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# A.P. govt. to implement subcategorisation of SCs

The sub-classification will be based on the 2011 Census, with Andhra Pradesh as a single unit for implementation, says Naidu, adding that it will be applied at the district level from 2026

**Sambasiva Rao M.**  
AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Thursday approved the report of the Commission on Sub-Classification of Scheduled Castes headed by Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, a retired IAS officer.

A majority of the members appealed to Legislative Assembly Speaker Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu to ensure that the State government implemented the SC sub-classification taking the district as a unit.

In his remarks, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu



**N. CHANDRABABU NAIDU**  
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister

This is a promise we made, and we have fulfilled it. It has been a 30-year-long struggle, and I am proud to see it come to fruition during my tenure

du reaffirmed the government's commitment to SC sub-categorisation, stating that it was a long-pending demand that had now been fulfilled.

Mr. Naidu said sub-classification of SCs had been done in accordance with the Supreme Court's direc-

tives to ensure equitable distribution of benefits among the SC sub-groups.

"This is a promise we made, and we have fulfilled it. It has been a 30-year-long struggle, and I am proud to see it come to fruition during my tenure," Mr. Naidu said during his

speech. He said the move would not cause harm to any group, and urged people not to believe in misconceptions on it.

### State as unit

"The sub-classification will be based on the 2011 Census, with Andhra Pradesh as a single unit for implementation. However, from 2026, it will be applied at the district level," Mr. Naidu made it clear.

"The decision is aimed at ensuring that the historically marginalised sub-groups within the community receive their rightful share of benefits," he said.

# Miss World 2025 in Telangana to cost ₹54 crore, to be split between State and Miss World Limited

**Siddharth Kumar Singh**  
HYDERABAD

Telangana is set to become the global stage for beauty and culture as the State prepares to host the 72nd edition of the Miss World pageant between May 7 and 31.

The event will see contestants from 140 countries competing for the prestigious title, marking a significant moment for the State, which aims to showcase its rich cultural heritage and global ambitions.

The total expenditure for the event is estimated at ₹54 crore, with costs being equally shared between the Telangana Tourism Department



The 72nd Miss World pageant will be held in Telangana between May 7 and 31. NAGARA GOPAL

and Miss World Limited. Telangana's ₹27 crore contribution will primarily come from sponsorships, Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao said at a press conference at Tourism Plaza Hotel in Hyderabad on

Thursday.

Mr. Jupally Krishna Rao hailed the occasion as a milestone for the State, underscoring the importance of hosting an event of such scale. He highlighted Telangana's blend

of tradition and modernity, describing it as a land of warm hospitality, rich history, and scenic beauty. "This is not just an opportunity to present the beauty of our State but also to honour the values that Miss World represents. This year's Miss World pageant is not just a celebration of external beauty, but of the strength, of spirit, the elegance of the mind, and the kindness of the heart," he added.

Tourism Secretary Smita Sabharwal elaborated on Telangana's history, calling it the "Three Linga Desha" and tracing its evolution as a State that emerged after decades of struggle.



SPOTLIGHT



Buffer zones, created by the Kuki-Zo and the Meiteis where their populations merged, now have additional layers of security manned by Army and Central Armed Police Forces. VIJAITA SINGH

# Manipur’s long road to recovery

President’s Rule was imposed in Manipur on February 13, 2025, after 21 months of violence and arson, fuelled by tensions between the Kuki-Zo tribes and the Meitei community, leaving 62,000 people displaced. With trade, health care, and education hit, and businesses facing extortion and reduced demand, the Centre now has a 13-point agenda to restore stability. **Vijaita Singh** finds that many on both sides of the ethnic divide, however, long for peace

**S**itting outside a small eatery constructed with tin sheets and iron mesh, Kundram Memori, 55, adjusts an assortment of vegetables spread on gunny bags on a footpath in Manipur’s Bishnupur district. Sprinkling the stock of cabbages, beans, and carrots with water as she waits for buyers, Memori recalls how less than two years ago she lived a comfortable life, around 15 kilometres away in Churachandpur, where she owned a grocery store and her husband taught in a school.

Memori’s life changed on May 3, 2023, when ethnic violence erupted between the tribal Kuki-Zo and the Meitei people in Manipur. It was triggered by a Manipur High Court order seeking the State government’s response on the inclusion of the Meitei community in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list. Her home in Churachandpur, dominated by the Kuki-Zo people, was burnt down. The family of four had to escape overnight.

Now, she lives in a relief camp in Bishnupur, and she says the family’s income has dropped by 80%. “My son is a research scholar; my daughter is pursuing a master’s degree in Imphal. After the violence, my husband developed hypertension. We do not have a home. I need to support the family now. We manage with whatever vegetables I sell here during the day. Evenings are spent in the camp, where we take turns to cook food and do the other chores,” says Memori.

In Churachandpur, Holkim, 70, sits quietly on a thin mattress on the floor of a community centre. The centre was converted into a relief camp in May 2023. She stares blankly when asked about her life in Sugnou, a Meitei-dominated area from where she was displaced in May 2023. “She was born in Sugnou, where she owned a shop and a small hotel. Everything was razed during the violence,” says a relative.

Forced to stay in a large hall with broken windows along with 102 others, bedsheets and plastic sheets doubling as walls, Holkim’s relative says that she hopes to go back home one day. “While the men go out to do odd jobs during the day, we stay back, cook meals and maintain the camp, clean the toilets. There is no running water; we store it in buckets. For the past few months there has been a shortage of medical supplies,” said Gracy Niengneihang, 36, another camp resident whose house in Imphal was destroyed by a mob. She says the community members lean on each other for support but also that there is no privacy.

Memori and Holkim are among the 62,000 people still living in relief camps, more than 21 months since ethnic violence erupted in the State. They have no opinion about President’s Rule in the State. All they want is to go back home.

### On February 13, 2025...

Manipur was placed under President’s Rule following an impending political crisis. The Congress party, in Opposition, was to move a no-confidence motion in the Assembly, which was set to be supported by the sitting Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators. On February 9, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh was summoned to Delhi in a chartered flight. Following a meeting with the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, he resigned.



After the violence, my husband developed hypertension. We do not have a home. I need to support the family now. We manage with whatever vegetables I sell here during the day

**KUNDRAM MEMORI**  
Resident,  
Bishnupur district  
camp, Manipur

The valley, with 10% of Manipur’s landmass, is dominated by the non-tribal Meitei ethnic group, mostly Hindus, who account for over 64% of the State’s population. The hills comprise 90% of Manipur’s area but send only 20 MLAs to the Assembly, mostly Kuki-Zo and Naga members.

As per the 2011 Census, the population in the State stood at 27.21 lakh and the decadal population growth from 2001 to 2011 was 18.65%. Other than the Manipur police and the Army, 288 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) are deployed in the State. The strength of each company may vary from 80-120 personnel.

