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FUTURE IS TO

-CREATE IT-

 भारत सरकार
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

చెందు ప్రదర్శన
Name XXXX
DOB: XX-XX-XXXX
Gender: MALE



0000 1111 2222



आधार - आम आदमी का अधिकार

 आपका निर्वाचन आयोग
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

चुने हुए व्यक्ति का चित्र
ELECTION PHOTO IDENTITY CARD




GND0023089

निर्वाचक का नाम : प्रेम राज ठाकुर
ELECTOR'S NAME : PREM RAJ THAKUR

पिता का नाम : किशन देव ठाकुर
FATHER'S NAME : KISHAN DEV THAKUR

लिंग / SEX : पुरुष / MALE

जन्म की तारीख : 15/02/1985
DATE OF BIRTH

EC sets ball rolling on linking voter ID cards with Aadhaar

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The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday set the ball rolling for linking Aadhaar with elector photo identity card (EPIC) numbers. The poll body said it would soon begin technical consultations with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on the issue.

The decision was made after a high-level meeting of the full commission, led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, an official statement said.

Commenting on the EC statement on its intent to link EPIC numbers with Aadhaar, the Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) of the Congress in a statement said the EC must consult all political parties and other stakeholders and assure



Plan in motion: Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and other officials during a high-level meeting in Delhi. PTI

them that “there are sufficient guardrails to not deny a single eligible voter the right to vote”.

The Election Commission, however, said linking of EPIC with Aadhaar would only be done under provisions of Article 326, which says voting rights can only be given to citizens. Aadhaar card only establishes the identity of a person.

It further said the linking would also take into effect as per the provisions of Sections 23(4), 23(5) and 23(6) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and in line with the Supreme Court judgment in WP (civil) No. 177/2023.

This in effect means that linkage would be done only in cases where Aadhaar has been submitted voluntarily by the elector.

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. ECI/PN/193/2025

18.03.2025

Press Note

Election Commission will take action as per Article 326, RP act, 1950 and relevant Supreme Court judgements, for linking EPIC with Aadhaar

Technical consultations between UIDAI and experts of ECI are to begin soon

The Election Commission of India led by CEC Shri Gyanesh Kumar along with ECs Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Dr. Vivek Joshi held a meeting with the Union Home Secretary, Secretary Legislative Department, Secretary MeitY and CEO, UIDAI and technical experts of the ECI in Nirvachan Sadan, New Delhi today.

While, as per the Article 326 of the constitution of India, voting right can only be given to a citizen of India; Aadhaar card only establishes the identity of a person.

Therefore, it was decided that the linking of EPIC with Aadhaar will be done only as per the provisions of Article 326 of the constitution, Section 23(4), 23(5) and 23(6) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and in line with the Supreme Court judgement in WP(civil) No. 177/2023.

Accordingly, technical consultations between UIDAI and the technical experts of ECI are to begin soon.



P. Pawan
Deputy Director

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- **This in effect means that linkage would be done only in cases where Aadhaar has been submitted voluntarily by the elector.**

Fact

- **Following an amendment to the Representation of the People Act, 1951 in 2021 enabling the linking of the Aadhaar numbers with the Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPICs), the EC began collecting the Aadhaar numbers from electors on a voluntary basis in 2022.**
- **However, the EC has not used the Aadhaar numbers in its revisions of the electoral rolls so far. The exercise was meant to aid the Commission in detecting duplicate registration of voters in order to clean up the electoral rolls. The Aadhaar-EPIC linking has not been made mandatory for voters.**
- **In 2009, the project of creating unique identities for residents of India, later christened Aadhaar, was started. Aadhaar was developed as a next-generation digital ID, offering authentication as a service.**

Fact

- **Being a bonafide proof of identity residing on the cloud, it could be plugged into any service delivery transaction to verify an individual's identity.**
- **Though the court held that Aadhaar registration must remain 'voluntary', the scope of the exercise has expanded significantly since it was first introduced.**

Consider the following statements: (UPSC CSE 2018)

- 1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.**
- 2. Once issued, Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only**
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2**

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PRELIMS TO INTERVIEW (P2I)



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[list=PLpuxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aJ0idtpl](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aJ0idtpl)

