

Headlines

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“Push yourself.
Because no one
else is going to
do it for you.”





Israel vows response to missile attack by Houthis

Page No. I, Prelims

**Agence France-Presse
Associated Press**
TEL AVIV

A missile struck inside the perimeter of Israel's main airport on Sunday, wounding six persons, halting flights, in an attack claimed by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

The attack on Ben-Gurion International Airport came hours before top Israeli Cabinet Ministers were to vote on whether to intensify the military operations in the Gaza Strip.

The Army, meanwhile, began calling up thousands of reserves in anticipation of a wider operation in Gaza, officials said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised a multi-phased response.

An Air India flight from New Delhi to Tel Aviv was



Cordoned off: Security forces inspect the site where the Israeli military said a projectile landed near Tel Aviv on Sunday. AP

diverted to Abu Dhabi.

"We have acted against them in the past and we will act in the future, but I cannot go into detail (...) it will not happen in one bang, but there will be many bangs," Mr. Netanyahu said in a video on published on Telegram.

Defence Minister Israel Katz vowed retribution:

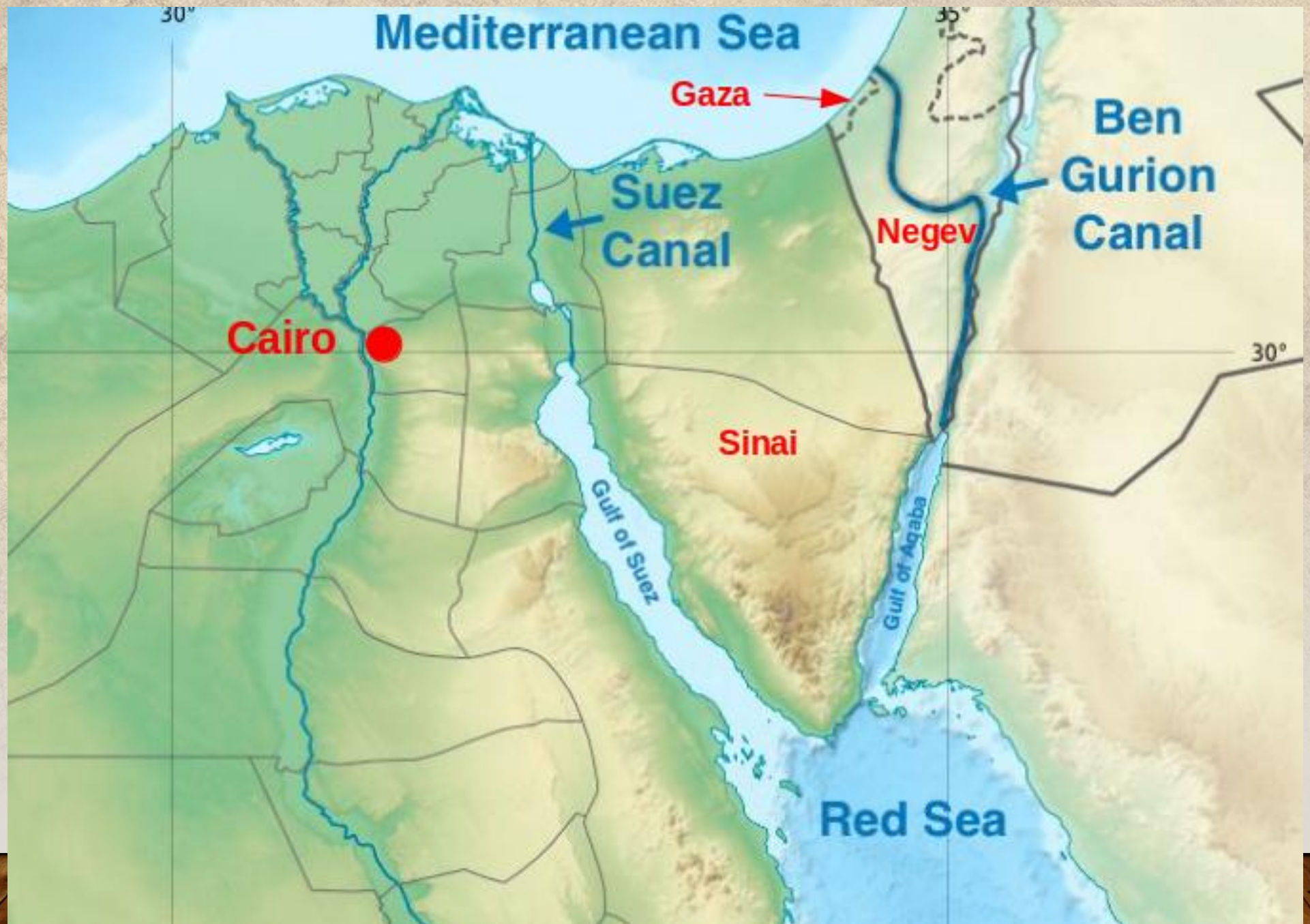
"Whoever harms us, we will harm them sevenfold."