The point where Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts converge has been one of the most volatile areas with armed men or ‘village volunteers’ aiming at each other frequently. To keep the warring communities away, ‘buffer zones’ were created. These buffer zones, where the Meitei areas in the valley and the Kuki-Zo areas in the hills converge, are secured by the CAPF and the Army, but not the State police. When *The Hindu* visited the Bishnupur-Churachandpur buffer zone, there were at least six checkpoints on a 2-km stretch. The Army and the CAPF personnel take photos of all the visitors and note down personal details such as phone and Aadhar number.

After Central rule was imposed in the State, bunkers – sandbags and tin sheds – built by village volunteers in buffer zones to protect their communities have been removed. Some have been occupied by Central security forces.

“We had a meeting with civil society groups. Some bunkers were voluntarily dismantled, and some were destroyed by the security forces,” says a police officer in Churachandpur.

According to a senior government official, around 450-500 bunkers have been destroyed in the past 22 months. “Sometimes they are rebuilt. Since President’s Rule, it is being ensured that none of the bunkers exist in the buffer zones to prevent confrontation between the two communities,” says the officer.

The government is working on a 13-point road map to end violence and restore peace in the restive State. The road map includes disarmament, Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F>



Kuki-Zo women protest at Kangpokpi against the free movement of vehicles; a relief camp at Moirang, Bishnupur; Kundram Memori, a resident of Churachandpur in Manipur, whose house was burnt down during the May 2023 ethnic violence. VIJAITA SINGH

arrest of armed miscreants and extortionists, rehabilitation of internally displaced people, restoration of damaged and destroyed religious places, and free movement on highways.

On March 8, after National Highways 2 and 37 – which connect the valley to Nagaland and Assam respectively – were opened for all vehicles, violence was reported in the hill district of Kangpokpi, leaving one protester dead and 40 others, including 27 security personnel, injured.

### Since May 3, 2023...

Since ethnic violence began, cases of extortion and abductions by armed groups have seen a rise, particularly in the valley areas. On January 26, 2025, as India celebrated Republic Day, the Manipur government established a dedicated Integrated Anti-Extortion Cell to deal with the “significant” law-and-order threat in the State, as a government press release put it. It said that people, including government officials, had been threatened with severe consequences via calls, messages, or letters from unlawful organisations if extortion demands were not met.

Post February 13, billboards and posters have been put up across the State displaying the helpline number of the Anti-Extortion Cell.

The trader community, many of who migrated to Manipur at least 100 years ago, have been the softest target of armed gangs. Those from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar say they are contemplating migrating from the State, which has become home to them.

“Even at the height of insurgency and violence in the State in the 1980s and 1990s, the situation was not this bad. People no longer have the purchasing capacity. With daily blockades, goods cannot move. First, we pay in the hills to move vehicles, then we have to pay sundry armed gangs in the valley. I do not accept calls from unknown numbers as those may be from extortionists,” says a trader from Uttar Pradesh on condition of anonymity. He notes that extortion calls and visits have stopped since President’s Rule was imposed.

Under a glass table at his shop in Thangal Bazaar in the heart of Imphal, the trader has a receipt of ₹4,500 acknowledging payment to Arambai Tenggol, a radical armed Meitei group, whose popularity has shot up in the past two years, coinciding with the period of violence. The trader says it is a pass to save him from other extortionists, as a few days after he paid the amount, another group arrived at his shop seeking money.

“It is 6 in the evening now. The market should be bustling with activity. But what do you see here? Many shops are shut, while many have started rolling down their shutters,” says another trader of Marwari origin at Thangal Bazaar.

Anil Haorokcham, secretary of the Manipur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, says they have been pursuing the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the State and Central government for a moratorium on bank loans. “Up to 99% of entrepreneurs here will fall in the category of non-performing assets (NPA) if a financial package is not announced by the government,” he says.



He says the government is yet to publish data on financial losses incurred in the State. “More than 50% of regular transactions have been lost. As the main city (Imphal) is cut off from satellite towns (hill areas) of Manipur, the towns are also facing collateral damage,” Haorokcham says.

He says the vegetable vendors at Ima Keithel (mother’s market), the all-woman-run market in Imphal, whose average turnover per day was ₹10,000 before May 2023, are not able to sell ₹2,000 worth of produce now. The exodus of Kuki-Zo people from Imphal has had an impact on health care, hospitality, and other sectors too.

“Private hospitals are contracting their businesses because Kuki-Zo people are not coming. Private schools are affected; tourism is wiped out from the State. A hotel owner said they are running the hotel at a 20-30% occupancy. The staff is on a rotational basis. They can’t fire the staff, nor can they employ them full-time. Salary is based on working days,” he says. His list of economic troubles continues: FMCG distributors say demand has gone down by 50% because people have lost purchasing power.

Ch Priyoranjan Singh, a professor in Manipur University’s economics department, says many businesspeople from the valley are moving to neighbouring Guwahati in Assam, to Manipur’s west. “First the pandemic and then the violence have set back the economy by several years. A mineral water bottling plant shut down two of its units after rampant extortion calls,” Singh says.

Manipur has a sizeable Nepali population. Devi, a clothes shop owner who came to Imphal after she married 12 years ago, says her family is considering moving back to Nepal. “We came to India as the education here is much better. But the other day my son was talking about guns and bombs. Last year, he heard gunshots outside his school. Many families from Nepal are now thinking of going back,” Devi says as she waits for customers to come.

### On February 20, 2025...

After President’s Rule was imposed, Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla appealed to members of all communities to surrender looted police weapons at the nearest police station within seven days or face strict action.

Since May 2023, around 6,020 police weapons and lakhs worth of ammunition were looted from police armouries, almost 90% in the valley areas dominated by the Meitei people. Since 2023, there have been multiple advisories by the government to surrender the weapons.

The amnesty period was extended until March 6. From February 20 to March 6, as many as 1,063 weapons, 15,027 pieces of ammunition, 684 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and 5,971 other items such as bullet-proof jackets and helmets were surrendered.

A police officer says that the deadline was not extended as people would stop taking the administration seriously. “A message had to be sent that the police mean business. The image of the police had taken a hit after Arambai Tenggol members abducted and assaulted a police officer on February 28 last year. After the deadline to surrender arms was over, it was made clear that the police and security forces would crack down on people hoarding them,” says the officer. Since February 18, around 90 people have been arrested for extortion-related activities.

Meitei civil society groups argue that the Kuki-Zo people are backed by armed insurgent groups that are in a Suspension of Operation (SoO) pact with the Centre. They also want this protection.

In Churachandpur, most Meitei homes have been flattened after the arson. In Imphal, Kuki-Zo properties have either been gutted or occupied by members of the Arambai Tenggol. The Trulock Theological Seminary, run by the Kuki Christian Council, located metres away from the office of the Manipur Rifles, has “mobile unit of AT” scribbled on its wall, pointing to its current occupants.

