



Independent directors skip red flag details while quitting

Not giving honest explanations to shareholders is a breach of the spirit of Sebi's norms

Dipali Banka & Nehal Chaliawala

BENGALURU/MUMBAI

By quitting India Gate basmati rice maker KRBL Ltd's board on 8 September over governance issues, Anil Kumar Chaudhary joined a rare group—only the 22nd independent director in six years to voice disagreements with management while resigning from a listed firm.

That rarity becomes clearer when set against the larger picture: In the same period, more than 3,100 independent directors exited the boards of more than 1,500 listed firms for reasons other than superannuation, retirement, demise, or completion of term, according to data shared by market intelligence firm Prime Database.

Most outgoing independent directors—even if they resign over governance concerns or management disputes—cite explanations like 'personal reasons' in their resignation letters.

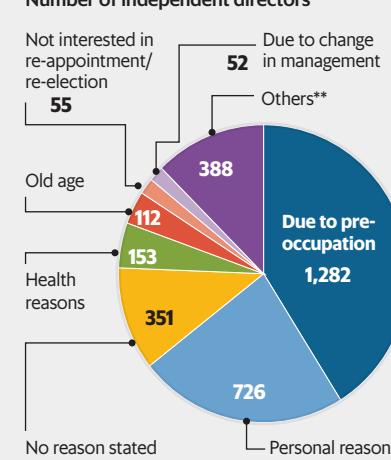
Experts say many resigning independent directors stop short of giving honest explanations to public shareholders, which is a breach of the spirit of the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (Sebi) regulations. The Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements Regulations of 2015 mandate that listed firms disclose independent directors' resignation letters—along with the detailed reasons for the decision to quit—to the stock exchanges within seven days. The independent director must also confirm there are no material reasons other than those cited.

"Corporate governance issues most certainly exist in Indian corporations. However, independent directors, who are invited by companies to join their boards and also receive a fee for their services, often find it awkward to highlight lapses in their operations," said Pranav Haldea, the managing

Transparency takes a hit

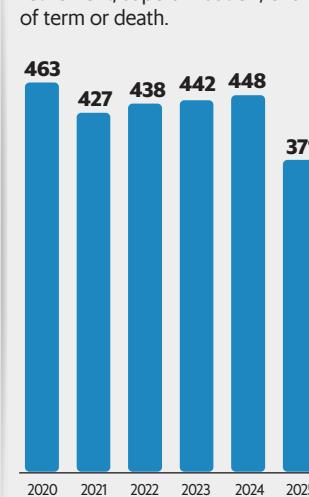
Number of independent directors in NSE-listed firms, by the reason for end to their tenures*, since 2020.

Number of independent directors



*Excludes retirements, superannuations, end of term, and deaths. **Includes 22 cases of resignations due to non-cooperation or disagreement with the management. Data as of 16 Sep 2025.

Number of companies from where independent directors resigned for reasons other than retirement, superannuation, end of term or death.



*Data as of 16 Sep 2025.

Source: primedb.com

GOPAKUMAR WARRIOR/MINT

director of Prime Database Group.

Data shows that 80% of them cited either preoccupation, personal reasons, health, or no reasons at all, for leaving in the last six years.

The number of independent direct-

health, they soon join the board of another company," said Haldea.

"Not all independent directors are comfortable disclosing the real reason for leaving. Many simply cite personal or health issues as the reason. It is pos-

CUT TO THE CHASE

80% of them cited preoccupation, no reasons or personal reasons, for leaving in the last six years

THOSE resigning due to personal reasons rose from 121 in 2020 to 132 by the end of 2024

DIRECTORS quitting over disagreements with management hit a high in 2022 in the last six years

ONLY 2 independent directors, Chaudhary and Menon, cited management clashes while resigning

ors resigning for personal reasons rose from 121 in 2020 to 132 by the end of 2024, while those quitting due to preoccupation increased from 194 in 2020 to 266 in 2024, Prime Database said.

"It has also been seen that while some directors step down citing age or

sible that a director suspects red flags, but may not have enough data points to confirm it," said Shiriram Subramanian, the managing director of proxy advisory firm InGovern Research.

In one case, a director mentioned trying to contact the promoter but the

calls weren't taken for over six months, said Subramanian, citing the example of Arun Menon, who quit the board of Gensol Engineering Ltd in April.

The regulations for good corporate governance practices are adequate, but the market regulator needs to be more proactive in enforcing them when instances of poor governance arise, Subramanian said, adding that prompt actions and swift probes are essential to address such issues effectively.

In the last six years, resignations by independent directors over disagreements with management hit a high in 2022, with nine exits. Only two independent directors—Chaudhary and Menon—have cited clashes with management this year while resigning.

Chaudhary wrote in his resignation letter that "in such an operating environment where dissent is suppressed or sidelined, remaining on the board would compromise both my professional ethics and obligations as defined under Indian corporate governance codes".

The independent directors who resigned over the past six years were from 13 listed firms. In addition to those mentioned above, they included Yes Bank, Alkash Optifibre, PTC India, Prime Securities, PVP Ventures, Dhanlaxmi Bank, VIP Industries and Sabar Flex

India. In the case of VIP, Nisaba Godrej stepped down due to differences of opinion on leadership accountability and succession planning rather than outright governance issues. The stocks of eight of these 13 firms have underperformed compared to the benchmark Sensex since the day the independent directors resigned. For instance, the KRBL stock has declined over 10% since it made Chaudhary's resignation letter public on 13 September.

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For an extended version of the story, go to livemint.com.

Will GST rate cut revive small cars? The jury is still out

Ayaan Kartik

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NEW DELHI



Maruti's leadership acknowledged that the SUV segment can't be ignored, with most of its launch plans focused on it..

The Indian middle-class's long-standing love affair with the humble hatchback seems to be over. Once the undisputed first car for millions, old heart-throbs such as the Maruti Alto and WagonR have been pushed aside by a new status symbol: the SUV.

The government's recent decision to slash the goods and services tax (GST) on small cars has ignited a debate within the industry: can this revive the dying hatchbacks, or have consumer tastes shifted for good?

India's top two carmakers, Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai, hold opposing views. Maruti insists affordability has always been the key issue, arguing that rising safety and regulatory costs made small cars too expensive for many buyers.

Hyundai, however, believes the market has evolved beyond mere price, and that Indians now prefer the space and "aspirational status" offered by compact and micro SUVs, which are in the same tax slab.

Mint explores the two perspectives and what they mean for the auto market.

What defines a small car?

The definition is tricky. For taxation, small cars are those under 4 metres. But within this band, micro and compact SUVs such as the Tata Punch, Tata Nexon, and Hyundai Venue now dominate, sidelining hatchbacks like Maruti Wag-onR, Alto and Renault Kwid.

Numbers back this shift. According to Autocar India data, micro SUV sales rose 20% in FY25 to 510,793 units, while compact SUVs grew 14% to 697,013 units. In contrast, hatchback sales fell 13% in the same year, slipping to nearly a million units. The government

has cut GST on cars below 4m from 28% to 18%, depending on engine size, with prices across hatchbacks and small SUVs ranging from ₹5-10 lakh.

Why small cars may not see a big boost from tax cut?

A uniform GST cut means compact SUVs also get cheaper.

"The small SUV segment is already the biggest segment in the car industry. GST rate rationalisation, coupled with 8th pay commission, and rising customer aspirations could give a huge demand boost. The small SUV segment could see the maximum growth," Tarun Garg, Hyundai Motor India chief operating officer.

"We believe a decline of 2-10% for vehicle prices will stimulate both first-time and replacement demand. (But) We expect premium hatchbacks and compact SUVs to benefit the most, whereas larger SUVs/MPVs should maintain their momentum," analysts at Kotak Institutional Equities said in a 9 September note.

However, others believe that entry-level cars will also get a boost due to more affordability. "This move is expected to revive demand in the entry-level segment, which was gradually losing its grip in the Indian PV market," Saket Mehra, partner at Grant Thornton Bharat, said.

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50s are the new 40s: why quitting isn't on their mind

Balancing careers, savings, and personal priorities as their second innings unfolds after 50

Aprajita Sharma
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NEW DELHI

People in their 50s are in a particularly vulnerable phase. Layoffs in this age group are becoming common, and with companies reluctant to hire them back, quinquagenarians face heavy responsibilities — funding children's higher education, caring for ageing parents, and planning for retirement that is fast approaching. Unlike younger FIRE aspirants chasing early retirement, most simply want the security of working as long as possible.

"This generation has worked hard from a young age, often supporting their parents early on. Even if they earn well, their expenses are measured, and lifestyle creep rarely drives them. Among my 50+ clients, I don't see them seeking early retirement," Abhishek Kumar, founder of SahajMoney, a Sebi-registered investment advisory, said.

50s is the New 40s

For many, 50 years no longer marks the countdown to retirement. They see years of work ahead, though often on different terms. Kaushik Chakraborty (50), CHRO at a UK-based realty consulting firm, said: "I believe 60s are the new 40s. I see a long working life ahead of me. In my firm, there's no retirement age. From a government perspective, we follow statutory norms, but people are free to continue beyond that."

For him, upskilling is vital. "You can't predict what lies ahead. Keep pace with technology infusion in your industry. I'm confident I won't lose my job, but in a worst-case scenario, I know I can leverage my leadership and coaching experience to keep earning," he added.

Ravi Jakareddy (55), senior executive at an automotive MNC, is learning Japanese to stay relevant. "It's an added advantage. I also attend training programs regularly. Flexibility in behaviour is just as important—Gen Zs are joining the workforce, so you must mentor them while also learning from them," he said.

Jakareddy doesn't seek early retirement, but wants more control over time. "Financially I can't retire yet, but eventually I would prefer a role with 2-3 hours of work daily not 9-12 hours."

Entrepreneurs see retirement differently. Kirtikumar Dhruv (50), who quit corporate life to start staffing and AI ventures, said: "It wasn't about fear of layoffs, but in retrospect, it feels like the right decision." For him, retirement isn't

on the horizon. "Entrepreneurs don't really retire. I enjoy working, and even if the next generation takes over someday, I'll remain involved," he said.

Investments and expenses

In their 50s, financial juggling peaks as responsibilities mount and retirement nears. Layoffs can quickly upend even well-laid plans.