The Israeli military said "several attempts were made to intercept" the missile launched from Yemen, a rare Houthi attack that penetrated Israel's air defences.

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Map highlighting Yemen and its remote island of Socotra







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Rise of sporting culture will boost India's soft power: PM

Modi inaugurates 7th Khelo India Youth Games, says the government has always given top priority to sports in its policies; he underlines the efforts to bring the Olympics to the country in 2036

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India's soft power will increase with the growth of a sporting culture in the country. He was addressing the inaugural ceremony of the seventh Khelo India Youth Games via videoconferencing.

The Khelo India Youth Games, 2025 is being organised in Bihar for the first time from May 4 to 15 in five districts.

Addressing the athletes, coaches, and staff members present at the event, he remarked that players from across the country had gathered, showcasing exceptional talent and determination.

He extended his best wishes to all the players, emphasising that sports in India was now evolving into a distinct cultural identity.

"As India's sporting culture grows, so will the country's soft power on the global stage," Mr. Modi said, underscoring the significance of the Khelo India Youth Games in providing a major platform for



Big draw: Spectators during the inauguration ceremony of the Khelo India Youth Games at the Patliputra Sports Complex in Patna on Sunday. PTI

the nation's youth.

He reiterated that the government had always given top priority to sports in its policies.

Stressing that hosting the Olympics in India has been a long-cherished dream of every citizen, Mr. Modi underlined India's efforts to bring the Olympics to the country in 2036.

He remarked that initiatives like Khelo India and the Target Olympic Podium (TOP) scheme have contributed to building a robust sports ecosystem,

benefiting thousands of athletes across Bihar and the rest of the country.

Mr. Modi also acknowledged the growing presence of Indian athletes in new and emerging sports such as Wushu, SepakTakraw, Pencak Silat, Lawn Bowls, and Roller Skating.

The Prime Minister highlighted the government's focus on modernising India's sports infrastructure. He said the sports budget had increased more than threefold, reaching approximately

₹4,000 crore this year, with a significant portion allocated to infrastructure development.

Mr. Modi acknowledged the establishment of the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence in Rajgir and institutions such as Bihar Sports University and the State Sports Academy.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya were present at the Patliputra Sports Complex, where the main function was organised.

Content.

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Fact

- The Khelo India initiative, launched in 2018, aims to revive India's sports culture by encouraging youth participation and identifying potential Olympians.
- KIYG is a national-level, multi-disciplinary sports competition for school and college students in India.
- The games are held annually in January or February and are part of the government's Khelo India initiative.
- It aims to promote sports culture and identify sporting talent at the grassroots level.
- The previous 6 editions of the Youth Games have been held in Delhi, Pune, Guwahati, Panchkula and Bhopal, Tamil Nadu: Chennai, Trichy, Madurai, and Coimbatore.
- It is held in two categories, namely under-17-year-old school students and under-21 college students.