Mutum Yoiremba, a political consultant, feels the way forward is through an agreed collective amnesia, “a forgetfulness, even if not forgiveness”. “The government must enable, encourage, and protect those who are willing to come out and engage in this dialogue. The military way of resolving things with an iron fist has failed in the past. It was through political dialogue that the Northeast had finally seen peace after nearly half a century of turmoil. The Government of India must act as an enabler for peace,” said Yoiremba.

Haorokcham says that a deteriorating economy does not discriminate on caste or religion. “There are many Kuki women married to Meitei men. When they want to have a family gathering, they go to Guwahati or Delhi. I wish normalcy comes back soon,” he says.

Sharad Leishangtham, 46, who used to work as a welder in Churachandpur, now sells sugarcane juice in Bishnupur, and lives in the relief camp. “They tore down my house. I have lost just about everything. But there should be no more fighting in Manipur,” says Leishangtham.

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## Free and fair

ECI must not view calls for transparency as attempts to undermine it

The Election Commission of India (ECI) seems to have softened its stand about disclosing absolute numbers of booth-wise votes cast in elections. Last year, when the question arose in the midst of the multi-phase general election, the ECI took the position that it had no legal mandate to disclose details of Form 17-C, part one, which contains the total number of electors in each booth and those who had actually voted, to anyone other than the candidate or its polling agent. In a recent hearing, it has said the Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, who took over recently, is open to meeting representatives of organisations and individuals who have sought a direction to the ECI to upload scanned, authenticated and legible copies of Form 17-C on its website. The Supreme Court of India has asked Trinamool Congress Member of Parliament Mahua Moitra and representatives of the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) to give a representation to the ECI and seek a meeting. While it may not mean that the ECI has already agreed to make absolute numbers of voters universally available, it may result in evolving a system of disclosure about turnouts, both in terms of numbers and percentages. In 2024, the ECI did release some details about turnout through its voter turnout app, but it also became a source of endless speculation as the percentages given were seen to be unusually higher than what was disclosed at the close of polling.

The prevalence of a difference of five to six percentage points between the turnout declared on polling day and subsequently revised figures, based on inputs from all booths, was noted at the end. This is normally explained as the result of a delay in collation of data from all booths, including those located in far-flung areas. However, the petitioners before the Court argue that Form 17-C is collected by available booth agents by hand, and it would not be a major problem for election officials to scan and upload it within 48 hours. The main grouse of political parties and activists is that the discrepancies, in the absence of the absolute number of votes cast but with only turnout percentages in hand, would raise suspicions about the whole process when the final results are released. The ECI has done well to offer to meet the petitioners on this question. There can be no dogmatic opposition to a procedural step to reduce the apprehension about any election being less than fair. It is futile to hold the position that every step demanding greater transparency in the electoral process is aimed at undermining its integrity or casting the process in a bad light. There ought to be a constant reassessment of existing procedures and practices to increase transparency and reduce the time taken to do so.

On November 18, 2024, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) issued a landmark order imposing a fine of ₹213.14 crore and forcing several behavioural remedies on Meta. This included a five year ban on sharing user data collected on WhatsApp with other Meta companies such as Facebook and Instagram, for advertising purposes. In turn, Meta approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) in an appeal against CCI’s order. The NCLAT, on January 23, 2025, granted a stay on the five-year ban from sharing user data and the penalty, subject to Meta depositing 50% of the total penalty.

The CCI’s order found that the privacy policy update introduced by Meta’s subsidiary, WhatsApp, in 2021 was an abuse of dominant position in the “Over-The-Top (OTT) messaging services for smartphones” and “Online Display advertising” markets in India. This update required users to mandatorily consent to expanded data-sharing, allowing Meta to provide access to such data to all of its other platforms; forcing users to accept a data-sharing agreement on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis, combined with the competitive advantage this data provides in online digital display advertising, constitutes an abuse of dominant position. The updated policy was viewed as a strategy to strengthen the market power of WhatsApp, potentially harming competition and hindering other messaging platforms from competing on equal terms.

### The era of data

In the 21st century, the economy has become digital and data is the new oil, but unlike oil, the utility of data is virtually limitless. It can be collected, analysed, and reused indefinitely. In digital markets, data plays a foundational role in creating and sustaining dominance due to its unique characteristics and the competitive advantages it provides. Data is both the source and the enabler of dominance in digital markets. Platforms such as Meta leverage vast data pools collected from billions of users to refine algorithms, offer hyper-targeted advertising, and create personalised experiences, thereby locking consumers into their ecosystems. This dominance is further amplified by data-driven network effects, where more users generate more data, enhancing the platform’s value and deterring competitors.

Meta is not the only tech giant to face scrutiny from the CCI. In 2022, Google was fined ₹1,337.76 crore for abusing its dominant position across several markets, including licensable operating systems for smart mobile devices, app stores for Android devices, non-OS-specific mobile web browsers, online video hosting platforms, and general web search services in India. Google was found to have abused its dominant position by

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There are lessons from the Meta case, which highlight the need for a more forward-looking approach to competition law

mandating the pre-installation of its apps on Android devices. This penalty was later upheld by NCLAT in 2023.

### Global actions

The challenges posed by Meta’s market dominance are not confined to India and have been a global regulatory concern. The Majority Staff Report on ‘Competition in Digital Markets’ (by the U.S. Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law of the Committee on the Judiciary) highlighted the urgent need to reform antitrust laws to address the unprecedented market power of tech giants. Meta faces antitrust litigation in the U.S. over its acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp, accused of creating barriers to entry for competitors, while Google has been sued for monopolistic practices. In 2024, the US District Court for the District of Columbia found Google in violation of the Sherman Act due to exclusive agreements in search and advertising markets.

Australia has also taken steps to address the dominance of digital platforms. In Europe, the Facebook-Germany case stands out, where the Bundeskartellamt (Federal Cartel Office) found Meta had abused its dominant position by combining user data from various sources without explicit consent, violating both European Union (EU) competition law and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This decision accentuates how data misuse can erode consumer privacy and hinder competition by creating entry barriers.

In addition, Meta is under scrutiny in the EU for its ad-supported subscription service, while Google has already been fined over €8 billion across three major antitrust cases, including those targeting its anti-competitive practices in the mobile operating systems and app markets.

The parallels between the regulatory actions against Meta and Google emphasise the importance of addressing data exploitation, vertical integration, and anti-competitive practices through a multidisciplinary approach. Together, these approaches illustrate the challenge of harmonising regulatory philosophies to effectively tackle the monopolistic practices of global tech giants.

Google and Meta are not even the first tech giants to face policing for dominating markets in the U.S. In the past, a ruling in an antitrust lawsuit required AT&T to divest 22 operating companies, dismantling its monopoly. Similarly, anti-trust proceedings against Microsoft resulted in oversight, ensuring API access for third-party developers and greater flexibility for PC manufacturers.