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Description



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Prashant tiwari

Education

Educator at StudyIQ IAS

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न अर्जुन की तरह महारथी हूँ

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Newspaper



Burning Issues



Practice



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Reviews



PYQ

India takes 24th spot in free speech survey

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The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

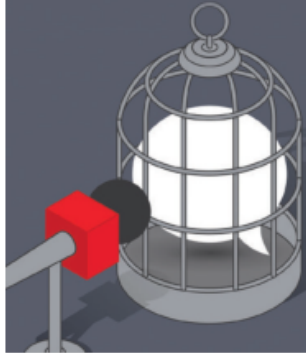
A new global survey by the Future of Free Speech, an independent U.S.-based think tank, has ranked India 24th out of the 33 countries surveyed on the question of support for free speech. Its report, titled ‘Who in the world supports free speech?’ states that “while abstract support for free speech remains strong, commitment to protecting controversial speech is eroding in many parts of the world.”

The survey, conducted in October 2024, also revealed that “more countries have seen declines rather than improvements in free speech support since 2021, with some of the biggest drops occurring in democratic nations like the United States, Israel, and Japan”.

Scandinavia dominated

The right to free speech

India, with a score of 62.6, was placed between South Africa (66.9) and Lebanon (61.8)



■ Scandinavia dominated the top rankings, with Norway and Denmark finishing at the apex of the Future of the Free Speech Index

■ Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan showed the biggest improvements, though they remained at the lower end of the ranking

■ Some authoritarian-leaning nations— such as Hungary (85.5) and Venezuela (81.8) — scored high

■ The survey found that a majority of Indians consider it very important to speak freely without government censorship, but support for criticism of government policies was below the global average

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Disconnect flagged

Indonesia (56.8), Malaysia (55.4), and Pakistan (57.0) showed the biggest improvements, though they

remained at the lower end of the ranking. India, with a score of 62.6, was placed 24th, between South Africa (66.9) and Lebanon (61.8). At the same time, some authoritarian-leaning nations – such as Hungary (85.5) and Venezuela (81.8) – scored high, “suggesting a disconnect between government restric-

tions and public attitudes”.

As regards its findings concerning India, the survey found that while a majority of Indians consider it very important to speak freely without government censorship, support for criticism of government policies was below the global average.

For instance, 37% of Indian respondents supported the statement that “governments should be able to prevent people” from criticising government policies – the highest percentage among all the countries surveyed.

Public sentiment

In contrast, 5% of the respondents supported this statement in the U.K., while only 3% endorsed this sentiment in Denmark.

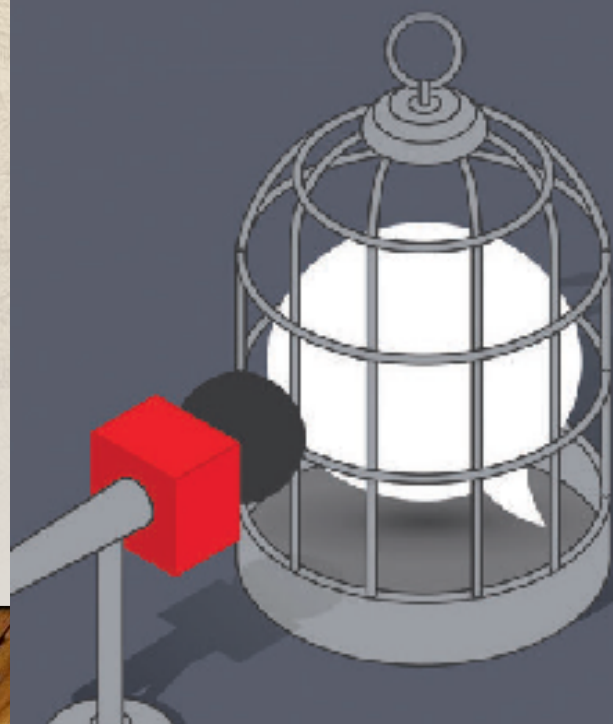
In general, nations that are more supportive of free speech tend to enjoy more freedom of expression in

practice and vice versa. But India was an exception to this pattern. “The most substantial disconnects from the general pattern are represented by India, Hungary, and Venezuela where the actual protection of free speech is very low compared to the popular support. These are all cases of democratic backsliding in countries that previously demonstrated high levels of respect for political liberties, including freedom of expression,” the report stated.

