary of the Delhi government would appoint bureaucrats. This means that the CM can be vetoed by two senior bureaucrats on the issue of appointments and transfers of bureaucrats.

The amendment is still under challenge by the Delhi government. But it is unlikely that a BJP-ruled state would pursue litigation against Centre which is ruled by its own party.

THIS WORD MEANS

DEI (DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION)

Workplace practices to improve the representation of employees from historically marginalised backgrounds

ANAGHA JAYAKUMAR NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 10

IN HIS second term, US President Donald Trump has moved to dismantle the DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) policies initiated by his predecessor Joe Biden.



US President Donald Trump. Reuters

What is DEI?

Put simply, DEI refers to policies that seek to promote the fair treatment and full participation of all, particularly groups who have historically been underrepresented or subject to discrimination based on identity or disability.

Biden in June 2021 passed an executive order titled 'Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce', which defined these terms as follows:

DIVERSITY: The practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities.

EQUITY: The consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.

INCLUSION: The recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds.

ACCESSIBILITY: The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.

Is DEI new?

Efforts to make workplaces more diverse and inclusive are not new. President Franklin D Roosevelt in 1941 banned racial discrimination in the hiring of defence contractors. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 officially banned any employer from discriminating based on race, colour, sex, religion, and other criteria.

This did not, however, lead to women,

queer persons, or Black and Brown people automatically receiving the kind of opportunities that historically more privileged groups did. Organisations, at times of their own volition, at times pushed by the government, have made concerted effort to hire a more diverse workforce.

According to a 2019 article in Time magazine, especially since 'Trump's election, and with the emergence of movements like #MeToo and Black Lives Matter', DEI has 'exploded'. Companies seeking to attract customers from historically marginalised communities have made many efforts to be seen as inclusive and anti-racist.

What policies has Trump targeted?

On January 20, the day of his inauguration, Trump signed an executive order targeting DEI in federal agencies. The order directed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to supervise the end of DEI programs and required agencies to report employment numbers in DEI and 'employment justice' roles within 60 days.

A day later, he passed another order striking down sections of the 1965 Equal Employment Opportunity Act to discourage federal departments and agencies from awarding contracts to companies with DEI policies.

Trump's position reflects that of conservatives across the US who label DEI as being discriminatory towards White citizens. Notably, the three conservative Supreme Court appointees made by Trump in his first term have been striking down affirmative action in college admissions in 2023.

EXPLAINED DIPLOMACY AND STRATEGY

India, France, and AI

India's relationship with France is old and deep, based on principles of strategic autonomy and mutual respect. PM Modi's visit to Paris as co-chair of AI Summit is testimony to the endurance of the relationship



SHUBHAJIT ROY

'I BELIEVE' that France cannot continue to be France if it leaves its role in the world by the wayside', French President Emmanuel Macron wrote in his memoir, Revolution, in 2017.

As chair of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit in Paris on February 11, the President would be trying to fulfil this obligation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi to co-chair the Summit, offering India an important part in the effort to make and shape the rules for technologies on the next frontier.

Back in 1998, speaking in New Delhi's Vigyan Bhawan, President Jacques Chirac first proposed the idea of 'a partnership for the 21st century' with India, 'a global partnership grounded in our complementarities and our common interests'.

The two countries have travelled a significant distance on that high road since then.

India at AI summit

The invitation to India to co-chair the AI Summit is being seen as a recognition of New Delhi's approach to AI, and its expanding role in the domain of new and emerging technologies. While China is a global leader in this breakthrough technology, the choice made by Paris signals the importance it attaches to shared values and convergences.

India's Strategic Partnership with France is its oldest, and the two countries have stood together in addressing a range of global issues. In 2015, they launched the International Solar Alliance on the sidelines of the Paris climate conference, and they are co-chairs of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). Together, they have made significant contributions to writing the code for a green and sustainable planet; they are now collaborating to mark the contours of development in the digital world.

The Summit will provide India with a platform to contribute towards the development of AI in an inclusive, responsible, and equitable manner, and to address associated risks. India will share its views on the democratisation of AI, and on bringing its benefits to the Global South.