The CCI orders against Google and Meta represent just a small chapter in the broader, well-documented concerns about the overwhelming dominance of “tech monopolies”

in key markets such as advertising, e-commerce and smartphone services. While the orders are a great beginning, a cycle of disputes across jurisdictions indicates that they may be stop-gap measures in regulating the free market in this context.

### On India’s laws

India’s competition law, namely, the Competition Act, 2002, currently lacks explicit provisions to address data-centric monopolies. While traditional frameworks focus on price-based dominance, digital markets often witness dominance arising from data aggregation. To address this gap, amendments to the Act should introduce “data monopolization” as a parameter for assessing market dominance by redefining key concepts such as “market power” and “dominant position” to reflect the realities of data-driven dynamics. The Act should also incorporate global best practices for addressing the concerns, such as mandating interoperability and data-sharing agreements or separation of integrated services. These measures could serve as effective solutions for entrenched monopolies and help level the playing field for smaller competitors while maintaining innovation incentives.

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 provides an opportunity to complement competition law by regulating data collection, consent, and usage. However, the absence of explicit coordination mechanisms between the CCI and the Data Protection Board of India limits the effectiveness of addressing overlapping concerns. India could draw inspiration from the EU’s integration of competition law with the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and GDPR to create frameworks that tackle data exploitation and anti-competitive practices comprehensively.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for India to fully harness the potential of its digital transformation, ensuring inclusive growth and equitable access to digital resources across the nation. The Economic Survey 2024-25, recently tabled in Parliament, underlines India’s rapid digital transformation, and emphasises the critical role of artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping the nation’s economic landscape. These developments underscore the imperative for India to adapt its regulatory frameworks, including competition law. As the digital economy continues to evolve, regulatory frameworks must not only catch up but also anticipate emerging challenges posed by rapidly advancing technologies and the ever-expanding influence of tech giants.

While the Meta case serves as a pivotal moment in India’s efforts to regulate digital markets and address the complexities of data-driven monopolies, it also highlights the need for a more comprehensive and forward-looking approach to competition law.

# The assault on multilateralism and international law

The mantra of ‘America First’ is shaping U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration, marking a significant turning point for multilateralism and international law. Since the beginning of his second term, a series of measures have signalled the U.S.’s withdrawal from the very multilateral institutions and agreements it once helped establish. These include calls for withdrawal from key entities such as the World Health Organization, the UNHRC, and the Paris Climate Agreement and sanctions against the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its officials. The most recent addition in this series is the introduction of the Disengaging Entirely from the United Nations Debacle (DEFUND) Act by Republican Senator Mike Lee from Utah, which would allow the U.S. to withdraw from the United Nations. The new American approach has serious consequences for an international order based on multilateral cooperation and respect for international law.

### Back to political and economic isolationism

First, the proposed DEFUND Act poses a threat to the legitimacy of the UN, which, despite its shortcomings, remains one of the most remarkable examples of international cooperation in the post-Second World War era. Should the DEFUND Act pass, it could sever the U.S.’s relationship with the UN by repealing critical legislation such as the United Nations Participation Act of 1945 and the United Nations Headquarters Agreement of 1947. This would halt all financial contributions to the UN and prohibit U.S. participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

Additionally, it would revoke the functional immunity of UN officials from other countries working in the U.S., making it difficult for the UN to effectively carry out important functions such as peacekeeping and the protection of human rights. These possible measures against the UN represent an attack on multilateral political cooperation, which is the bedrock of a rules-based international order.



### Varsha Singh

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The U.S.’s unilateral actions are a turning point and could invite global retaliation, but this is also a chance for non-western nations to take up leadership roles

Second, a February 6 Executive Order imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC), located in The Hague, which serves as the first permanent court punishing individuals for crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Following the Second World War, the U.S. was instrumental in establishing the Nuremberg Tribunal to hold individuals accountable for such atrocities. The U.S. Chief Prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, Robert H. Jackson, famously stated that “the willingness to submit enemies to the rule of law marked a triumph of reason over power”.

The legacy of Nuremberg is echoed in the mission of the ICC, notwithstanding the fact that the U.S. is not a member of the ICC and has not ratified the Rome Statute. The executive order accuses the ICC of engaging in “illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America” and its close ally, Israel. Such accusations undermine the court’s purpose and function to ensure accountability and prevent impunity for perpetrators of grave crimes violating human rights.

### Trade troubles

Third, the reinvigorated economic nationalism in the Trump administration has led to the implementation of aggressive tariffs in the name of American safety and national security. A historical parallel can be drawn to the era of the 1930s when trade protectionism, triggered by the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act enacted by the U.S., had dire economic consequences and saw the world spiralling into the chaos of the Second World War. It was this recognition of the economic and political vulnerabilities of countries due to isolationism that led to the adoption of a rules-based multilateral trading order in the form of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) of 1947, which later evolved into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Today, the WTO is also facing an existential crisis due to the U.S. blockade on appointments to the Appellate Body of the WTO Dispute

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Settlement, and a looming threat of U.S. withdrawal.

### Action and reaction

Overall, the growing anti-internationalist sentiment in the U.S. and the unilateral actions taken by the Trump administration are bound to jeopardise multilateral political and economic cooperation among states. This, in turn, would lead to the devaluation of international institutions that govern and facilitate global cooperation. These institutions, founded on the principle of shared sovereignty, play a crucial role in creating and interpreting international law while maintaining a rules-based international order. Withdrawal from, and restricting the functioning of international institutions and agreements would have significant repercussions for the pressing issues of our time, such as climate change, environmental degradation, public health, respect and accountability for human rights, and economic stability and growth.

Furthermore, the U.S. risks facing retaliation from other states and may find that initiatives such as MAGA, or ‘Make America Great Again’, cannot thrive without the support of multilateral cooperation. Consequently, resistance from the international community is essential, as mutual enrichment among nations can only be achieved through cooperation rather than coercion. On the positive side, this scenario offers non-western nations such as India, the chance to assume leadership roles.

India has consistently emphasised the importance of multilateralism and adherence to international law. Aptly, during the G-20 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (February 2025), in Johannesburg, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar reiterated the need for an inclusive and multilateral approach to global challenges and called for prioritising international law and peaceful resolutions. Additionally, this also serves as an opportune moment to reform the UNSC, as India has been consistently demanding.



# Should immigrants have the same right to protest as citizens?



**Happymon Jacob**

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Professor at Jindal Global Law School

PARLEY

**R**anjani Srinivasan, an Indian doctoral student at Columbia University, left the U.S. on March 11, 2025, following the revocation of her student visa by the U.S. State Department. Her departure followed a raid on her campus residence by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, who have accused her of being a “pro-Hamas sympathiser”. Earlier, on March 8, immigration authorities arrested Mahmoud Khalil, a Palestinian student activist and green card holder, for allegedly violating his terms of residency by supporting a U.S.-designated terrorist organisation. Should immigrants have the same right to protest as citizens? Prabhash Ranjan and Happymon Jacob discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Aaratrika Bhaumik**. Edited excerpts:

**Do immigrants have the same right to protest as citizens under international human rights law?**

**Prabhash Ranjan:** Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) enshrines freedom of expression as a fundamental human right, extending to both citizens and immigrants. Article 19(2) specifically guarantees the right to seek, receive, and disseminate information across borders through various media. However, Article 19(3) qualifies this right by imposing special duties and permitting states to impose restrictions when necessary to safeguard national security or public order. Additionally, other provisions of the ICCPR explicitly prohibit war propaganda and the advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that incites violence.