Fact

- To improve India's performance at Olympics and Paralympics, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) started the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) in September 2014.
- This was revamped in April 2018 to establish a technical support team for managing the TOPS athletes and providing holistic support.
- High Priority Sports:
- The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports is responsible for appointment of TOPS members with emphasis on ensuring representation from 'High-Priority' sports (Archery, Badminton, Boxing, Hockey, Shooting and Wrestling).

As conflict zones multiply globally, another frontier is quietly slipping into turmoil – the Arctic. Long seen as a realm of scientific cooperation and environmental protection, the polar north is becoming a theatre of military and geopolitical competition. With Russia more assertive, China expanding its Arctic ambitions, and Washington renewing interest in Greenland, the region appears set for a renewed phase of strategic contestation.

In a curious way, the Arctic's movement from the margins of international politics to the heart of great power competition is an outcome of more than just clashing geopolitical ambitions. Climate change has been decisive, opening new maritime corridors and resource frontiers, and spurring a scramble for access. The Northern Sea Route (NSR), once passable only during narrow summer windows, is now virtually an open sea lane. Traffic is rising, potentially redrawing global trade patterns.

A growing militarisation

Alongside this commercial promise lies a more concerning development: the steady militarisation of the high north. With Arctic states reopening old military bases, deploying submarines, and reinforcing claims through visible shows of force, the stakes for control and influence in the region are higher than ever.

To be sure, the militarising impulse of Arctic powers is not new. Nor is the tendency to leverage polar presence for wider strategic manoeuvring. United States President Donald Trump was the first to drop pretences when he proposed buying Greenland in 2019. Far from the absurdity many deemed it, the idea had clear geopolitical merit; behind Mr. Trump's theatrics lay a deeper instinct – a recognition that the Arctic was no longer peripheral to global power play, but central to it.

For non-Arctic powers such as India, the implications of a militarised Arctic are serious, prompting many to reassess their regional postures. Even so, New Delhi remains curiously



Abhijit Singh

is the former head of the maritime policy initiative at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), New Delhi

An increasingly militarised Arctic demands new thinking from New Delhi

insulated from the region's shifting realities. Faced with complex challenges closer to home, India appears oddly impassive to the dangers taking shape in the high north.

India's 2022 Arctic Policy offers a thoughtful road map focused on climate science, environmental protection and sustainable development. It draws strength from the parallels between the Arctic and the Himalayan "Third Pole" – anchored in the belief that glacial melt and atmospheric shifts in the far north have cascading effects on South Asia's water security and monsoon cycles.

Yet, the policy underplays the Arctic's rapidly evolving strategic landscape. As regional actors pivot from cooperative science to geopolitical contestation, India's restrained posture risks relegating it to the margins. The predisposition to remain apolitical – justifiable in an earlier era – now appears increasingly anachronistic. Besides being absent from conversations reshaping access and governance, India remains detached from the emerging politics of influence in the Far North.

This is not to say that India lacks a presence in the Arctic. It operates a research station in Svalbard, contributes to polar expeditions, and holds observer status in the Arctic Council. But these mechanisms were designed for a more benign order – one built on consensus and mutual trust. With the existing order visibly fraying, scientific diplomacy no longer seems fit-for-purpose.

A constructive role for India

The stakes for India are far from hypothetical. As the NSR becomes more viable, trade flows may shift northwards, potentially undercutting the relevance of the Indian Ocean sea lanes. Should Russia and China consolidate control over Arctic sea routes, India's aspirations to be a connectivity hub in the Indo-Pacific – articulated through initiatives such as Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) – could face serious headwinds.

More concerning for New Delhi is the blurring of boundaries between the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific. Growing Russia-China strategic coordination in the Arctic and China's expanding naval presence in the Indian Ocean are making it harder for India to focus solely on its maritime interests in the south. An added challenge is the growing unease among Nordic states over India's long-standing ties with Russia, particularly as Moscow's brazenness in the Ukraine war deepens.