When asked whether their ability to speak freely about political matters has improved or worsened over the past year, “Indians and South Africans believe that they have undergone the most significant progress, although observers and rankings tend to agree that the situation in India has become worse, if anything,” the report noted.

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Content.

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Content.

- **Article 19 of Indian Constitution guarantees certain freedoms to all citizens of India. It encompasses six fundamental rights:**
 - **Right to freedom of speech and expression,**
 - **Right to assemble peacefully and without arms,**
 - **Right to form associations, unions, or co-operative societies,**
 - **Right to move freely throughout the territory of India,**
 - **Right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India,**
 - **Right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business.**
- **Note: Originally, Article 19 of Indian Constitution contained seven rights. However, the right to acquire, hold, and dispose of property was deleted by the 44th Amendment Act of 1978.**

Content.

- **Article 19 (2) of Indian Constitution empowers the State to instil reasonable restrictions on the following grounds:**
- **Security of the State**
- **Friendly Relation with Foreign States**
- **Public Order**
- **Decency and morality**
- **Contempt of court**
- **Defamation**
- **Incitement to offence**
- **Integrity and sovereignty of India**

The dystopian side of Insta-commerce

In various urban centres, we often see a gathering of a range of *mazdoors* (labourers) with their tools early in the morning, waiting for someone to call them to work. When an employer or *thekedaar* turns up, huge numbers of these men and women swarm around him and he begins a negotiation process of getting the best deal for himself. From the point of view of the worker, who is a part of an enormous and growing unemployed work force, the deal is made in desperation. It is a supplier's market. The *thekedaars* are a creation of managerial facilitation where employers are able to get a 'middleman' to squeeze the greatest possible amount from labour, and offer them the greatest possible profits. Spend an hour in a labour chowk or a *mazdoor mandi* (job market) and you will understand how people's labour is sold in an auction on a daily or piece rate basis, where the lowest wage wins.

Doing dirty work virtually

This lesson has been learnt rapidly and more diabolically by employers of gig and digital platforms. The gig economy relies on a paradigm of piece rate work, offering so-called employment and 'choice' to workers, thereby shedding all responsibility vis-à-vis workers, their wages, their working conditions, and social security. The digital medium has been cunningly used to repurpose the work of the *thekedaar* (the middleman) by creating a platform that would do his dirty work virtually, and outside of the public eye. Every unemployed worker would now become part of your *mazdoor mandi*, desperately looking for work and supposedly exercising his/her choice by clicking on any option that might help them survive another day. The advantages of the *mandi* where the auction is a downward bid, with the lowest wage winning, have been multiplied virtually, exponentially, and seamlessly so that you don't see the unfair work practice that the *thekedaar* plays



Nikhil Dey,

Founder, Mazdoor
Kisan Shakti
Sangathan



Rakshita Swamy,

Founder, Social
Accountability Forum
for Action and
Research

Startup founders indulge in PR to show that they care for the rights of gig workers, and at the same time privately oppose any legislative framework that emerges to protect their rights in a State

and the anguish on the worker's face. There is also no possibility of collective bargaining because the collective has been atomised into a million desperate workers individually checking their phones in search of employment. When they 'accept' a ride, delivery, or a service, the aggregator (*thekedaar*) holds it up as their great benevolent service to the nation of creating employment. The magic is all too real for them to know because they control it all through a disembodied app. They know how much to offer, on what terms, and under what conditions. Their algorithms help them maximise profits in a way that the worker can either choose to say yes to or perish in a market that is dominated by a consumer class that only sees the convenience of someone providing a service at the mere click of a button.

The consumer sees a worker, who has driven through pollution, rushed up the stairs, and is dripping from sweat or wet with rain, only for a brief moment. The worker's indignity is compounded when he is forced to desperately seek a five-star rating. The distressing story of exploitation has now reached a new high, with the introduction of 'Insta Maids'. This service offers a house help within 15 minutes to clean utensils and sweep the house for "₹49 an hour". Workers understand what is happening and are fighting back. Some of their slogans point to the poignancy of the situation - "*rating nahi, haq chaahiye* (we don't want ratings, we want rights!)" and "*insaan hai hum, ghulaaam nahi* (we are human beings, not slaves!)"