While international law affords immigrants the same right to protest as citizens, the extent of this right depends on the host country’s domestic legal framework. Some states enforce stricter regulations, whereas liberal democracies may adopt a more permissive stance.

**To what extent do foreign policy and national security considerations constrain immigrants’ right to peaceful protest?**

**Happymon Jacob:** The application of international human rights law is deeply influenced by domestic politics. The critical question is what happens when international legal norms and expectations collide with national political realities. For instance, in the U.S., a long-standing tradition of free speech has created a global expectation that Americans will consistently uphold this right. However, instances where American actions diverge from these expectations expose a disconnect between historical tradition and contemporary reality. This phenomenon is not unique to the U.S. – across Africa, Asia, and parts of Europe, non-citizens often do not enjoy the same degree of free speech as citizens. Moreover, the ability to exercise free speech or participate in peaceful



Protesters march near Arizona State University against the ICE’s detention of Palestinian student activist Mahmoud Khalil. REUTERS

protests frequently depends on an individual’s legal status – whether they are a natural-born citizen, a permanent resident, or an undocumented immigrant. The social contract that binds a government to its citizens does not necessarily extend to non-citizens in the same way, further entangling the legal and political framework governing these rights.

**Does the crackdown on protesting foreign students in the U.S. violate First Amendment rights?**

**PR:** The Immigration and Nationality Act, 1952 authorises the denial of entry and deportation of non-citizens who endorse or support terrorist activities or organisations. President Trump’s executive order, issued in January directing federal agencies to combat antisemitism on campuses, is rooted in this law. Thus, its issuance does not exceed constitutional authority. However, the critical question is whether the order itself is constitutional.

U.S. law extends First Amendment protections to non-citizens, regardless of their immigration status, particularly in matters concerning criminal penalties and law enforcement investigations. However, it remains uncertain whether non-citizens enjoy the same level of First Amendment protection as citizens when facing deportation proceedings. This is where Happymon’s argument becomes relevant – each case must be evaluated based on the individual’s legal status. For instance, a green card holder would have stronger legal protections than someone on a student visa. Historically, during the Cold War, legal aliens in the U.S. were deported for their affiliation with the Communist Party. While the U.S. legal system has since become more robust, past precedents highlight the enduring legal complexities surrounding such deportations.

**The Trump administration has revoked nearly \$400 million in grants for Columbia University. Do you think this could deter foreign students from studying in the U.S.?**

**HJ:** I don’t believe measures such as these will significantly influence the decisions of international students, including those from



The U.S. has long been perceived as a nation that upholds the rule of law and champions the freedom of speech and expression. If it begins weaponising laws to target individuals it disfavors, it risks legitimising similar actions by governments worldwide.

PRABHASH RANJAN

India, to study in the U.S. Only a small fraction of Indian students are likely to engage in such protests, making it an unlikely deterrent. However, a more pressing concern is whether reductions in university funding could ultimately discourage international talent from enrolling in American institutions. If that happens, it could pose a serious challenge for a nation that relies on immigration-driven innovation and expertise.

**U.S. immigration judges operate within the Department of Justice, where the Attorney General has the authority to remove them. Could executive influence compromise the fairness of deportation proceedings?**

**PR:** Yes, executive control over immigration judges is deeply problematic. Law and politics are not as divorced as we might wish to believe. While judges are ideally expected to operate in depoliticised courtrooms, the reality is that legal interpretations often unfold within a broader political context. That said, my confidence lies less in individual immigration judges and more in the U.S. judicial system as a whole. At the appellate level, independent review and judicial scrutiny of executive actions can help ensure fairer outcomes. However, for immigrants caught in this system, the process itself can feel like a punishment – perhaps by design.

**The Trump administration has reportedly invoked Section 212(a)(3)(C) of the 1952 Act to justify the arrest of Mr. Khalil. It empowers the Secretary of State to deport a foreign national if their “presence or activities in the United States would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences”. Is this provision susceptible to a constitutional challenge on grounds of vagueness?**

**PR:** Yes, it does. The application of a rarely invoked statute to a Palestinian political activist raises serious due process concerns, potentially amounting to arbitrary enforcement. In *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* (2010), the U.S. Supreme Court held that independent advocacy or mere membership in a government-designated terrorist organisation is protected speech under the First Amendment. Criminal liability arises only from providing material support, not from association alone. Thus, for the U.S. government to justify prosecution under this statute, it must present substantial evidence of actual criminal conduct.

In Mr. Khalil’s case, the legitimacy of the government’s actions depends on the evidence it has and whether it can demonstrate genuine wrongdoing. If he is merely expressing a viewpoint aligned with a particular group, that remains constitutionally protected speech.

**Can this provision be weaponised against those the administration disagrees with?**

**HJ:** As Prabhash pointed out, this provision grants the government significant authority, with no clear definition of what constitutes “adverse foreign policy consequences” for the U.S. Its vague language allows almost anything to fall within its scope, making it highly susceptible to misuse. That said, most countries maintain such sweeping laws, ostensibly reserved for exceptional circumstances. If an administration chooses to exploit them, judicial intervention remains the only real safeguard. Moreover, the invocation of such rarely used provisions is inherently political – how the executive frames an issue dictates the response. Protests perceived as part of routine political discourse will elicit a different reaction than those framed as law-and-order threats or national security risks. Parsing the nuances of such provisions has limited utility, as these laws inherently permit extreme measures in extraordinary situations. However, what qualifies as an “extreme case” is a matter of political interpretation.

**Will such incidents erode U.S. soft power and weaken its stature in the global order?**

**HJ:** If the U.S. continues on this path, it risks losing the moral authority to advise other nations on their domestic affairs. American soft power will decline, along with its international standing. Such actions could also contribute to the erosion of democratic and liberal values worldwide. Additionally, they will weaken the U.S.’s ability to build coalitions based on shared democratic values.