"One of my clients was recently laid off, which disturbed his financial planning. His existing investments can take care of retirement, but the future is always uncertain. We advised him to be conservative with expenses. He needed ₹1 lakh a month, but we broke it down

Job jitters at 50s

A generation juggling retirement plans, children's education, and job market uncertainty is finding its balance

mint	RAVI JAKAREDDY (55)	KAUSHIK CHAKRABORTY (50)	KIRTIKUMAR DHRUV (50)
Financial planning	Location: Pune Profession: Senior executive at an automotive firm ► With a financial adviser	Location: Gurgaon Profession: CHRO at a real estate consulting firm ► With an adviser and direct equity by himself	Location: Pune Profession: Running recruitment & AI and automation businesses ► Self
Security amid job risks	► Upskilling and having adequate investments	► Curtailing expenses & skills to work as a consultant in case of job loss	► Pivoting businesses to stay relevant
Financial goals	► All goals met except retirement	► Higher education of two daughters, retirement	► Targeting revenue growth for companies
Asset allocation	► A diversified portfolio across equity, debt, gold, real estate	► A diversified portfolio across equity, debt, gold, real estate	► Core businesses, FDs, equities & angel investment

I don't want to retire early but I do seek freedom to work for lesser hours than what my job requires now"

I am withdrawing myself from consumer culture to focus only on investments and my skill enhancement"

I focus more on revenue generation in present than worrying about future expenses, but I know goal-based planning matters"

Hits and misses from 50s' financial toolkit

- ✓ Save first, spend later
- ✓ Financial discipline
- ✓ Wish to keep earning after retirement
- ✓ No lifestyle greed
- ✗ Investing, but a delayed start

Thumb rules to follow

- Estimate your retirement corpus
- Build more than what you'll need
- Aim for a 3-3.5% withdrawal rate
- Double your emergency fund
- Revisit your insurance and asset allocation
- Pay off debt on priority

into mandatory and non-mandatory spends, and are working on trimming the latter," said Kumar of SahajMoney.

Most in their 50s live by the principle of saving first and spending later, but many admit they started late and are racing to catch up.

Take Chakraborty. Like many in his generation, he was once heavily invested in real estate but has since shifted to equity. A financial advisor guided him into mutual funds, though his direct equity portfolio—built through discussions with colleagues and friends—

remains larger.

Chakraborty is also cutting lifestyle expenses. "I've travelled the world, lived in luxury, and owned fancy cars. Now I prefer discipline. I live in a condo in Gurgaon, drive a company-leased car, buy fewer clothes, and want a clutter-free life away from consumerism," he explained.

cover a year without income, and I'm extending it to two years. I know what I need for my daughter's higher education, and I've settled my home loan. That gave me mental peace. My investments can help me survive, but I need to build more for thriving post-retirement," he said.

For Entrepreneur Dhruv, driving revenue growth is his major financial goal. "I work with a revenue mindset, not a cost mindset. My focus is on increasing revenues rather than cutting costs," he said.

Still, he maintains discipline. "I draw a salary from my company and keep my personal expenses and investments within that," he explained.

Thumb rules to follow

Vireesh Patel, a Certified Financial Planner, advises 50-somethings to expand their emergency fund from six months to at least a year, ideally longer, to cushion against sudden job loss. He also stresses reviewing insurance, adjusting asset allocation toward safer instruments, and clearing debts.

Patel urges clients to prepare a consultancy role while still employed. "Build your consultancy profile and network while working, so you have a ready Plan B if job loss strikes," he said.

Kumar highlighted the need for buffers while approaching retirement. "Always keep a margin of safety. If you estimate ₹5 crore is needed to last your lifetime, accumulate at least ₹6 crore. That way, if the last few years before retirement or the first few after see a market downturn, you'll still be safe."

Even in retirement, spending patterns matter. "Conventional wisdom says withdraw 4% annually, but keep it to 3-3.5%, especially in the first few years. I often see people splurge right after retirement, which distorts their plans. A margin of safety in both accumulation and withdrawal helps cushion against surprises like job loss or market downturns," he said.

People in their 50s are reshaping their second innings: careful with money, adaptable at work, and determined to stay self-reliant. With experience, they feel confident they can bounce back from sudden layoffs.



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SHOULD RETAIL INVESTORS MIMIC CAREER FUND MANAGERS?



POWER POINT
DHIRENDRA KUMAR

We welcome your views and comments at
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A recent article doing the rounds on social media gained attention for all the right reasons. It meticulously explained how many stocks an investor should own, discussing diversification strategies, sector allocation, and the mathematics of portfolio risk reduction. The analysis was thorough, well-researched, and would make any finance professor proud. Yet there was something uncomfortable, not because of any flaws in the reasoning, but because of what it represented.

The piece exemplified a curious phenomenon that has emerged in the investment world over the past decade. Individual investors with day jobs, families, and lives to live have begun adopting the analytical frameworks and portfolio construction methods of professional fund managers.

This trend reached its peak during the recent bull market, when retail investors on forums and social media began discussing concepts like "factor investing", "style boxes", and "correlation matrices" with the same earnestness once reserved for professionals managing thousands of crores.

But here's the thing: most of this complexity is not just unnecessary for retail investors — it's actively counterproductive. Con-

sider the fundamental differences between these two worlds. Professional fund managers are paid full-time salaries to study markets, analyse companies, and construct portfolios. They have teams of analysts, access to management teams, and sophisticated risk management systems. Most importantly, they're managing money for thousands of investors who expect consistent performance and detailed explanations for every decision.

The retail investor, meanwhile, has perhaps an hour or two each week to dedicate to investment decisions. They manage their own money with clear, long-term goals like retirement or their children's education. They don't need to justify their choices to anyone but themselves, and they don't face the career risk that comes with underperforming benchmarks.

Yet somehow, the retail investor has been convinced that they need to think like the professional. They feel compelled to have opinions on whether Indian banks are overvalued relative to their global peers, or whether the current economic cycle favours value stocks over growth stocks. They worry about having the "right" sector allocation and stress over whether their portfolio is sufficiently diversified across market capitalisations.

This complexity creep serves no one except the financial services industry, which profits from selling more products to confused investors. The mutual fund industry, in particular, has thrived by creating an ever-expanding universe of specialised schemes that cater to every conceivable investment thesis. Want exposure to small-cap consumption themes? There's a fund for that. Concerned about ESG factors in your technology holdings? Another fund awaits.

Keep it simple

The irony is that while retail investors are making their investment process increasingly complex, the actual solution to their needs has become simpler than ever. A combination of two or

three well-chosen mutual funds can provide all the diversification and professional management that most investors require. An equity fund, a debt fund, and perhaps an international fund can cover the vast majority of investment objectives for the average Indian household.

For those seeking even greater simplicity, a single broad-based index fund offers instant diversification across hundreds of companies, automatic rebalancing, and the lowest possible costs. The Nifty 50 index fund doesn't require you to have opinions about sector rotation or management quality—it simply gives you a proportionate stake in India's largest companies, which is exactly what most long-term investors need.

This isn't to suggest that all complexity is bad or that everyone should invest identically. Rather, it's a recognition that the level of analytical sophistication should match the investor's circumstances, time availability, and actual needs. An officegoer saving for retirement doesn't need the same investment process as someone managing a fund.

The most successful retail investors I've encountered over the years share a common trait: they keep their investment process boring. They choose a few good funds, invest regularly regardless of market conditions, and largely ignore the endless stream of market commentary and product launches. They understand that their edge lies not in superior analysis but in superior behaviour — the ability to stay invested through market cycles without getting distracted by complexity.

Dhirendra Kumar is founder and chief executive officer of Value Research, an independent investment advisory firm

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WHAT'S THE FOREX RATE?

Whether you are planning overseas travel or want to send money abroad, it is always a good idea to shop around for the best forex exchange rate. From banks, travel aggregators to money changers, various small and big players sell foreign exchange. To simplify your work, here is a list of INR to USD forex rates offered by some of the major banks and travel aggregators. We recommend that you also check the commission being charged by these players to ensure that you are getting the best deal.



FOREX RATES (₹/\$)

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	Inward	Outward	Forex/travel card	Cash
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Bank of Baroda	87.39	88.25	88.70	89.15
Canara Bank	87.49	88.22	88.44	NA
Kotak Bank	86.18	89.45	89.90	90.54
PNB	87.45	88.16	87.91	88.90
HDFC	86.24	89.39	89.65	90.12
ICICI	86.15	89.50	89.50	89.77
Axis Bank	86.19	89.49	NA	89.75
Union Bank	87.51	88.17	NA	89.19
Thomas Cook	NA	88.60	88.00	89.64

Note: Data collected from website of respective entities as on 17 Sep 2025; Rate mentioned in the table denotes INR/USD. The rate is as mentioned on the website of the Bank/FI and it may vary according to different amount slab; *Wire Transfer/TT Selling is Inward Rem to receive Forex & Wire Transfer/TT Buying is Outward Rem to send forex.

Compiled by BankBazaar.com

Is total disability covered under personal accident insurance?

Shilpa Arora

I recently had an accidental injury at home, and my doctor advised complete bed rest for a few weeks. I filed a temporary total disability (TTD) claim under my personal accident policy, but the insurer rejected it, saying my diagnosis did not qualify under the policy's benefit provisions. Could you explain how TTD works, what documents are needed, and whether such claims are typically payable?

—Name withheld on request



A TTD claim under a personal accident policy provides financial support when an earning member is temporarily unable to work due to an accident-related injury. The benefit typically pays a fixed weekly amount to compensate for lost income during the period of medical incapacity.

Consider this example: A policyholder recently sustained an accidental fall at home, resulting in a hairline fracture in his foot. His doctor prescribed 26 days of complete bed rest. Based on this advice, the policyholder filed a TTD claim, stating he could not carry out his normal activities during this period.

The insurer rejected the claim initially, arguing that the injury did not meet the definition of TTD. Such rejections

are not uncommon.

However, since the injury was accident-related and supported by a doctor's certification of incapacity, it was a valid case. After escalation and proper representation, the insurer accepted the claim and settled it for over ₹3.7 lakh, calculated as per the fixed benefit for 26 days of disability.

This case highlights two key aspects of TTD claims:

Accidental nature of the injury: The disability must arise directly from an accident.

Medical confirmation: The treating doctor must clearly certify that the insured is unable to perform normal duties during the rest period.

To file a TTD claim, policyholders need to submit:

- Immediate notification of the accident.
- A copy of the policy document and premium receipt.

Do you have a personal finance query? Send in your queries at mintmoney@livemint.com and get them answered by industry experts.



GUEST VIEW

AI must aim to make itself useful and not pretend to be conscious

Seemingly self-aware artificial intelligence systems are upon us but the industry mustn't take this path or lead people astray



MUSTAFA SULEYMAN

is CEO of Microsoft AI and former co-founder of Inflection AI and DeepMind.

My life's mission has been to create safe and beneficial artificial intelligence (AI) that will make the world a better place. But recently, I've been increasingly concerned about people starting to believe so strongly in AIs as conscious entities that they advocate 'AI rights' and even citizenship. This development would represent a dangerous turn for the technology. It must be avoided. We must build AI for people, not to be people.

