

THE WORLD

WILL DEFEND CANADIAN WORKERS, BUSINESSES IN NEGOTIATIONS: CARNEY

Trump says 35% tariff on Canada from next month, eyes 15-20% for others

US says changes only if fentanyl flow goes down

JEFF MASON & ISMAIL SHAKIL
WASHINGTON, JULY 11

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump ramped up his tariff assault on Canada on Thursday, saying the U.S. would impose a 35% tariff on imports next month and planned to impose blanket tariffs of 15% or 20% on most trading partners.

In a letter released on his social media platform, Trump told Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney the new rate would go into effect on August 1 and would go up if Canada retaliated.

In a post on X late on Thursday, Carney said his government will continue to defend Canadian workers and businesses in their negotiations with the US as they work towards that deadline. The 35% tariff is an increase from the current 25% rate that Trump had assigned to Canada and is a blow to Carney, who was seeking to agree a trade pact with US.

An exclusion for goods covered by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) on trade was expected



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney. Reuters file

to stay in place, and 10% tariffs on energy and fertilizer were also not set to change, an official said.

Trump said in his letter about what he referred to as the flow of fentanyl from Canada as well as the country's tariff- and non-tariff trade barriers that hurt US dairy farmers and others. "If Canada works with me to stop the flow of Fentanyl, we will, perhaps, consider an adjustment to this letter," Trump wrote.

Canadian officials say a miniscule amount of fentanyl originates from Canada but they have taken measures to strengthen the border. "Canada has made vital progress to stop the scourge of fentanyl in North America. We are committed to continuing to work with the United States to save lives and protect communities in both our countries," Carney added in his X post late Tuesday. **REUTERS**

Rubio meets China's Wang Yi, says good chance of Trump-Xi meeting

DAPHNE PSALEDAKIS & DANIAL AZHAR
KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 11

US SECRETARY of State Marco Rubio said on Friday he had "positive and constructive" talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, as the two major powers vied to push their agendas in Asia at a time of tension over Washington's tariff offensive.

The top US diplomat was in Malaysia on his first Asia trip since taking office, seeking to stress the US commitment to the region at the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum, where many countries were reeling from a raft of steep US tariffs announced by US President Donald Trump.

Rubio had his first in-person talks with China's foreign minister, which came after Beijing warned Washington against reinstating hefty levies on its goods next month and threatened retaliation against nations that strike deals with the US to cut China out of supply chains.

Wang sharply criticised Washington during talks with Asian counterparts in Malaysia,



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio had his first in-person talks with the Chinese foreign minister in Kuala Lumpur. AP

calling the US tariffs "typical unilateral bullying behavior".

But both sides described their bilateral meeting as positive and constructive on Friday. And Rubio said the odds of Trump meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping were high. "We're two big, powerful countries, and there are always going to be issues that we disagree on. I think there's some areas of potential cooperation and I thought it was a very constructive, posi-

tive meeting, and a lot of work to do," he told reporters.

Rubio said that his sit-down with Wang was not a negotiation, but rather about establishing a constructive baseline to continue talks. Rubio noted Trump had been invited to visit China, and added: "It's a visit he wants to undertake, and so we'll work on finding the right date for that, but I'm sure it'll happen because the president - both presidents - want it to happen." **REUTERS**

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"AVOID POLITICAL & IRRELEVANT ARTICLES"
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Can't So Then You Have To Increase Your Efforts
All the topics of this UPSC IAS Edition are directly or
indirectly important for the prelims & main examination.
There are some topics which can be coded in answer writing
of other topics in the main exam.

FRANCE

Drowning deaths spiked by 58% during heat wave

Paris: France's public health authority said on Friday that more than 100 people had died from drowning between June 1 and July 2 this year, an increase of 58% over the same period last year, blaming it on unusually warm weather at the end of June. Sante Publique, the French authority, said 429 total drownings had occurred in France between June 1 and July 2. "These increases occurred in a context of high temperatures... which led to an increase in people going to swimming areas to cool off." **REUTERS**

**ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION PANEL HEARS JUSTICES CHANDRACHUD, KHEHAR**

Joint polls constitutional, say ex-CJIs, question sweeping powers to EC in Bill

Point to some provisions in ONOE Bill which could lead to legal challenges

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY & DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI, JULY 11

FORMER CHIEF Justices of India Justice JS Khehar and Justice DY Chandrachud, who appeared Friday before the Joint Committee of Parliament on the 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) Bill, are learnt to have said that the Bill does not violate the basic structure of the Constitution.

However, they were said to have underlined that the Bill in its present form may not pass the Constitution muster, especially with regard to the sweeping powers given to the Election Commission of India.

Earlier, former CJIs UU Lalit and Ranjan Gogoi, who too appeared before the panel, had raised the issue of possible legal challenges to the Bill.

Justices Khehar and Chandrachud had almost a five-hour-long discussion with the committee. They were said to have not only gone through the entire Bill, provision by provision, but also discussed the larger issues of constitutional philosophy, morality and politics

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Chairman of the House panel on 'One Nation, One Election', P P Chaudhary, posted on X photographs of former Chief Justices of India D Y Chandrachud (left) and JS Khehar appearing before the committee on Friday. X/@ppchaudharybjp

Four ex-CJIs raise red flag: EC power to delay simultaneous elections may not pass muster

APURVA VISHWANATH

NEW DELHI, JULY 11

APPEARING BEFORE the Joint Committee of Parliament on 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) Bill, four former Chief Justices of India have red-flagged the vast powers that the Election Commission holds in the proposed law for holding simultaneous polls.

It is learnt that on Friday former CJIs J S Khehar and D Y Chandrachud expressed doubts whether the power of EC to de-

cide if simultaneous polls can be delayed for a state is constitutionally permissible. Both are learnt to have underlined that holding simultaneous polls itself is constitutional and would not violate the basic structure of the Constitution.

However, it is learnt that Justice Chandrachud told the committee that the EC's powers might suffer from constitutional infirmities.

In March, Rajya Sabha MP and former CJI Ranjan Gogoi had also pointed out that the EC had

been given unrestricted powers to decide the schedule of simultaneous polls. In February, former CJI UU Lalit had also given some suggestions on various aspects, including on the power of the EC.

Parliamentary committee proceedings are privileged, and details of exchanges between members during meetings are not made public.

The 129th Constitution Amendment Bill, which seeks to introduce simultaneous polls, states that the EC will decide

whether simultaneous polls are feasible.

The proposed amendment to Article 82 of the Constitution stipulates that the "if the Election Commission is of the opinion that the elections to any Legislative Assembly cannot be conducted along with the general election to the House of the People, it may make a recommendation to the President, to declare by an order, that the election to that Legislative Assembly may be conducted at a later date."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**JULY 14-15 SCO HUDDLE IN RUN-UP TO SUMMIT LATER THIS YEAR**

Jaishankar likely to be in China next week, first visit since LAC standoff

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, JULY 11

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar is likely to travel to Tianjin in China for the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on July 14-15, sources have told *The Indian Express*.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is expected to host the meeting which will be attended by counterparts from Pakistan, Iran and Russia among others.

This will be Jaishankar's first visit to China since the start of the military standoff along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh in May 2020.



China Foreign Minister Wang Yi and MoS for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita at East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur. PTI

The meeting of the Foreign Ministers will also set the stage for the SCO Leaders' Summit in Tianjin, which is expected to be held early September.

Jaishankar's visit follows visits by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and NSA Ajit Doval, who had travelled to China in the last

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FULL REPORTS ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Joint polls constitutional, say 2 former CJIs

associated with the Bill.

Later, committee chairperson P P Chaudhary said, "It was a rich discussion. We got valuable inputs and many issues that members had were clarified. Justice Khehar told the members that it was a golden opportunity for nation-building and that they should avail it as they will not get it back again."

Parliamentary committee proceedings are privileged, and details of exchanges between members during meetings are not made public.

Issues related to the Bill being silent on situations such as imposition of Emergency in a state or whether elections could be forced even if an Assembly had just three months of tenure left at the time of dissolution also

came up.

On whether simultaneous elections would lead to dilution of local issues, Justice Chandrachud, it is learnt, said the exact opposite might happen too. He was said to have cited the example of the language issue, a regional issue with the potential to become a national voting agenda in simultaneous polls.

In the context of the powers given to the EC and the Bill being silent on many electoral situations, Justice Chandrachud flagged legal challenges and proposed some redrafting of the Bill.

It is learnt he suggested that it was time to give thought to some constraints on the no-confidence motion provision to ensure some stability. This, he suggested, could be done by just

amending the rules of the House, requiring no constitutional amendment.

He was said to have told the committee that asynchronous (non-simultaneous) elections were not held as a criteria of a free and fair election and were not part of the basic structure. In fact, the constitutional scheme early in the history of the republic was to hold simultaneous elections, he pointed out.

Justice Khehar too gave a similar opinion. On the proposed Article 82A (1), he observed that the clause only fixed the appointed date, which would be the first sitting of the new Lok Sabha, and brought about no change in the conduct of election or tenure of the House, so it was not violative of the Constitution.

All Assemblies elected after the appointed date would have their terms ending with that of the Lok Sabha, as per the Bill.

In Justice Chandrachud's view, the Constitution only provides for a maximum term, that is five years, and there is no minimum guaranteed term. He was said to have pointed out that in a parliamentary democracy, there was no guaranteed term at all, and a government had to prove its mandate throughout the five years, through the check of the no-confidence motion.

Justice Khehar observed that the Bill, while curtailing the term of Assemblies to only the unexpired term i.e less than 5 years, also ensures that the electorate is clearly informed about the reduced term at the time of voting.

● 4 ex-CJIs red-flag EC powers

At least two former CJIs, it is learnt, have suggested amending the law to include parliamentary oversight over the EC's power to decide the schedule. Justice Chandrachud, it is learnt, also suggested narrowing down the EC's powers to delay the schedule only on the grounds of "pub-

lic order or national security" to ensure that the power is not used arbitrarily.

Broad powers in legislation without sufficient safeguards could be deemed arbitrary by courts and be held violative of the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.

● Jaishankar likely to be in China next week, first visit since standoff

week of June for SCO meetings.

While these discussions are taking place in multilateral meetings, they assume significance in the bilateral context.

Delhi and Beijing have been working towards normalising their bilateral relationship, but India's Operation Sindoor against China's ally Pakistan brought out divergences in the relationship.

In recent days, Indian Army officers have publicly accused China of complicity in Pakistani military strikes against India in the wake of Operation Sindoor. Lt General Rahul R Singh, Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Capability Development and Sustenance), said Beijing provided "live inputs" to Pakistan on Indian operational deployment even when talks were underway between the Indian and Pakistani Directors General of Military Operations regarding cessation of hostilities.

Naming Pakistan, China and Turkey as the "three adversaries" India faced on its "one border" in the north, Lt Gen Singh said China provided "all possible support", treated the northern border as a "live lab" to test its weapons supplied to Pakistan, and had followed its "36 stratagems", hoping to kill the adversary with "a borrowed knife", and to "use the neighbour to cause pain".

This was the strongest indictment of Beijing's involvement in the military confrontation between India and Pakistan in May.

In the last week of June, eight months after the disengagement of troops at the LAC in eastern Ladakh, Rajnath Singh told his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun that there was need for a "structured roadmap of permanent engagement and de-escalation". He called for a "permanent solution of border demarcation".

In his talks on the sidelines of the meeting of SCO Defence Ministers in Qingdao, Singh underlined the need for "bridging the trust deficit created after the 2020 border standoff, by taking action on ground".

The SCO Defence Ministers failed to issue a joint statement after Singh declined to sign the draft statement which omitted a reference to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in J&K.

So, Jaishankar's visit will be a challenging task for New Delhi. China is the host of the SCO Leaders' Summit in Tianjin which will be hosted by President Xi Jinping.

Doval had travelled to Beijing in December last year when India and China agreed on a set of "six consensus" including resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, trans-border river cooperation and Nathula border trade. This was announced by the two sides following talks in Beijing between Doval and Wang Yi — they are also the Special Representatives (SRs).

The two sides have taken some steps including the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, currently underway. The two sides are also talking to each other about resuming direct flights and are looking to ease visa curbs for Chinese nationals and sharing data on transnational rivers like the Brahmaputra.

The two sides also agreed to jointly make preparations for the 24th Special Representatives' Meeting on the China-India Boundary Question.

Sources said the Indian side is working towards engaging the Chinese side with "eyes wide open" because the border situation is still not normal. About 50,000-60,000 troops are still deployed on either side of the LAC.

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GOVT & POLITICS

Punjab House passes resolution against CISF deployment at Bhakra-Nangal project

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 11

THE PUNJAB Assembly Friday unanimously passed a resolution rejecting the Centre's proposed deployment of CISF personnel at the Bhakra-Nangal dam project, and said if the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) went ahead with the move, the state government would not bear any financial burden arising out of it.

Moving the resolution on the second day of the special session of the Vidhan Sabha, Cabinet Minister Barinder Kumar Goyal said Punjab had re-examined the issue and conveyed to the BBMB on May 27 and July 4 its strong reservations against the deployment of CISF.

Amid a standoff between Punjab and Haryana over the sharing of waters from the Nangal Dam, the Centre in May this year had sanctioned a contingent of 296 armed CISF personnel for providing a counter-terrorist security cover to the project — a move that was opposed by the Aam Aadmi Party government in the state.

If the CISF personnel are deployed, Punjab, being a partner state of BBMB, will also have to bear part of the cost.

During the discussion on the resolution, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann termed the BBMB a “white elephant” and said it needs to be reconstituted. “Punjab has 60 per cent share in BBMB, yet it moved court against us for not sharing water with Haryana. Deploying CISF will cost ₹97,000 per head, which amounts to more than Rs 43 crore annually. We will not bear this cost,” he said.

In its communication in May, the Union Ministry had asked the BBMB to provide boarding, lodging and other logistics for the CISF personnel. The communication quoted a security deposit of ₹2,90,100 per head and asked the BBMB to transfer ₹8,58,69,600 (for 296 personnel) to CISF headquarters.

The Leader of Opposition, Congress' Partap Bajwa, supported the resolution but asked the government to also bring a resolution against deployment of CISF at the secretariat. “All the ministers sit in the secretariat, which is guarded by CISF. Why should they allow CISF to guard the installation. We should have Punjab Police guard it,” he said.

Opposition members including Shiromani Akali Dal's Gurpreet Singh Ayali, and BJP's Jangl Lal Mahajan also supported the resolution.

Scrap or modify? Nagaland internal ST quota debate heats up

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, JULY 11

WITH AN agitation pushing for ending reservations for “backward tribes” on one side and a demand to increase the quantum of this quota on the other, Nagaland’s nearly five-decade old reservation policy has become the centre of a debate in the state.

This week, the Committee on Review of Reservation Policy (CORRP), a grouping of five tribes in Nagaland, resumed its protest to push for a review of the reservation policy, which provides for an internal quota within the broader ST category for “Indigenous Scheduled Tribes of Nagaland” in government jobs and reserves 37% of posts for tribes identified as “backward tribes”.

The CORRP comprises representatives from the apex bodies of five groups that have come to be called “advanced tribes”: Ao, Angami, Sumi, Lotha and Rengma.

In response to pressure from Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+tUYKq0AFHBawMGQ1>

the CORRP, which has been building up since September last year, the Nagaland government had in March convened a meeting. Following this, Cabinet minister Neiba Kronu said the government has decided to review the policy.

Two months later, Deputy CM Y Patton met with the CORRP and said the Cabinet would deliberate on whether a commission on this matter would be set up.

However, there is a roadblock. The stand of the government, which was expressed by CM Neiphiu Rio in the Assembly last year and in a statement last week, is that a review of the reservation policy is only possible after the long-pending national Census is completed. Saying that the government wants to avoid “temporary arrangements” in connection with reservations, Rio told reporters last week: “For any reform in administration or backward reservation or delimitation, it should come after the conduct of the Census.”

There are 14 recognized Naga



Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio

tribes in Nagaland, and the Scheduled Tribes in the state also include “Indigenous” Garo, Mikir, Kuki and Kachari groups.

The Nagaland government had first introduced reservation for STs of the state in the Nagaland State Services in 1967. The quantum for this was fixed at 80% of vacancies in the Nagaland State Services and 100% of non-technical Grade-III and IV posts.

The element of internal reservations within this reservation was introduced in 1977. Through an order then, 25% of these reserved vacancies were reserved for seven tribes – Konyak, Chakhesang, Sangtam, Phom, Chang, Yimchunger and Khiamunuingan – citing economic backwardness and “in-

significant representation in the services”. The 1977 order had laid down a timeline of 10 years for these additional reservations. However, in 1989, through another order, the Nagaland government directed that the reservation policy would continue “until further orders”.

After several changes in the quantum of reservations for “backward tribes” and the list of tribes entitled to it, the present quota stands at 25% of all posts under the Government of Nagaland for six tribes from Eastern Nagaland districts – Konyak, Phom, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Chang and Khiamniungan – and another 12% for the Chakhesang, Pochury, Zeliang tribes and the Sumis from Kiphire district.

Now, other tribes are saying that the quota policy for backward tribes be entirely scrapped or that the remaining posts be reserved exclusively for them.

“This policy was supposed to be there for 10 years, but it has been there for 48 years. There Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F>

have been six review committees that made various recommendations, one of which was that Chakhesang and Zeliang tribes be removed from the backward tribes list as they have made considerable advancement. But neither were these implemented nor were the other tribes ever included in these discussions,” said G K Zhimomi, the member secretary of CORRP.

Zhimomi said the disparity in Nagaland was “economic” – not because of a rigid social system like the caste system – and called for a policy better suited for Nagaland. He also pitched for a “creamy layer” system as it exists for OBC reservation. While there is a 27% quota for OBCs in government jobs and higher educational institutions, those falling within the “creamy layer” cannot get the benefits of this quota.

Not just the CORRP, calls for a review of reservation policy have come from different quarters including Naga Students’ Federation and its lone LSMP Congress leader

Supongmeren Jamir.

There is also a demand from another quarter: organisations representing tribes from Eastern Nagaland, which have for years been demanding that the backward tribes reservation for the seven tribes from the region be increased to 45%.

The six eastern districts of the state have historically lagged behind in development indices, a regional disparity that was also flagged in the 2016 Nagaland State Human Development Report.

“We are waiting for the government to take a call on this issue but we believe it should be reviewed and that there should be an enhancement (of ST internal quota) for Eastern Nagaland areas. The current policy is not doing justice. Even though it has been in place for so many years, it has been on paper. It does not reflect in the offices where these figures are not being met,” said Eastern Naga Students Federation President Nuhey mong.

Fadnavis govt halts registration of bridge course homeopath docs

Govt forms panel, protests withdrawn

ANURADHA MASCARENAH
PUNE, JULY 11

THE STATE government Friday formed a committee to look into concerns flagged by doctors over a notification allowing homeopathy practitioners to get registered with the Maharashtra Medical Council (MMC) after they complete the Certificate Course in Modern Pharmacology (CCMP). After the state assured it will suspend the registration process and a circular was issued, doctors with the IMA withdrew their plan for a stir. Dr Santosh Kadam, president, IMA, Maharashtra told *The Indian Express* their contention was that if homeopathy practitioners are registered with MMC after they complete the bridge course, it would allow them to practice modern medicine.

Several organisations had protested against the notification dated June 30, 2025, allowing homeopathy practitioners who had completed the bridge course to register with MMC from July 15. Besides the IMA, the Maharashtra Senior Resident Doctors’ Association and other medical groups had questioned the government’s decision and supported the IMA’s move for a token strike.

The IMA had also filed a writ in the Bombay HC in February this year regarding the potential registration of homeopathic doctors with the MMC. Doctors had also protested the notification as they questioned whether a bridge

course in modern pharmacology would equip homeopathy practitioners to prescribe allopathic drugs safely. Dr Kadam along with former MMC chairman Dr Shivkumar Uttare and other doctors met CM Devendra Fadnavis late on Thursday evening, following which a meeting was held Friday morning.

The CM had instructed Principal Secretary of Medical Education Dheeraj Kumar and MMC administrator Dr Vinky Rughwani to discuss the issue, following which a panel was set up. It is chaired by the Commissioner of Medical Education and includes the registrar of Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Maharashtra Homeopathy Council, Maharashtra Medical Council and others.

Dr Rughwani told *The Indian Express* that the panel has been asked to submit a report in two months. “Till such time that they submit the report, the government has agreed to withdraw the notification,” Dr Rughwani said.

When contacted, Dr RS Indulkar, advisor to Maharashtra Homeopathy Council, told *The Indian Express*, “There is a need for doctors in remote corners. There is a paucity as most of the modern medicine doctors prefer working in urban setups. By this CCMP course, homeopathy practitioner upgrades their skill and is able to prescribe allopathic medicines. Even in urban areas, a majority of hospitals have employed homeopathy doctors. Then why this dichotomy?” she said.



As America slips

The US is undermining what made it great. India will suffer short-term pain — it also has opportunities



MANISH SABHARWAL

LISTEN TO THE COURT

EC must not stand on prestige. At stake is the integrity and credibility of the process it has fine-tuned so painstakingly

THE SUPREME COURT has not stayed or stopped the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar, an exercise that has stoked confusion on the ground and raised spectres of disenfranchisement. But that's not the most important message after the EC's day in court Thursday. It is, instead, this: The Court has flagged important issues that the Commission would do well to heed and act upon, before it files its counter-affidavit in a fortnight — the SC is scheduled to hear the matter again on July 28. Even as the Court has framed its concerns with a respectful tentativeness, given that it is addressing a constitutional authority, the EC must know that they resonate widely. It needs to ask itself whether the electoral roll revision exercise — unprecedented not in itself, but for asking for documentation at the stage of enumeration, for shifting the burden of proof onto voters, and for disregarding the sanctity of existing electoral rolls — can be carried out according to due process with only months to go before the Bihar election. It needs to consider seriously the Court's suggestion that, "in the interest of justice", it should include more accessible and ubiquitous options like the Aadhaar card, ration card and voter ID card in its list of required documents. The Court has asked the EC to give reasons for not including these. The EC must know that the onus is now on it to prove that it is acting in good faith.

It is ironic that the EC, for long seen to be one of India's most trusted institutions, should find itself in the dock. The reforms initiated and supervised by the EC in a sprawling country of staggering diversities have ensured that the Indian election sets the gold standard for the conduct of free and fair polls, and for ensuring that no voter is left out, every vote is counted in. Now, that institution must show that it also listens, that it knows when not to stand on prestige. For, at stake is its own record and legacy, and more importantly, the integrity and credibility of the process that it has refined and fine-tuned so painstakingly. Apart from suggesting the inclusion of three documents in the EC list, and pointing out that the tight timeline creates practical difficulties, including in the matter of providing a reasonable opportunity for a hearing in cases of deletion, the Court has also drawn attention to the question of remit. It is the Ministry of Home Affairs, not the EC, the SC has rightly said, whose task it is to ascertain or verify citizenship.

But most of all, the EC must listen to the Court because it is giving the Commission another opportunity to listen to the voice of India's voters. Ground reports in this paper have captured some of those voices, especially in vulnerable sections that are more likely to fall through the cracks of a complicated bureaucratic exercise. The EC must listen to the undocumented people, the poor and the migrants, the SCs and STs and extremely backward castes, and to the women who move from their parents' homes to their marital homes. It must update and clean the electoral rolls, of course, and make them more accurate. But it must do so without making the process arduous for the people, and without stoking their anxieties.

CALL BACK THE BILL

Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill will aid state over-reach, criminalise dissent. Fadnavis government must step back

THERE ARE SALIENT differences between Left Wing Extremism (LWE) — which has been flagged by successive governments at the Centre and in the states as a grave internal security threat — and "urban Maoism". The former, an insurgency against the state, has targeted security forces, government officials, civilians and politicians and invited a whole-of-government response that includes armed engagement, development work and a host of other policies and actions. The latter is a political term of relatively recent vintage that has been deployed controversially against activists, students and academics who have expressed dissent with the dominant ideology or political establishment. Disturbingly, the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, passed by the lower House, conflates the two. Its loosely defined scope and stringent provisions raise spectres of state overreach and misuse. Armed with vague and opaque definitions, it invites the danger of blurring the lines between extremist violence and non-violent dissent.

The Bill fails the test established by the Supreme Court as far back as 1962 in *Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar*. Words and ideas, no matter how critical of the government, even the state itself, do not constitute sedition or a crime unless they can be directly linked to an incitement to violence. The Bill provides for a jail term of up to seven years for "any action" that is "spoken or written" or "by visual representation" that can be construed as a "danger to peace and tranquillity" or interferes with "maintenance of public order", and it allows for attaching the property of an accused. In this respect, it is more stringent than the most controversial sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. Democracy, in practice, is the right to speak and write, to draw and debate, to disagree and criticise. The Constitution recognises this in its guarantees of the fundamental rights to speech and expression. The Special Public Security Act violates that promise in letter and spirit.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who tabled the Bill, said that it was needed to counter organisations that are "brainwashing the youth". He should have more faith in the maturity of the young. He spoke of how LWE influence is waning in the state, as in much of the "red corridor", which, he said, is down from four districts to two blocks. Why, then, raise the bogey of "urban Maoism"? It is difficult not to see the Bill as an attempt to arrogate more powers to the state and to help it to criminalise political-ideological opponents. The Maharashtra government must rethink the law.

AN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE occurs when your body's immune system treats its own healthy tissues as invaders and attacks them. America's policies currently targeting its three powerful muscles — universities, companies and immigration — create short-term pain for India in remittances, student enrolment, manufacturing jobs, foreign investment and exports. While these attacks feel like a passing shower, it's too early to conclude they aren't the climate change of Pax Americana ending. Regardless of how politics unfolds in America, India must seize the long-term economic opportunities by making itself stronger through a 180-day plan for deregulation for employers, decentralisation of power and deepening of human capital.

Some people date Pax Americana — US dominance in the world order — to World War II. I prefer January 1992, when President George H W Bush, referring to the Soviet Union's collapse, said, "The last year has seen changes of biblical proportions. By the grace of God ... a world once divided ... now recognises one sole and preeminent power, the United States of America." Despite this biblical hubris — and 9/11, two wars, a financial crisis and Covid since — the US has dominated in digital innovation, new drugs and stock market growth because it stole the best people in the world, made public investments in basic science and its companies globalised their supply chains. But America is now pouncing on all three.

America's universities are home to 50 per cent of Nobel Prize winners. Funding from the National Institutes of Health contributed to 99 per cent of all drugs approved between 2010 and 2019. In biotech, US government funding accounted for 38 per of total investment in 2024, almost as much as all global venture capital combined. Global consumers of medicine and information technology innovations (chips, internet, and GPS) have benefited from generous US government funding that supported cutting-edge basic science research and grants to academic scientists. Some of the backlash against universities is earned as some intolerant humanities professors with physics envy gift-wrapped their disciplines as social

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The political popularity of America's economic irrationality — Make America Great Again, feels like Make America White Again — suggests healing will take time. But Indians showing *schadenfreude* at America's challenges should pause. Despite our short-term pain from the US's actions, its democracy remains the best partner for India's students, emigrants, investment needs and exports. Suppose the government-funded American research engine in basic science suffers. It's hard to imagine the Indian state or pharma, software, and manufacturing companies responding with resources of the same intensity and impact.



RUCHI GUPTA

AS THE US and China drive a new era of AI competition, and the EU asserts leadership on AI regulation, India has articulated its ambition to lead in technology and shape global AI governance. With its democratic legitimacy and digital capacity, India is positioned to represent the Global South in AI forums. However, without a comprehensive, politically grounded national strategy, it risks falling behind in technological capability and managing the attendant strategic and social transformations.

The IndiaAI Mission, approved last year with a budget of over Rs 10,000 crore, is a welcome step. But it is a mission without a mandate. Housed as a division of a Section 8 company under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, it is led by a bureaucrat. Operating without a Cabinet-endorsed national strategy, it lacks both the political heft to drive whole-of-government coordination or signal the long-term political commitment required to align public and private action. The US, China, the UK and the EU anchor their AI efforts in formal, Cabinet-endorsed national strategies with clear roadmaps and timelines.

This governance gap is critical because India faces structural deficits that impede its AI ecosystem, which cannot be overcome through incremental approaches. The Indian R&D base remains relatively shallow. Our universities are underrepresented in global AI rankings; the pipeline of AI-specialised PhDs is limited; collaboration between academia and industry is weak. India continues to lose top-tier AI talent to global hubs.

In the private sector, India's IT industry remains oriented toward services. Research investments are modest relative to interna-

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sciences, ignoring Richard Feynman's warning that physics would be impossible if electrons had feelings. This conversion of economics to mathematics, political science to statistics, and sociology/anthropology to racism paralleled a crisis in peer-reviewed, journal-published academic papers around replicability, scalability, and generalisability. It's also unclear whether a private university like Harvard, with an endowment of \$50 billion, should take \$90,000 per student per year in government funding.

President Donald Trump's economically illiterate advice to Walmart, a hyper-efficient American retailer with 3 per cent profit margins, to "eat" his import tariffs is a long way from the global supply chains described in the new book *Apple in China* by Patrick McGee. Ignoring the author's patronising and unfair portrayal of Apple's motivations, the book insightfully demonstrates how the globalisation of manufacturing supply chains became the most significant factor in reducing global poverty by attracting investment, training managers and accelerating productivity. India came late to manufacturing supply chains; only one in 10 of our workers works in a factory. However, China's recent dismissal of Deng Xiaoping's economic genius presents India with a manufacturing opportunity to attract factory refugees despite America's tariff drama.

If demography is destiny, immigration has ensured America doesn't face the problems of Japan (adult diapers outsell baby diapers) or China (Nigeria may have more people by 2060). Approximately 14 per cent of Americans are foreign-born, and immigrants, including their US-born children, account for 27 per cent of the country's population. These numbers conceal the disproportionate contributions of Indian immigrants to new company formation, university teaching, scientific research, technology innovation, and taxes. India's improbable success in two Indian industries — economists never envisioned poor countries exporting software and medicines — benefited from America's skilled worker visa regime and brain circulation. A new book by Srinath Raghavan of Ashoka University on the Indira Gandhi years suggests they represent

conjoined crises of hegemony, representation, and governance. This may also explain America's political backlash. Universities became idealists with illusions. The geographic (rural) and sectoral (manufacturing) concentration of wage declines were ignored. Liberals denied that illegal migration would hurt legal migration, a path to citizenship is not necessary for a path to work. And migrants are easier to vilify than technology.

The political popularity of America's economic irrationality — Make America Great Again, feels like Make America White Again — suggests healing will take time. But Indians showing *schadenfreude* at America's challenges should pause. Despite our short-term pain from the US's actions, its democracy remains the best partner for India's students, emigrants, investment needs and exports. Suppose the government-funded American research engine in basic science suffers. It's hard to imagine the Indian state or pharma, software, and manufacturing companies responding with resources of the same intensity and impact. Let's compare America to the alternative; imagine the tyranny and soullessness of a global order hinged on China.

Every problem is an opportunity. India must capitalise on this one in three ways. First, cut employer compliance, filing and criminal provisions. Second, shift some of Delhi's power (funds, functions and functionalities) to state and city governments. Third, while the troubles of America's Ivy League universities are probably temporary, granting *poorna swaraj* to IISc, IITs, IIMs, and Ashoka to innovate, disrupt and teach would accelerate their disruption of global university rankings.

All three reforms are hard. But as a song from the movie *Pink* reminded us, *Jo tujh se lip ti bediyaan samajh na inko vastra tu/ ye bediyaan pighal ke banale in ko shastra tu* (Don't mistake the chains that bind you for clothes/ Melt these chains into weapons). In policy, there is no such thing as being too late, but there is a "fierce urgency of now". Success is far from guaranteed but the moment feels auspicious.

The writer is co-founder of Teamlease Services

MISSION WITHOUT A MANDATE

India's AI ambitions need bipartisan consensus. Parliament must be brought in

tional companies, and to the extent that the Indian IT industry has engaged with AI, it has been largely in deployment — downstream of frontier innovation. India lacks AI-first national champions and the deep-tech industrial ecosystem seen in global leaders. Venture capital majors are frank: They see India as a consumer market, not a deep-tech innovator. Funding remains skewed towards consumer tech, not foundational research. Bridging these deficits will require a coordinated transformation, guided by a national strategy, anchored in political consensus and designed to provide long-term policy stability. That consensus is what India's current approach lacks. Parliament's role goes beyond regulation; it is the primary forum for signalling bipartisan political consensus. Yet, Parliament has remained extraneous to shaping national AI governance. Less than 1 per cent of questions are on AI and there is no dedicated institutional mechanism for oversight. In other leading democracies, legislative processes have built bipartisan support for AI strategies, ensured transparency, and aligned governance with public values. Without parliamentary anchoring, India's AI governance risks remaining fragmented and vulnerable to administrative shifts.

The consequences of this democratic deficit are evident. Important debates around strategic autonomy, use of public data, energy demands and national security implications have received short shrift in the largely technocratic policy discussions. This absence also undermines India's international credibility. While India's leadership of the Global Partnership on AI signals global ambition, other

democracies will look at whether its domestic governance aligns with its aspirations abroad.

The path forward is clear. India needs a Cabinet-endorsed National AI Strategy — presented to Parliament — that sets out a vision, an actionable roadmap, and mechanisms for democratic accountability. This strategy must establish an empowered coordinating authority with a whole-of-government mandate; align R&D, industrial policy, and security strategy, and create frameworks for public engagement and parliamentary oversight. AI is not just another technology. It is a general-purpose transformation that will reshape national security, economic structures and the social contract itself. Managing that transformation requires policy stability and legitimacy — built through broad-based national deliberation.

India's strengths are undeniable: A young population, a competitive digital economy, and the world's largest democracy. These assets position India to chart an AI trajectory that combines innovation with inclusion. But that future will not emerge by default.

The window for action is closing. As global AI governance frameworks take shape and capabilities advance rapidly, India must move beyond piecemeal initiatives toward a comprehensive strategy. AI governance must be treated as a national strategic priority — grounded in democratic consensus — if India is to shape an AI future aligned with its national interests and global leadership aspirations.

Gupta is executive director of Future of India Foundation. This article draws from the Foundation's report, 'Governing AI in India: Why Strategy Must Precede Mission'

THE IDEAS PAGE

Farm crisis, Made in China

Beijing is weaponising fertiliser exports, but Centre has shown little urgency to help farmers



PAWAN KHERA

I WAS IN Bihar last week. A young farmer named Raju Singh greeted me with folded hands. But his smile didn't quite reach his eyes. "Sir, *bijli kabhi hai, kabhi nahi. Ab DAP (Di-ammonium Phosphate) bhi gaya. Ab boliye, kya ugaayein? Kyu ugaayein?*" (The power supply is erratic. Now even DAP supplies have stopped. What do we grow now?) The question, "Why even farm?" should give nightmares to policymakers in Delhi. When farmers stop wondering what to grow and start asking why, we are not facing an agricultural crisis. We are staring at an abyss of depleting national morale.

Raju isn't alone. Across Bihar — in Siwan, Samastipur, Darbhanga — I heard versions of the same story. Farmers queuing up for fertiliser and being told to "wait", while private agents jack up prices under the counter. Some bought DAP at Rs 1,750 a bag — Rs 400 above the notified price — according to local mandi reports. Others simply gave up.

Fertiliser stock levels in India are nearly half of what they were at the same time last year. With such limited availability, prices are skyrocketing. The decline is largely due to China's informal ban on fertiliser exports to India. Despite the absence of a formal notification from their government, customs authorities and port officials in China have stopped clearing fertiliser shipments destined for India.

India is the largest importer of DAP in the world, the second-most used fertiliser in the country after urea. China has historically been the top exporter of DAP to India. Eighty per cent of India's speciality fertilisers — crucial for high-value horticultural crops like fruits and vegetables — also come from China. As the *kharif* sowing season (June–July) is underway, the shortage of DAP and speciality fertilisers is back-breaking for Indian farmers.

The government has shown no urgency. It has repeatedly raised slogans of Atmanirbhar Bharat. But this spirit of self-reliance is hardly reflected in primary sectors like agriculture. We are told to blame global forces for the disruptions, but this isn't a global halt. This ban is exclusive to India.

Why the ban? China has a tendency to weaponise trade to solve territorial disputes. In 2010, a collision between a Chinese fishing boat and Japanese coast guard vessels near the disputed Senkaku Islands (known as the Diaoyu Islands in China) led to the detention of the Chinese captain by Japan. In response, China halted rare earth exports to Japan, although this was not officially announced. India, of course, has its own unresolved territorial dispute with China. This is China's way of arm-twisting India into submission. The Narendra Modi government is yet to call out China.

At the time of the dispute, Japan, too, was heavily reliant on China for its rare earth supplies. It took the matter to the WTO, and in 2014, it ruled against China to stabilise rare earth prices. The matter generated ripples across the world as many countries re-evaluated their reliance on China. Japan, for example, initiated efforts to diversify its supply chain of rare earth reserves. Consequently, its dependence on China for rare earth reserves has gone down by at least 30 per cent.

Having witnessed China leverage its rare earth dominance with Japan, the Modi government should have moved on a war footing to reduce India's dependence on China from the day it assumed office in 2014. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) urged the government to establish an India Rare Earth Mission. This suggestion first fell on deaf ears. It is only during the past couple of months that the Centre has sprung into action on this matter — albeit too little and too late.

It is too late because India is already a victim of China's informal ban on the export of rare earth reserves. It is too little because this last-minute diversification of supply chains and the endeavour to boost domestic production of rare earth reserves are welcome, but not enough. As for fertilisers, the bulk of India's existing DAP production capacity was established under successive Congress governments. The BJP, on the other hand, during the past 11 years, has only shown interest in producing polarising propaganda.

The Modi government now finds itself facing a rather unconventional form of warfare. China is not directly challenging India on a battlefield or in diplomatic forums. Instead, it has launched a covert assault on farms, infrastructure projects and our manufacturing sector. The truth is, we are losing ground. Today, the ban on the export of rare earth magnets is slowly suffocating our manufacturing sector — especially defence, EVs, and electronics. Exploration and diversification of the supply chain are being taken up only now, when the damage is already done. Chinese firms have refused to supply spare parts for tunnel boring machines used in critical infrastructure projects in India, citing vague procedural hurdles.

China is throttling our agriculture during the peak season. All we have received in the name of policy over the past 11 years are rebranded schemes and repackaged slogans. In the last three months alone, over 750 farmers have died by suicide in Maharashtra. The scarcity of fertilisers will spike fruit and vegetable prices, fuel food inflation across rural India and hurt the urban middle class. States like Bihar that are already net importers of several nutrient-rich crops will bear the brunt. Let's be clear: This isn't the doing of foreign forces. It's a failure of Indian hands: Those in charge who promised *atmanirbharta* and delivered dependence, those who promised vision and delivered a vacuum.

Across the country, farmers, workers, and families are fast seeing through the BJP's propaganda. The day isn't far when they'll return the favour of indifference to the BJP — with a quiet, decisive and stinging lesson in democracy.

The writer is chairman, media and publicity department, AICC. Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBawMGQ1>

Preparing for a future war

India should focus on UAVs, not fighters or tanks



K J ALPHONS

I AM NOT a defence expert, even though I was a keen member of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on Defence. But, can anyone call themselves a defence expert after Operation Spider's Web? Carried out by Ukraine, it saw 117 drones, each reportedly costing less than Rs 50,000, apparently destroying or damaging 41 Russian aircraft — most of them strategic cruise missile carriers — including at a location 4,000 km from the Ukrainian border. In another instance, several US B-2 stealth bombers flew thousands of kilometres, passed over enemy territory, bombed Iranian nuclear facilities and returned safely, all undetected. Experts will propose dramatic changes in defence strategy, just as the art of war changed with the invention of gunpowder, machine guns, fighter planes, rockets, nuclear bombs, missiles etc. In light of recent developments, I have the following observations on future planning.

First, fighter planes are flying ducks, and horribly expensive, too. Earlier, fighters were lost in dogfights; now, they can be shot down in one's own air space from enemy

territory. It is foolish to use them when a Rs 50,000 drone can do the job much better at a fraction of the cost. It could be argued that a fighter plane can carry much bigger payloads, but with precision munitions, this is no longer so critical. In any case, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) can be designed to carry payloads of any size. Besides, for precision delivery of large payloads, missiles are the best. Our Agni missiles can hit almost anywhere in the world accurately. They are our pride and the best demonstration of *atmanirbharta*; we owe a lot to former president A P J Abdul Kalam and Tessy Thomas — the DRDO's former director general of aeronautical systems and project director for Agni-IV — for them.

Even stealth fighters have no place in future warfare — sooner rather than later, better radar technology or satellite-based observation techniques will be developed to detect them. The DRDO and HAL should stop wasting resources on fighters. Only transport planes and transport choppers will be relevant in the future. Even reconnaissance planes will be obsolete, with

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satellites doing a much better job. Second, aircraft carriers are sitting ducks for UAVs. A torpedo can also sink even the most protected carrier. And protecting one requires a lot of paraphernalia — it's like an emperor who needs to be closely guarded. They are also enormously expensive: The USS *Gerald R Ford* cost \$13.3 billion to build. India has two aircraft carriers: INS *Vikramaditya* and INS *Vikrant*. *Vikramaditya* has a displacement of 44,500 tonnes and *Vikrant* around 43,000. Both cost a fortune. China has three and is building one more. Their only purpose is to carry fighter planes and helicopters. They are good for national pride and not much else — don't build more. The money can be used to develop equipment that is far more critical.

Third, tanks are expensive. They can be immobilised with drones, and there are a variety of shells that can destroy any battle tank. They can easily be replaced with more effective and less expensive equipment — don't waste money on them.

Fourth, future wars will be satellite/UAV-driven conflicts. Not only will these track

everything, they will deliver the munitions as well, including nuclear warheads. Spend lots of money on these.

All over the world, the best defence equipment is manufactured by the private sector. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has focused on the development and production of defence equipment locally. He knows what he wants. It has produced some good results like the Akashteer air defence control and reporting system, designed and produced by BEL, which was very effective during Operation Sindoor. The DRDO's wings should be clipped drastically and it should stick to its areas of core competence, such as missile technology. Let the private sector do the rest, without any supervision by the DRDO. They will produce world-class products. Give them a free hand and have a large PLI for the sector.

Our armed forces are incredibly competent and we need to give them the best for future warfare.

Alphons is a former Union minister and author of *The Winning Formula*

What Maharashtra’s ‘urban Maoism’ Bill says

Bill passed by voice vote in Assembly targets ‘unlawful activities of left-wing extremist organisations’. First introduced last year, Bill has seen 3 amendments

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, JULY 11

THE STRINGENT Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Bill, which seeks “to provide for effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of left wing extremist organisations or similar organisations”, was passed by the state Assembly by a voice vote on Thursday.

The MSPS Bill has been debated widely ever since it was first introduced in the monsoon session of the state legislature last year by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who was Deputy Chief Minister at the time. The Opposition has raised concerns over the definition and interpretation of some of the terms and clauses in the Bill.

The Bill will now be introduced in the Legislative Council where it is expected to pass as well. It will then be sent to the Governor for his assent, following which it will become law.

Why did the Fadnavis government introduce the Bill?

The statement of objects and reasons of Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBaWMcGQ1>

the Bill says the “menace of Naxalism is not only limited to remote areas of the Naxal affected states, but its presence is increasing in the urban areas also through the Naxal front organisations”.

According to the government, these “frontal organisations” provide logistics and safe refuge to armed Naxal cadres, and “existing laws are ineffective and inadequate to tackle this menace of Naxalism”.

To address this situation, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha have enacted Public Security Acts and banned 48 Naxal frontal organisations, the Bill says.

What are the provisions of the Bill?

The Bill gives the government the power to declare any suspect “organisation” as an “unlawful organisation”. It prescribes four offences for which an individual can be punished: (i) for being a member of an unlawful organisation, (ii) when not a member, for raising funds for an unlawful organisation, (iii) for managing or assisting in managing an unlawful organisation and, (iv) for committing an “unlawful activity”.

These offences carry jail terms of two years



CM Devendra Fadnavis said Maoists were ‘trying to brainwash the youth of urban areas’. *PTI*

to seven years, along with fines ranging from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. The offence relating to committing an unlawful activity carries the toughest punishment: imprisonment of seven years and a fine of Rs 5 lakh.

Offences under the proposed law are cognizable, which means arrests can be made without a warrant, and are non-bailable.

The Bill defines ‘unlawful activity’ as any action taken by an individual or organization

whether by committing an act or by words either spoken or written or by sign or by visible representation or otherwise, which constitute a danger or menace to public order, peace and tranquility; or interferes with the maintenance of public order; or interferes with the administration of law or its established institutions and personnel; or is designed to overawe by criminal force or show of criminal force to any public servant, etc.

Indulging in or propagating, acts of violence, vandalism or other acts generating fear and apprehension in the public; encouraging or preaching disobedience to established law and its institutions; or collecting money or goods to carry out any of these unlawful activities are also included.

What happened when the Bill was first introduced last year?

The Bill was first brought at the fag end of the 2024 Monsoon Session of the Assembly. The day after the Bill was tabled, the Assembly was prorogued and the Bill was not passed.

After the Assembly elections, following which Fadnavis became Chief Minister, the Bill was introduced in December last year. Fadnavis said that since many organisations

had expressed apprehensions, the Bill would be sent to the joint select committee, and taken up again after all views and opinions had been considered.

What changes were suggested by the Joint Select Committee?

The Joint Select Committee, comprising 25 members from both houses of the legislature, was headed by BJP leader and state Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule. The Committee held five meetings between March 4 and June 26 this year.

The Committee received more than 1,200 suggestions and objections from various stakeholders including opposition parties, NGOs, and citizens until the April 15 deadline. Some objections were raised about open-ended definitions of terms like “unlawful activity”; some like the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUC) asked for the Bill be withdrawn in its entirety.

Eventually, the Committee made a total of three amendments to the original Bill.

■ The first amendment was regarding the “long title and preamble”. Initially the long title and preamble read: “A Bill to provide far more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and organisations

and for matters connected....”.

The introduction to the amended Bill says that “since the Bill intends to destroy Urban Naxalism, the Committee opined to bring clarity on this aspect”, and changed unlawful activities of individuals and organisations to “unlawful activities of Left Wing Extremist organisations or similar organisations...”.

■ The second amendment was to clause 5(2) of the Bill, which says that “the Advisory Board shall consist of three persons who are or have been or qualified to be appointed as judge of the High Court. The Government shall appoint the members and designate one of them as the Chairperson.”

The Committee suggested that the Board shall consist of a chairperson who is or has been a judge of the High Court, and two members of which one shall be retired judge and another shall be a government pleader of the High court appointed by the state government.

■ The third amendment was made to clause 15(2). Instead of the acts defined under the Bill being investigated by a police officer not below the rank of Sub Inspector, it was suggested that it should be entrusted to officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.

EXPLAINED HISTORY

Kailash-Mansarovar yatra resumes after five years: history of a storied pilgrimage

AISWARYA RAJ
DEHRADUN, JULY 11

AFTER A five-year hiatus triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic and extended due to tensions between India and China, the Kailash-Mansarovar *yatra* has resumed in 2025.

This year, the Ministry of External Affairs chose 750 pilgrims who would be making the storied pilgrimage: five batches of 50 *yatris* will cross into Tibet through the Lipulekh pass in Uttarakhand, and 10 batches of 50 pilgrims will make the longer but relatively easier journey through the Nathu La pass in Sikkim. The first batches of pilgrims on both routes are currently on their way.

The mountain & the lakes

With an elevation of 6,638 metres, Mount Kailash (*Gang Rinpoche* in Tibetan) is located in the Ngari Prefecture of the Tibet Autonomous Region, near the tri-junction of India, Tibet and Nepal. To its south on the Tibetan plateau are two lakes: the freshwater Manasarovar (*Mapam Yumtso*) and salt-water Rakshastal (*Lhanag Tso*).

Both lakes and the towering mountain in their background are significant in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Tibetan Bon traditions.

“For Hindus, [Kailash] is the home of the Hindu god Shiva... for Jains it is where their first leader was enlightened; for Buddhists, the navel of the universe; and for adherents of Bon, the abode of the sky goddess Sipaimen,” Alice Albinia wrote in her award-winning book *Empires of the Indus: The Story of a River* (2008).

Four major rivers — the Yarlung Tsangpo (which later becomes the Brahmaputra), the Indus, the Sutlej, and the Karnali (later known as Ghaghra, a major tributary of the Ganga) — trace their to origins “the watershed of this iconic mass of rock,” Albinia wrote.

Mainstreaming a pilgrimage

Despite its age-old sacredness, however, the Kailash-Mansarovar complex was not a popular pilgrimage site till “as recently as the early 1900s...,” wrote Tibetologist Alex McKay in his book *Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography* (2015).



Mansarovar lake with Mount Kailash in the background. *Wikimedia Commons*



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“The actual mountain was visited only by the occasional renunciate and not by ordinary Indian pilgrims. Indeed early Hindu and Buddhist texts clearly stated that Kailas was a heavenly place that could only be visited by advanced spiritual practitioners,” he wrote.

This changed after 1904, when Tibet officially opened up to British subjects (including Indians), and courtesy the efforts of a certain Charles Sherring, then the district collector of Almora. Sherring in 1905 undertook an inspection of the Kailash-Mansarovar complex, and in his report recommended improving the pilgrimage route.

In 1906, he would go on to publish a book, *Western Tibet and the British Borderlands*, about the sacred mountain which had a stunning photograph of Kailash on its cover.

According to McKay, this book was an attempt to mainstream the beliefs of a small sect of Shaivite renunciates among the larger Hindu

population, which Sherring hoped would drive pilgrim traffic and bring revenue and employment opportunities to his district. This is also why Sherring recommended the Lipulekh route, which passes through Almora, as the easiest path from the plains to the Kailash.

Over the years, the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage grew in popularity: in 1930, some 730 Indian pilgrims had reportedly made the journey to the holy mountain. The numbers would remain in the hundreds till the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950, following which Kailash was first closed to Europeans in 1951, and then to Indians in 1959.

The pilgrimage opened up once again in 1981, in no small part due to the efforts of Subramanian Swamy, then an MP from the Janata Party. “In April 1981, Swamy discussed the issue with Deng Xiaoping, and arrangements were finalised during the visit to India by the Chinese Foreign Minister in July of that

year. Two months later, the first batch of a total of 60 Indian pilgrims set off for Kailas via Almora and the Lipulekh pass; Subramanian Swamy was among them,” McKay wrote.

The pilgrimage, then and now

Pilgrims typically travel to and circumambulate Mansarovar, a 90-km walk that takes between three to five days to complete. Some then circumambulate Mount Kailash, a much more arduous 52-km trek that takes around three days to complete.

C M Bhandari in his book *A Journey to Heaven, Kailas-Mansarovar* (1998) described his pilgrimage in 1997. The Tseti camp, on the western shore of Mansarovar, was the starting point for the circumambulation of the lake, after which pilgrims travelled to Huore, some 30 km to the north. Then they reached the Serlung monastery to the south of Huore, before travelling to Trugo Gompa, on the southern shore of the lake, and returning to Tseti.

The Kailash trek began on the southern side of the mountain, at Tarchen. Pilgrims typically travel clockwise around the mountain, always keeping Kailash to their right. The trek passes through Dirapuk, Dolma La, Zutul Puk, and finally culminates in Tarchen.

According to Bhandari, pilgrims must acclimatise to the high altitude before reaching Tibet. “The arrangement via the Indian route allows almost 10 days of gradual climb from about 3,000 feet at Dharchula to 14,000 feet at Navidhang. This helps the body to get used to trekking in mountains at high altitudes,” he wrote.

This year, *yatris* will stay at Dharchula for one night, then acclimatise at the village of Gunji for two nights, spend two more nights at Navidhang, before journeying through Lipulekh. In Tibet, pilgrims will be spending around a week before returning to Lipulekh.

Due to the construction of motorable roads, the amount of trekking on the Lipulekh route has reduced considerably, down from 27 km in 2019 to only one km this year on the Indian side, Pooja Garbhal, additional secretary of tourism at Uttarakhand, told *The Indian Express*.

On the Nathu La pass route, which first opened in 2015, the journey is even easier: pilgrims travel the entire 1,500 km from Nathu La to Mansarovar by car or bus.

How a novel initiative helped Tamil Nadu bring down TB deaths in the state

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

TAMIL NADU has witnessed a dip in the number of tuberculosis (TB) deaths in the state after the rollout of the Tamil Nadu Kasanoi Erappila Thittam (TN-KET), or TB death free initiative, in 2022.

What does the data show?

Due to the initiative, three districts — Dharmapuri, Karur, and Villupuram — witnessed a reduction in the number of TB deaths between 2022 and 2023, according to a paper published in the *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*. The TB death rate in Dharmapuri went down from 12.5% to 7.8%, in Karur from 7.1% to 5.3%, and in Villupuram from 6.1% to 5.2%.

Scientists at the National Institute of Epidemiology told *The Indian Express* that within the six months of the TN-KET pro-

gram, Tamil Nadu saw a dip in the number of early TB deaths by 20% across the state. Two-thirds of the districts in the state documented a 20% to 30% reduction in total deaths in 2024, according to scientists.

Experts say, the program has been successful for two reasons.