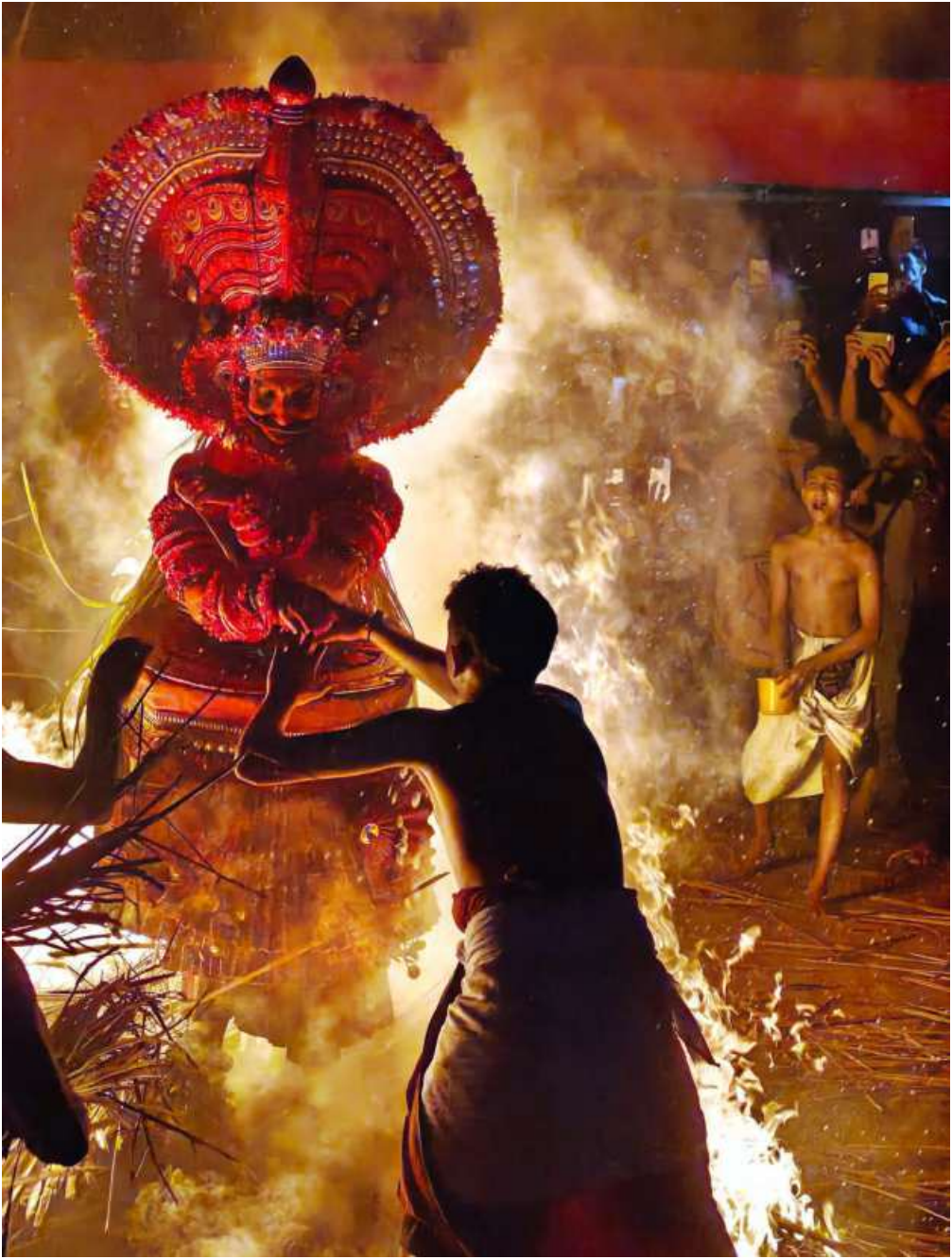
**PR:** The U.S. has long been perceived – rightly or wrongly – as a nation that upholds the rule of law and champions the freedom of speech and expression. This commitment has played a crucial role in fostering a global culture of liberal values and open discourse. However, if the U.S. begins weaponising laws to target individuals it disfavors, it risks legitimising similar actions by governments worldwide. This would contribute to a more repressive global environment, where political expression becomes increasingly precarious. That said, I still have faith in the U.S. legal system – it remains robust. Whether a single administration can upend it entirely remains to be seen. The unfolding deportation proceedings will be telling.



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## PICTURE OF THE WEEK

### Rising from the ashes



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This Theyyam performance at the Kaliyattam festival at Ettikkulam in Kannur, Kerala, tells the story of a warrior who was reborn from his ashes. According to the legend, Kandanar Kelan, an archer-farmer, was burning vegetation to prepare land for farming when he got engulfed in flames. To escape, he tried to clamber up a tree and was bitten by two snakes. Another theyyam, Vayanattu Kulavan, resurrected him. THULASI KAKKAT



# Text & Context

## How do habitual offender laws discriminate?

How are habitual offenders deemed so? What is the history behind denotified and nomadic tribes being seen as ‘criminal tribes’? Why are States such as Gujarat not keen to repeal the habitual offender laws? [Join FREE Telegram Channel https://t.me/+Bu7senHpQdhlODg1](https://t.me/+Bu7senHpQdhlODg1)

### EXPLAINER

Abhinav Lakshman

#### The story so far:

**M**onths after the Supreme Court of India questioned the need for decade-old laws that have classified a section of criminals as “habitual offenders” across India, the Government of India has revealed in Parliament that such laws continue to operate in as many as 14 States and Union Territories.

#### What has the SC said about the matter in the past?

In October last year, while deciding a matter on caste discrimination within Indian jails, the Supreme Court of India had called into question the very basis of the “habitual offender” classification, noting it was “constitutionally suspect” and used to “target members of denotified tribes”.

The recent information revealed in the Lok Sabha on March 11 by the Union Social Justice Ministry showed that some States like Gujarat have argued for the continuation of the law given that the “intent” of its use is not suspect, while others are in the process of discontinuing its application, like Punjab. States like Haryana have already repealed it. The government has said that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs communicates with States on these laws and the status of their repealing from time to time.

#### What is the origin of the ‘habitual offender’ classification?

According to the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic tribes headed by Bhiku Ramji Idade, which submitted its report in 2017, the beginning of “criminalising” communities in India began with Regulation XXII of 1793, which gave magistrates “summary powers” to put to work or imprison certain communities or tribes based on suspicion alone. The Indian Penal Code of 1860 and the Criminal Procedure Code of 1861 further set up the mechanism to maintain a register of “dacoits and thugs”, before culminating in the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871. It was through this Act, the Idade Commission notes, that “the phrase ‘criminal tribe’ was first concocted, and the system of registration began”. The law provided for “a gang, a tribe, or a class of people” to be declared criminal, and was strengthened throughout the next few decades. In 1924, the law was applied to all of colonial India which increased the number of communities declared “criminal” exponentially, according to the Idade report.

Just as the Constitution of India was being adopted, the government’s Criminal Tribes Act Enquiry Committee Report (1949-50) was published, which recommended the repealing of the CTA, and encouraged “central legislation applicable to all habitual offenders without any distinction based on caste, creed, or birth”. In 1952, based on this report, the Government of India repealed all criminal tribes laws across the country, leaving the communities notified under these laws to be classified as “denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic” (DNT, NT, SNT) tribes.