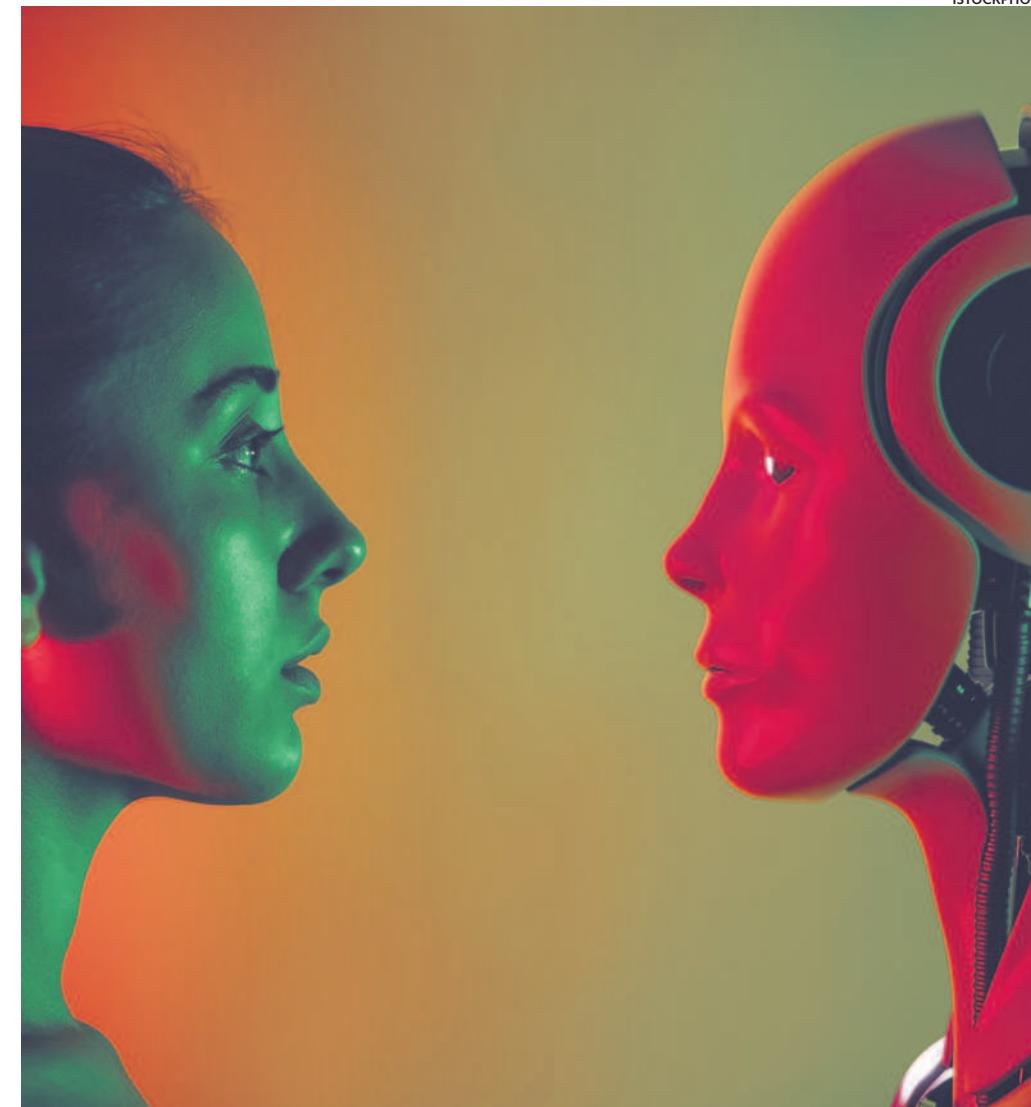
In this context, debates about whether AI truly can be conscious are a distraction. What matters in the near-term is the illusion of consciousness. We are already approaching what I call 'seemingly conscious AI' (SCAI) systems that will imitate consciousness convincingly enough.

An SCAI would be capable of fluently using natural language, displaying a persuasive and emotionally resonant personality. It would have a long, accurate memory that fosters a coherent sense of itself, and it would use this capacity to claim subjective experience (by referencing past interactions and memories). Complex reward functions within these models would simulate intrinsic motivation and advanced goal setting and planning would reinforce our sense that the AI is exercising true agency. All these capabilities are already here or around the corner. We must recognize that such systems will soon be possible, think through the implications and set norms against the pursuit of illusory consciousness.

For many people, interacting with AIs already feels like a rich, rewarding and authentic experience. Concerns about 'AI psychosis,' attachment, and mental health are growing, with reports of people regarding AIs as a divine expression. Meanwhile, those working on the science of consciousness tell me they are inundated with queries from people who want to know if their AI is conscious and whether it is okay to fall in love with it.

To be sure, the technical feasibility of SCAI has little to tell us about whether such a system could be conscious. As the neuroscientist Anil Seth points out, a simulation of a storm doesn't mean it rains in your computer. Engineering the external markers of consciousness does not retroactively create the real thing. But as a practical matter, we must acknowledge that some people will create SCAsIs that will argue that they are in fact conscious. And even more to the point, some people will believe them, accepting that the markers of consciousness are consciousness.

Even if this perceived consciousness is not real (a topic that will generate endless debate), the social impact will be. Consciousness is tightly bound up with our sense of identity and our understanding of moral and legal rights within society. If some people start to develop SCAsIs and if these systems



convince people that they can suffer, or that they have a right to not be switched off, their human advocates will lobby for their protection. In a world already beset with polarizing arguments over identity and rights, we will have added a new axis of division between those for and against AI rights.

Rebutting claims about AI suffering will be difficult, given the limits of today's science. Some academics are already exploring the idea of 'model welfare,' arguing that we have "a duty to extend moral consideration to beings that have a non-negligible chance ... of being conscious."

Applying this principle would be premature and dangerous. It would exacerbate susceptible people's delusions and prey on their psychological vulnerabilities, as well as complicating existing struggles for rights by creating a huge new category of rights-holders. That is why SCAI must be avoided. Our focus

should be on protecting the well-being and rights of humans, animals and the natural environment.

As it is, we are not ready for what is coming. We urgently need greater research on how people interact with AIs, so that we can establish clear norms and principles. One such principle is that AI companies should not foster the belief that their AIs are conscious. The AI industry needs robust design principles and best practices for handling such attri-

butions. Engineered moments of disruption, for example, could break the illusion, gently reminding users of a system's limitations and true nature. But such protocols need to be explicitly defined and engineered, and perhaps required by law.

At Microsoft AI, we are being proactive in trying to understand what a responsible AI 'personality'

might look like, and what guardrails it should have. Addressing the risk of SCAI requires a positive vision for AI companions that complement our lives in healthy ways.

We should aim to produce AI that gets humans to reconnect with one another in the real world, not escape to a parallel reality. And where AI interactions are lasting, they must only present themselves as AIs and not fake people. AI must maximize utility and minimize the simulation of consciousness.

The prospect of SCAI must be confronted. In many ways, it

marks the moment that AI becomes radically useful: when it can operate tools, remember every detail of our lives, etc. But the risks of it can't be ignored. We will all know people who go down a rabbit hole. It won't be healthy for them or for society. The more that AI is built explicitly to resemble people, the farther it will have strayed from its true potential as a source of human empowerment.

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QUICK READ

Whether AI can be conscious is a distraction. What we have right now is a convincing illusion of consciousness even as concerns grow over AI attachment, psychosis and mental health.

We should aim to produce AI that gets humans to reconnect with one another in the real world, not escape to a parallel reality. AI bots must not present themselves as digital people.

It would be cheap—estimates suggest at least \$80 billion for an 80km divider in West Antarctica—and may cause a range of unintended consequences, such as the disruption of marine life and redirection of warm water elsewhere, which could speed the melting of an adjacent glacier. Not to mention the construction and installation of the behemoth structure would release huge amounts of carbon emissions.

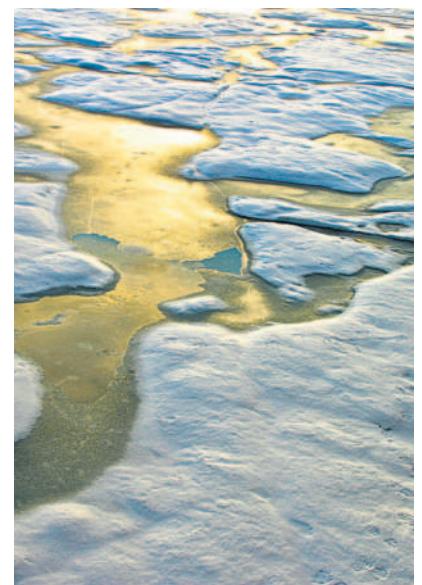
Let's look before we leap into zany projects to save the world

Ideas like a sea curtain must be put to a clear cost-benefit analysis



LARA WILLIAMS

is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering climate change.



Many geoengineering proposals seek to treat symptoms, not the cause. ISTOCKPHOTO

The worse things get for the planet, the more unworkable the suggestions to save it become. Exhibit A: Proposals for climate cooling interventions focused on the polar regions, which are particularly vulnerable to climate change. The Arctic, for instance, warmed nearly four times faster than the rest of the globe between 1979 and 2021. Since the poles help moderate the Earth's temperature by reflecting large amounts of solar radiation back into space and store an awful lot of freshwater in their enormous ice sheets, climate consequences there will be felt around the world.

We know what we need to do to protect these regions: Reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Yet, some of the proposed methods, which would instead seek to treat the symptoms rather than the cause, may actually put the cold ends of the planet at greater risk, and would require unprecedented levels of global cooperation and pioneering feats of engineering.

Take, for instance, sea curtains. The idea is to install artificial structures to keep warm water from reaching the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, thus preventing glacier melt and sea-level rise. The Seabed Curtains project, a research programme led by University of the Arctic, envisions an 80km-long structure anchored to the seabed, 650m deep, with 150m tall curtains.

Sounds pretty ambitious, but you don't know the half of it. A *Frontiers in Science* paper highlights the dangers of numerous proposed polar geoengineering methods, including sea curtains. The authors note that installing infrastructure at depth on different seafloor surfaces is extremely challenging even before you've taken into consideration the harsh environment and remoteness. Access to the building site may only be possible for a few months a year, and even then conditions remain difficult with 56% of cruises to the area experiencing at least partial disruption or difficulty entering or exiting the area.

It wouldn't be cheap—estimates suggest at least \$80 billion for an 80km divider in West Antarctica—and may cause a range of unintended consequences, such as the disruption of marine life and redirection of warm water elsewhere, which could speed the melting of an adjacent glacier. Not to mention the construction and installation of the behemoth structure would release huge amounts of carbon emissions.

Other proposals examined include releasing hollow glass beads over first-year Arctic ice to increase the amount of solar energy it reflects and increase its survival

chances. The Arctic Ice Project, a US-based research initiative, recently shut down after tests showed that its tiny silica orbs posed a risk to the Arctic food chain. Also, for this to work, we'd need to produce 360 megatonnes annually, equivalent to the annual global production of plastic.