India has yet to reassure its Arctic partners that an approach guided by strategic autonomy, rather than alignment, can still be beneficial for all sides.

A more purposeful engagement

New Delhi, then, needs a recalibration – one that retains its climate-conscious ethos but builds sharper strategic focus. This calls for a three-part strategy. First, India must institutionalise Arctic engagement beyond science, with dedicated desks in the Foreign and Defence Ministries, regular inter-agency consultations, and collaboration with strategic think tanks. Second, New Delhi should partner with like-minded Arctic states on dual-use initiatives – polar logistics, maritime domain awareness, and satellite monitoring – that enhance India's credibility without raising red flags. Third, India must claim a seat at the table as new Arctic governance forums emerge – on infrastructure, shipping regulation, digital standards, and the blue economy. India must also approach the Arctic's political landscape with sensitivity, avoiding an extractive mindset and engaging local communities with restraint and respect.

India's current Arctic posture is not without merit, but it is no longer adequate. It rests on the hope that scientific cooperation and climate diplomacy can smooth over growing geopolitical fault lines. That hope is fast fading. The Arctic is now shaped less by principle than by power. Those unwilling to adapt could find themselves edged out of the emerging order.

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- **This is not to say that India lacks a presence in the Arctic. It operates a research station in Svalbard, contributes to polar expeditions, and holds observer status in the Arctic Council.**
- **The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous Peoples, and other Arctic inhabitants.**
- **It addresses the concerns related to the Arctic region, including sustainable development and safeguarding the environment in the Arctic region.**
- **It was formally established in 1996 through the Ottawa Declaration.**

Fact

- **The eight Arctic States (whose territories fall in the Arctic region) are members of the Arctic Council.**
- **These are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the US.**
- **All Arctic Council decisions:**
 - **Require consensus of the eight Arctic States.**
 - **Happens in consultation with the permanent participants.**
- **Observers of the Arctic Council are:**
 - **Thirteen Countries, including India.**
 - **Thirteen intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary organisations**
 - **Twelve Non-governmental organisations.**
 - **India had been given the Observer status in 2013.**

Temporary respite

India's growth strategy must focus on boosting domestic consumption

India's Goods and Services Tax collection in April, since the indirect taxation framework was implemented in 2017, has consistently hit record highs. This April was no different – generally because of businesses tallying their books and completing their financial year-end tax commitments. The gross GST collected this time was about ₹2.37 lakh crore, marking an on-year growth of 12.6% from last April. After refunds, the central government netted over ₹2.09 lakh crore, an on-year rise of 9.1%. This also signifies a marked rise in GST compliance, also aided by faster refunds, which are crucial for small businesses as they work with thin working capital, and the mass adoption of fintech. The fintech adoption rate in India, at 87%, which is well above the global average, and aided by the insular COVID-19 years of 2020-21, has brought in millions from the MSME sector into the formal banking system, enabling better tax compliance and regulatory supervision. Wider compliance is also evident from April's GST collections from 2018 to 2025, which has more than doubled from ₹1.03 lakh crore to ₹2.37 lakh crore.

What is significant this April has been the 86% rise in refunds issued to exporters and the 20.8% increase in GST revenues from imports. This correlates with the 10-month high growth in the April print of HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI). The PMI rose from 58.1 in March to 58.2 in April. The survey indicated a sharp rise in new business aided by greater international demand. Orders from abroad grew to the largest degree in over 14 years in the first month of the 2026 fiscal year, with demand led by Africa, Asia, Europe, West Asia and the Americas. This suggests that businesses have scrambled to get their orders in before the 90-day pause on tariffs by the U.S. ends on July 9. It also suggests a possible re-alignment in supply chains, with greater sourcing from India, as the U.S. tariffs on China appear to be more onerous and certain, with the possibility of transshipment goods from China being taxed, without a high value-add threshold. Apple has said at its January-to-March quarterly earnings call that it intends to source 'most of its iPhones' for the U.S., its largest market, from India. This suggests a temporary respite for India's manufacturing sector, which witnessed a four-year growth low at 4% in the last fiscal. A more durable growth strategy would be to boost domestic consumption and wrangle favourable concessions for its manufacturing sector from the many ongoing trade agreements.