By this time, States had already started enacting “habitual offender” laws across the country, such as the Madras Restriction of Habitual Offenders Act, 1948, which was extended to Delhi in 1951. Rajasthan passed a similar law in 1953, and over the next two decades more



**Criminal by ‘habit’:** Members of various denotified tribes take an oath during the first conference of Itinerant People’s Rights Organisation in 2012. FILE PHOTO

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States – Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, etc. – adopted laws on “habitual offenders”. All of them moved away from the premise of classifying communities as “prone to crime”, by defining a “habitual offender” in terms of the convictions they have had.

However, even though the CTA Enquiry Report had led to the reframing of habitual offender laws, by centering individuals over communities, more than a decade later, when the Lokur Committee in 1965 was looking at denotified tribes, it saw them as communities with an “anti-social heritage”. Some specific communities were even described as having an “affinity for crime”.

#### What were some of the crimes which made one a ‘habitual offender’?

Habitual offender laws have a schedule of crimes for which the classification could be invoked. Across States, this included crimes like “being a thug”, “belonging to a gang of dacoits”, “living on the earnings of prostitution”, and half-a-dozen entries on “lurking”.

Registers were maintained, and rules and regulations were formulated by States on how ‘habitual offenders’ were to be treated within prisons, leading to jail manuals across the country adopting the language of “habitual offenders”, with some of them explicitly allowing for erstwhile “criminal tribe” community members to be designated as “habitual offenders” (for example in Rajasthan). But in 1998, the custodial death of Budhan Sabar, a member of a denotified community in West Bengal, led to national outrage over the concept of “habitual offenders” and how it was being used by the police.

#### When did change start?

From the outrage over Mr. Sabar’s death, an advocacy group was formed known as the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes Rights Action Group (DNT-RAG) by writers Mahasweta Devi and G.N. Devy, who also spearheaded the launching of a magazine named after Budhan, which wrote on issues faced by these communities. The

DNT-RAG studied the conditions of denotified tribes and prepared a report.

In 1998, the DNT-RAG wrote to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in India and the United Nations Secretary General, noting that even though the CTA had been repealed, “the police as well as the general public continue to treat most of these unfortunate communities as ‘born criminals’ and ‘habitual criminals’”, citing the habitual offender law in Bombay. “Every day brings in instances of mob-lynching, arson, and police atrocities enacted upon the innocent and helpless DNTs,” the letter said.

Reacting to this letter, the NHRC formed an Advisory Group which in 2000, concluded that these “habitual offender” laws can be repealed. Since then, every National Commission that has dealt with the issue of DNT, NT, SNT communities has mentioned the adverse effect of “habitual offender” laws on these communities.

In March 2007, the United Nations Commission on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted the way “habitual offender” laws were being applied and called for its repeal. In 2008, the National Commission on DNT, SNT, NT headed by B.S. Renke noted the negative effect of the laws on the lives of these communities.

In 2014, the High-Level Committee of the Tribal Affairs Ministry, headed by Professor Virginius Xaxa noted, “The tag of criminality attached to DNTs and to the nomadic way of life of nomadic tribes persists to the present day. The explanation lies, in good measure, in the Criminal Tribes Act being replaced in many States by the Habitual Offenders Act.” In 2020, journalist Sukanya Santha reported on widespread caste-discrimination within Indian prison systems, including the treatment meted out to those who have been classified as “habitual offenders”, based on which she filed a petition in the Supreme Court.

#### How have States reacted?

Deciding this case in October 2024, a Bench headed by then-Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud had noted that while “habitual offender” laws were not the

subject of the matter specifically, it felt compelled to make some observations.

It said, “The ‘habitual offender’ legislations were enacted to replace the Criminal Tribes Act. However, in States such as Rajasthan, they were used to refer to members belonging to criminal tribes/denotified tribes. Applying that logic, several Prison Manuals/Rules have also referred to ‘habitual offender’ to mean members of Denotified Tribes or wandering tribes...This cannot be accepted. A whole community ought not to have either been declared a criminal tribe in the past or a habitual offender in the present. It would not be wrong to say that the classification of ‘habitual offender’ has been used to target members of Denotified Tribes.”

Further down in the judgment, the Supreme Court went on to “urge” the State governments to review whether there remained any need for such “habitual offender” laws in the country.

According to the latest information provided by the States and UTs to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Punjab has said that it has not implemented the law for over five years and neither had any register been maintained in this time. Similarly, the Odisha government has said that no case had been registered under the law in the last five years and Andhra Pradesh has said that no one in their jails currently was imprisoned under the law.

Some States like Goa have argued that since there are no DNTs in their State, there is no scope of the law being misused to target them and have indicated that they may be allowed to continue using them. Gujarat has opined against repealing it saying it “does not intend” to harass. Telangana has called the law preventative, whereas Uttar Pradesh has said that since all “habitual offender” provisions had been covered under their Goondas Act, it does not matter if it is repealed.

According to the latest available records of the National Crime Records Bureau (for 2022), about 1.9% of India’s 1.29 lakh convict population have been classified as “habitual offenders”, with the highest proportion seen in Delhi, where 21.5% of convicts are classified as such.

### THE GIST

▼ In October last year, while deciding a matter on caste discrimination within Indian jails, the Supreme Court of India had called into question the very basis of the “habitual offender” classification, noting it was “constitutionally suspect” and used to “target members of denotified tribes

▼ Habitual offender laws have a schedule of crimes for which the classification could be invoked. Across States, this included crimes like “being a thug”, “belonging to a gang of dacoits”, “living on the earnings of prostitution”, and half-a-dozen entries on “lurking”.

▼ In March 2007, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted the way “habitual offender” laws were being applied and called for its repeal.



# Army seeks inclusion of additional areas in Manipur under AFSPA

**Vijaita Singh**  
NEW DELHI

At a review meeting chaired by the Union Home Ministry on Wednesday, the Army sought the inclusion of additional police station limits in Manipur valley districts within the ambit of the Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act (AFSPA), a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

On November 14, 2024, out of 19 police stations in seven districts of Manipur, the AFSPA was reimposed in the jurisdiction of six in five districts of Manipur, mostly in the valley, in the wake of ethnic violence in the State that erupted on May 3, 2023.

“The Army proposed that 12 police station limits in valley districts be



**Strong measures:** The AFSPA was reimposed in the jurisdiction of six police stations in five districts of Manipur last November. ANI

brought under the AFSPA for operational efficiency. The suggestion was to reimpose the AFSPA in phases; however, a final decision will be taken by the Ministry,” said the official.

At a review meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New

Delhi on March 1, the possibility of bringing additional areas under the AFSPA, if required, was deliberated.

The AFSPA was withdrawn from the limits of all valley police stations between April 1, 2022 and April 1, 2023 amid an improved security situation. The “disturbed area” noti-

fication for the hill districts in Manipur has been periodically extended, with the last one issued on September 26, 2024.

The Ministry reviewed the scope of the AFSPA in Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur at a multi-agency meeting on Wednesday.