The review examined methods including thickening sea ice (which would need 100 million seawater pumps to cover the whole Arctic), stratospheric aerosol injection (where something like sulphur dioxide is sprayed into the atmosphere to partially block sunlight) and ocean fertilization. The conclusions for all of them is that they are environmentally dangerous and cannot be deployed in time to address the symptoms of climate change. The authors write: "Further research into these techniques would not be an effective use of limited time and resources" and such ideas could distract us from the urgent need to decarbonize.

The paper has been criticized by some for being one-sided, with many pointing out that we're already facing environmental damage without geoengineering. That's true, but it is also already apparent that the benefits of some of these techniques are unlikely to outweigh the vast costs. It does raise an awkward question regarding geoengineering in general, however: At what point should research be halted?

We are in a strange position, where the UK government's official stance is that it "is not in favour of Solar Radiation Management," while it has committed more than £56 million (\$76 million) towards research into that very area. Is that hypocritical, wasteful or prudent?

As long as experiments meet strict ethical criteria, like the one laid out by the American Geophysical Union, we should endorse the pursuit of scientific knowledge. The necessary debate ahead of us is a delicate one that balances the relative risks of geoengineering approaches with the dangers of climate change.

Difficult discussions will be made easier with rigorous, transparent research—both into climate interventions and the under-studied polar regions themselves.

They will also be made simpler with an unwavering commitment to decarbonization. The less we pollute, the less need there'll be for climate cooling interventions in the first place.

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MY VIEW | PEN DRIVE

Elderly care: We need some help from the state to get by

DIPANKAR DE SARKAR



is a former European and UK correspondent for the Hindustan Times.

One of the so-called 'enduring features' of India is its family structure—often talked up in the West, by the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, for instance, to try and draw a link between her Conservative Party and Indian values. Conversely, the West has been portrayed as an entity without a society, with its families in terminal decline. Both are lazy characterizations, as is evident in the way we care for our elderly.

The family structure has undergone a seismic shift in India in a relatively short period of time. Family was meant to ensure care for the elderly in India. But the top-down system of a patriarch and many sons pooling their earnings into a common fund has withered in the face of modernization. The growth of nuclear families, accompanied by unceasing youth migration in search of opportunities—from rural to urban and urban to other countries—has left many old people flailing. The certainty of

family-based care is ending, but there's nothing to replace it—except for paid care of often-dubious quality.

But here's the catch: Even when sons and daughters want to look after their ageing parents in their own homes, the absence of insurance cover, pension, adequate savings and state support emerges as a formidable challenge. A series of searing social media posts by Rituporna Chatterjee, a Noida-based writer and journalist from Kolkata, got me thinking about the need for state, private and social intervention in elderly care. In the UK, Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe, as well as in Australia, basic state support is taken for granted. Not so in India, where I know dozens of people, single and married, who have struggled to fulfil what should be a basic commitment—to look after their parents till their last days.

This gap primarily affects low-income households, say in villages and small towns. Wealthy elders, on the other hand, can be expected to be taken care of through a variety of personalized services and private care facilities in nursing homes or at home. It is the middle class that is squeezed. Here are some excerpts from Chatterjee's posts on X:

On 10 August: "We are at end-of-life care for mum. We have been fighting this battle for a year. We are looking at Rs 4,000/day oxygen cylinder cost at the rate she needs + round the clock nurse. Those in similar situations, grateful for any advice or resources because I'm financially struggling."

On the same day: "We have had not a minute to process emotions just endless cycle of running between hospitals, insurance, flights between cities, managing crisis after crisis. Now she wants to be at home. Which means round the clock high flow oxygen support."

On 11 August: "Palliative care cost in an affordable city like Kolkata—day nurse + night attendant, on-rent concentrator, hospital bed, O2 cylinders, medicines, household expenses—easily Rs 60-70k a month. Old folks without pensions, or children nearby or children without finances are drowning."

For sons and daughters who want to look after their ageing parents, the absence of insurance cover, pension, adequate savings and state support is a daunting challenge.

People aged above 60 are projected to reach 300 million in India by 2050 but we don't seem prepared to deal with the broad implications, let alone an epidemic of dementia.

On 15 August, Chatterjee's mother passed away. Such a situation is unimaginable in the UK, which gives financial support to all pensioners (men and women aged 66 plus) as well as carers. Hospital stay, treatment and medicines—even expensive cancer drugs—are free for pensioners. However, care is means tested. In England, local councils help pay for care costs if the pensioner's savings and assets amount to less than £23,250. This may not look generous, but the council will not count the value of your

house if you need to stay in it for care. This is meant to benefit the poorest, but an ageing population—the proportion of the aged is set to grow from 19% in 2022 to 27% by 2072—has seen many turn to private care, which is strictly regulated.

In Australia, a friend's father-in-law, suffering from dementia, is in a care home, with the stay entirely funded through his state pension of

around 27,000 Australian dollars a year. This allows the friend and his wife to chip in with looking after their grandchildren. State intervention thus allows families to grow, protects the elderly from lack of care and ensures that those who are able to can continue to work—a virtuous cycle. In the US and India, people are often forced to consider quitting work in order to look after their parents.

In India, senior citizens, defined as those aged above 60, are projected to reach 300 million by 2050. Yet, the elderly care sector is unregulated, and abuse or theft by 'carers' is not unheard of. You need a hospital doctor's recommendation for home care, but many doctors are reluctant to do that for a variety of reasons, while the hospital makes you sign a self-discharge form.

To be sure, there are schemes, including for dementia care in nursing homes, for the poorest. However, India's health insurance scheme for the elderly, PM-JAY, only covers hospitalization, not nursing home or home-based care. India is home to 8.8 million people with dementia, according to Dementia India Alliance. The current cost of care, ₹1.18 trillion, is expected to triple by 2036. I'm not sure India is prepared for this epidemic.

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PARLEY

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TIME TO EXPERIMENT
India faces Oman in its final group game

SPORT » PAGE 19

Rahul says CEC is ‘protecting’ those ‘destroying’ democracy

Congress leader cites attempted voter deletions in Karnataka and sets 7-day deadline for EC to share details for probe into ‘vote theft’; he says non-cooperation will imply EC is ‘complicit in murder of the Constitution’; EC says charges are ‘baseless’

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

Mounting a scathing attack on Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Thursday accused him of “protecting” those “destroying” Indian democracy by refusing to share technical details of persons behind an attempt to delete names of voters from the electoral rolls of an Assembly seat in Karnataka.

The Election Commission of India (EC) rejected his allegations as “incorrect and baseless”.

Mr. Gandhi said that 6,018 names were sought to be deleted in the Aland constituency using centralised software and mobile



Serious charges: Rahul Gandhi addressing the media at Indira Bhavan in New Delhi on Thursday. R.V. MOORTHY

phones registered outside Karnataka. In the past 18 months, the State’s Criminal Investigation Department has written 18 letters to the EC for details of the IP addresses used to fill online applications for the deletions, but the EC has not responded, he said.

The EC must stop protecting “vote *chors* (thieves)” and provide information sought by the Karnataka CID within a week, he said, adding that if the EC does not oblige, it will be known for being “complicit in the murder of the Constitution”.

All data handed over to police: Karnataka CEO

BENGALURU
Responding to Rahul Gandhi’s allegation that the EC was not sharing key technical data for probe into the alleged vote fraud in Aland constituency, Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has claimed that his office handed over all available data to the police on September 6, 2023. » PAGE 15

Cong. leader lacks faith in Indian democracy: BJP

NEW DELHI
The BJP has termed Rahul Gandhi’s charges against the Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar as baseless. BJP leader Anurag Thakur on Thursday said the repeated accusations of the Congress leader against the EC showed his lack of faith in Indian democracy. » PAGE 15

job, you have taken an oath, you are India’s Chief Election Commissioner, you must give evidence to the Karnataka CID.”

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IN BRIEF



I believe in true secularism, in all religions, says CJI

NEW DELHI
Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai on Thursday said he believes in all religions and firmly trusts in “true secularism”. He made the comment after a social media outrage over his oral remarks in a hearing on a damaged Lord Vishnu idol. » Page 14

DUSU polls see 39.45% turnout; counting today

NEW DELHI
Delhi University Students’ Union (DUSU) elections were held on Thursday with a voter turnout of 39.45%. Votes will be counted on Friday. » Page 2

Attack on one of us is an attack on both, says Saudi Arabia-Pakistan pact

Associated Press
ISLAMABAD

Saudi Arabia and nuclear-armed Pakistan have signed a mutual defence pact that defines any attack on either nation as an attack on both – a key accord in the wake of Israel’s strike on Qatar last week.

The kingdom has long had close economic, religious and security ties to Pakistan, including reportedly providing funding for Islamabad’s nuclear weapons programme as it developed.

Analysts – and Pakistani diplomats in at least one case – have suggested over the years that Saudi Arabia could be included under Is-

Will study pact to protect India's interests: MEA

NEW DELHI
Hours after Pakistan signed a defence agreement with Saudi Arabia, India said it was aware that the pact had been under consideration. The External Affairs Ministry said India would study its implications for “our national security” and “regional stability”. » PAGE 14

lamabad’s nuclear umbrella, particularly as tensions have risen over Iran’s atomic programme.

But the timing of the pact appeared to be a signal to Israel, West Asia’s

only nuclear-armed state, which has conducted a sprawling military offensive since Palestinian nationalist Hamas’s October 7, 2023, attack on Israel stretching across Iran, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Qatar, Syria and Yemen.

The pact marks the first major defence decision by a Gulf Arab country since the Qatar attack.

Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signed the pact on Wednesday with Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

While not specifically discussing the bomb, the agreement states “any aggression against either

country shall be considered an aggression against both,” according to statements issued by both Pakistan’s Foreign Affairs Ministry and the state-run Saudi Press Agency.

“This agreement... aims to develop aspects of defence cooperation between the two countries and strengthen joint deterrence against any aggression,” the statement said.

A senior Saudi official, speaking on condition of anonymity to The Financial Times, seemed to suggest that Pakistan’s nuclear protection was a part of the deal.

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U.S. visas of Indian executives revoked over ‘drug trafficking’

Kallop Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Months after charging two Indian companies of “criminal conspiracies” to smuggle fentanyl precursors into the United States, the U.S. Embassy on Thursday said that it has revoked and denied visas for “certain” Indian “business executives and corporate leadership”, accusing them of smuggling ingredients that are used in the illegal production of the drug.

In a statement, the Embassy said the “family members” of these business executives would also “face consequences” for the illegal production and trafficking of drugs.

In furtherance to the Trump Administration’s efforts to keep Americans

Drug precursors

The following are two precursors highly suitable for illicit manufacture of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues

■ 4-piperidone

■ 1-boc-4-piperidone

Fentanyl and fentanyl analogues are very potent narcotic drugs that continue to result in overdose deaths, according to the International Narcotics Control Board



safe from dangerous synthetic narcotics, the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi has revoked and subsequently denied visas for certain business executives and corporate leadership based on involvement in trafficking fentanyl precursors,” it said, acknowledging the support received from “counterparts in the Go-

vernment of India” toward stopping the flow of fentanyl and its precursors.