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PM Modi and President Macron on the sidelines of the 2021 G20 Summit. X/PMOIndia

Aims of AI Summit

The Paris Summit will seek to build on the two summits held in the United Kingdom in November 2023 and South Korea in May 2024. The Bluetech Park Declaration signed at the UK Summit, attended by 28 countries, affirmed that AI should be designed, developed, deployed, and used in a manner that is safe, human-centric, trustworthy, and responsible.

The Seoul Summit, co-hosted by the UK, was attended by 27 nations. The Seoul Declaration reaffirmed their commitment to international cooperation on AI, and to addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the new technology. The summit also proposed a network of AI Safety Institutes.

The Paris Summit has five main themes: Public Interest AI, Future of Work, Innovation and Culture, Trust in AI, and Global AI Governance. It will aim to leverage existing initiatives and for AI, including by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the G7, G20, etc.

The Summit will launch concrete initiatives to place AI at the service of the common good, with a specific focus on the needs of the Global South. India has been actively engaged in a range of discussions, including co-chairing the AI Governance Working Group, participating in deliberations of other working groups to shape deliverables, serving on the Steering Committee, contributing to negotiations on the Leaders' Statement, and participating in the GPAI (Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence) Ministerial Meeting on the Summit sidelines.

New Delhi's focus

India will be putting forward the example of the IndiaAI Mission. The Rs 10,371 crore program aims to democratise AI innovation and ensure that its benefits are equitably distributed to all citizens.

On the global cooperation on AI, India is focused on three main areas: GPAI: This is an OECD-supported multistakeholder initiative to guide the responsible development and use of AI. As a founding member and lead chair of GPAI for 2024, India has been working towards making GPAI the nodal partnership for global cooperation on AI.

BRIDGING THE AI DIVIDE: India is pushing for inclusive AI Governance focused on bridging the widening AI divide between countries, and democratising AI globally.

GLOBAL SOUTH PRIORITIES: India is creating the example of a 'Global South' in the discourse around cooperation on AI, spotlighting the unique challenges, opportunities, and requirements of the developing world.

India-France ties

Modi's visit will be an occasion to further deepen the India-France strategic partnership. The PM's share a warm personal equation with President Macron, and the two leaders met thrice in 2024, with the President attending the Republic Day celebrations as Chief Guest. Strategic ties between the countries have traditionally pivoted on areas such as defence, security, space, and civil nuclear energy collaboration. In particular, the defence partnership has been a key pillar of the relationship.

ship has seen an increasing indigenous element. Their defence cooperation is reviewed under the Annual Defence Dialogue (Defence Minister level) and the High Committee on Defence Cooperation (Secretary level).

Pivotal ongoing defence projects include the P-75 Scorpene Project and purchase of Rafale aircraft. The two countries are discussing buying 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, and three more Scorpene-class conventional submarines.

The bilateral ties are also expanding into the sectors of tech, innovation, renewable energy, trade, economy, supply-chain partnership, and people-to-people relations. The logo of India-France Innovation Year, 2026, will be unveiled during the PM's visit and the two leaders will jointly inaugurate a new Indian consulate in Marseille. The city is a global communications hub, with its strategic location on the Mediterranean Sea making it a key node for the network of undersea cables linking Europe to Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Ninety-nine per cent of the world's data traffic, both Internet and telephony, is carried by submarine cables.

Modi and Macron will also hold an India-France CEOs' forum in Paris. An initiative on India-France Triangular Development Cooperation is likely to be launched as well, through which India and France will aim to implement climate- and SDGs-focused projects in three countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Macron and Modi will visit the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) facilities close to Marseille, India, which is an active participant in the fusion technology project. It has very significant energy requirements to fulfil its development goals.

Enduring partnership

Ties between India and France have evolved based on 'strategic autonomy' and a 'sense of respect'. President Chirac had been India's Republic Day Guest in 1998, months before New Delhi conducted the Pokhran II nuclear tests — and afterwards, France refused to join the chorus of global condemnation and Western sanctions aimed at a punitive response for the action. The same Chirac had agreed to be the Republic Day Guest as France's Prime Minister in 1976, when India had been shunned by much of the world due to Indira Gandhi's Emergency.