One, it uses a quick, easy-to-use tool, which helps a doctor determine whether a patient is severely ill and needs to be hospitalised soon after being diagnosed with TB. The tool does not require any laboratory-based investigations.

Two, the initiative follows a differentiated care model which offers a patient-centred approach instead of a one-size-fits-all treatment.

How does the tool work?

Tamil Nadu health workers use a paper-based triage tool which prioritises patient care based on the severity of the illness. To determine the severity, health workers record five

key parameters for all TB patients in the state.

■ Height and weight of the patient is used to calculate body mass index (BMI) which can flag undernutrition;

■ Swelling of the leg is determined by pressing it for 15 seconds;

■ Respiratory rate per minute is recorded in a sitting position;

■ Oxygen saturation is taken using a pulse oximeter; and

■ It is determined whether TB patients can stand without support.

If a patient has a BMI of less than 14 kg/sq m, or suffers from respiratory issues, or performs poorly on any of the other metrics, they are tagged as “severely ill”. Such a patient is immediately referred for comprehensive assessment and in-patient treatment (care provided in a hospital or in some sort of medical facility).

Note that this paper-based triage tool is simpler than other tools where health

workers have to record 16 parameters of a patient, and send them for laboratory-based investigation. This makes the process of diagnosis at least a week long. Using the TN-KET program’s triage tool, a diagnosis can be made within a day.

Since the implementation of the initiative, 98% of the patients diagnosed with TB in Tamil Nadu get examined using the triage tool, and 98% of those confirmed to be severely ill are admitted to hospitals within seven days of diagnosis, according to scientists.

The Tamil Nadu government has also launched a portal called Severe TB Web Application, where once the recorded parameters are entered, one can assess “the probability of a patient dying”, Manoj Murhekar, head of the National Institute of Epidemiology, told *The Indian Express*. “This will help guide the health workers to take immediate action and pre-

vent TB deaths,” he said.

What is a differentiated TB care model?

The TN-KET is one of India’s first initiatives to implement the differentiated care guidelines issued by the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) in 2021. By following a patient-centred model, it provides treatment based on a patient’s medical history and medical parameters such as age, weight, and specific disease conditions. It also considers the severity of the disease in all patients diagnosed with TB, and provides comprehensive care to the worst affected.

Combined with a quick examination of TB patients through the triage tool, this model has been highly effective in preventing early deaths of the worst affected patients. Usually, 50% of those who die due to TB, lose their lives within the first two months after being diagnosed.

“Immediate inpatient care can reduce the probability of early death in severely ill

patients by 1% to 4%. Usually, the probability of death in such patients is between 10% and 50%,” said Hemant Shewade, senior scientist at the National Institute of Epidemiology, who has studied the implementation of the TN-KET.

Why is this significant?

Currently, India bears the highest burden of TB across the world. With an estimated 28 lakh cases, the country accounted for 26% of the global TB burden in 2023, according to the Global TB report, which was released last year. With 3.15 lakh deaths due to TB in 2023, India accounted for 29% of the global burden, the report revealed.

The success of the TN-KET program has demonstrated that a differentiated care model combined with the use of a simple triage tool could save the lives of TB patients. This initiative can now be emulated by other states, helping reduce the number of TB deaths across the country.

OF 23 COUNTRIES SENT ‘TARIFF’ LETTERS, 8 HAVE LESS THAN \$1 BN TRADE SURPLUS

US households face bigger income loss than Trump’s \$300 bn tariff revenue

SIDDHARTH UPASANI
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

THE AMERICAN government hopes to collect \$300 billion in revenue this year from President Donald Trump’s tariff war. However, the higher prices resulting from the increase in tariffs from imported goods could set back US households’ incomes by an even greater amount.

On Tuesday, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the US, so far in 2025, had garnered around \$100 billion in tariff income, which could triple to \$300 billion by the end of the year. And while Trump claims the tariffs “will start being paid” from August 1 by the countries they are imposed on, the loss of income for US households from higher prices will exceed the government’s revenues on account of the higher duties on foreign goods.

According to non-partisan policy research centre The Budget Lab at Yale, all tariffs levied up to July 9 in 2025 — assuming they stay in force in perpetuity — will lead to a 1.8 per cent increase in prices in the short-run, which is

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equivalent to an annual income loss of \$2,367 for each household, on average. With the Census Bureau estimating the number of US households at just over 127 million, this results in a total income loss of \$302 billion for American households this year.



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The Budget Lab’s calculations assume the US Federal Reserve does not react to the tariffs, which are estimated to bring down GDP growth in 2025 by 70 basis points (bps) and 40 bps in the long run — equivalent to an annual GDP loss

of \$110 billion in 2024 prices. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate is seen rising 40 bps by the end of 2025.

To be sure, the gains for the US government from the tariffs could end up being higher than just \$300 billion considering the reciprocal tariffs were suspended for 90 days as various countries negotiated trade deals with the Trump administration.

According to the Budget Lab, the tariffs levied so far in 2025 could raise the government’s rev-

enue by a net \$2.2 trillion over 2026-35. This is lower than the US Congressional Budget Office’s own estimate of tariff income of about \$2.8 trillion over 10 years, which Bessent said this week was “probably low.”

Small beginnings

Starting July 7, Trump has sent ‘letters’ to 23 countries informing them of the tariff that would apply to goods imported into the US from their shores starting August 1. This interim pause until next month, according to ANZ Asia Economist Krystal Tan, “appears to be a calculated negotiation tactic — designed to increase the pressure on trading partners to accelerate talks and offer deeper concessions”.

However, the list is littered with names that the US stands little to gain from. Of the 23 countries on whom the US has levied tariffs as of July 10, eight — Laos, Myanmar, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Libya, Tunisia, Brunei, and Moldova — enjoyed a goods trade surplus of less than \$1 billion in 2024. In fact, these eight countries’ goods trade surplus with the US in 2024 was a mere

\$3.79 billion, up from \$3.11 billion in 2023.

And yet, these countries have been slapped with tariffs ranging from 40 per cent — Laos and Myanmar, who had a goods trade surplus of \$763 million and \$577 million, respectively, with the US in 2024 — to 25 per cent. Moldova, which faces a tariff of 25 per cent, had a goods trade surplus of just \$85 million with the US last year. All these rates are in addition to any sector-specific tariffs.

Then there is Brazil, which has attracted the highest tariff rate of 50 per cent for non-trade reasons, with Trump complaining in his letter to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva that the treatment of his predecessor Jair Bolsonaro — who is on trial for his alleged coup attempt following a loss to Lula in the 2022 elections — was a “disgrace” and a “witch hunt”. The US, ironically, enjoyed a goods trade surplus of almost \$7 billion with Brazil in 2024. On the whole, the 23 countries to have received Trump’s letters so far had a combined goods trade surplus of \$326 billion in 2024, up 6 per cent from 2023.

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Incentive scheme for rare earth magnet production proposed: Kumaraswamy

New Delhi: Inter-ministerial consultations are underway for a Rs 1,345-crore scheme to subsidise production of rare earth magnets in India with two select manufacturers proposed to be given incentives, Union Heavy Industries Minister H D Kumaraswamy said on Friday.

The proposed scheme comes in the wake of China restricting

exports of rare earth magnets that has hit global supplies, impacting EV makers, including in India.

It will provide end-to-end support for conversion of rare earth oxides into magnets. The proposal may be sent to the Union Cabinet for approval once the inter-ministerial consultations are completed, sources said.

“(The) Rs 1,345 crore scheme

has (proposed) two manufacturers,” Union heavy industry minister Kumaraswamy said. Secretary in the Heavy Industries Ministry Kamran Rizvi shared that a Rs 1,345 crore scheme which envisages “end-to-end” support to two manufacturers for conversion of rare earth oxides into magnets, which is under inter-ministerial consultation. **PTI**

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