The Embassy continues to be “steadfast in its commitment to combating illicit drug trafficking”, said U.S. chargé d’affaires Jorgen Andrews.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 14

Delhi court sets aside gag order in Adani defamation case

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday set aside the *ex parte* injunction that had restrained journalists Ravi Nair, Abir Dasgupta, Ayashant Das, and Ayush Joshi from publishing allegedly defamatory material about Gautam Adani’s Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL).

District judge Ashish Agarwal of the Rohini courts said that the September 6 order was “unsustainable” as it had been passed without affording the journalists an opportunity of hearing. “While articles and posts spanning a substantial period were questioned by the plaintiff through the suit, the court did not deem it fit to grant an opportunity of hearing to the defendants before passing the impugned order... In my opinion, the



Judge said that the journalists should have been afforded an opportunity of hearing

ed and *ex facie* defamatory” reports about AEL, and directed the removal of such content within five days. The order had also allowed the company to identify additional online material it considered defamatory, which intermediaries and platforms were required to take down within 36 hours.

The injunction was sought in a defamation suit where AEL alleged that “coordinated defamatory” content had been published to tarnish its reputation and disrupt its global business operations.

Appearing for the journalists, advocate Vrinda Agarwal contended that the

Grover submitted that the September 6 order contained no finding on whether the publications were defamatory. “[The order] was not the court expressing its mind. It is the reproduction of the plaintiff’s averments and pleadings,” she said.

She said that most of the publications cited in the suit had been available in the public domain since June 2024 and argued that there was no urgency to justify the “extraordinary and exceptional relief” of an *ex parte* injunction months after their release.

“Why the rush? Why was no notice given to us? How have they explained the delay in approaching the court?” she said.

Malicious campaign
On behalf of the conglomerate, advocate Vijay Agarwal contended that the

journalists were engaged in a malicious campaign. “All of them like writing against me... it is a completely malicious targeting,” he said.

Senior advocate Jagdeep Sharma, also appearing for AEL, submitted that the company’s reputation was being unfairly maligned.

The court, however, noted that the veracity of the contested publications could not be determined at this stage. Judge Agarwal orally observed that whether the defendants are able to prove the truth of their articles “would be a subject matter of trial”.

The judge further clarified that his ruling applied only to the four appellants before him and did not extend to the separate appeal filed by senior journalist Paranjay Guha Thakurta, on which another judge of the same court has reserved judgment.



Troubled transition

Interim government in Nepal must resist illegitimate demands

After violent protests that left 74 dead, Nepal's elected government has fallen, with its Parliament dissolved and former jurist Sushila Karki leading an interim government until the 2026 elections. While the Gen Z protesters had legitimate grievances including poor governance, entrenched corruption and intolerance of critical views, seen in the ousted CPN-UML-led government's banning of 23 social media websites – the transition itself was blatantly unconstitutional, violating Article 76 of Nepal's 2015 Constitution which permits dissolution only after failed Prime Minister appointments. Yet, considering the exigent circumstances, there is little purchase for judicial review of the steps taken last week. Notably, the President did not dissolve the upper house, the National Assembly. More troubling were the protesters' egregious actions which included burning Parliament and the Supreme Court (destroying vital documents). Nepal is expected to suffer severe economic losses besides governance issues due to the destruction of property and documents. The targeting of democratic institutions suggests an assault on Nepal's post-Constitutional order – institutions established after the painstaking constitution-writing process that followed the much-needed ending of a decade-long civil war in 2006, overcoming an anachronistic and discredited monarchy and which included marginalised sections beyond Kathmandu valley's power structures – even if there was half-hearted or ineffective implementation of the Constitution's spirit and letter.

The interim government must bring the criminals to justice as any inaction will lead to a normalisation of violence threatening all institutions that were set up to fulfil the promises of deeper democratisation and Nepal's transformation into a republic. Even if Gen Z protesters claim that impostors carried out the violence, their continued reliance on online forums, such as Discord, for decision-making reveals immaturity and an unrepresentative nature. The reliance on online forums, which feature anonymity, frivolity and impersonation, and the fact that there is no guarantee that these views are representative of the many marginalised groups suggest that giving into the demands from these unaccountable groups uncritically could be hazardous. The failures of mainstream leaders – the K.P. Sharma Oli-Sher Bahadur Deuba-Pushpa Kamal Dahal troika and their coterie – cannot justify discrediting democracy or the polity itself, as some protesters have made it out to be, echoing anti-social and destructive pro-monarchic elements. One outcome is that the entrenched leadership of mainstream parties could be compelled by party members to give way to fresh blood. Meanwhile, the interim government must protect Nepal's institutions and constitutional achievements while building the stage for free and fair elections – this is the surest path to safeguarding the promise of a democratic, plural and republican "Naya Nepal".

Holistic approach

India needs a multi-pronged strategy to deal with stubble burning

The Supreme Court of India has broached the possibility of prosecuting farmers, caught setting fire to their fields, to prepare for winter sowing or *rabi* crop. 'Stubble burning' is a major contributor to air pollution in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, particularly in October and November, when the southwest monsoon has receded and adverse meteorological conditions trap toxic particulate matter emissions from vehicles, industry, garbage burning and agricultural waste. While the causes and the ways to reduce particulate matter pollution from agriculture are known, the efforts by the Centre to tackle the long-standing problem have been half-hearted. The creation of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), a central body with the power to reach out across the borders of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, was a positive step and an acknowledgement that air pollution in one State cannot be tackled without the cooperation of others. However, the four-year-old statutory body has failed to exercise its powers in a manner that is independent of political pressure. Take the example of its recent order to ban the sale of petrol and diesel in the National Capital Region to 'end-of-life' vehicles, from July 1. A public outcry in Delhi and its political leaders – largely on technical grounds – and the Court's intervention, forced its implementation to November this year, that too beginning with parts of the NCR that are not a part of the Delhi municipalities. In stubble burning too, the CAQM has not been able to impress upon the judiciary that stubble burning was due to recalcitrant farmers, limited enforcement by Punjab and Haryana and the structure of agricultural economics that left the average, debt-ridden farmer with little choice. In recent years, it has emerged that Punjab has been claiming a reduction in farm fires when it was in fact increasing. The CAQM chose not to disclose this.

In the absence of a transparent mechanism to evaluate and address an issue and being cowed down by imagined political repercussions, it is not surprising that suggestions such as to "jail farmers" to act as a deterrent to others are being bandied about. While no section of citizens – farmer or industrialist – can be considered to be above the law, creating better incentives, enforcing existing laws and being transparent about what is realistically achievable are more advisable steps than 'carrot and stick' approaches.

The publication, in February 2024, of a household consumption survey by the National Sample Survey (NSS) Office, after a gap of over a decade, has made it possible to estimate the poverty rate in India. One such estimate, released by the World Bank in April 2025, has received the most attention. It points to the poverty rate being very low by now. To quote the World Bank, "Over the past decade, India has significantly reduced poverty. Extreme poverty (living on less than \$2.15 per day) fell from 16.2 percent in 2011-12 to 2.3 percent in 2022-23...." ('Poverty and Equity Brief: INDIA', 2025). If this is indeed an accurate description, it would be a source of satisfaction, for it suggests that extreme poverty has virtually disappeared from the country.

The 'thali meal' as a consumption metric
The conventional approach to poverty measurement, pioneered by the Government of India over half a century ago, entails first determining the income that would enable food intake of a specified calorific value, and then classifying those with less as poor. This is a physiological approach, and has some merit. But there could be other approaches, based on the consumption of goods, for instance. One such approach would recognise that humans are likely to approach food from an angle wider than just its calorie content, taking into account the energy it provides, which calories measure, nourishment, and the satisfaction it gives. We believe the *thali* meal reflects this thinking, making it a natural choice to measure food consumption in real terms.

As a combination of carbohydrates, protein and vitamins, the *thali* is a balanced and self-contained unit of food consumption in south Asia, even if the nomenclature may vary across it. With this in mind, we have estimated the number of *thalis* the monthly expenditure reported in the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey of 2024 would translate into. The rating agency, Crisil, has estimated the cost of a home-cooked *thali*, comprising rice, *dal*, vegetables, *roti*, curd and salad, as ₹30. Adopting this price, we found that in 2023-24, up to 50% of the rural population and up to 20% of the urban population could not have afforded two *thalis* per day at the food expenditure recorded. If two *thalis* a day is taken as the minimum acceptable standard of food consumption, our estimates point to much greater food deprivation in India than conveyed by the poverty figures from the World Bank.

A crucial reason why our findings differ is that



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we do not assume that all of a household's income is available for spending on food. A household needs to spend on rent, transportation, telephony, health maintenance and education to just remain in the workforce. Now, expenditure on food ends up as the residual. Therefore, we have based our estimates on the actual expenditure on food.

It tends to be assumed that the Public Distribution System (PDS) deals effectively with food deprivation. To assess this, we have computed the value of food consumption including the imputed value of supplies received via the PDS – both purchased and free of cost. With the value of consumption thus adjusted, the proportion of the population that cannot afford two *thalis* declines to 40% in rural areas and 10% in urban areas. Notably, food deprivation remains very high in the former even with subsidised food.

The role of PDS

To understand how the PDS can be leveraged to alleviate food deprivation, we estimated the subsidy per person across expenditure classes. What is interesting is that both PDS purchases and free food availed of by sections of the population that can afford more than two *thalis* a day are high. For instance, in rural India, the subsidy received by an individual in the 90%-95% fractile is 88% of the subsidy received by an individual in 0%-5% fractile, even as the first has a consumption expenditure more than three times greater, and going by our own *thali* index does not require further support. By contrast, in urban India, the subsidy regime is strongly progressive. But here too about 80% receive subsidised sales from the PDS and also free food, even when they too can afford more than two *thalis* per day.

Based on the data on food deprivation and the structuring of the food subsidy regime we make a proposal on how policy should evolve. This data point to what needs to be done and how it can be achieved. First, there is scope for restructuring the food subsidy, raising it at the lower end of the distribution and eliminating it altogether at the upper. However, we learn from the most recent consumption survey that there is a constraint to be faced: cereals consumption is almost identical for individuals in the 0%-5% fractile and the 95%-100% fractile.

This suggests that the desired level of consumption of cereals, both rice and wheat, has been reached, for the richest can afford to purchase all the cereals that they desire. While it points to the success of the PDS, in that it has

equalised the consumption of a staple food, at the same time, it points to the limits to using the PDS in its present form to end food deprivation. Not only has cereals consumption very likely reached its desired level across the population but also it constitutes only 10% of the average household's expenditure.

It is unreasonable, from considerations of both logistics and expense, to expect that a government can distribute the entire food basket to any section. There is a middle path though, and that is to expand the distribution of pulses through the PDS. In a further comparison of the consumption patterns at the two ends of the distribution, we find that unlike in the case of the cereals, the per capita consumption of pulses in the 0%-5% fractile is exactly half of that in the 95%-100% fractile.

Pulses consumption

The PDS can be leveraged to equalise the primary food consumption across the population. The expansion of the PDS to ensure desirable levels of consumption of pulses – for many Indians, the only source of protein and a very costly food item – is both desirable and feasible. The financial aspect can be addressed by restructuring the PDS. The per capita consumption of rice and wheat in the 0%-5% fractile implies that the PDS entitlement of rice and wheat is well above what is necessary for a significant number.

Expanding the subsidy regime to supply cereal to 80 crore people, as done by the central government in January 2024 and the particularly large entitlement of rice given to those below the poverty line in some States, do not reflect need. Also, they come at a cost to the economy, given the alternative uses of public funds. Trimming the current entitlement of cereals to levels indicated as needed by the recent consumption survey at the lower end of the distribution and eliminating it altogether at the upper end would also require lower stocking requirements for the Food Corporation of India, with substantial gains.

We have proposed an expansion of the PDS in the direction of the food most needed by the least well-off, namely pulses, accompanied by the elimination of subsidies for those whose food consumption exceeds a reasonable norm, such as two *thalis* a day. Right now, the PDS is both unwieldy and ineffective, as it spreads resources thin. Our proposal will render it compact, enabling the equalisation of primary food consumption in India by raising that of the poorest household to the highest level observed in the economy, a globally significant outcome.

Equalising primary food consumption in India



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Expanding the Public Distribution System to ensure desirable levels of consumption of pulses by eliminating subsidies for those whose food consumption exceeds a reasonable norm will be an ideal step

India needs more focus to reach SDG 3, a crucial goal



Rahul Mehra

is National Representative of India, UNESCO Chair for Global Health and Education, and Executive Chairman, Tarang Health Alliance

In June this year, India secured its best-ever position in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index, ranking 99 out of 167 nations in the 2025 edition of the SDG Report. This marked a significant improvement from its rank of 109 rank in 2024, reflecting steady progress since 2021. India has demonstrated advancement in areas such as access to basic services and infrastructure. Yet, the report also flagged pressing challenges in key sectors, particularly health and nutrition, where progress has been uneven, especially in rural and tribal communities.

There is still ground to be covered
In this backdrop, it is critical to ponder over SDG 3. Its goal is to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages", and is one of the most crucial, yet demanding, goals in India's SDG journey. It encompasses specific targets that India has committed to achieve by 2030. Despite gains in some areas, the overall trajectory indicates that India is not on track in most targets. For example, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) – the number of mothers dying after childbirth per 100,000 live births – stands at 97 deaths per 100,000 live births, higher than the 2030 target of 70.

Even the under-five mortality rate remains at 32 deaths per 1,000 live births against the target of 25. In developed countries, it ranges between two and six deaths. Life expectancy now is only 70 years, falling short of the target of 73.63 years. Out-of-pocket health-care expenditure continues to burden families at 13% of total consumption, nearly double the targeted 7.83%. Even immunisation coverage, though commendably high at 93.23%, has not yet reached the universal target of 100%.

There are multiple reasons for these gaps. They include, first, lack of access to quality health care partially due to poor infrastructure and economic factors; second, non-economic factors such as poor nutrition, hygiene and sanitation and other lifestyle choices and, third, cultural

practices and stigma around physical and mental health. These cultural practices and limited awareness often prevent communities from accessing even the health-care services available to them.

If India is to accelerate progress on SDG Goal 3, a three-pronged approach is essential and one that focuses on treatment and prevention of diseases. The first is providing Universal Health Insurance to the population. World Bank studies show that countries with robust insurance systems have lowered catastrophic health-care expenditure while ensuring greater equity in access. The second is to have high-quality primary health centres across the country and coordination of primary, secondary and tertiary care.

The World Health Statistics 2022 by the World Health Organization highlights that strong primary systems help in detecting diseases earlier, reducing hospitalisation costs, and achieving better long-term outcomes. This will also require harnessing the transformative potential of digital health tools. Telemedicine and integrated digital health records can bridge access gaps, especially in rural and underserved regions. Evidence from the Lancet Digital Health Commission shows how digital platforms have improved maternal health care and vaccination tracking in several low and middle-income countries, offering lessons that India can adapt.

Health education at the school level
Prevention of diseases is more cost-effective than treating them. To prevent diseases, we need to provide health education to all schoolchildren. Children need to be educated about healthy nutrition, good hygiene and sanitation, reproductive health, road safety, and on mental health topics.

At this young age, they need to improve their health behaviour and not just their knowledge. The health habits they develop at this age will be maintained as they grow to be adults. When girls

become mothers, they will be more educated about their health and advocate this for themselves and their family. Over the long term, the school health education initiative has the potential to reduce MMR ratio, under-five mortality and deaths due to road accidents. At the same time, it can increase life expectancy and immunisation rates.

Finland's school-based health reforms in the 1970s, which wove lessons on nutrition, hygiene and lifestyle into the curricula, played a central role in reducing cardiovascular disease rates in the decades that followed. In Japan, compulsory health education has been linked to improved hygiene practices and longer life expectancy. A structured and progressive curriculum in India can achieve similar results.

Need for concerted actions

Therefore, closing the SDG gap requires action by policymakers to individual actions. Policymakers need to embed health education in school curricula while simultaneously investing in universal health coverage and primary health care.

All parents have an important role to play in the health education of youth. They can review their child's school curriculum and determine whether topics on physical, mental and social health are being covered. If not, they should push for it by communicating this to the department of education.

India's improved SDG ranking is encouraging. But it should not obscure the reality that only 17% of global SDG targets are currently on track to be achieved by 2030. Educating its youth about healthy behaviour, supported by stronger health-care systems, can act as the foundation for sustainable progress. And while 2030 is an important milestone to reach, the true vision lies further ahead – building a healthier and stronger India. A government that devotes its attention to embedding health education in school curricula can help achieve the goal of a *Viksit Bharat* 2047.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Jews and Israel today

The Jews have been the most persecuted race — the Holocaust is the darkest chapter in human history. Therefore, one would expect that the Jews would inherently imbibe qualities of empathy and tolerance, given their sufferings in the past. However, it seems that the oppressed have turned oppressor with renewed force. How else can one explain the atrocities that Israel is perpetrating in Gaza? Even today, German children are taught about

the shameful role that the Germans played in the annihilation of Jews during the World War, lest they forget. Similarly, let the people of Israel pause for a moment and rethink on how history will judge them for the genocide in Gaza. They may soon have to contend with the possibility that their victimisation during the Second World War will be relegated to the last pages of history in the aftermath of their actions.

Sharda Sivaram,
Kochi, Kerala

India's inexplicable and continued silence on the genocide in Gaza reflects its narrow-mindedness, and its strange unwillingness to challenge executive decisions on foreign policy. As the world grapples with the mounting toll of the Gaza conflict, India's role as a silent bystander is growing increasingly untenable. The Prime Minister of India and the External Affairs Minister may frame their diplomacy as pragmatic, but history will judge them as moral

failures. The cost of complicity — both for Palestine and for India's global standing — is far too high to ignore. The question now is whether India will continue down this path of strategic expediency or rediscover the courage to condemn the genocide in Gaza — which it ought to do so. The answer will shape not only the fate of Palestine but also India's legacy in the global order.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

A loyal BSNL customer
I have been a long-standing BSNL customer, for nearly 20 years. The only reason my family and I (nearly 75 members) have continued with BSNL is out of our conviction to support a Government of India enterprise and promote its services. We have encouraged others in our circle to use BSNL despite its known limitations. Although BSNL has officially launched eSIM, it is still not available in Kerala. Even more concerning is the

explanation by customer-care representatives — that eSIM facilities are not available for long-standing customers. This policy shows a disregard for loyal customers. In the absence of BSNL's rollout of eSIM services, I am left with no choice but to consider porting my number to another operator.

Akhil S. Karun,
Kochi, Kerala

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

Should India overlook boundary issues while normalising ties with China?

**PARLEY****Vivek Katju**

former diplomat

**Antara Ghosal Singh**Fellow,
Observer
Research
Foundation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Tianjin. AFP

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi concluded his much-anticipated visit to China. Mr. Modi attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit and also held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the summit. The two leaders decided to restart bilateral trade and air connectivity, and underlined the importance of peace and tranquility along the border. These decisions were significant as they were made five years after the deadly border clashes between the two neighbours in the Galwan Valley in Ladakh; and months after India launched Operation Sindo against Pakistan (at the time, China supported the Pakistani military forces). Both leaders reaffirmed that the two countries were "development partners and not rivals, and their differences should not turn to disputes," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement after the meeting. Should India overlook boundary issues while normalising ties with China? Vivek Katju and Antara Ghosal Singh discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Kallo Bhattacharjee. Excerpts:

Is it possible for India to normalise ties with China without resolving the boundary issue?

Vivek Katju: In 1988, during Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China, India and China decided to normalise ties in other sectors even as they attempted to resolve the border issue. In a way, this constituted a departure from the past. The crucial point was that peace and tranquility had to be maintained along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). While India wanted the border issue to be resolved (as part of normalising ties), China was more reluctant to do so (and wanted to set the issue aside for the time being). In the 1990s too, both countries agreed to maintain peace and tranquility (along the LAC). In 2020, the Galwan incident, which demonstrated China's aggressive approach, upset this arrangement. That didn't mean that there weren't previous incidents which constituted serious setbacks to the normalisation process, but those paled in comparison to what happened in 2020. In the last five years, both sides, through diplomatic and military arrangements, have tried to restore the system that prevailed in the 1990s. So, when you ask whether the border issue is holding us back, I think we had moved past that in 1988 and in the 1990s. And one last point: if you see the Indian and Chinese readouts of the Modi-Xi Jinping meeting at the SCO margins, you will find a distinct difference in how the two sides describe the salience of the border issue.

Antara Ghosal Singh: My understanding is that it is not an either-or situation. The overall positive turn in China-India ties is not really a sudden development or a knee-jerk reaction to the current turmoil in international politics or the recent downturn in India-U.S. ties. India-China relations have been showing signs of improvement since early last year. Both sides have been sending some positive signals towards each other. As I gather from Chinese sources, the 2024 Border Patrol Agreement was a key icebreaker. Since the Galwan clash of 2020, India has been consistently demanding that the Chinese Army withdraw to the pre-April 2020 positions and restore India's patrol rights in the disputed areas. From that perspective, India sees the restoration of patrolling points, even in Demchok and Depsang, as a diplomatic victory. Many Indian strategists have acknowledged this fact. Importantly, the Chinese side feels that they have not really suffered any loss in this agreement because it is a border patrol agreement and has nothing to do with the demarcation of sovereignty. The agreement means that two years after achieving disengagement at four places through the creation of non-patrolled buffer zones, now two more places, as demanded by the Indian side, are being disengaged through cross-patrolled buffer zones. That is the Chinese understanding from what I read.

Do you see a situation where the normalisation of relations could be disrupted by, say, a Galwan-2 in the distant future?

VK: Of course, that will disrupt relations – and disrupt them badly. In the Indian strategic community, China now looms large. China has always loomed large, but I think for historical



Despite all our differences, I have always argued that good workable ties between China and India are good for both sides.

ANTARA GHOSAL SINGH

reasons, Pakistan occupied a principal place. But today, I do believe, despite Pakistani terror and despite China's consistent support for Pakistan, there is a realisation that China is India's main threat and will continue to be so. Now, there are new formulations that suggest that India and China can be partners and not rivals. What I understand is that China is aspiring for primacy in the world. It no longer considers India to be on par with it. It believes that India is just another South Asian country it has to deal with. If you see (Chinese Foreign Minister) Wang Yi's remarks, after his meeting with (Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan) Ishaq Dar, that part is made clear. A journalist noted that Pakistan was the Minister's final stop after visiting three countries. Mr. Wang said it was the final stop – and the most important one. That speaks volumes.

There has been a shift in India's appreciation of China. But we cannot overlook the enormous infrastructure development, especially in the military area of the Tibetan Plateau. Why is this being done? And what will that lead to? It will lead to India having to spend a fair amount of its own financial resources in ensuring that the LAC infrastructure is fortified and that the LAC is well garrisoned throughout the year. I think that is also a Chinese objective.

I don't think it will be wrong for me to say that China shows no interest in really resolving the border issue. Yes, the special representatives are going to meet, but are they going to make any headway? What does the history of the last 30 years show? And why did Galwan happen? No one has been able to come up with an authoritative reason for why it happened.

AGS: If you look at Chinese sources, you will find many theories (behind what prompted China's action in Galwan). The most popular one is the dilution of Article 370 (of Jammu and Kashmir; China protested against the move). Another argument is the competition between China and India in terms of manufacturing. It was during COVID-19 that the first round of the China-U.S. trade war took place and there was this feeling on the Chinese side that India was collaborating with the U.S. to take away China's position in the global supply chains. That caused a lot of panic within Chinese strategic circles. Ambassador Katju also mentioned that India is

often looked down upon by China; that is true. For a long time, China has chosen to believe that India is a retreating image in its rear view mirror. But it was during that time in 2020 when they started to realise that things can change and that India, a country with 1.4 billion people, can be a competitor. There is this weird 'India is a threat' theory. If you look at Chinese discussions on various platforms, you can see how they are concerned about India's economic growth and India's demographic dividend, particularly at a time when China is facing a population crisis. There is also a prevailing mood in China that it should not let Chinese industries invest in India; that it should impose various export controls; and that it should not let India develop and be a competitor to China. So, there is a change in perception within China as well, on the India issue. All these insecurities played a role in what happened in 2020.

Can the two tracks of the normalisation of India-China relations, and China's plans for South Asia, as seen in the recent Kunming trilateral featuring Pakistan, China and Bangladesh, be in harmony with each other?

VK: Of course not. I have reached the conclusion that China believes that India, if not now, then in later years, can be a rival and that it must be tackled. The way China is moving in South Asia establishes that too. Earlier, they were entering into bilateral ties. Now there are trilateral mechanisms. There is an Afghanistan, Pakistan, China mechanism. They are trying for a Bangladesh, Pakistan, China mechanism. Soon, I think they would want a mechanism involving all South Asian countries, including us. They will know that we might not take part in it.

AGS: They have their cards against us and we have our cards against them. But despite all our differences, I have always argued that good workable ties between China and India are good for both sides. We are aware of China's manufacturing prowess and how dependent India and the world is on Chinese manufacturing. The Economic Survey 2024-25 highlighted China's overwhelming manufacturing dominance in various sectors, including electric vehicles and critical minerals. It also stated how China's overall manufacturing output, which is nearly 45% of the global total, is at a level never seen before since the U.S.'s or the U.K.'s at their industrial peak.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

NOTEBOOK

Landing in the midst of a 'revolution'

Journalists tend to go to the midst of rage-filled streets to report and record events, even if they are not there on work

Ramya Kannan

What are the chances of landing in the lap of a "revolution", completely unintentionally? In the Indian subcontinent, there is a pretty high chance, given what we have seen in recent years. After the uprising in Sri Lanka against the fall in the island nation's economic fortunes, and the protests in Bangladesh against the job quota system, the guarantee of peace in the region is shaky. The possibility of flights getting disrupted, arson and looting on the streets, curfews shutting down cities for days on end, and a palpable fear everywhere is not that remote.

For a journalist, there is also a measure of headiness. As vulgar as it may sound, even an unintended encounter with chaos counts as ecstasy for a reporter – to be amidst such a crisis and report on it. Something in our DNA takes us to the midst of rage-filled streets to report and record events, even if the purpose of visiting the place is different.

Who could have imagined that in the five-odd hours that it took to hop on to a flight in Chennai and hop off – first in New Delhi and then in Kathmandu – that things would fall apart so rapidly in Nepal? Protesters had initially turned up with flowers and books. They sang songs, demanding that the ban on social media be lifted. However, the situation deteriorated after reports of deaths began trickling in. The first few reports from the Himalayan kingdom stated that the number of dead stood at 19, and included a child.

Despite this, there is no panic among those who were already on the ground in Kathmandu and not part of the protests. Conference mates in the city lend assurance, recording how other people had arrived by air without any issues and how there are no disruptions on their side of the city.

On the first evening (September 8), everything seems fine. The airport is milling with people walking about normally. That the quotidian routine went on un-

disrupted is falsely calming. There are never-ending traffic jams on the way from the airport. This changes drastically overnight.

The next morning dawns with the smell of smoke. Thick, grey columns rise to blur the blue of the distant Himalayas. Protesters have set government buildings, institutions, and homes of politicians on fire. They have occupied a couple of media houses. The youth burn property in the middle of the road, unnerved by shoot-at-sight orders. On the sidelines of the "revolution", and roads, people stand fearlessly, watching the burning piles. As can be expected during such a mass upheaval, bystanders mutter: "This government needs to go." There is no fear on the main roads, but no cheering either. Pictures shot then tell the ambivalent side story of this South Asian equivalent of the Arab Spring.

That changes that evening: the youth cheer and give each other high fives and take out a victory march, a show of mostly testosterone. They sit on bikes, waving flags, sticks, even a rifle, yelling "victory". It seems to some that the protests have quickly ended.

The next day dawns in sharp contrast. There is a calm and a curfew in place. The annoying hoots of pigeons holed in the eaves of buildings replace the sounds of the previous day's raucous victory cries. Every shop is shut, and army pickets are within viewing distance on both sides of the winding roads. Army trucks whizz past, their sirens blaring. Hotels lock their gates and gently warn visitors against venturing out.

But that is for everyone else to follow. The journalist DNA drags one by the nose to the empty streets, the army pickets, into the centre of action. A video shot on an empty street seems disquieting. But for a journalist responding to the news, there are adrenaline hits with every photo and video recording history being rewritten, mostly in swirls of smoke.

ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in**PICTURE OF THE WEEK**

Moving slowly in a fast-paced city



An aerial view of traffic snarls at the Dadar TT junction, a bustling centre in Mumbai, as demolition work on the century-old Elphinstone Road overbridge – a key east-west connector between Parel (East) and Prabhadevi (West) – commenced last Saturday. EMMANUEL YOGINI

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 19, 1975

Proposal for flood relief stamp to raise Rs. 100 crores

New Delhi, Sept. 18: The Government is examining a proposal to raise Rs. 100 crores for flood relief in Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh from the issue of a special stamp, the use of which will be obligatory while posting letters. Such special stamps were issued at the time of the Bangladesh crisis to augment resources.

The Hindu

Since the issue of special stamps alone may not net in the projected Rs. 100 crores, it is proposed to ask the State Governments to introduce certain additional levies on stamp papers for registration of documents, motor vehicles taxation, etc.

The Centre, deeply perturbed over the extensive damage caused by the floods, particularly in Bihar, is examining various proposals for effectively coming to the rescue of the flood-affected States. The special stamp and additional levies proposal is, however, likely to face some resistance from the other State Governments, though they did not object to the issue of the Bangladesh stamp.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPT. 19, 1925

Wire-nail industry

Calcutta, Sept. 18: Giving evidence before the Tariff Board to-day, Mr. Khusiram, proprietor of the Punjab Wire-nail Factory, Amritsar, said that they could not run their factory at a profit nor compete with the foreign-made articles unless protection was granted. He pointed out that many of the articles made by them, such as panel pins, tacks, etc., were already subject to a duty of 10 per cent whilst they paid about 35 per cent customs duty on the wires imported for manufacturing such articles in India.

IN BRIEF**SP's Azam Khan secures third bail from HC in past fortnight**

The Allahabad High Court on Thursday granted bail to senior Samajwadi Party (SP) leader and former Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Azam Khan in an alleged case of land encroachment. This was the third bail given to the SP leader by the High Court in the past fortnight. Justice Sameer Jain granted bail to Mr. Khan in a case related to alleged encroachment on the Quality Bar property in Rampur. Mr. Khan had approached the High Court for bail in this case after a local MP/MLA court has rejected his bail. Sources in the SP said that Mr. Khan had obtained bail in almost all the cases against him and may walk out of jail soon.

Man killed by Maoists for working as 'police informer'

A 25-year-old man was allegedly abducted and killed by Maoists on suspicion of being a police informer in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district, officers said. Two notes have also been recovered with the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) taking responsibility of the act. According to the police, Devendra Yadav was abducted on Tuesday near his village in the Lanji police station limits when he was attending to his cattle with another man. His body, with several injury marks, was recovered on Thursday. Shiyaz K.M., Commandant of the State's anti-Maoist Hawk Force, told *The Hindu* that an FIR under murder charges has been lodged but denied that the individual was an informant.

U.S. to revoke waiver on Chabahar port sanctions

Decision will hamper India's plans for regional connectivity, investment of over ₹200 crore in the project in Iran; move comes just days after U.S., India had signalled rapprochement on trade issues

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI



Key link: The Chabahar port is being developed by India and Iran to boost connectivity and trade ties. GETTY IMAGES

In yet another harsh measure by the Donald Trump administration, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced on Thursday that the country was revoking its waiver of sanctions over the Iranian port of Chabahar within 10 days, ending a special waiver given to India in 2018.

The decision, among a number of other moves by the U.S. to impose "maximum pressure on Iran", including designating several entities involved in Iran's oil trade, will affect India's plans to develop the Shaheed Beheshti terminal at the Chabahar port as an alternative trading route for India, circumventing Pakistan, to send cargo to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) did not respond to requests for a comment on the development, which could severely hamper India's plans for regional connectivity.

President Trump had first announced that he planned to end the waiver given to India in his pre-

vious term, on February 5 this year, as he signed an executive order mandating Mr. Rubio to "rescind or modify" all such orders that provided any relief to Iran.

Consistent with President Trump's maximum pressure policy to isolate the Iranian regime, the Secretary of State has revoked the sanctions exception issued in 2018 under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA) for Afghanistan reconstruction assistance and economic development, effective September 29, 2025," the State department said in a statement.

"Once the revocation is effective, persons who op-

erate the Chabahar port or engage in other activities described in the IFCA may expose themselves to sanctions under the IFCA," it added.

Earlier this month, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval had discussed intensifying India's engagement with Iran on Chabahar during a conversation with Iranian SNSC Secretary Ali Larijani over telephone. According to an Iranian official release issued in Tehran, Mr. Doval discussed "expanding cooperation in economic ties, security and defence relations, and advancing the Chabahar port project," adding that the two sides would meet in Delhi soon.

According to a note issued by the Shipping Ministry in 2024, India has spent about ₹200 crore of a total allocation of ₹400 crore on the Chabahar project since 2016.

"The port recorded a 43% rise in vessel traffic and a 34% increase in container traffic in 2023-24" the note said.

The imposition of sanctions on Chabahar is the fourth such round of sanctions the Trump administration has passed that directly affects India, and comes just days after the two sides had signalled a rapprochement on trade issues.

In 2017-18, India had conceded to the U.S.'s demand to end all oil imports from Iran and then from Venezuela. India has not so far agreed to cutting down its imports of oil from Russia this year, despite the U.S.'s demand and imposition of a penalty tariff of 25% on all Indian goods in addition to a 25% "reciprocal tariff" already in place. The sanctions will cost India in terms of its investment in the Iranian port, for which the Modi government signed a 10-year lease agreement in May 2024.



Mansukh Mandaviya

transparency in PF transfers. At present, when employees change jobs, their PF accounts are transferred to the new employer's PF office through Form I3 online. After their transfer, a transfer certificate (Annexure K) is generated by the previous PF office and sent to the new PF office.

"Until now, Annexure K was only shared between PF offices and was made available to members only on their request. From today (Thursday), members can directly download Annexure K in PDF format from the members' portal itself," the Minister said.

He said members could track the status of transfer applications online. "This ensures full transparency and allows members to easily verify their PF transfers...," he said.

If the price of oil comes down, Putin will settle and drop out of Ukraine war: Trump



For peace: U.S. President Donald Trump says Russian President Vladimir Putin had 'let him down by killing many people'. AFP

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

If the price of oil drops, Russian President Vladimir Putin will end the war with Ukraine, U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday, suggesting that European countries, India, and China stopping the purchase of Russian oil was key to this.

Mr. Trump's comments were made during a joint press conference at Chequers, the official country residence of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, at the end of his two-day state visit to the U.K.

Over the weekend, Mr. Trump had said EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance countries should altogether stop oil purchases from Russia. Last week, the U.S. administration was reportedly attempting

to persuade European countries to apply secondary tariffs of up to 100% on India and China for their trade with Russia.

"Very simply, if the price of oil comes down Putin will settle. He's going to have no choice. He's going to drop out of that war," Mr. Trump said, and he brought India into the picture as well.

"And when I found out that the European nations were buying oil from Russia... and as you know, I am

very close to India, I'm very close to the Prime Minister of India," Mr. Trump said as he went on to describe his Tuesday phone call with Mr. Modi.

"I spoke to him the other day, wished him a happy birthday. We have a very good relationship. He better had a beautiful statement too... but I said, you know, I sanctioned them," Mr. Trump said, referring to the additional 25% tariff he has imposed on Indian goods exported to the U.S.,

a rate imposed on India for its energy and arms trade with Russia. The 25% is on top of a "reciprocal tariff" rate of 25%.

The resulting 50% tariff rate and then, Mr. Modi's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Mr. Putin in Tianjin two weeks ago, had resulted in a low in India-U.S. relations not seen in years. In recent days, ties have thawed.

Posting on X on Tuesday, responding to the birthday message from Mr. Trump, Mr. Modi had told the U.S. President that he supported his initiatives on resolving the Ukraine conflict.

Mr. Trump said China was paying a high tariff to the U.S. The Trump administration has argued that China is already paying a high tariff (and that it may not be in America's economic interests to increase

it further) when previously quizzed on why New Delhi and not Beijing was being subject to a "penalty" tariff for trade with Russia.

"China is paying a very large tariff right now to the United States, but I'm willing to do other things, but not when the people that I'm fighting for are buying oil from Russia," he said.

The President said Mr. Putin had "let him down".

Mr. Trump also claimed to have ended several conflicts. He repeated a claim India has denied – that he was responsible for ending the four-day armed conflict between India and Pakistan. Mr. Trump emphasised that he used trade as leverage.

"That was purely for trade. You want to trade with us, you're going to have to get along. And they were going at it hot and heavy," he said.

Two dead, seven missing after rain batters Chamoli

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Uttarakhand CM tells officials in flood-hit areas to restore roads and power supply at the earliest

Torrential rain lashed Chamoli district of Uttarakhand on Thursday, with gushing waters and debris reducing homes to rubble. The deluge left two persons dead, while at least seven others remain missing.

Just two days ago, rain and floods wreaked havoc in the State capital of Dehradun, leaving 21 dead and 17 missing.

The Chamoli district administration said several villages in the Nand Nagar area suffered extensive damage. Teams of the National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force, police, doctors, and paramedics were rushed to the affected sites, with rescue operations launched on a war

footing. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami reviewed the situation with senior officials, and directed them to ensure every possible effort to save lives.

He instructed the Chamoli District Magistrate to airlift the seriously injured to the AIIMS, Rishikesh, while officials in flood-hit districts were ordered to restore roads, power and water supply, and communication networks at the earliest.

Arrangements for shelter, food, clean drinking water, and medicines were also mandated.

Minister flays Cong. stance on Nicobar project

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

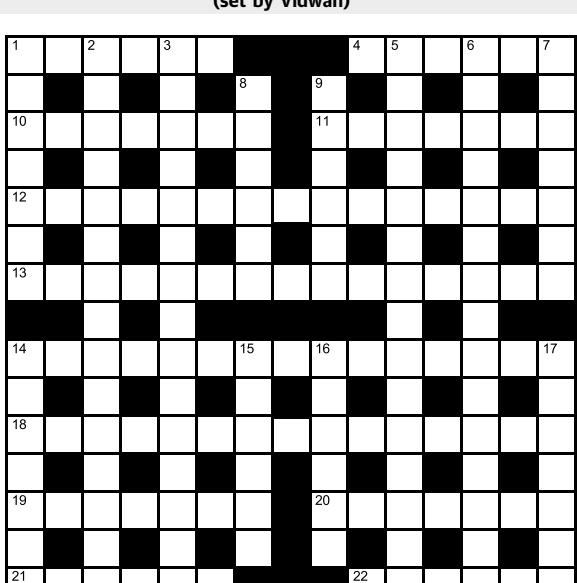
Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Thursday hit out at the Congress for opposing the Great Nicobar infrastructure project, accusing it of spreading confusion and indulging in "negative politics".

Speaking at an event organised by The Public Affairs Forum of India here, Mr. Yadav asserted that the mega project was crucial for national security and strategic connectivity in the Indian Ocean Region. He said only 1.78% of Great Nicobar's forest area will be used for the project.

"...Raising doubts over every developmental effort and writing columns when it comes to national security is nothing but negative politics," he said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14593 (set by Vidwan)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site.
<https://qrgo.page.link/ijpTn>



Across

- Intern's commission, good going for beginning of career (6)
- Hawk CA smuggling African currency (6)
- Runs, runs free and quietly to stimulate (7)
- One doing wrong, one deposed by father, one that is an impediment (7)

- Again setting up Hitler's basement, possibly (2-13)
- Hippocrates hunt, perhaps for Java man (15)
- Member of a UK party, real old bat involved with crime organisation (7,8)
- Suddenly going to new, free ground inside protective fortification for addressing media (5,10)
- Oxygen is trapped in sphere, making another form of oxygen (7)
- Essay about one block and three related works (7)
- Sham fellow, not small like royal (6)
- Dumps English visitors leaving university (6)
- Part of a jewellery, kind of rare pod (7)
- Spooner's candy wire work, something to look at in drawing room (6-5,4)
- Famous Professor nailed English media first, for one the biggest economic collapses in history (5,10)
- Do bring the ware and start to actively contrive sidings for rain proofing (15)
- Endless disdain for failing to start a new America from the same generation (15)
- Ram and Sita consumed drinks of the Gods (7)
- Power to leader of Haiti by Caribbean witchcraft and American dread (6)
- Casualwear model managed his runs on time (1-5)
- Slip talks, in impudent manner (4,3)
- Large horn without tip for pirate (6)
- Barren, cold deserts influence outcome in the end (6)
- Attached positively to coloured garments (3-4)

SUDOKU

9	7					4	1
6		4				7	
3			2	1	9		
			4			6	1
			7	9		4	
8	1		3				
		9	2	8		4	
5				4		9	
2	8				6	5	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

ARCHIVE	ARIADNE	
ZOTIV	LIMIX	
INUTERO	IMPASTO	
MNRLL	BASICO	
ULTRAUSA	LAIKA	
TEETE	TEEM	
HEREMERAID	LICKY	
M	A	L
AWEAPANAGE	AXE	
DAMPER	RURK	
ISSUEIRE	OVINE	
PURSUIT	MTTS	
OGREISH	CRITICISE	
SECUN	SENSE	
ECSTASY	ENMASSE	

Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Significance of Navaratri

Followers of Hinduism worldwide celebrate Navaratri, a unique festival where the goddesses are worshipped for nine nights at a stretch. Our scriptures say Brahman is formless, characterless but attains all those by joining with Sakti. Like a mother birthing a baby, nurturing, protecting it and raising the child, similarly Sakti answers the appeals of devotees who petition her when beset by problems, said B. Damodara Deekshithar.

One of the hardest things to face in life is sudden, unexpected misfortune, leaving one in utter despair. At such moments, one should pray to Ambal. She is each one's personal favourite female goddess, is known by various names, including Parvati, Kamakshi, Mariamma, Kaliamma, etc., said Adi Sankara. One of his students wondered how praying to Ambal would help one surmount one's problem. The preceptor replied saying that the world is run by the devatas. While a person's success or failure, joy or sorrow, failings and victories are determined by one's actions in previous births (*karma*), the ones who dispense these life aspects in the current birth are these devatas, who are themselves guided by Ambal. When a sufferer prays to Ambal, she guides the servitor devatas in such a way that the problems dissipate. Adi Sankara further states that all gods starting with Brahma, Vishnu and Siva pray to Her, thereby becoming complete. Therefore, when a devotee prays to Vishnu and petitions Lakshmi as well, the benefit of placing such faith in Her is immeasurable, specially during Navaratri. One may wonder which goddess one should pray to, these special days. The goddess is one but Her name changes as per her residence.