Bill in cold storage

In India, beginning with Rajasthan, the workers made an important though limited breakthrough by advocating and pushing for legislation that would give them: i) a framework for social security that would help deal with atomised piece rate work; ii) access to their own data on a real-time basis; iii) a grievance redress mechanism that

would allow them some independent platform to raise their grievances, and a tripartite board where issues related to the sector could be discussed by all concerned. This breakthrough has been stymied with the new BJP government refusing to notify the Act with rules. The Congress government that got it passed promised more progressive legislation in Karnataka and Telangana, and put up a draft law with a promise to pass it immediately. But the collective power of the aggregators was further aggregated in the form of NASSCOM and CII-led representations to the State governments. These asserted that gig workers are 'partners' and should not be recognised as employees; cannot have a right to their data including the right to know the break-up of individual bills; cannot be promised protection against arbitrary termination; and should not have access to an independent grievance redress framework. The Karnataka government has formed a ministerial committee to deliberate further on these inputs, and contrary to assurances that progressive legislation would be passed, has put the Bill in cold storage. It is clear whose voices an elected government listens to.

It is no coincidence that the person who signed on behalf of the CII Unicorn Forum's submission to the Karnataka government is the founder of Urban Company. On LinkedIn he suggests that the Insta Maids service "will bring alive the promise of New India for service partners where financial security, professional recognition and dignity are within reach for all". The naked double speak is evident when founders indulge in PR to show that they care for the rights of gig workers, and at the same time privately oppose any legislative framework that emerges to protect their rights in a State. This hypocrisy must be exposed and the modern slavery of platform-based gig work must be brought to an end.

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Content.

- **In various urban centres, we often see a gathering of a range of mazdoors (labourers) with their tools early in the morning, waiting for someone to call them to work. When an employer or thekedar turns up, huge numbers of these men and women swarm around him and he begins a negotiation process of getting the best deal for himself.**
- **The gig economy relies on a paradigm of piece rate work, offering so-called employment and 'choice' to workers, thereby shedding all responsibility vis-à-vis workers, their wages, their working conditions, and social security.**
- **There is also no possibility of collective bargaining because the collective has been atomised into a million desperate workers individually checking their phones in search of employment.**
- **When they 'accept' a ride, delivery, or a service, the aggregator (thekedar) holds it up as their great benevolent service to the nation of creating employment. The magic is all too real for them to know because they control it all through a disembodied app.**

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- In India, beginning with Rajasthan, the workers made an important though limited breakthrough by advocating and pushing for legislation that would give them: i) a framework for social security that would help deal with atomised piece rate work; ii) access to their own data on a real-time basis; iii) a grievance redress mechanism that would allow them some independent platform to raise their grievances, and a tripartite board where issues related to the sector could be discussed by all concerned.

A change now

The U.S. now seems more receptive to India's concerns about Sikh extremism

In the first acknowledged discussion on the Pannun episode and anti-India activities by pro-Khalistani groups in the U.S. since the Donald Trump administration took office, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh raised the issue in a meeting with U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. He urged the U.S. to designate Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), led by Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, as a foreign terrorist organisation, citing its anti-India activities on American soil and its alleged backing by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Ms. Gabbard was in India to also attend the annual Intelligence and Security Chiefs Conference, chaired by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. The conference, now in its fourth edition, took place a day before the annual Raisina Dialogue, the flagship conference of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), co-organised with the Observer Research Foundation.