These actions were testimony to French pragmatism, foresight, and commitment to the relationship with India, as well as to the management of sensitive diplomatic situations. Bilateral ties have become even more durable and stronger since then.

Drishhti IAS UPPSC Foundation Course MPPSC Foundation RAS Foundation

Jan 2025 was warmest ever: Why La Niña did not bring down temperatures

ALIND CHAUHAN NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 10

THIS JANUARY was the hottest on record, with the global average surface air temperature being 1.75 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (1850-1900 average). Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service (CCS) said last week. This made January 2025 the 18th of the last 19 months in which the global average surface air temperatures breached the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold.

CCS also said temperatures reached record-breaking levels despite the development of La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific, and their temporary cooling effect on global temperatures. Scientists had expected that La Niña, which emerged in December last year, would bring some relief from the heat. 'This what makes it a bit of a surprise: you're not seeing this cooling effect, or temporary brake at least, on the global temperature that we were expecting to see,' Julien Nicolas, a climate scientist at Copernicus, told Agence France-Press.

What is La Niña?

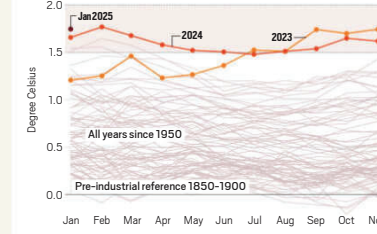
La Niña is one of the three phases of what is known as the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), a climate phenomenon characterised by changes in sea temperatures along the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, accompanied by fluctuations in the atmosphere overhead. ENSO influences, alters, and interferes with global atmospheric circulation, which, in turn, influences the weather worldwide.

ENSO has three phases — warm (El Niño), cool (La Niña), and neutral — which occur in irregular cycles of two to seven years.

In the neutral phase, the eastern side of the Pacific Ocean (near the northwestern coast of South America) is cooler than the western side (near the Philippines and Indonesia). This is due to the prevailing wind systems that move from east to west, sweeping the warmer surface waters towards the Indonesian coast. The relatively cooler waters from below come up to replace the displaced water.

In the El Niño phase, these wind systems weaken, leading to lesser displacement of warmer waters off the South American coast.

MONTHLY GLOBAL TEMPERATURE ANOMALIES



Source: CCS/ECMWF

complicated, and some places may be both warmer and cooler than expected at different points in the year.

Why did La Niña not cool temperatures this January?

Each El Niño and La Niña phase is unique — no two La Niña cycles are exactly alike due to variations in intensity, duration, and specific regions impacted by them. Therefore, the development of these phases does not necessarily increase or decrease global temperatures with the same intensity every time.

The ongoing La Niña cycle is expected to be weak. That could be because of its much-delayed emergence — experts had pegged La Niña to develop sometime in September — among several other factors. According to a report by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 'ENSO events peak in the northern Hemisphere winter, and there's just not a lot of time for La Niña to strengthen.' A weaker La Niña typically has a weaker influence over temperature and precipitation patterns. Despite the arrival of a La Niña phase, the rate of rise in heat-trapping atmospheric car-

bon in 2024 and January 2025 has remained above the already high levels of previous years, according to a report published by The Conversation. Usually, a strong La Niña brings extra rain, leading to more plant growth. This, in turn, results in more absorption of carbon from the atmosphere by the plants.

The dip in concentration of aerosols, or suspended particles, in the atmosphere due to clean air policies being implemented in some regions could have also played a role in keeping temperatures warmer. Aerosols, in general, have a cooling effect as they scatter the solar radiation back into space. They also impact cloud formation, which in turn affects how much sunlight is absorbed or reflected.

Why is this significant?

Experts suggest that a particularly warm January cannot foretell the long-term trajectory of weather patterns on the planet. However, it does indicate that the ability of natural cooling phases to temporarily bring down global temperatures might be waning. There is only one way to counter this: by cutting down greenhouse gases. The only way to counter this is by cutting down greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions.