

SPECIAL INTENSIVE REVISION ROW: DRAFT ROLL LEFT OUT 65 LAKH NAMES

# Use Aadhaar, any of 11 listed papers for inclusion claim: SC on Bihar rolls

Asks parties to let BLAs assist in claim form submission

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

THE SUPREME Court Friday directed the Election Commission of India to let those excluded from Bihar's draft electoral rolls submit their claim forms online, or physically, along with their Aadhaar card or any of the 11 documents listed by the Commission.

An estimated 65 lakh names were excluded from the draft voter list following the Special Intensive Revision exercise in the poll-bound state.

Stating that its attempt is to see that the entire exercise is "voter friendly", the bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya

EXPLAINED

A race against time

SUBMISSION OF claims for inclusion in the voter list will be a race against time. That window closes on September 1. There have been pleas for more time to complete the SIR exercise. As of date, the SC has not extended the time period. The matter will be heard next on September 8.

OPP PARTIES HAIL SC DECISION [PAGE 6](#)

Bagchi asked Bihar's 12 recognised political parties to instruct their Booth Level Agents (BLAs) to assist voters in submitting claim forms.

Hearing pleas by NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and others challenging the SIR, the bench, on August 14 when the matter was last heard, had issued a set of directions to the EC to make available — both online and offline — the list of the estimated 65 lakh voters whose names had not been included in the draft rolls, along with the reasons for exclusion.

On Thursday, the EC, through an application, informed the bench that it had complied with

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## A story of two camps as deadline looms: Confused voters, officials in a rush

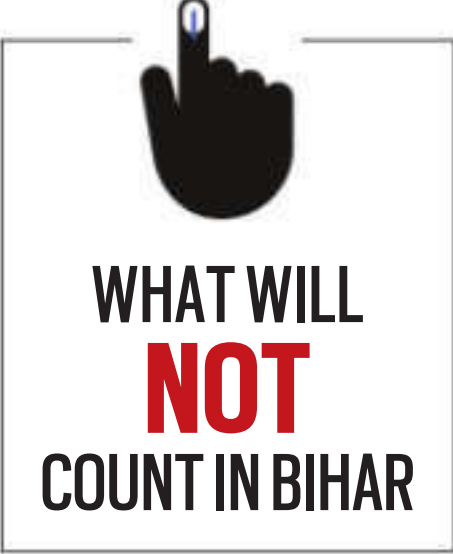


At a camp for BLOs set up at the government high school in Sitamarhi's Parihar block in Bihar. *Damini Nath*

DAMINI NATH  
SITAMARHI, AUGUST 22

TWO CAMPS — one with an enquiry desk and a trickle of visitors, the other packed with officials and their volunteers huddled around cellphones. The first camp, at the Block Development Office in Sitamarhi's Parihar block, is for electors left out of Bihar's draft roll; the other camp, at an adjoining school, is to help officials upload documents of potential voters.

As part of the second phase of the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR),



electors and political parties have time until September 1 to make claims and raise objections to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

DELHI-NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

## SC modifies 'harsh' order, says stray dogs to be released after sterilisation

Only aggressive dogs or those with rabies to be kept in shelters: Bench

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

TERMING ITS earlier order on confining stray dogs in Delhi-NCR to dedicated shelters instead of releasing them as "too harsh", the Supreme Court on Friday directed that these dogs should be returned to the area from where they were picked up after sterilisation, deworming and vaccination, in accordance with the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023.

The court, however, "clarified that this relocation shall not apply to dogs infected with rabies or suspected to be infected with rabies, and those that display aggressive behaviour". "Such dogs shall be sterilised and immunised, but under no circumstances should they be released back onto the streets. Furthermore, as far as possible, such stray dogs shall be kept in a separate pound/shelter after sterilisation and immunisation," a three-judge bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and NV Anjaria said.

Expanding the scope of the case beyond the confines of Delhi-NCR, the court directed that all States and Union Territories be implemented in the matter. It also said that all related cases pending before various High Courts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

### DOG LOVERS TOLD TO PAY FOR INFRA

**THE BENCH** asked individual "dog lovers" and NGOs, who approached the court against the earlier order, to deposit Rs 25,000 and Rs 2 lakh, respectively, within a week to continue being heard in the matter.

**"THE AMOUNTS** so deposited shall be utilised in the creation of infrastructure and facilities for the stray dogs under the aegis of the respective municipal bodies," the bench said.

INDIAN EXPRESS UPSC IAS EDITION HD 23~08~2025  
-:FOR UPSC IAS ASPIRANTS:-

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Please Try To Read This Completely in 40 Minutes If You 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.

### Targeted by Trump, India & Brazil set to deepen crude oil supply ties

SUKALP SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

WITH INDIAN oil refiners intensifying their crude diversification efforts amid the increasing weaponisation of trade tariffs by US President Donald Trump against New Delhi, another country targeted by Trump appears eager to boost oil trade with India. India's crude oil imports from Brazil — which, like India, faces 50 per cent tariff from the US — posted the highest growth among all oil suppliers in the first six months of 2025, and have grown further from there, according to an analysis by S&P Global Commodity Insights (SPGCI).

"Sky-high US tariffs are prompting India and Brazil to explore opportunities to boost oil trade, as New Delhi looks for alternatives to Russian oil, while Brazil scouts for newer markets for its growing crude output... Russian oil flows to India continue, but Indian refiners are preparing for the worst by continuing to diversify their sources, a move that could lead to Brazilian crude flows to India," SPGCI said in a note. So far this year, Brazil has been India's ninth biggest supplier of crude oil.

Indian refiners' hefty imports of Russian crude have surfaced as a major irritant for the Trump administration. The US President recently announced an additional 25 per cent tariff — over and above the 25 per cent tariff announced earlier on Indian goods — as a penalty for India's Russian oil imports. New Delhi has called the targeting of India over the purchase of Russian oil "unjustified and unreasonable" and said these imports began as its traditional supplies were diverted to Europe, with the US having "actively encouraged such imports by India for strengthening global energy markets stability".

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FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON  
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SC on Bihar rolls

the direction and “booth-wise list of about 65 lakh persons whose names do not appear in the Draft Electoral Roll has been published on the website of all 38 District Election Officers in... Bihar, along with reasons for their non-inclusion in the Draft Electoral Roll, i.e., whether it is on account of death, shifting of ordinary residence or duplicate entries”. It said “reports have been received from all 38 DEOs... annexed to this affidavit, along with the report of CEO Bihar. The said list has also been posted at Panchayat Bhavan/Block Development/ Panchayat Officers’ offices”.

Resuming the hearing Friday, the bench said, “We are surprised to see... that the 1,60,813 Booth Level Agents (of various political parties) have so far filed only two

objections.” It said, “On the other hand, some political parties which are being represented by counsel have submitted that their BLAs are not being permitted to submit objections.”

The bench directed the BLAs to make every effort to facilitate the 65 lakh people whose names were not included in the draft electoral rolls, except those who are dead or who have shifted and are not ordinary residents, to submit their objections by the cut-off date of September 1, 2025.

“Wherever physical forms are submitted, the Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are directed to acknowledge receipt of those forms. However, such acknowledgement

shall not be proof that the form is complete in all respects,” the bench said.

The SIR, announced on June 24, triggered a row over its timing and the requirement that voters enrolled after 2003 should produce multiple documents to stay on the electoral rolls, raising concerns that lakhs will possibly be disenfranchised.

Appearing for ADR, Advocate Prashant Bhushan said the website of the Commission should also state what document was submitted along with the application by a voter seeking inclusion of name. The bench, however, left that decision to the EC.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal,

appearing for RJD MP Manoj Jha, sought more time for the exercise, saying the time is too short because the final list will have to be published by September 30. But the bench said it was not looking to extend the time now.

“Today, we are not extending the date,” Justice Kant said, adding that the EC can look into it if it feels the need.

“That is what we said, trust the Commission. If there is any such need, we will do it,” said Senior Advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the EC. “We are going from door to door and those who are shouting, they are not of any help at all,” he said. Fixing the next hearing for September 8, the bench said, “We have passed an order, we are eagerly waiting to see how it is complied with.”

Two camps

draft roll published on August 1. It’s also a window for Booth Level Officers (BLOs) across the state to upload the documents — one of the 11 mandated by the EC — that potential voters had to attach with their enumeration forms.

On a weekday afternoon, Baidyanath Mahto turns up at the camp at the Block Development Office. Mahto, who sells spices in Delhi’s Rithala, had come home to his village in Sitamarhi district last week to find his name and that of his wife struck off the draft roll — one of the 65 lakh deletions from the electoral rolls in the state.

Standing outside the camp, Mahto holds pre-printed enumeration forms, his wife’s and his own. But these are of no use now. An official hands him a Form 6 copy and asks him to fill that up instead. “We moved to Delhi two years ago and before that, we were in Nagaland for years, but our votes have always been in our village. Now, my name has been struck off after the BLO marked me ‘absent’. I’ll have to apply as a new voter all over again,” he says.

According to Sitamarhi data, nearly 2.45 lakh people in the district have been deleted in the first phase — marked as absent, shifted or dead by the BLOs.

According to the EC order of June 24, all 7.89 crore registered electors of Bihar were required to fill enumeration forms and declarations by July 25 to remain on the draft roll. BLOs appointed by the EC were meant to go house-to-house to hand out the enumeration forms and then go back and collect them too.

Releasing the draft roll on August 1, the EC declared that 65 lakh names had been deleted — many among them migrants such as Mahto who had been marked “absent” by the BLOs.

The crowd at the camp barely picks up, with people walking in at infrequent intervals. While officials attribute this to the robustness of the exercise, saying there have been few claims and objections so far, on the ground, *The Indian Express* came across voters with little clarity of the process or their status on the rolls.

An official says though the camp was meant to help deleted voters such as Mahto get back on the list, many of the enquiries have been from new voters.

Among those at the camp is 19-year-old Sumit Kumar, who has come to check the status of his Form 6 online application that he submitted on July 17. Unaware of

the SIR drive then, Sumit had got the form filled at a cyber cafe, giving his Aadhaar as proof.

Under the EC’s SIR order, while all existing electors have to submit enumeration forms, those added to the rolls after 2003 have to also submit documents from an EC-mandated list of 11 to establish their eligibility. All new enrolment forms such as Sumit’s have to be accompanied by a declaration and one of the 11 documents, which does not include Aadhaar.

“They are saying my application has been rejected. I only attached my Aadhaar. Now they are asking me to fill another form and give my matriculation certificate and my father’s identity proof. I’ll have to come back,” he says.

Dhanuriya Devi has come to the camp to get her son enrolled as a first-time voter. She’s carrying his matriculation certificate and a photograph, but is sent back, with the officials asking her to come back with the correct booth number. As part of the SIR drive, the number of booths in Bihar went up by about 20,000, leading to several booths getting new serial numbers.

Confusion at camp for BLOs

At the government high school next door, the camp for BLOs sees frenetic activity. The camp has been especially set up for 77 BLOs, whose progress in uploading the documents has been identified as “slow”.

The BLOs, with helpers assigned to them, are busy on their phones as they make multiple attempts to upload the documents on the EC’s BLO App. With a large number of BLOs being teachers and anganwadi helpers, some of the women officials are accompanied by their sons and husbands.

An official at the camp says nearly 80 per cent of the documents have been uploaded so far and that he’s confident the task will be completed by September 1. The BLOs who did not do their due diligence in the first phase, when they had to go house-to-house to collect the forms, are the ones facing problems now, he says.