Page No. 8, GS 3

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- **A more durable growth strategy would be to boost domestic consumption and wrangle favourable concessions for its manufacturing sector from the many ongoing trade agreements.**

Fact

- **With an intention to do away with multiple indirect taxes and to have a 'One Nation One Tax' system, the Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill was introduced in 2014.**
- **The Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill was passed as the Constitution (101st Amendment) Act in 2016.**
- **Finally, the Goods and Services Tax was introduced and enforced across the country on 1st July 2017.**
- **The 101st Constitutional Amendment Act added Article 279A, which empowers the President to constitute the GST Council for administering & governing the Goods and Services Tax Framework.**
- **It is this council which makes recommendations on everything related to Goods and Services Tax, including laws, rules, rates, etc.**

Demise of foreign aid in India

Indian attitude to official and private foreign aid has always been ambivalent – sometimes welcoming, at other times hostile. With U.S. President Donald Trump's targeting of USAID, the death knell, at least for official aid, seems to have been rung. Other European countries may follow suit, thanks to continuing global conflicts, anti immigration sentiments, and the slowing of economic development in the aid-offering countries. The writing on the wall could not be clearer.

In fact, for India, the writing has been clear for several years now, much before Mr. Trump's action. Western aid-giving nations no longer see India as a country needing aid, given its high growth rate, its oft-vaunted claim of becoming the fifth largest economy by 2047, and the prevailing political and religious ideologies within the country.

India sought international aid soon after Independence to assist in its task of catching up with the developed world. Most of the aid went to the government, as it was believed that the government should be the lead change agent. The peak period was from 1955 to 1965, and most of it came from Western nations. Some official development aid also went to private organisations, especially from bilateral aid organisations, for both humanitarian and development needs.

However, official developmental aid has shown an almost constant decline, especially from 1970 onwards. After 1990, Official Development Assistance (ODA), as a proportion of either Gross National Product or public investment, became insignificant partly due to the success of India's growth story.

What India seeks now is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and global cooperation in trade, climate change, and technological developments. Thus, declining official aid is not as great a concern as declining private aid to non-government agencies, though



Pushpa Sundar

author of Foreign Aid for Indian NGOs: Problem or Solution? (2010)

While foreign aid may have had some drawbacks, it has played a valuable role for NGOs

it too will have downsides such as unemployment in aid-giving organisations in both donor and recipient countries, wastage of stockpiled food and medicines, and reduced global collaboration in health and environment.

Private non-governmental organisations engaged in development work – referred to as NGOs – will be more affected by a decline in aid, both official and private. NGOs not only take up the slack in government provision at the bottom but also hold up a mirror to the truth in governance.

While public donations sustained Indian NGOs in the pre-Independence period and for some years afterward, since the 1960s onwards, the two major sources for NGOs in development have come to be government grants and foreign aid. It is only since 2013, when corporate social responsibility contributions became mandatory, that corporate money has become somewhat significant.

External aid to NGOs, both from official and private sources, increased continuously, but slowly the amounts received from both have been coming down. Between 2017-18 and 2021-22, NGOs received ₹88,8820 million, but though correct estimates of Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) aid are difficult to get, approximate figures indicate that the amount has gone down considerably.

Probable reasons

The reason for the decline is less about the reluctance of foreign donors and more about the ambivalent attitude of the Indian government towards the receipt of foreign aid by Indian NGOs. While allowing NGOs to accept aid, government regulations have hedged it in with several restrictions since 1976, when the FCRA was passed. Even before the declaration of Emergency in 1975, the “foreign hand” had become a bogey phrase. The government began to blame it for anti-government sentiments and

activities. The anti-national activities purportedly holding up development included religious conversions to Christianity or Islam, protests against development projects, and various policies of the government.

The FCRA required those receiving or wishing to receive foreign money to register themselves with the Ministry of Home Affairs, and to use the funds strictly according to the rules. This Act and its rules have been amended in 2010, 2011, 2020, 2023, and again in 2024. Each time, the rules have been made more and more stringent, and several NGOs have lost their FCRA registrations.

Certain private foreign donors, such as the Soros Foundation and others, have also been actively discouraged. These factors pushing out aid will slowly but surely toll its death knell.

While foreign aid may have had some drawbacks, such as bringing in ideas not entirely or always suited to India, it has played a valuable role for NGOs. Where government grants are meagre, not easily available, and lacking the flexibility to meet changing conditions on the ground, foreign aid was more generous and allowed more flexibility in use, opened windows to the world outside in terms of new ideas and practices, and built the capacity of Indian NGOs. It also allowed NGOs to play a valuable watchdog role on abuses by the government or market forces by voicing dissent against policies and actions detrimental to poor and vulnerable constituencies.

If foreign aid ceases entirely, not only will there be unemployment in the voluntary sector, but also unfinished projects or shelving of new projects, and a slowing down of social sector development, but more importantly, no correction to government overreach.

While self-reliance is a laudable goal, deliberately killing the golden goose is, in effect, risking harm to India's national interests.

Content.

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- **Western aid-giving nations no longer see India as a country needing aid, given its high growth rate**
- **India sought international aid soon after Independence to assist in its task of catching up with the developed world. Most of the aid went to the government, as it was believed that the government should be the lead change agent.**
- **The peak period was from 1955 to 1965, and most of it came from Western nations. Some official development aid also went to private organisations, especially from bilateral aid organisations, for both humanitarian and development needs.**

Fact

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What is the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act?

- **The FCRA was enacted in 1976 during the Emergency period due to concerns about foreign interference in India's affairs through financial support to independent organizations.**
- **FCRA was designed to regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations, ensuring that they operate in a manner consistent with the values of a sovereign democratic republic.**
- **2010 Amendment:**
- **Enacted to consolidate the law to regulate the acceptance and utilization of foreign contribution by certain individuals or associations and to prohibit acceptance and utilization of foreign contribution for any activities detrimental to the national interest.**
- **2020 Amendment:**
- **Prohibiting the transfer of foreign contribution to any other person or organization.**
- **Reducing the limit of usage of foreign contribution for administrative expenses from 50% to 20%.**

Fact

- Applicants need to open a bank account for the receipt of the foreign funds at a specified branch of State Bank of India in New Delhi.
- FCRA registration is valid for five years, and NGOs are required to apply for renewal within six months of the registration's expiry.
- The government has the authority to cancel an NGO's FCRA registration for various reasons, including violations of the Act or a lack of reasonable activity in their chosen field for two consecutive years.
- Once canceled, an NGO is ineligible for re-registration for three years.
- Section 135 Companies Act, 2013 - CSR provisions are applicable to companies:
 - With an annual turnover of INR 1,000 crore and more
 - Or a net worth of INR 500 crore and more
 - Or a net profit of 5 crore INR and more
 - The Act mandates companies to spend at least 2% of their average net profit in the previous three years on CSR activities.

What is USAID?

- **The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency of the U.S. government, established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy.**
- **It was created to consolidate various foreign assistance programs under one agency to administer civilian foreign aid and development assistance.**
- **USAID receives funding allocated in the U.S. federal budget.**
- **The top recipient countries of USAID include: Ukraine, Ethiopia, Jordan, Somalia etc.**
- **Objectives and Areas of Work**
- **It operates in over 100 countries, providing financial aid and technical assistance in key sectors such as:**
- **Economic development, Health and education, Food security and humanitarian assistance, Climate change mitigation and Democracy and governance.**





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न अर्जुन की तरह महारथी हूँ

मात्र मैं हूँ

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