Founded in 2007 by Pannun, a U.S.-based attorney, the SFJ advocates "self-determination" for Sikhs in their "historic homeland" of Punjab, seeking to establish a sovereign state of Khalistan. The Indian government banned the organisation in 2019 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for anti-India activities. The Khalistani insurgency remains a dark chapter in India's history, having led to the assassination of a Prime Minister. Its resurgence in several western countries has been a growing concern for India. Pro-Khalistani protests, often turning aggressive, have become a pattern. Most recently, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was heckled, with pro-Khalistan slogans being raised, during his visit to London earlier this month, prompting the MEA to lodge a strong protest with the U.K. Diplomatic efforts to address the issue, particularly with Canada and the U.K., have often been met with a lacklustre response, frustrating India. However, recent allegations that Indian agencies attempted targeted killings of Khalistani sympathisers have strained bilateral ties with Canada and the U.S. Relations with the then Trudeau administration in Canada were tense, while under the Biden administration, India faced significant diplomatic pressure after a U.S. investigation charged an Indian citizen – allegedly linked to the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) – with orchestrating a plot to kill Pannun. The issue became so serious that Mr. Doval refrained from accompanying Prime Minister Narendra Modi on an official visit. The Trump administration, so far, appears less inclined to escalate the matter and may be more receptive to India's concerns. While India continues to push for action against anti-India and separatist groups, it must however ensure that its efforts do not impact the by and large cohesive Indian diaspora abroad, nor affect India's diplomatic relationships with partners.

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- **While India continues to push for action against anti-India and separatist groups, it must however ensure that its efforts do not impact the by and large cohesive Indian diaspora abroad, nor affect India’s diplomatic relationships with partners.**

Raisina Dialogue?

- **India's flagship international conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, organized annually.**
- **Aims to bring together global leaders, policymakers, academics, and strategic experts.**
- **Started in: 2016, as an initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Observer Research Foundation (ORF).**
- **Ministry Involved: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).**

Aim:

- **Foster global discussions on diplomacy, security, and economic policies.**
- **Enhance India's role as a key player in international affairs.**
- **Strengthen cooperation between nations on pressing global issues.**
- **Organizers: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Observer Research Foundation (ORF).**

BSNL has been dialling the wrong consultant

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In May 2024, a report that the American consultancy group, Boston Consulting Group (BCG), was to be involved in the revival strategy of state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and that BSNL was to pay BCG ₹132 crore for the consultancy drew much attention. BCG has reportedly recommended reducing the workforce among other major steps. While this became a much-talked about news item, this is not a one-off event. In recent years, the public sector's reliance on the services of external consultancy firms has increased exponentially – and not just in India but also worldwide. While the overall spending of the government is not available for India, there is some data available for other countries. For instance, France spent over €1 billion on intellectual services provided by consultancies in 2021, while the Australian government spent A\$21 billion on external labour hire in 2021-22.

Need for scrutiny

The case of BSNL has once again drawn attention to the contentious issue of the growing influence of consultancy firms within the public sector. It raises important questions about the efficacy and the implications of outsourcing strategic decision-making in the public sector. Given the increased involvement of external consultancies, there is a need that this is scrutinised.

The central critique by most people is rooted in their lack of “skin in the game”. Consultancy firms are given projects and contracts to provide strategic advice but bear no responsibility for the outcomes of their recommendations. Like in this case, for example, if BSNL's fortunes fail to improve despite the implementation of BCG's strategies, the consultancy faces no consequences. This lack of accountability creates a troubling misalignment of incentives. The consultants are rewarded handsomely regardless of the results, while BSNL – and by extension, the Indian taxpayer – will bear the full brunt of any failure.

Moreover, such an arrangement undermines the very purpose of hiring external expertise: to deliver tangible improvements and long-term viability. Also, if you are paying someone to solve



Aasheerwad Dwivedi

is Assistant Professor (Economics), Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi

The case of BSNL's revival strategy has again drawn attention to the contentious issue of the growing influence of consultancy firms within the public sector

your problems without any major accountability, there will always be some problems left to be solved.

In addition, the over-reliance on consultancies erodes the capacity of the state to innovate and manage its enterprises effectively. Over time, this dependence on external expertise creates a vicious cycle. Instead of building internal capabilities, they become perpetually reliant on external advice – and this does not come cheap.

Impact on state capacity, conflict of interest

This kind of dependency has much broader implications for the state capacity. The skills and the knowledge learned by the consultancies on these projects are not transferred to the public officials. In effect, this sets up a negative feedback loop, where public sector employees lose skills and institutional knowledge, meaning, the next project or piece of work will still need external inputs.