The BLOs were initially asked to upload the supporting documents along with the enumeration forms, but later, the EC clarified that documents could be submitted in the second phase too. “Some BLOs did not fill forms with proper documents. Now, in the verification phase, they are facing difficulties but we will ensure the work is done properly,” says the official.

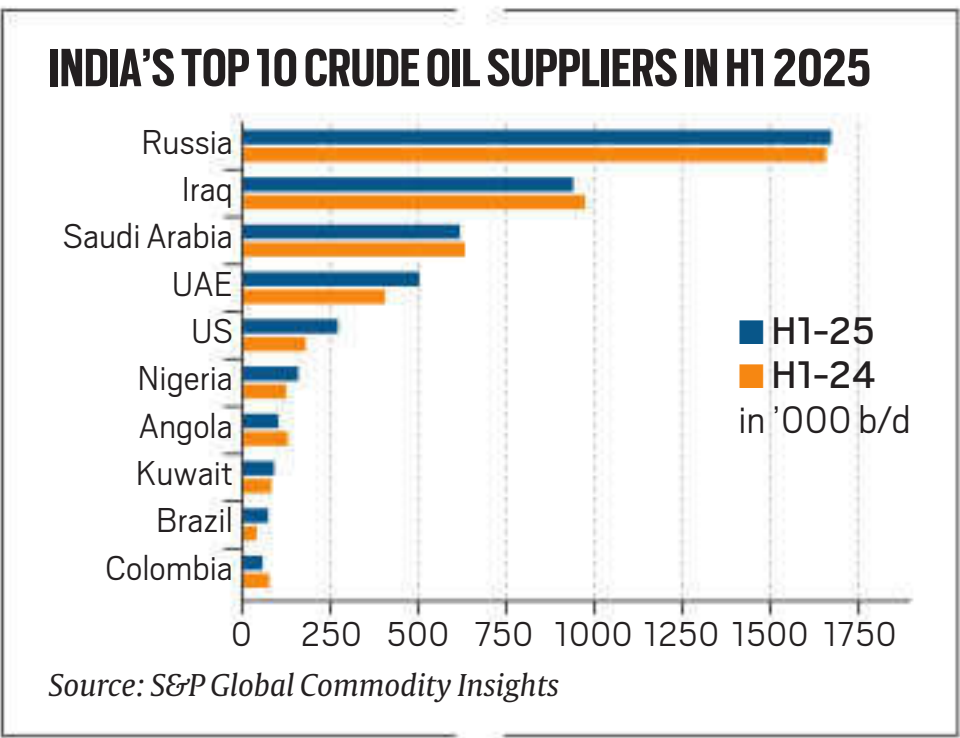
India & Brazil

Trump has also targeted Brazil with a 50 per cent tariff over what he has termed as a “witch hunt” against former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who is seen as an ally of Trump. Notably, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva shortly after Trump announced the additional tariff on Indian goods.

India has stated over the years that as a country which depends on energy imports, it will buy oil from wherever it gets a good deal, as long as the oil is not under sanctions. Russian oil is not under sanctions, and is only subject to a price cap imposed by the US and its allies that applies if Western shipping and insurance services are used for transporting the oil.

So far, India has not issued any advisory or directive to its refiners with respect to their Russian oil purchases. Nevertheless, New Delhi appears eager to increase import volumes from other suppliers to strengthen its energy security and keep dependencies on one or a small group of suppliers in check. Russia is currently India’s largest supplier of crude oil and accounts for 35–40 per cent of India’s total oil imports by volume. In all, India’s oil import basket includes crudes from around 40 countries already, although a bulk of the supplies are from Russia and West Asia.

“Brazilian crude exports to



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“Brazilian crude exports to

India will be closely watched in the coming months, particularly as both countries navigate the impact of US tariffs related to Russian oil imports,” said Benjamin Tang, head of liquid bulk at S&P Global Commodities at Sea.

While freight, arbitrage opportunities, and availability of spare cargoes would determine the commercial viability of Brazilian crude among Indian refiners, growing diplomatic efforts between the governments of India and Brazil are expected to yield positive results. Although India and Brazil are evidently pushing for more crude oil trade, several logistical and pricing challenges persist, along with competition from West Asian oil suppliers, who are located much closer to India and have been the traditional mainstay of India’s oil imports. India may also face competition for Brazilian oil from China.

Crude inflows to India from Brazil jumped about 75 per cent year-on-year in January–June to 72,000 barrels per day (bpd) from 41,000 bpd, signalling a growing affinity of Indian refiners for crudes from oil producers that are not part of the global cartel OPEC, according to SPGCI. Over the years, Brazil has emerged as a major non-OPEC oil supplier. Public sector refining major Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and private sector giant Reliance Industries (RIL) have been the primary buyers of Brazilian crude.

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SC on strays

should be transferred to the SC for a “final national policy or decision” on the issue.

On August 11, a two-judge bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan had ordered authorities in Delhi–NCR to relocate all stray dogs to dedicated shelters, underlining that the canines should not be returned to the streets. The order led to an uproar among animal lovers who rushed to the SC. The matter was later referred to a three-judge bench.

Modifying the order, the three-judge bench said in its interim order on Friday: “A blanket direction to pick up all the strays and place them in dog shelters/pounds without evaluating the existing infrastructure may lead to a Catch–22 situation because such directions may be impossible to comply with”. It said “the directions” of the two-judge bench “to the extent that they prohibit the release of the picked up strays, shall be kept in abeyance for the time being”. “The dogs that are picked up shall be sterilised, dewormed, vaccinated, and released back to the same area from which they were picked up,” it said.

The court, however, indicated that a solution to the stray dog situation may still be far. “Aggressive sterilisation would definitely put a

curb on the rapid growth of the stray dog population, ultimately leading to its reduction. However, this is possible only in an idealistic situation, which seems unlikely in the present scenario,” it said.

Saying that dedicated feeding areas should be created for stray dogs, the court said those who feed them on the streets would face proceedings. “Municipal authorities shall forthwith commence an exercise for creating dedicated feeding spaces for the stray dogs in each municipal ward... Gantries/ notice boards shall be placed near such designated feeding areas, mentioning that stray dogs shall only be fed in such areas. Under no condition shall the feeding of stray dogs on the streets be permitted. The persons found feeding the dogs on the streets in contravention of the above directions shall be liable to be proceeded against under the relevant legal framework,” it said.

It said the directions “are being issued in view of the reports regarding untoward incidents caused by unregulated feeding of stray dogs and to ensure that the practice of feeding dogs on roads and in public places is eliminated, as the said practice creates great difficulties for the common man walking on the streets.”

“One cannot be ignorant of the fact that the mandate to keep all

the stray dogs, picked up from Delhi and the adjoining NCR cities, in the municipal shelters/pounds would require logistics of gargantuan proportions including manpower, shelters/pounds, veterinarians, cages and specially modified vehicles for transportation of the captured stray dogs,” the bench said.

The provision in ABC Rule 11(19) that the dogs, upon sterilisation and immunisation, should be relocated to the same locality from which they were picked up, “is scientifically carved out in as much as it serves two purposes. Firstly, the same prevents the scope of overcrowding in the dog shelters/pounds, and secondly, the picked-up stray dogs, after immunisation and sterilisation, are relocated to the same environment where they were living earlier, which is a compassionate treatment,” the court said.

The bench also pointed to arguments by some animal lovers “that the process of sterilisation and inoculation has worked wonders in many towns across the country and has significantly brought down the population of stray dogs” and that “towns like Dehradun and Lucknow, which have taken aggressive measures for sterilisation, etc., as per the ABC Rules, have seen a steady decline in the population of stray dogs.”

“There is not even the slightest doubt in our minds that the intent behind the (August 11) order is salutary inasmuch as it works towards protecting the citizens at large from the attacks by aggressive and rabid stray dogs. However, there are certain vital factors that call for a balancing exercise so that the order dated 11th August, 2025, can be taken to its logical conclusion while keeping its ambit within the contour of the legal framework, i.e., the ABC Rules, 2023,” the court said.

The court directed municipal authorities to create dedicated helplines for reporting violation of its directions. “On such a report being received, appropriate measures shall be taken against the individuals/ NGOs concerned,” it said. “No individual or organisation shall cause any hindrance or obstruction in the effective implementation of the directions.. In case any public servant acting in compliance with the... directions is obstructed, then the violator/s shall be liable to face prosecution for obstructing the public servant acting in discharge of official duty,” it said. The court also sought an affidavit from the municipal authorities showing compliance, along with statistics of resources like dog pounds, veterinarians, dog catching personnel and specially modified vehicles/cages available.



# Will launch over 100 satellites over the next 15 years: ISRO

AMITABH SINHA  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

**SIGNALLING** A major surge in its activities, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Friday said it would be launching more than 100 satellites in the next 15 years to meet the country's needs for earth-observation data, and satellite-based communication and navigation.

This would be in addition to space exploration or science missions like those to the Moon, Mars or Venus, or the human space-flight missions under the Gaganyaan programme.

"Over 100 satellite missions sounds like a lot, but it is only about seven to eight missions a year, up to 2040. This can easily be achieved, apart from our other missions like Chandrayaan or Gaganyaan," said Nilesh Desai, director of Ahmedabad-based Space Application Centre, at an event in New Delhi on Friday. Desai was presenting ISRO's roadmap for 2047.

Until now, ISRO has been doing just about five to six launches — all kinds of missions — in a year. The maximum launches it has managed in a year is nine, in 2016. But ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said the space agency was preparing to step up the gas.

"Space sector is undergoing a transformation. Our timelines must match the requirements of our country. Slowly but surely, these missions are going to bring great benefit to the country," he said. Narayanan said the space sector in India needed to undergo rapid indigenisation to enable the transformation, and expressed confidence that the emerging private industry would make this happen.

"We send communication satellites, but some crucial parts are currently imported. Similarly, Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBawMGQ1>

## EXPLAINED Relying on private firms

ISRO IS planning to move into the next gear, banking heavily on the promise shown by the private space companies, both on the application side as well as those building hardware. At least 350 private space companies are currently in operation, and many of them have been working on extremely innovative projects. Their success is essential for ISRO delivering on its 2047 roadmap.

we have built a strong navigation system, but if we are still importing atomic clocks that are part of that system, we cannot be talking about it in very glowing terms. We have now initiated the indigenisation of atomic clocks, but the rate of production of these atomic clocks has to go up," he said. "The private industry has been showing immense promise, they are doing wonderful things. I am sure we will have a much higher degree of indigenisation in our missions very soon."

The 2047 roadmap for ISRO includes not just the Chandrayaan-4 and 5 missions, which have already been announced, but also 6, 7 and 8 before the crewed mission to Moon in 2040. Both Chandrayaan-4 and 5 are sample return missions, and are expected to happen in the 2027-28 timeline. Chandrayaan-5 is a joint mission with Japanese space agency JAXA. ISRO did not mention the timelines for the follow-on Chandrayaan missions. The roadmap also includes Mars lander mission.

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## As MP loses its 36th tiger this year, forest staff face the heat

ANAND MOHAN J  
BHOPAL, AUGUST 22

A MALE tiger was found dead due to poaching near the Tawa river in Madhya Pradesh's Narmadapuram Friday. This brought the tiger death toll in the state this year to 36 — the highest in the country. Senior wildlife officers have expressed alarm at the deaths and accused the staff on the ground of carelessness.

Satpura Tiger Reserve Field Director Rakhi Nanda told *The Indian Express*, "An old male tiger was found in revenue land with its paw missing. It's the first case of poaching. We have formed a team to find those behind this."