The proliferation of consultancy contracts reflects a deeper crisis of confidence in the public sector's ability to govern itself as well, by implicitly undermining their own legitimacy. This outsourcing of expertise not only weakens public institutions but also creates an unaccountable parallel bureaucracy of consultants who wield significant influence over public policy and resource allocation without subject to the same democratic oversight or accountability as public officials or political leaders.

Consultancy firms often serve multiple clients across industries, including competitors and regulators, which can create conflicts of interest. Their advice may be influenced by these overlapping relationships, raising questions about the impartiality and the integrity of their recommendations. The conflict of interest has recently been much debated in most countries leading to major consultancy firms considering breaking their various functions.

An additional problem is that the objectives of public sector enterprises are often very different from those of the private sector. Consultancy firms often approach problems from a profit-maximisation perspective, emphasising cost-cutting, efficiency, and market

competitiveness. While these strategies might yield short-term gains, they may not align with the broader public service mandate of organisations. For instance, BSNL, as a public sector enterprise, has historically played a vital role in India's telecommunications landscape, particularly in bridging the digital divide and bringing telecommunication services to rural and underserved areas. The aggressive cost-cutting measures might compromise the quality of service in rural areas, where BSNL's presence is crucial in providing affordable telecommunications access. Overall, a purely market-driven strategy could divert the public enterprise's focus from its social responsibilities, which will essentially undermine its role as a public goods provider.

What will work better

A better alternative, as Mariana Mazzucato and Rosie Collington, the authors of the book, *The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens our Businesses, Infantilizes our Governments and Warps our Economies*, suggest would be to invest in strengthening the internal capabilities of the public sector institutions. This could involve recruiting and training top talent, fostering a culture of innovation, and empowering employees to take ownership of the company's strategic direction. They write, “Because knowledge is not cultivated within state workforces and institutions, a dependency on the ‘expertise’ of consultancies spirals.” By building internal expertise, these organisations could develop strategies that are not only effective but also aligned with their long-term goals and public service mandate. This will help them reclaim their strategic autonomy as well – which gets compromised with too much reliance on outside the system.

The case of BSNL and BCG serves as a microcosm of the broader debate about the role of consultancy firms in public sector governance, state capacity and accountability. There is a need for governments across the world to rethink this model of governance.

The views expressed are personal

Content.

- **In May 2024, a report that the American consultancy group, Boston Consulting Group (BCG), was to be involved in the revival strategy of state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and that BSNL was to pay BCG ₹132 crore for the consultancy drew much attention.**
- **BCG has reportedly recommended reducing the workforce among other major steps.**
- **In recent years, the public sector's reliance on the services of external consultancy firms has increased exponentially — and not just in India but also worldwide.**
- **While the overall spending of the government is not available for India, there is some data available for other countries.**
- **For instance, France spent over €1 billion on intellectual services provided by consultancies in 2021, while the Australian government spent A\$21 billion on external labour hire in 2021-22.**

Fact

- **The case of BSNL has once again drawn attention to the contentious issue of the growing influence of consultancy firms within the public sector.**
- **It raises important questions about the efficacy and the implications of outsourcing strategic decision-making in the public sector. Given the increased involvement of external consultancies, there is a need that this is scrutinised.**
- **Consultancy firms are given projects and contracts to provide strategic advice but bear no responsibility for the outcomes of their recommendations. Like in this case, for example, if BSNL's fortunes fail to improve despite the implementation of BCG's strategies, the consultancy faces no consequences.**
- **if you are paying someone to solve your problems without any major accountability, there will always be some problems left to be solved.**

- **In addition, the over-reliance on consultancies erodes the capacity of the state to innovate and manage its enterprises effectively. Over time, this dependence on external expertise creates a vicious cycle. Instead of building internal capabilities, they become perpetually reliant on external advice — and this does not come cheap.**
- **This kind of dependency has much broader implications for the state capacity. The skills and the knowledge learned by the consultancies on these projects are not transferred to the public officials.**
- **In effect, this sets up a negative feedback loop, where public sector employees lose skills and institutional knowledge, meaning, the next project or piece of work will still need external inputs.**
- **An additional problem is that the objectives of public sector enterprises are often very different from those of the private sector.**



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