Just over 10 days ago, another tiger was found dead in Satpura, Nanda said, attributing the death to a territorial fight with another tiger. "We have evidence that the tiger died due to infighting," she said. Another tiger was found dead at the Sanjay Tiger Reserve on August 19 due to electrocu-

tion. Wildlife officials suspect the tiger was caught in an electric wire set up by farmers to protect their crops.

On August 20, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Head of the Forest Force, V N Ambade, issued a stern warning to forest officials, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Ambade criticised the ineffective use of monitoring tools, such as M-Strips and monsoon patrolling.

"It is clear that in the recent tiger deaths in Pench and Satpura, local officers and staff displayed grave carelessness," he wrote, warning that strict action would follow.

Calling tiger and leopard protection the "highest priority" of the state forest department, the PCCF made it clear that no form of negligence would be tolerated.

"It is not appropriate that tiger deaths occur repeatedly despite such monitoring systems being in place," the letter read.

## Aiming for the Moon, ISRO building its heaviest rocket

As tall as 40-storey building, expected to be ready by 2035

ANONNA DUTT  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

THE INDIAN Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is in the process of building its heaviest rocket ever, and has named it Lunar Module Launch Vehicle, or LMLV. This new rocket would be as tall as a 40-storey building, dwarfing the LMV-3 which is its current most powerful rocket. ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said Friday that the LMLV would be ready by 2035, and would be used for the lunar missions, including the first human mission to the Moon, planned by 2040.

The LVM-3 carried Chandrayaan-3 to the Moon and since then has been human-rated for use in the Gaganyaan mission, India's human space-flight programme. Narayanan said ISRO was no longer working on the NGLV (Next Generation Launch Vehicle), a heavy-lift rocket that was supposed to carry the modules for India's space station, the Bharat Antariksh Station, or BAS. India plans to set up a five-module Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) by 2035.

"This launch vehicle (LMLV) Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBawMGQ1>



**A model of LMLV rocket (centre). On the left is a model of the LMV-3 rocket, on the right is LVM3.** *Express*

is capable of carrying much heavier payloads. NGLV was designed to carry 30 tonnes to low earth orbit, this will be capable of carrying 80 tonnes to the low earth orbit," Narayanan said.

Low-earth orbits are between 200 and 2,000 km from the Earth's surface. Moon is about 4 lakh km away. The LMLV rocket would be capable of car-

rying about 27 tonnes to the Moon.

The spacecraft carrying astronauts to the International Space Station, like the Crew Dragon of SpaceX which was used in the Axiom-4 mission recently, weigh between six to eight tonnes. But those going to the Moon would be heavier because of additional systems that are required to be fitted for the longer journey. Humans have not landed on the Moon after 1972, and as such the new generation of human-rated spacecraft for lunar missions are still under development. But it is estimated that they might fall in the 18-20 tonne weight category.

A model of the new rocket is currently displayed at the Bharat Mandapam, where ISRO is hosting a two-day event leading up to the National Space Day on Saturday. Narayanan said the design for the vehicle was prepared by the ISRO team within a few months working day and night.

"NGLV will no longer be required for setting up the BAS. A modified version of the current LVM3 rocket, using a liquid oxygen and kerosene engine, will be capable of putting all modules in space," he said.

## BSF gets MHA nod for border talks in Dhaka

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

THE UNION Home Ministry has given the go-ahead to the BSF to attend biannual border talks with Bangladesh in Dhaka, beginning August 25. Bangladesh had sent an invitation for the talks earlier this month.

This will be the first Dhaka visit by an Indian delegation after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government last year.

"During the course of the conference, discussions will be held on prevention against attack/assault on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by

Bangladesh-based miscreants/nationals, how to prevent trans-border crimes, construction of single row fence, action against Indian insurgent groups (IIGs) in Bangladesh, issues related to border infrastructure, joint efforts for effective implementation of coordinated border management plan (CBMP), confidence building measures (CBM) and other issues," a BSF spokesman said.

"The 56th director general level border co-ordination conference between the BSF and BGB will be organised by the BGB in Dhaka between August 25 and 28," the spokesman said.



JAY MAZOOMDAAR  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

AMID THE debate triggered by the Supreme Court's order to capture and move stray dogs to shelter homes in Delhi, a policy decision is pending in another case related to scores of endangered wildlife species before the apex court.

In December 2023, a group of Maharashtra NGOs moved the apex court, seeking identification and management of free-ranging dogs "invading wildlife habitats" as an "invasive species" by means of sterilisation, immunisation -- and, failing those, "removal or elimination" to "preserve the right to protect endangered species under Article 21" of the Constitution.

At a meeting hosted by the Environment ministry in July to frame a new policy in the matter, one of the petitioners underlined

that "sterilization alone may not be the solution as the sterilized dogs may continue to attack the wild animals in the area".

Called feral or stray, free-ranging dog packs have emerged as a major conservation threat, directly hunting endangered species in recent years, and indirectly leading to the loss of wildlife through the spread of various diseases. Consider this:

■ Camera-traps used for the 2018 all-India tiger census captured more stray dogs than tigers in 17 tiger reserves, prompting the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to release a Standard Operating Procedure -- "To deal with Stray/Feral Dogs in Tiger Reserves -- in December 2020.

■ Since 2014, Maharashtra Forest Rules prohibits "trespassing with or permitting to trespass dog" and allows forest officers, if

they cannot chase away or capture without delay, to kill or trap such trespassing dogs by using all means at their disposal.

■ In March 2020, an Environment ministry report by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) identified dogs as a major threat to the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard and Chinkara in Rajasthan's Desert National Park.

■ In March 2021, a report by the WWF-India and then Jammu and Kashmir government highlighted how the damage caused by feral dogs to the eggs and the chicks were the most important threat to the breeding of the Black-necked crane in Ladakh.

■ In October 2023, the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and the WII came together to publish a paper titled "Free-ranging dogs are seriously threatening Himalayan environment: delineating the high-risk areas for curb-



Feral dogs chase a sambar deer. Source: NTCA/WII

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ing free-ranging dog infestation in the Trans-Himalayan region."

Among the victims are the snow leopard in Ladakh; Himalayan fox, blue sheep and ibex fawns in Himachal's Spiti; golden langur in Assam's Chakrashila sanctuary; leopard cat in Karnataka's Coorg; mouse deer in Kerala's Wayanad; and

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Animal Husbandry and Fisheries.

Last September, the AWBI held a meeting where, the minutes show, its secretary underlined "the severe threat posed by free-ranging dogs to endangered species". The participants unanimously concluded that the ABC rules for population control "in its current form is not adequate to safeguard the endangered wildlife due to "several constraints, including shortage of time."

This April, the Supreme Court disposed of the petition with liberty to the petitioners to come back, if required, after attorney general R Venkataramani informed the court that talks were on between the ministries of Environment and Animal Husbandry and "in all likelihood guidelines will be framed within a period of six weeks from today."

While that deadline was missed, key Environment ministry officials met top wildlife officials from six states, representatives from the AWBI, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the petitioners on July 7 when it was decided that the ministry "may again discuss with all concerned stakeholders if required and shall take necessary action in the matter."

The five petitioners are Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Conservation Action Trust (CAT), Nature Conservation Society and Wildlife Conservation Trust, and Mumbai-based conservationist Debi Goenka.

In the Delhi case, meanwhile, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court last week reserved its interim order on the issue of managing the stray dog population in the National Capital Region, days after another bench initiated suo motu proceedings and ordered the relocation of strays from the streets to dedicated shelters.

# PM on two-day visit to Japan from Aug 29, then heads to China for SCO

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

DAYS AFTER Chinese Foreign minister Wang Yi met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and handed him the invitation from President Xi Jinping, the government on Friday announced that the PM will travel to Tianjin in China for the SCO leaders' summit on August 31 and September 1.

Before China, PM Modi will travel to Japan for two days, starting August 29.

“At the invitation of the Prime Minister of Japan, Shigeru Ishiba, Prime Minister Modi will visit Japan from 29-30 August, 2025 to participate in the 15th India-Japan Annual Summit. This will be Prime Minister Modi's eighth visit to Japan, and

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the first Summit with Prime Minister Ishiba,” the Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday.

Japan was one of the early visits by PM Modi in 2014. He has regularly travelled to the country as part of annual meetings, including G20 and G7 summits.

“During the visit, the two Prime Ministers will review the Special Strategic and Global Partnership between India and Japan, including defence and security, trade and economy, technology and innovation, and people to people exchanges, as well as discuss issues of regional and global importance,” the ministry said. It also said that the visit will reaffirm the longstanding special bond of friendship between the two countries.

Japan is an important strategic partner and a fellow member

of the Quad grouping and relations with the country have been developed in a robust manner in the last 25 years.

Announcing the China visit, the MEA said, “In the second leg of his visit, at the invitation of the President of China, Xi Jinping, Prime Minister will travel to China from 31 August to 1 September, 2025 to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Tianjin. On the sidelines of the Summit, the Prime Minister is expected to hold bilateral meetings with several leaders attending the Summit.”

India has been a member of SCO since 2017. It held the presidency of the Council of Heads of State of SCO in 2022-23.

This will be PM Modi's first visit to China after seven years.

He had last travelled to the country for the SCO summit in Qingdao in June 2018.

This marks a very important step towards normalisation of ties that have been strained due to the border standoff.

India and China have agreed to establish at least three border mechanisms, restart border trade and issuing visas to Chinese nationals as part of the normalisation process. Earlier, the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra had been resumed after five years as part of first steps towards normalising ties. Now, the two sides have also decided to resume direct flights between the two countries.

The difficult issue of de-escalation still remains and the two sides have agreed to move forward on that as well.





# India-US, despite Trump



SUJAN CHINOY

The recent rough patch in bilateral ties shouldn't dilute past gains or close doors for future cooperation

## ABOUT CREDIBILITY

Inflation targeting regime has worked well. Changes that undermine RBI's monetary policy framework should be avoided

IN 2016, INDIA shifted to an inflation targeting regime. The inflation target of 4 per cent with a band of plus/minus 2 per cent was initially set for a five-year period ending in 2021. Subsequently, in March 2021, the government retained the inflation target for another five years. With the second review of the framework due early next year, the RBI has now released a discussion paper on the monetary policy regime. The paper examines how inflation targeting has fared in India over the past nine years, and also raises several questions over its structure.

On balance, shifting to this framework has "served India well". Inflation has averaged 4.9 per cent after the shift, as compared to an average of 6.8 per cent in the period before that. The framework has provided the Monetary Policy Committee the flexibility to deal with challenging economic situations — during the pandemic years, for instance, it allowed for greater weightage to be attached to growth priorities in the decision matrix. The regime has also brought about accountability — when inflation stayed above the upper threshold of 6 per cent, the RBI was required to send a report to the government detailing why the target was not met and the corrective action that needed to be taken. Alongside, publication of the minutes of the committee meeting, which are released with a gap of two weeks, has brought about transparency in the decision-making process by detailing the thinking and rationale for the decisions of each committee member. Further, by putting in place a six-member committee to decide on policy, more voices have been incorporated in decision-making.

The questions raised by the discussion paper centre around whether the 4 per cent target is optimal, if it should be replaced by a range, if the tolerance bands should be changed or done away with and whether headline or core inflation is the best guide for policy. Each of these has been explored in great detail. The paper notes that across the world, while 48 countries have adopted this framework, with differing targets and ranges, "no major country" has ever shifted away. The framework has been tweaked on occasion, however, to reflect changing domestic and global conditions. On the issue of targeting headline vs core inflation, RBI continues to veer on the side of headline inflation. "Any attempt to anchor inflation expectations should not ignore shocks to food and fuel," it says. Globally, too, headline inflation is favoured. In fact, the paper notes that "Uganda is the only country that targets core inflation". It takes time to build credibility. Any changes that are perceived as either undermining or diluting the current framework, such as raising the target or shifting to range targeting, run the risk of "eroding policy credibility". These are best avoided. As the central bank notes, "the conduct of monetary policy frameworks needs both policy certainty and credibility".

## THINK IT THROUGH

SC's revised order on stray dogs opens up space to calm tempers and work out long-term solutions

IF THE FURORE following the Supreme Court's August 11 order, which directed that all stray dogs in Delhi-NCR be removed to shelters, showed a deep polarisation of attitudes, then its modification of the order on Friday is an opportunity to tackle a serious issue in a more thoughtful, scientific manner. The three-judge bench, to which the matter was reassigned after the original order was reserved, strikes a balance between established animal welfare laws and public safety concerns: Among other directions, the Court has said that while sterilised and vaccinated dogs are to be released where they were picked up from, the ones that have rabies or are suspected to have it, or display aggressive behaviour, are to remain in the shelters. The new order opens up space for tempers to calm down, so that a sustainable and humane solution to a stubborn problem may be found.

What this requires, in the first place, is an acknowledgement of, and introspection over, the reasons for the failure of the Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules. Both a paucity of resources and a lack of will on the part of local governance have hobbled efforts to manage the stray dog population. In its order on Friday, the Court asked municipal authorities to give a full picture of the resources available, including the number of pounds, veterinarians, dog-catching personnel and cages/vehicles required for compliance with the ABC Rules. With the Court now expanding the scope of the matter to include all states and Union Territories, these hard numbers can help plug holes and be used to formulate a more realistic solution. They can help local bodies in other parts of the country, especially those that may not have the kind of resources that Delhi-NCR does, to form a clearer idea of the challenges, and develop a more targeted approach. Numbers can also help make a stronger case for why the vast community of those who care for "streeties" must be included if there is to be a lasting solution: Their help can be sought, for example, in ensuring that each dog in a locality is kept up-to-date with vaccinations, including for rabies — something that may be beyond the capacity of resource-poor municipal bodies.

That the problem of stray dogs is deeply linked to unmanaged solid waste cannot be ignored; like so many other species, such as pigeons, crows and cats, dogs too have come to depend on overflowing rubbish bins and garbage dumps for food. Tackling the trash problem can go a long way towards controlling the stray dog population. In addition to correcting other past mistakes, municipal authorities should not delay addressing this problem.

US PRESIDENT DONALD Trump's recent policy pronouncements towards India have sent ripples across the political, economic and strategic firmament no less than China's actions in Galwan in 2020.

Today, India is dealing with uncertainty in relations with both the US and China. It is ironic that China is now speaking out in support of India's strategic autonomy. Pakistan, meanwhile, has struck up a new relationship with Trump, nominating him for the Nobel Peace Prize, and offering deals in crypto currency and critical mineral assets.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his firm resolve to protect the interests of Indian farmers and others dependent on the dairy and fisheries sectors. Much is at stake in a vital bilateral partnership. The US is India's largest trading partner. Bilateral trade touched \$131.84 billion in 2024-2025 with India enjoying a trade surplus of \$41.18 billion. India's exports to the US account for approximately 20 per cent of its total. Eighty per cent of this is produced by MSMEs. The whiplash effect could affect sensitive sectors of the Indian economy. The EU, with stricter quality standards, is not an alternative.

Remittances from the Indian diaspora in the US account for 30 per cent of the total of \$135 billion. If work visas for Indians are targeted next, remittances will drop sharply. Given that the service sector accounts for over 50 per cent of India's GDP, any downsizing would result in significant layoffs.

The number of student visas issued by the US had decreased substantially even before the 50 per cent tariffs were announced. Noticeably, there was a 44 per cent drop in F-1 visas for Indian students in the first half of 2025 compared to the first half of 2024. It could deprive those with a STEM background from accessing high-tech education. The US benefits from the \$12-17 billion spent by Indian students annually.

Defence and security cooperation has burgeoned in recent years following the con-

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US demands for access to India's agriculture and dairy sectors will impact the livelihood of vulnerable sections of the Indian population. Oil, on the other hand, is a fungible product. It should be relatively easier for India to reduce its offtake of Russian oil, as long as the alternatives are broadly competitive. Legacy issues, however, make it difficult for India to shun Moscow altogether. India will also have to avoid creating new dependencies.



PAYAL MALIK, NIKITA JAIN AND SHAILLY GUPTA

BEHIND THE HEADLINES of layoffs, attributed partly to the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI), there is a more fundamental question: How will India shape the trajectory of AI in ways that its impact on jobs, productivity, and economy is inclusive?

Estimates from the ServiceNow-Pearson AI Skills Research 2025 report indicate that agentic AI could reshape over 10.35 million jobs and create 3 million new tech roles in India by 2030, placing the country ahead of Singapore and Australia in AI transformation. A 2025 ILO study highlights that, as new tasks emerge in AI deployment, jobs are likely to evolve rather than disappear. This optimism must be tempered with a clear-eyed view of India's structural challenges. The farm sector, which employs the most people in India, has limited exposure to AI. Labour-intensive sectors, especially services, which contributed 55 per cent to GDP and 31 per cent to employment in FY24, could, however, be impacted. Compounding this is the slow pace of skilling and low adoption of evolving competencies, especially among informal workers. How these structural gaps interact with AI adoption in India will determine whether technology exacerbates existing employment gaps or helps close them.

Economist and Nobel Laureate Daron Acemoglu has argued that AI's impact is not destiny but a choice. The central dilemma lies between two distinct AI pathways — automation and augmentation. Automation entails using AI to replace human workers, boosting efficiency but risking job losses. Augmentation involves using AI to complement human effort, enhancing productivity while preserving or expanding employment. India must avoid

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## ENABLER, NOT DISRUPTOR

India's policy challenge is to ensure AI supports small businesses, workers

the automation trap and prioritise three inter-linked pillars — skilling workers, reducing inequality through inclusive, non-extractive infrastructure, and fostering entrepreneurship through support for innovation.

These shifts are underway in some sectors. Tata Steel uses AI co-pilots to support engineers rather than displacing workers. Infosys has launched large-scale reskilling efforts. Siemens is deploying generative AI to enhance productivity and worker well-being. These examples point to a path where AI acts as a charioteer (*saarthi*) and not a destroyer (*vinashak*).

To scale such models, a focus on lifelong learning is essential. Digital and AI-related competencies should be embedded across schools, universities, industrial training institutes, and vocational centres. Strengthening academia-industry-government partnerships is equally vital. Flagship programmes such as the Atal Innovation Mission, Startup India, Future Skills PRIME, Youth for Unnati, and Vikas with AI must be scaled up.

Emerging evidence shows that generative AI tools can help narrow skill gaps, particularly for workers with low skills, by serving as collaborative tools. With AI transforming both low- and high-skill jobs, success increasingly hinges on developing the cognitive and social-emotional skills that machines cannot replicate.

To realise AI's augmenting potential, India must ensure markets remain open and competitive. As highlighted in the ICRIER AI Markets and Competition report, the growing dominance of vertically integrated firms risks replicating platform-era distortions. Infrastructure lock-in, bundling of services, self-preferencing and proprietary standards could

moderation in that grouping.

Earlier this year, the two sides unveiled fresh initiatives such as the US-India COM-PACT (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology) for the 21st Century and TRUST (Transforming the Relationship Utilising Strategic Technology). The challenge is to preserve such collaboration despite Trump's techno-nationalism and the ruckus created by punitive tariffs. There is also the matter of India's digital and data sovereignty versus US tech dominance.

Trump is keen to claim credit for the May 10 India-Pakistan ceasefire. At that time, many countries were following the military hostilities with concern, the US among them. A few well-wishers may have urged Pakistan to approach India for a ceasefire through established military channels, as required by India. This is well appreciated, but it is not tantamount to mediation, on which India has a longstanding and principled position. One may recall that former President Bill Clinton had put pressure on Pakistan during the Kargil War, but that was not mediation.

Where does that leave the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)? There have been calls for India to step up its participation in the Quad's activities, including in the South China Sea. India has a strong commitment to the four-way alliance. The Indian Navy has recently carried out joint naval exercises with the Philippines in the South China Sea.

The bilateral kerfuffle has reached "high noon" proportions but there need not be any showdown. India and the US must engage at multiple levels to preserve the gains made so far. A mutually acceptable trade deal could pave the way for an enduring partnership in the interest of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific.

*The author, a former ambassador, is currently director general of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. Views are personal*

restrict smaller players from participating in the AI economy. If unchecked, these structures will place critical decisions about AI deployment in the hands of a few firms. Employers, driven by cost efficiencies, may default to automation-first approaches. AI infrastructure providers, be they foundational models, storage, or computing, may shape AI's trajectory.

The policy challenge, therefore, is not merely enabling AI access but also ensuring that AI ecosystems remain contestable and worker-supportive. This will require competitive access to cloud and edge computing, open APIs, and interoperable systems, and supporting indigenous development of Small Language Models, domain-optimised AI models or domain-specific agents, and vernacular tools to democratise AI innovation.

Computing, storage, and access to datasets should be treated as public goods. India's digital public infrastructure model should be anchored in shared infrastructure, open standards, and interoperability to make sure that innovators are not locked out. Public investment in incubators, accelerators, and mentorship should not be limited to scaling a few unicorns but to building an ecosystem of sustainable enterprises. When empowered with the right digital tools, computing access, and tailored skilling, MSMEs can become powerful engines of employment-rich growth.

AI may displace some jobs. But with the right policy choices, institutional support, and infrastructure, it can become a driver for inclusive growth.

*The writers are at the ICRIER*

*Prosus Centre (IPCIDE)*



# The necessity of bridges

India’s strength lies in accommodating complexity — allowing multiple identities to coexist without fear. That balance is under strain



NAJEEB JUNG

FOUR YEARS AGO, in an increasingly polarised India, five friends took an unusual step. Concerned about the steady deterioration of communal relations, especially between Hindus and Muslims, they decided to meet the chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Mohan Bhagwat.

This was a personal initiative born out of anxiety over the country’s social fabric. The decision to meet Bhagwat was deliberate. For all the public claims about the independence of the BJP from the RSS, the Sangh remains the ideological mother body, with undeniable influence over the BJP’s thinking and approach.

The five friends did not claim to represent Muslims. They were concerned citizens, moved by the community’s growing alienation from the state. Years of inflammatory rhetoric and targeted policies had left many feeling cornered in their own country. They believed passivity was not an option. So even if there was a faint chance that dialogue could yield understanding, it was worth the effort. Initially, their step drew mixed reactions — cautious support from some, criticism from others, who saw it as legitimising an exclusionary organisation.

Undeterred, they expanded their outreach, meeting Muslim clerics, Sikh leaders, Christian priests, social activists, and educators. Across communities, one truth emerged: The absence of conversation was only deepening the mistrust.

The RSS’s history is no secret. Its literature contains ample anti-Muslim and anti-Christian rhetoric. Generations of its leaders have portrayed minorities as “outsiders” or obstacles to a vision of Hindu Rashtra. Against this backdrop, the question loomed: Could there be a change of heart, or were these talks futile?

Surprisingly, the meetings were direct. Bhagwat candidly outlined Hindu concerns about Muslims; the group raised Muslim concerns without hesitation. The tone was not always comfortable, but it was honest. And he kept his promise to try and reduce differences. From time to time he has spoken on the need for unity, to reduce hate and learn toleration.

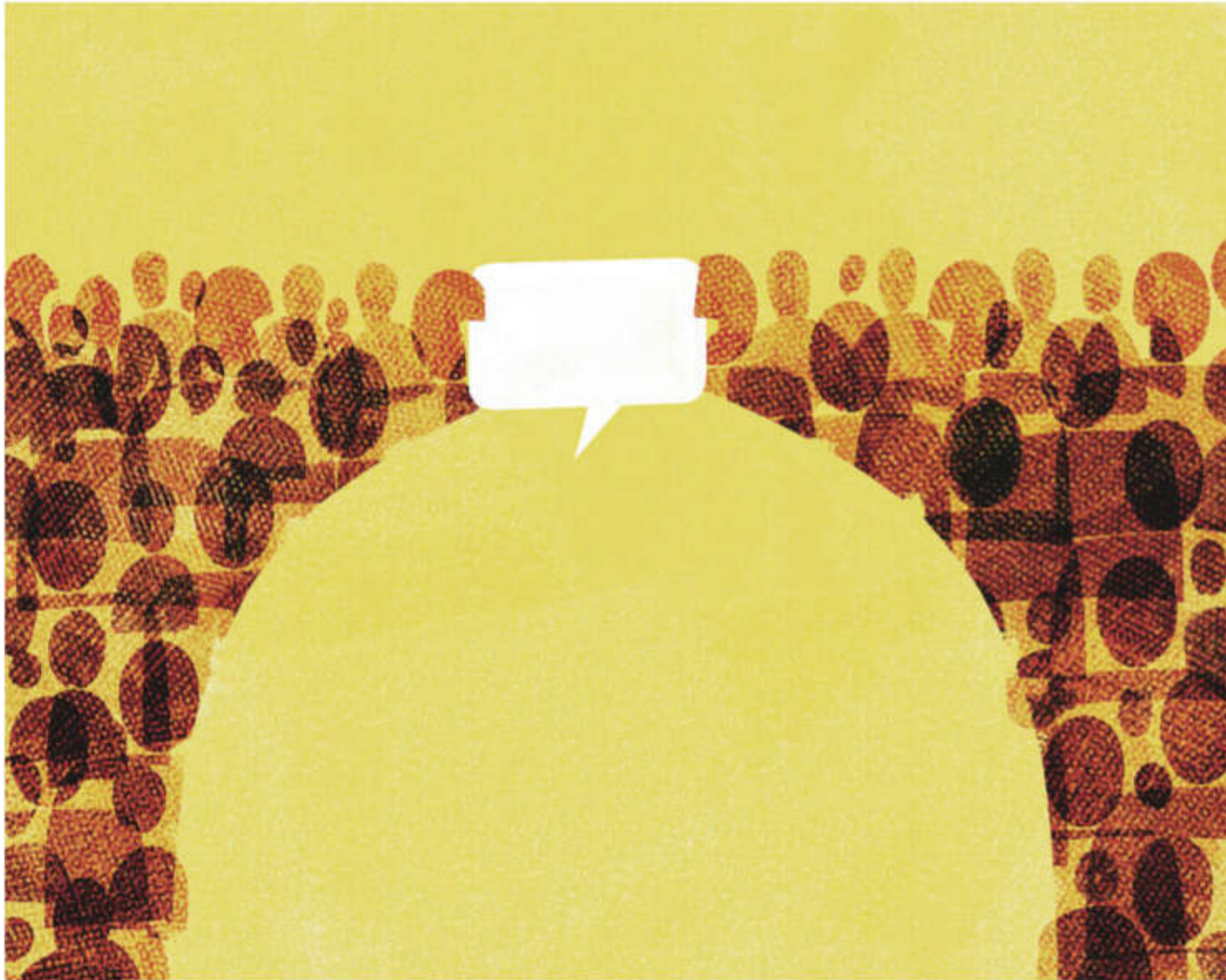
From these conversations came several practical recommendations: One, sustained dialogue — regular platforms for Hindu and Muslim scholars, clerics, community leaders, and activists to meet locally and nationally to address misconceptions quickly. Two, joint social action — collaborating in disaster relief, literacy campaigns, and public health initiatives to create shared ownership of society. Three, shared cultural spaces — updating madrasa syllabi to include shared histories, holding joint cultural festivals, and celebrating major religious occasions together. Four, engaging with the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) — Muslims should be open to the idea if the government first shares a draft and seeks genuine feedback. Imposition without consultation, as seen with the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, invites resistance. Five, noise sensitivities — Muslims could limit loudspeaker use for the five daily calls to prayer (*azan*) to reduce friction with neighbours.

Six, respecting Hindu sentiments on cow slaughter — while rare among Muslims, a visible campaign against it could ease one of the most sensitive communal flashpoints. Seven, managing Friday prayers — avoiding road blockages by staggering timings or finding alternative venues. Eight, community conduct — actively addressing lawlessness among some youth in Muslim-majority areas, with leaders promoting civic responsibility. Nine, both communities must refrain from using derogatory terms such as “*kafir*” for Hindus and “*jihadis*” for Muslims or other such terms that generate hate.

Many Muslim-majority countries have reformed to meet modern realities. Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Algeria have adapted laws on family, education and public life. Indian Muslims, too, can pursue reforms that respect faith while accommodating the sensitivities of a plural nation. Yet no internal reforms will succeed without reciprocity from the Hindu community and the state. Trust cannot be one-sided.

Over the last decade, many Muslims, Christians and Sikhs have grown deeply suspicious of the executive and judiciary. Laws perceived as discriminatory, selective justice, and the endorsement of majoritarian rhetoric have eroded faith in the state’s neutrality.

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C R Sasikumar

Over the last decade, many Muslims, Christians and Sikhs have grown deeply suspicious of the executive and judiciary. Laws perceived as discriminatory, selective justice, and the endorsement of majoritarian rhetoric have eroded faith in the state’s neutrality. There is enough evidence of law enforcement agencies favouring Hindus, particularly during festivals. A very good example is the Kanwar festival.

There is enough evidence of law enforcement agencies favouring Hindus, particularly during festivals. A very good example is the Kanwar festival, with state police officials welcoming the pilgrims with flowers, touching their feet or showering petals from helicopters. Such actions in a secular country shake the confidence not just of minorities but also the very large secular society.

Confidence-building also requires the government to step back from polarising politics, apply laws equally, act against hate speech, and show in action, not just in words, that every citizen has an equal stake in India. Demonstration of equal action has been sadly lacking.

India’s strength lies in accommodating complexity — allowing multiple identities to coexist without fear. That balance is under strain. The choice is stark: Let mistrust harden into permanent division, or take the harder path of conversation, reform, and mutual respect.

This initiative with the RSS chief may have been just a drop in the ocean. Therefore, more citizens and institutions must commit to long-term, genuine engagement. India can still reclaim the pluralistic spirit that is its truest inheritance. Trust, once broken, takes time to rebuild. But it can be rebuilt. And in this time of suspicion, the smallest bridges matter.

*The writer is former vice chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia, former Lt Governor, Delhi, and currently chairman, Advanced Study Institute of Asia*



RAM RAJA  
BY RAM MADHAV

# Reforming the steel frame

Success of India’s deep-tech push requires removing bureaucracy’s colonial roots

ON INDEPENDENCE DAY last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered an important address from the Red Fort’s ramparts. There was greater emphasis on a grand vision for the future of the nation this time compared to the past, especially the direction the country should take in the coming years. PM Modi focused a lot on areas in frontier technology and insisted on making the country *atmanirbhar* (self-reliant) in these areas. He talked about semiconductors, nuclear energy, clean energy, critical minerals, oil exploration, EVs, even jet engines, and asked, “Should the jet engine for our Made in India fighter jets be ours or not?”

The Prime Minister promised citizens that the country will shed dependency in the next two decades. He explained self-reliance as “not confined merely to imports and exports, or to rupees, pounds, and dollars”, but “linked to our capability”, calling upon countrymen to “preserve, maintain, and enhance our capability, it is imperative to be self-reliant”.

Modi’s technology push is not new. His efforts in that direction have yielded commendable results, with India becoming a go-to nation for many developing countries in areas like fintech. Technology has become the mainstay of most activities for the common person in the country. India has become the world’s largest per capita data consumer (32 GB), overtaking China (29 GB) and the USA (22 GB). With growing digital awareness and education, and the increasing number of smartphone users and availability of cheap data,

India will continue to grow in that area.

However, most of this digitisation came from low-tech and mid-tech areas of basic computing and social media. In high-tech areas, India has registered some advancements in the last two decades, with cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Gurugram, and others emerging as hubs of such technologies. Yet, several high-tech areas remain heavily import-dependent. Meanwhile, as we race ahead in mid-tech and high-tech areas, the world has moved on to the next level of deep-tech, Web 4.0, for instance. PM Modi wants the country to focus on areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, robotics, blockchain technologies, genetics and bioengineering, aerospace and defence, space and outer space and crypto and other digital currencies.

It is a tall order. It’s not that India lacks capability. Global leaders in deep-tech like Nvidia and IBM have R&D facilities in India, benefiting from the country’s talent pool. But there are some fundamental challenges that the country needs to address to achieve *atmanirbharta* in deep-tech. PM Modi appeared conscious of that imperative. A day after his Independence Day address, PM Modi called a high-level meeting of his senior cabinet colleagues and others to discuss “next-generation reforms”.

Next-generation reforms are crucial. But what is more crucial is for the government to look at the pending basic reforms in three important sectors — the bureaucracy, regulatory bodies, and the judiciary. In his address from

Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F> the Red Fort in 2022, PM Modi had called on the people to shed “all traces of the colonial mindset”. Incidentally, these three institutions continue to dominate governance in our country. Not that the individuals who work in these institutions — bureaucrats and judicial officers — are incompetent. Many of them have proved to be outstanding and won laurels for the nation. But the challenge is with the systems we inherited from the British colonisers.

The Westminster bureaucracy we adopted without change after Independence was created by colonial administrators to perpetuate British rule in India. Nearly every civil servant came from London till the first two decades of the 20th century. To increase the demand for them, the Public Service Commission was created in 1926 to train Indians for bureaucratic positions. But the Indian Civil Service’s design, the “steel frame”, continued to ensure that Indians remained subservient to an unelected and unaccountable institutional framework. Incidentally, 2026 marks the centenary of this British vintage institution. There cannot be a better occasion to overhaul the UPSC.

There have been several attempts at administrative reforms in the past. The Veerappa Moily Committee, appointed during the UPA government in 2005, was the last. Its important suggestions include introducing “direct appointment of specialists with domain expertise for high-ranking government positions” and “establishing a code of ethics for public officials and a mechanism for account-

ability”. However, not much has happened in that direction. Prime Minister Modi’s efforts to encourage the lateral entry of experts, too, have met with limited success in cracking the “steel frame”. Earlier this year, the government formed a Deregulation Commission to identify and eliminate redundant compliance obligations in various sectors. Its aim was to end regulatory red tape. PM Modi’s grand vision depends on how he tackles these tough bureaucratic and regulatory roadblocks.

Two countries that lead the world today, China and the US, have different bureaucratic models. But one common feature between them is the supremacy of the political leadership. Even in the UK, from where we inherited the Westminster model, a major debate erupted a few years ago over the steel frame’s efficacy. Dominique Cummings, chief advisor to the then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, led the campaign for bureaucratic reforms. Objecting to the internal promotion model, he pushed for opening senior appointments to outside competition. Besides fixing accountability, he also advocated for greater ministerial control over the administration.

There can be a debate over the merits of these suggestions. But for Viksit Bharat to become a reality, an undeniable imperative for India is to shed its colonial bureaucratic model and replace it with a more accountable and responsive institutional arrangement.

*The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP. Views are personal*



EXPLAINED

GLOBAL

## ALLIGATOR ALCATRAZ: WHY HAS A JUDGE PUT RESTRICTIONS ON IT?

A FEDERAL judge in the United States issued a preliminary injunction on Thursday halting operations at an immigration detention centre in Florida that has earned the moniker “Alligator Alcatraz”.

The name comes from Alcatraz Island, a former prison located on an island near San Francisco which was deemed impossible to escape, as well as the significant alligator population in Florida.

The detention centre was set up around two months ago in Florida Everglades National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The centre has faced scrutiny for its treatment of detainees and alleged environmental violations.

The ruling has given the state 60 days to stop its operations. An appeal against the order has been filed.



Donald Trump at Alligator Alcatraz in Florida in June 2025. AP

### Detention centre

The detention centre was established amid the Trump administration’s increased focus on targeting immigration into the US. “We had a request from the federal government to (create the facility), and so ‘Alligator Alcatraz’ it is,” Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has said.

“Clearly from a security perspective, if someone escapes, there’s a lot of alligators you’re going to have to contend (with),” DeSantis said.

What was previously the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport for pilots was transformed into a tent city with a capacity for housing up to 5,000 people.

The centre was also seen as an extension of Trump’s continued fascination with the original Alcatraz prison, located on an island off San Francisco and closed more than 60 years ago. He has ordered officials to examine the possibility of reopening it, and said in May that the prison would serve as a “symbol of law, order, and justice”.

### Several concerns

Several media reports have claimed that the setup includes large white tents and bunk beds surrounded by chain-link cages. “Toilets don’t flush, flooding floors with fecal waste, and mosquitoes and

other insects are everywhere,” the *Associated Press* reported.

Meals are allegedly not provided on time or in adequate quantities, but state officials have denied these reports.

The current injunction has come as the court hears a lawsuit brought by environmental groups. Arguing to block further construction, these groups have said that such activities could adversely impact sensitive wetland ecosystems, endangered species, and essential waterways.

District Court Judge Kathleen Williams wrote in her order about a plan to aid tourism in the 1960s in the Everglades that was eventually rejected.

Since then, “every Florida governor, every Florida senator, and countless local and national political figures, including presidents, have publicly pledged their unequivocal support for the restoration, conservation, and protection of the Everglades,” she wrote.

The national park is located at “the interface of temperate and sub-tropical America, fresh and brackish water, shallow bays”, which “contains the largest mangrove ecosystem in the Western Hemisphere”, according to UNESCO.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

## WHY NOT ALL VIRUSES LEAD TO A PANDEMIC AFTER TRANSMISSION

WHEN A disease-causing virus jumps from one species to another, most often, the infection fails to establish sustained transmission in its new environment. On the rare occasion, however, it can trigger a pandemic.

A new study has now identified some key factors which determine whether a pathogen will persist after it spills over to a new population. These are: the fraction of the exposed population that’s infected (or infection prevalence); the ability to release copies of the virus into the environment (or viral shedding); and how vulnerable the hosts are to the virus (or infection susceptibility).

The study was published in the journal *PLOS Biology* on Thursday.

David Kennedy, researcher at the Pennsylvania State University and senior author on the paper, in a statement, said, “This work helps us figure out which out-

breaks to worry about so that we can direct our public health resources where they need to go to prevent and respond to disease emergence.”

For their study, researchers induced a spillover among a species of worms by exposing them to the Orsas virus. The worms were seen to reproduce and grow for five to 13 days, after which 20 adult worms were transferred to a new, virus-free Petri dish where they could multiply and grow again. This was repeated until no trace of the virus could be detected.

Specific traits among worms remaining from the initial lot were studied including what fraction of the worms were infected and how much virus each worm shed into the air. This helped scientists determine that infection prevalence, viral shedding, and infection susceptibility play a substantial role in explaining the outcome of a spillover event. **ENS**



### ADRIJA ROYCHOWDHURY NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

SHANTANU MUKHERJEE, 46, has complained to police that filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri’s forthcoming *Bengal Files* tarnishes the image of his late grandfather Gopal Mukherjee.

Agnihotri’s film is about the “Great Calcutta Killing”, the most violent episode of Hindu-Muslim violence in the lead-up to Partition. Between 5,000 to 10,000 people were killed in the four-day bloodbath that began on August 16, 1946, the date designated by the Muslim League as Direct Action Day.

Gopal Mukherjee, known by the moniker Gopal ‘Patha’ because his family owned a mutton shop in central Kolkata’s College Street (*patha* is goat in Bangla), was a leader of one of Calcutta’s major street gangs at the time. His group of more than 800 young men took it upon themselves to protect Hindus from gangs of Muslim rioters.

“We have no problem with a film being made on Gopal Mukherjee. But the vulgar way in which he has been depicted is very offensive,” Shantanu Mukherjee told *The Indian Express*.

In the official trailer of the film, Gopal Mukherjee is seen proclaiming India to be a nation of Hindus, blaming Gandhian non-violence for the “victory” of Jinnah, and hacking frenziedly at people in the street with a sword.

### Call for ‘direct action’

By August 1946, relations between the Muslim League and the Congress had frayed beyond repair. The League had committed itself to accepting nothing short of Partition and the creation of Pakistan, and its leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, proclaimed that there would now be “either a divided India or a destroyed India”.

The League (and the Congress) rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 1946, which had proposed a loose federal structure for post-colonial India, and on July 31, Jinnah called on Muslims across India to observe August 16 as Direct Action Day.

“On that day, meetings would be held all over the country to explain the League’s resolution [for a separate Muslim state],” H V Hodson, who was an adviser to Viceroy Wavell in 1946, wrote in his book *The Great Divide: Britain, India, Pakistan* (1969). “These meetings and processions passed off...without more than commonplace and limited disturbances, with one vast and tragic exception,” he wrote.

While Muslims were in majority in Bengal, making up 54% of the population, Calcutta itself was 73% Hindu. Muslims were

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Mahatma Gandhi with H S Suhrawardy (third from the left) in 1947. A young Mujibur Rahman, the future Father of Bangladesh, is standing behind. Wikimedia Commons

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concentrated in North Calcutta and in the Metiabruz area by the Hooghly, and mainly part of the city’s underclasses.

### Suhrawardy’s mischief

H S Suhrawardy became Prime Minister (Chief Minister) of Bengal in April. He was a respected leader among Bengal’s Muslims but reviled among Hindus who blamed him for the Bengal famine of 1943 which killed an estimated three million people (he was the Minister for Civil Supplies at the time).

Almost all members of Suhrawardy’s cabinet belonged to the League. In *A History of the Bengali-speaking People* (2001), historian Nitish Sengupta wrote that Suhrawardy’s cabinet without a single upper caste Hindu was, for the *bhadralok* class, “a foretaste of what was likely to happen to them if the whole of Bengal went to Pakistan”.

Many historians blame Suhrawardy for the carnage in Calcutta in August 1946.

On Direct Action Day, he addressed a gathering of an estimated 1,00,000 Muslim youth in Maidan (a vast open space in central Calcutta). What Suhrawardy told the crowd remains disputed — it is said that he announced he had taken steps to restrain the police, which was understood as an invitation to loot and murder — but his speech was followed by a massive outbreak of violence in the city.

Suhrawardy himself “spent a great deal of time in the Control Room in Lall Bazar [police headquarters], often attended by some of his supporters”, Frederick Burrows, Governor

EXPLAINED

HISTORY

## Direct Action & Gopal ‘Patha’

Between 5,000 and 10,000 people were killed in Calcutta in a four-day bloodbath in August 1946. Gopal ‘Patha’ Mukherjee, a local strongman, took it upon himself to protect Hindus from Muslim rioters

what was new in Calcutta was the sheer scale of the phenomenon,” he wrote.

For a long time, Calcutta remained divided between Muslim and Hindu zones with very little movement between them. Historians of Bengal believe that the Calcutta riots of 1946 were by far the most cataclysmic event leading to the partition of the province a year later. And they would be a harbinger of the horrors yet to come.

### Mukherjee’s role

Much of the street violence during the Great Calcutta Killing was “a pogrom between two rival armies [of Muslim and Hindu and Sikh] of the Calcutta underworld”, Burrows wrote to Wavell.

What is known of Mukherjee and his role in the violence comes primarily from the 1996 book *The Goondas: Towards a Reconstruction of the Calcutta Underworld* by Jayanta K Ray and Suranjan Das, and an audio interview that Mukherjee gave to Andrew Whitehead of the *BBC* in 1997.

According to Ray and Das, Mukherjee was born in 1916 and lived in Malanga Lane in Bowbazar in central Kolkata. He was “5 feet 4 inches in height, wore long hair like ladies, sported a moustache and long beard”, Ray and Das wrote.

In his interview to Whitehead, Mukherjee said that on August 16, 1946, he was sitting at his meat shop when he saw a party of Muslim League volunteers marching with sticks in their hands and raising slogans of ‘*lad ke lenge Pakistan*’ (We will fight and snatch Pakistan).

After riots began in Bowbazar, Mukherjee shut his shop and gathered some “boys” to protect the neighbourhood. “I realised we had to save the country. If the whole area went to Pakistan, there would be more torture and bloodshed,” he told Whitehead.

He said that he instructed his boys to retaliate ferociously to any violence against Hindus. “If you come to know of one murder, you should commit 10 murders, that was my order to my boys,” Mukherjee said, adding that his grandfather “attacked only those members of the Muslim League who were spreading violence. He did not attack anyone from their families, women, children or the elderly”.

“Had he not attacked the rioters from the Muslim League, this (Kolkata) would have been Bangladesh. The whole map of India would have been different,” Shantanu Mukherjee told *The Indian Express*.

Asked by Whitehead during the interview if he felt proud of his actions in 1946, Gopal Mukherjee said: “It was not about pride. It was about duty. I believed that I had a duty to help people in distress.”

## Row over ‘film on Yogi’, and why Bombay HC judges want to watch movie

### OMKAR GOKHALE MUMBAI, AUGUST 22

THE BOMBAY High Court has said judges will watch a film purportedly based on the life of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has been accused of delaying.

The court said on Thursday that it would watch *Ajey: The Untold Story of a Yogi* before passing an order on a petition filed by the producers of the film. The case will be taken up again on August 25.

### The film in question

The producer, Samrat Cinematics India Pvt Ltd, has said the film is inspired by Shantanu Gupta’s book *The Monk Who Became Chief Minister: The Definitive Biography of Yogi Adityanath* (2017), officially endorsed by the UP Chief Minister’s Office.

The purpose of the film is “not only to depict the journey of a leader in public service but also to motivate and inspire the youth of the nation through a narrative grounded in fact and integrity”, the makers have said in their plea.

### In the Bombay HC

Samrat Cinematics has alleged that it applied for certification of the film on June 5 this year. Under the rules for certification, CBFC was required to scrutinise the application within seven days and refer it for screening before the examining committee within 15 days, it has said.

However, after CBFC took no action for more than a month, the petitioner applied again under the “priority scheme”. CBFC then scheduled the screening on July 7, but it was cancelled, according to the plea.

Since they received no further correspondence from CBFC, the filmmakers were com-

pelled to approach the HC to seek a direction to CBFC to decide on the release of the film at the earliest.

The producer has said the delay by the Censor Board in processing the application for the film, its teaser, trailer, and promotional song, is “unreasonable” and “unexplained”.

On July 16, a Bench of Justices Revati Mohite-Dere and Neela K Gokhale orally remarked that CBFC was mandated to issue the certification within the stipulated time under the law.

The next day, the Board assured HC that the application would be decided within two working days, following which the court disposed of the filmmakers’ writ plea. The film was scheduled for release in theatres on August 1.

### The second writ plea

On July 21, CBFC wrote to the filmmak-

ers saying their application for certification had been rejected. This prompted them to file a second writ plea in the court.

On August 1, the HC observed that CBFC had taken its July 21 decision without viewing the film, its teaser, trailer, and promotional song, is “affect the public at large”. CBFC assured the HC that a panel would watch the film before deciding on certification. Thereafter, on August 6, it passed an order refusing to certify the film on the ground that it violated the Guidelines for Certification of Films for Public Exhibition.

According to CBFC, the film violated clauses requiring that the medium should remain responsible and sensitive to the values and standards of society.

EXPLAINED

LAW

Also, the film presented “visuals or words contemptuous of racial, religious or other groups” and “involving defamation of an individual or body of individuals, or contempt of court”, CBFC said.

The producer then said it would apply to CBFC’s Revising Committee. The HC had asked the Board to inform the petitioner about any content or dialogues that it found objectionable. The makers were asked to communicate whether they intended to delete or rework parts of the movie.

CBFC raised 29 objections but subsequently dropped eight. The Board objected to the title of the film as being provocative, and flagged certain dialogues.

On August 17, CBFC’s revising panel rejected the filmmaker’s application.

### Seeing for themselves

On Thursday, CBFC argued that the writ plea was not maintainable. It said the film-

maker could challenge the Revising Committee’s order in an appeal before the HC under the Cinematograph Act.

The producer argued the Revising Committee’s decision violated the makers’ fundamental rights. It said that CBFC had in an arbitrary manner asked for a No-Objection Certificate from a private individual (Chief Minister Adityanath) before the movie could be cleared for release.

The Board was “not the guardian of the private person’s fundamental rights”, the petitioner said. The Bench said that although an alternative remedy to file an appeal was available, it would have to examine whether the present writ petition was maintainable. It pulled up CBFC, saying it had failed to follow the principles of natural justice.

The judges then said they would watch the film before passing an order on the plea by the maker, and consider the objections of the Revising Committee.



COUNCIL TO HOLD ITEM-WISE DISCUSSION ON NEXT-GEN REFORMS

With a tight timeline for Oct rollout, GST Council set to meet on Sep 3-4

ANCHAL MAGAZINE  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

WITH A tight timeline for implementing the next-generation reforms under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime by early October, the 56th meeting of the GST Council will be held for two days beginning September 3. A meeting notice issued late Friday by GST Council and signed by Revenue Secretary Arvind Shrivastava, who is the ex-officio secretary of the Council, also stated that the meeting of officers' of states and Centre will be held on September 2, a day before the Council's meeting.

The Council's meeting comes after chief ministers, finance ministers and other ministers from states had come to the Capital to participate in the meetings of the Groups of Ministers (GoMs) over the last two days. While the ministerial panel on rate rationalisation gave its in-principle support for the GST overhaul proposal this week, the item-by-item discussions will now take place during the two-day meeting of the GST Council in September.

The GST Council, headed by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and having representatives from 31 states and Union territories including Delhi, Puducherry and Jammu & Join FREE Whatsapp Channel https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F

LOWER TAX ON COMMON-USE ITEMS, TWIN SLABS



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will chair the meeting.

File

Join FREE Telegram Channel https://t.me/+jUYKq0AFHBaWMGQ1 Kashmir, will discuss the proposal that seeks to reduce tax rates for common-use items and for public welfare services such as health and life insurance for individuals that is likely to be exempted.

States have already raised two key concerns — whether there will be any institutional mechanism to compensate states for revenue loss; and whether the benefits from GST rate cuts will percolate to the ultimate beneficiary — the common person. States are expected to raise these concerns in the upcoming GST Council meeting as items under various slabs get discussed there.

Seven days ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his

**THE GST** Council, headed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, with representatives from 31 states and UTs, will discuss the proposal to reduce tax rates for common-use items and for public welfare services **THE CENTRE** has suggested replacing multiple tax slabs with two-slab structure — 5% and 18% — and a 40% special rate for sin goods

Independence Day address, had announced the next big phase of reforms under the GST regime by Diwali, a gift for the common man, small entrepreneurs and MSMEs, in terms of reduced tax burden. The Centre has suggested replacing multiple slabs — 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent — with a broad two-slab structure — 5 per cent and 18 per cent — in addition to a 40 per cent special rate for sin and demerit goods.

Over the last two days, on August 20-21, states' ministers, chief ministers and finance ministers converged in Delhi to discuss the Centre's GST overhaul plan. On August 20, Finance Minister Sitharaman addressed

the Groups of Ministers (GoM) constituted by the GST Council on compensation cess, health and life insurance, and rate rationalisation.

Two meetings of GoMs were held on the first day — compensation cess & life and health insurance. All members broadly agreed with the proposal to make the GST rate nil on health and life insurance for individuals from the current GST rate of 18 per cent. Some states raised concerns about the possibility of benefits from GST cuts on insurance being pocketed by companies, while some others asked about the impact on state government health insurance schemes. Annual revenue loss from GST exemption on insurance for individuals is seen around Rs 9,700 crore.

On August 21, the GoM on Rate Rationalisation met and gave its in-principle support to the Centre's GST overhaul proposal. States said they do not oppose the "pro-people" proposal, but it may result in revenue losses that will ultimately leave them with less resources to spend on common people in their regions.

States said they are "okay with the pro-people proposal" but it should not move ahead without detailing a mechanism for compensating states for revenue loss. While the GST overhaul plan entails removal of 12 per cent and 28 per cent slabs, states' revenue loss

concerns stem mainly from the proposal which would see most items such as white goods, small cars shift to 18 per cent from the existing 28 per cent slab. The Centre plans to introduce a special rate of 40 per cent, subsuming compensation cess levy, which will apply only to 5-7 sin, demerit and luxury items. Some states have also suggested amending Section 9(1) of the GST law to allow for an additional levy going beyond the current cap of 40 per cent (20 per cent Central GST plus 20 per cent State GST).

The differing views and observations of states on revenue loss and concerns over possible profiteering by manufacturers and companies will be part of the note that the GoM on Rate Rationalisation will send to the Council along with the Centre's proposal.

The proposed GST reforms are expected to boost consumption. As per the proposal, 99 per cent of items in the current 12 per cent slab are set to be moved to the 5 per cent slab, while 90 per cent of goods and services currently at 28 per cent would shift to the 18 per cent tax slab. Common-use items will continue to be in the zero or 5 per cent slab, while a standard rate of 18 per cent will apply on other goods. Sin, demerit and ultra-luxury items will attract a 40 per cent rate.

FULL REPORT ON  
www.indianexpress.com

Branded as a social evil, banned gaming companies stare at a tough road ahead

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

ON THE evening when the online gaming Bill received the Cabinet's nod, an unusual gathering happened in Delhi. Employees, consultants and lobbyists from rival gaming companies — many of whom had spent years undercutting each other's arguments in the corridors of power — found themselves in the same room. Old adversaries frantically compared notes and scoured the Bill's language, searching for cracks in the definition of what exactly was being prohibited. Could there be an exemption, a loophole, a shred of ambiguity that might yet keep a corner of the industry alive?

For one evening, at least, bitter rivals were bound by something greater than market share or policy battles: survival.

With The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, now having been notified, it's official that all kinds of real money gaming platforms — Dream11, Winzo, MPL, My11Circle and the likes — are illegal in the country and can not offer games where users can wager money. "People are sad, they are crestfallen," a lawyer working with some online gaming companies said.

The companies have sought meetings with Home Minister Amit Shah, however, have not yet been successful in that. There is widespread belief in the industry that even though the bill was introduced by the IT Ministry, the Home Ministry has played a crucial role in its formulation. On Thursday evening, some companies are learnt to have met senior officials in the IT Ministry, where they were asked to comply with the law at the earliest.

Companies such as Dream11, Winzo, MPL, My11Circle, and Probo have stopped their real money gaming operations, bringing the curtains down on what was one of startup India's most successful sectors, financially, with three startups having a valuation of over \$1 billion. Some are already pivoting to new revenue



As per the online gaming industry, it pays over Rs 20,000 crore annually in direct and indirect taxes, has attracted FDI of over Rs 25,000 crore till June 2022, and currently supports over 2 lakh direct and indirect jobs.

Express photo

streams. Dream11, for instance, is launching a new gold loan app under a new service called Dream Money.

Dream11, the country's biggest fantasy sports app and the Indian cricket team's main jersey sponsor, which had also recently shifted its domicile from the US to India, posted a revenue of Rs 6,384 crore in FY23, according to its financial disclosures and had a profit of Rs 188 crore. Winzo reported an operating revenue of Rs 1,055 crore in the fiscal year ending March 2024, and a profit of Rs 315 crore. Games24x7 had a revenue of Rs 1,988 crore in FY23, but posted a loss of Rs 199 crore. For all of them, revenue from online gaming was the biggest chunk of their earnings, as high as 90-95 per cent.

For long, the online gaming company operated in a legal grey zone, with both the Centre and several state governments trying to regulate the sector, with calls for a national level law. And for an industry which focused extensively on policy engagement with the government through various lobby channels, the news of an outright blanket ban came as a big surprise, as work on the Bill happened without their knowledge or inputs.

Historically, the sector had succeeded in favourable judge-

ments at the Supreme Court, where formats like fantasy sports and rummy were categorised as games of skill. However, the Bill applies to all online money gaming platforms irrespective of whether they are games of skill or chance, a distinction the industry had lobbied hard for in the past.

That there will be a legal challenge against the law is clear. Companies and their associations have been on constant calls since they have learnt of the bill to prepare a legal roadmap, with multiple considerations. One of those is for the industry to pool money for one company which will raise the challenge in court, this paper has learnt.

However, even if the companies manage to get a favourable judgement from the court, the road ahead looks murky. A senior executive said that if the case drags on for anything more than six months, a victory would amount to very little as the financial hit in that time would be too much to bear. And because the government has clearly branded real money gaming as some sort of a social evil, the industry fears that they would anyway be burdened with significant tax obligations, which would also make their offerings lukewarm to users.

FULL REPORT ON  
www.indianexpress.com

India's 'prisoner's dilemma' in Trump's 'game of chicken' on Russian oil purchase

ANIL SASI  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar may have expressed surprise over the additional 25 per cent US tariff slapped on India over energy imports from Russia, reiterating that "it was the Americans" who said "we should do everything to stabilise the world's energy markets, including buying oil from Russia". There is, however, a growing realisation in New Delhi's policy circles that India may have ended up becoming a "soft target" to pressure Russia into ending the Ukraine war — collateral damage in US President Donald Trump's ambition to squeeze Russia's crude exports and pressurise Moscow to get on to the negotiating table for ending the war in Europe.

Experts concur. Squeezing oil revenues, according to analysts such as David Woo, the former head of global interest rates, foreign exchange, emerging market fixed income & economics research at the Bank of America, was seen by Washington DC as the "cheapest and easiest way to weaken Russia", with India ultimately getting the rough end of the stick. Pressuring China, from Washington DC's point of view, was off the table. Jaishankar's statement Thursday, delivered when he was seated next to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow, came after the US doubled down on its attack on India. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent accused India on Wednesday of profiteering from the purchases of oil from Russia in a deal that he called "the Indian arbitrage — They're buying cheap Russian oil, selling petrochemicals

EXPLAINED Fundamental differences with China

WHILE TRUMP'S tariff assault seems to have catalysed efforts to stabilise the India-China relationship, there are 'fundamental differences' between the two sides, including core security issues and the fact that China is in the running to get even more favourable terms from the US if a bilateral deal is struck

back out. Much of that is going to the richest families in India".

Chinese embrace, and the Hobson's choice

From an Indian perspective, this situation ostensibly presents the 'prisoner's dilemma' — a classic game theory scenario illustrating why two rational individuals might not cooperate even when it's in their best interest to do so, essentially highlighting the conflict between individual rationality and collective well-being. There are also references being made in Delhi to this being a Game of Chicken, another game theory scenario where two parties must choose between driving forward or swerving to avoid a crash, and where if neither party backs down, the result could be catastrophic.

And to make it worse, China's sudden embrace presents New Delhi with a "Hobson's choice" of sorts, a reference to a situation where there appears to be a free choice but there is actually no real alternative; the term originates

'Approaching US trade issue with very open mind'

New Delhi: India will address its future trade relationship with the US with a "very open mind", Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday, just days before heavy extra US tariffs are due to hit imports from the country. Speaking at an event here, he said India is addressing the issue of trade with US with a "very open mind, a positive outlook and the confidence that India-US relationship is very consequential and very important to both the countries."

REUTERS

from Thomas Hobson, a 17th-century stable owner in Cambridge, England, who required customers to take the horse nearest the stable door or have no horse at all. Just weeks ago, a top Indian General had accused China of leveraging a "borrowed knife", citing Beijing's use of Pakistan as a tool to act against India during the Op Sindoer skirmish, where China provided significant military hardware and intelligence support to Pakistan.

And while Trump's tariff assault seems to have catalysed efforts to stabilise the India-China relationship, there are "fundamental differences" between the two sides, including core security issues and the fact that China is in the running to get even more favourable terms from the US in the event a bilateral deal is struck between the two, which looks highly likely.

Already, China is on course to be in a significantly advantageous position vis-a-vis India after the August 27 secondary tariffs kick in. In this context, the only loser in terms of a further backlash from Washington DC on account of this pronounced embrace with China and Russia could be India. New Delhi was among the early frontrunners to have kicked off trade talks with the US, but failed to close a deal. While many major economies signed trade pacts on Trump's terms, India now finds itself in the company of Brazil, Myanmar, and Switzerland facing steep US tariffs. China is a beneficiary of this situation, as it stands, or as it gets progressively worse for India.

After the Op Sindoer ceasefire, when Trump tried to take credit for bringing the India-Pakistan conflict to a halt, New Delhi insisted that the US had no role in it. Pakistan, on the other hand, said the American President played a huge role. The problem is that Trump seems to have taken this personally and turned the fire on India, while Islamabad has cashed in on the situation. A visible embrace with China, could likewise end up being counterproductive for India, even as Beijing could stand to gain in both economic and strategic terms.

Now, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi set to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping this month at the Shanghai Cooperation summit in Tianjin, this comes at a time when New Delhi is ostensibly recalibrating its foreign policy toward Beijing. Much of this realignment from India's perspective is, however, coming against the backdrop of the US policy reversal. FULL REPORT ON  
www.indianexpress.com



FOUND ON ISLE OF WIGHT, NEAR SOUTH COAST OF ENGLAND

SAIL-BACKED DINOSAUR FOSSIL UNEARTHED IN UK

A new dinosaur with a dramatic sail along its back and tail has been identified from fossils found on the Isle of Wight, off the south coast of England, the University of Portsmouth revealed on Friday. Scientists believe the species may have evolved its eye-catching look to impress potential mates, possibly suggesting it evolved by sexual selection. **AP**

Iran, European countries to discuss nuclear talks, sanctions



Iran Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi in Rio de Janeiro earlier this year. *Reuters file*

REUTERS  
DUBAI, AUGUST 22

IRAN'S FOREIGN Minister Abbas Araqchi will have a joint telephone call with his French, British and German counterparts on Friday to discuss nuclear talks and sanctions, state news agency IRNA reported.

The three European powers have threatened to activate United Nations sanctions on Iran under a "snapback" mechanism if Iran does not return to the negotiating table over its nuclear programme.

The countries, along with the US, contend that Iran is using the programme to potentially develop weapons. The International Atomic Energy Agency has stated that Iran is nowhere near developing a nuclear bomb and US national intelligence director Tulsi Gabbard testified that there was no proof of Iran moving toward a nuclear weapon.

Iran's state broadcaster said Araqchi and the British and European foreign ministers will discuss triggering the snapback mechanism. Tehran suspended nuclear talks with the US, which were aimed at curbing the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme, after the US and Israel struck its nuclear sites in June.

Russia says agenda 'not ready at all' for Putin-Zelenskyy summit

REUTERS  
KYIV, BUDAPEST, AUGUST 22

RUSSIAN FOREIGN Minister Sergei Lavrov said there is no agenda for a potential summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy, accusing Zelenskyy of saying "no to everything".

Speaking to *NBC*, Lavrov said Putin had made clear he was ready to meet Zelenskyy to discuss a possible deal to end the war in Ukraine provided there was a proper agenda for such a session, something he said was lacking now.

Both Russia and Ukraine are trying to show Donald Trump that they are ready to try to strike



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Friday. *Reuters*

a peace deal, something the U.S. leader has said he wants to broker, while accusing the other of not being sincere or ready to negotiate in good faith.

"Putin is ready to meet with

Zelenskiy when the agenda would be ready for a summit. And this agenda is not ready at all," Lavrov told *NBC*. Lavrov said Russia had agreed to show flexibility on a number of issues raised by Trump at a U.S.-Russia summit last week.

"He (Trump) clearly indicated - it was very clear to everybody that there are several principles which Washington believes must be accepted, including no NATO membership (for Ukraine), including the discussion of territorial issues, and Zelenskyy said no to everything," said Lavrov. "He even said no to, as I said, to cancelling legislation banning the Russian language. How can we meet with a person who is pretending to be a leader?"



# Valarivan wins women’s 10m rifle gold at Asian Shooting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SHYMKENT (KAZAKHSTAN), AUGUST 22

INDIAN SHOOTER **Elavenil Valarivan** clinched the gold medal in the women's 10m air rifle competition of the 16th Asian Championships here on Friday with a characteristically composed performance in the final.



The 26-year-old from Tamil Nadu, who has won multiple gold medals in World Cups, shot a score of 253.6 to finish on top in the final and claim her second gold in the continental showpiece, the first coming way back in 2019 when she was honing her skills under the tutelage of Olympic medallist shooter Gagan Narang at his Gun for Glory Academy.

The silver went to China's Xinlu Peng with a score of 253, while Korea's Eunji Kwon (231.2) took home the bronze.

In the skeet mixed team, Abhay Singh Sekhon (65) and Ganemat Sekhon (73) shot 138 in qualification to make the second bronze medal match against Kuwait's Abdullah Alrashidi, a 62-year-old legend of the sport and a double Olympic bronze medallist, partnering Afrah Almohammad.

The Indians prevailed 39-37 in the 48-shot team contest, going into the final station just a point ahead. However, Afrah missed a couple while the other three missed just one of the last four, to give India another senior medal.

Coming back to the women's rifle final, this was Valarivan's first individual podium finish in the ongoing event having won a silver and bronze in the team events previously.

Another Indian in the fray, Mehuli Ghosh, signed off in fourth position after scoring 208.9 in the eight-shooter final.

Valarivan had qualified eighth for the final with a score of 630.7. Ghosh had originally finished 10th in the event with a score of 630.3 but made the final as two other higher-placed Indians -- Arya Borse (633.2) and Sonam Maskar (630.5) -- stepped aside since they were competing only for ranking points.

Meanwhile, Valarivan and Mehuli combined with Ananya Naidu (630.0) to win the team bronze in the women's 10m air rifle event with a total score of 1891. China won gold while Korea took silver.

Valarivan's medal was only the second senior individual gold for India in the continental showpiece, where the country is topping the charts thanks to a strong showing by its junior shooters.

Anantjeet Singh Naruka had claimed India's first senior gold in the men's skeet event. Double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker had won the bronze medal in the women's 10m air pistol competition.

## Juniors continue to dominate

Harmehar Singh Lally combined with Yashasvi Rathore to win the gold medal in the junior skeet mixed team competition, defeating Kazakhstan's Maxim Pochivalov and Lidiya Basharova 39-36 in the contest for the top prize. The trio of Shambhavi Shravan, Hrudya Shri Kondur and Isha Anil won the gold medal in the team gold in the women's junior 10m air rifle competition with a combined total of 1896.2, which is a junior world and Asian record.

The teams from China and South Korea bagged the silver and bronze respectively.

In the individual final, however, Shambhavi finished fifth with 186.3, Isha was sixth with 165.2 and Hrudya seventh with a score of 143.2.

In the bronze medal match in junior skeet mixed team competition, Ishaan Singh and Agrima Kanwar lost to Kazakhstan's Artyom Sedelinov and Angelina Sorokina 36-40.

# Strong defence, leg attacks power Kajal to World U20 gold

NITIN SHARMA  
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 22

LATE ON Friday, when 17-year-old Haryana wrestler **Kajal Dochak** won the title in the women's 72 Kg final with a 8-6 win over China's Liu Yuqi to become India's second U20 World Champion this week, her father Ravinder Dochak and uncle Krishan Dochak, a former International wrestler, were busy managing their small transport business in Sonapat.

"I used to compete in the 96 Kg category and once won the bronze medal in the Takhti Cup in Iran in the 2000s apart from being in national camp with Sushil Kumar and Yogeshwar Dutt. I decided to make Kajal a wrestler. While we all are now in the transport business running local passenger service, seeing Kajal win medals for India gives us joy and this world title means that Kajal is carrying the family legacy further and in a much bigger way," Kajal's uncle Krishan told *The Indian Express*.

The family are natives of Lath village, known for kabaddi, near Sonapat. It was in 2017, after the family shifted to Sonapat years ago that a young Kajal would be taken to the Kuldeep Malik Wrestling Academy by her uncle. In the Asian Championship trials, Kajal had

defeated 2023 World U20 champion (76 Kg) and this week's world's U-20 silver medallist in the 76 kg, an olympic category, Priya Malik in the trials.

"Right from her young days, Kajal would be natural in moves like leg lock and would often try with me. Initially she was a bit weak but then with the diet and training, Kajal would add more weight and compete in the higher weight categories. I was also a heavyweight wrestler so I knew along with weight, we would also need more speed as well as stamina and would also lay emphasis on leg attacks," Krishan said.

On Thursday, Kajal had first scored wins over Emili Mihaylova of Bulgaria and Kaiyrkul Sharshebaeva of Kyrgyzstan followed by a 13-6 win over American Jasmine Robinson in the semi-finals. "Prior to 2020, Kajal was a bit weak and would compete in the 38-40 Kg category. But she was always very swift in her moves and would not fear bigger wrestlers at the academy. She has always been good in double leg attack and throwing attacks. During the semis against Robinson yesterday, she was playing with fever. Today against the Chinese too, Kajal was playing despite running a temperature. She relied on her leg attacks as well avoiding the Chinese leg attacks. This comes from the swiftness," her coach Ajay Malik said.





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