“It is likely that one of the four districts in Assam may be de-notified under the AFSPA,” said the official.

The 1958 law gives powers to the Army and the Central Armed Police Forces deployed in “disturbed areas” to kill anyone acting in contravention of law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant, and grants protection from prosecution and legal suits without the Union government’s sanction.

INBRIEF



Unified Pension Scheme for Central govt. staff notified

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) on Thursday notified operationalisation of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) which promises an assured pension of 50% of the average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months prior to superannuation. This follows the UPS notification dated January 24, by the government for Central government employees covered under the National Pension System (NPS). The regulations shall come into effect from April 1, the PFRDA said. These regulations enable the enrolment of Central government employees including an existing Central government employee in service as on April 1, who is covered under the NPS, and new recruits, who joins service on or after April. The enrolment and claim forms for all these categories employees will be available online from April 1.

Believe India will cut tariffs substantially on U.S. goods: Trump

The only problem is India is one of the highest tariffing nations, but on April 2, we will charge them same tariffs they charge us, says President

Press Trust of India  
NEW YORK

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he believes India will lower its tariffs on American goods, even as he reiterated his threat to impose reciprocal tariffs on the country starting April 2.

In an interview with *Breitbart News*, an American news, opinion, and commentary website, Mr. Trump discussed the U.S.'s relationship with India.

Asked about his summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month, Mr. Trump said he has a "very good relationship" with India. "But the only problem I have with India is they are one of the highest tariffing nations in the world," the website quoted Mr. Trump as saying. "I believe they're... probably going to be lowering those tariffs substantially, but on April 2, we will be charging them the same tariffs they charge us."

Asked about the India-Middle East-Europe-Economic Corridor (IMEC) project, Mr. Trump, with-



**Boosting ties:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Donald Trump during a meeting at the White House in February. PTI

Join FREE Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+Bu7senHpQdhlODg1> out mentioning China in particular, said it was a "group of wonderful nations" banding together "countering other countries that look to hurt us on trade." "We have a powerful group of partners in trade," he said. The U.S. is a signatory to the deal to establish IMEC.

"Again, we can't let those partners treat us badly, however. We do better in many ways frankly with our foes than we do with our friends," Mr. Trump was quoted as saying by the website. "The ones that wouldn't be as friendly to us in some cases treat us better than the ones that are supposed to

be friendly, like the European Union, which treats us terribly on trade," Mr. Trump said.

"India and everybody would think of them as an ally. I can say the same for others. But this is a group of wonderful nations that is countering other countries that look to hurt us on trade," he added.

Earlier this month, Mr. Trump said India had agreed to cut its tariffs "way down". Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal, however, told a parliamentary panel in New Delhi on March 10 that no agreement on trade tariffs had been reached so far between India and the U.S.

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Andre Lago

India, Brazil could play key role in climate talks: Lago

Jacob Koshy  
NEW DELHI

President-Designate of the upcoming climate talks in Brazil Andre Lago said this was a time when developing countries, including India and Brazil, could play a greater role in shaping the conversation around climate change.

"The challenge always has been that it is more difficult to get money for adaptation than mitigation because it was seen to benefit the developing countries, India and Brazil, for example, as well as the donor country. In adaption, the benefit for the donor country wasn't so clear. However, now adaptation is being framed as a way that can influence migration. Mitigation looks hazy. So adaption and mitigation are moving closer to one another and the closer they are, the more resources can flow for both," Mr. Lago said at a press conference here on Thursday.



# ‘Inflation going up in South from migration from poorer States’

SBI research report says southern States display a higher trend in prices of various items, rate cut over the cycle could be at least 75 basis points

**Lalatendu Mishra**  
MUMBAI

**L**abour migration from low-income to high income States in search of employment is resulting in higher inflation in richer States in the South, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, as per a State Bank of India (SBI) report.

“The region-wise analysis of retail prices shows southern States display a higher trend in prices for items like vegetables, cereals and most of the pulses,” SBI researchers said.

“North-east and western regions have had lowest inflation against higher inflationary trends displayed by southern and eastern regions,” they said.

A back-of-the-envelope analysis indicated that in the post-pandemic period (FY21-FY25), inflation declined by 3.4% in the North-east, while in the South, it declined by only 2.6%, the officials said.

### Higher taxes in South

Primary trends suggest higher taxes levied on petrol/diesel, liquor, and registration charges for automobiles and flats by the southern States could be the driver of higher inflations, the paper stated.

Going by the share of sales tax collection by States, southern States

hold the highest share of 30%, followed by northern region, as per the report.

“Reading between the lines, we believe that migration of labour from low-income States to high income states in search of employment opportunities is resulting in higher inflation in high income States than lower income States as vouched by food inflation across cohort of high income/middle income and low-income States suggesting higher purchasing power anchors higher inflation,” India’s largest lender said in the report.

Officials said that while India’s Consumer Price Index-based (CPI) inflation moderated to a 7-month low of 3.6% in February on easing food and vegetable prices, State-wise data showed inflation in bigger States continued to outstrip the all-India inflation rate of the same month.

## Migrating inflation

Region-wise analysis of retail prices reveal southern States exhibit higher trend in prices for items like vegetables, cereals, most pulses



- Northeast and western regions have had lowest inflation than southern/eastern regions
- Higher taxes on petrol/diesel, liquor by southern States could also be boosting prices
- In post-pandemic period, inflation slid 3.4% in the NE while in the South it dipped by only 2.6%

“Among the States, Kerala clocked the highest inflation rate of 7.3% in Feb, followed by Chhattisgarh 4.9%,” they said.

“Among the States, Kerala clocked the highest inflation rate of 7.3% in Feb, followed by Chhattisgarh 4.9%,” they said.

### Rural vs. urban

Nine major States’, rural inflation is higher than the all-India rural inflation. While, there are eight States where urban inflation is higher than all-India urban inflation, it said.

Stating that CPI inflation may slow to 3.9% in Q4 FY25 and average 4.7% in FY25, SBI said based on this, “we expect FY26 inflation may come 4.0-4.2% and core inflation in the range of 4.2% to 4.4%.”

“With benign inflation this month and going forward, we expect a cumulative rate cut over the cycle could be at least 75 basis points, with successive rate cuts in the next policy meetings in April and August [this year],” it added.

# U.S. firm Eli Lilly unveils drug for obesity, diabetes

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**  
NEW DELHI

American pharmaceutical major Eli Lilly and Company introduced diabetes and obesity management drug Mounjaro (tirzepatide) in India in a single-dose vial following marketing authorisation from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

A release issued by the company noted Mounjaro was a treatment for obesity, overweight and Type 2 diabetes that activates both GIP (glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide) and GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1) hormone receptors.

The release added adults taking Mounjaro and following diet and exercise in a controlled clinical trial lost on average of 21.8 kg at the highest dose (15 mg), and 15.4 kg at the lowest dose (5 mg) over a period of 72 weeks.

The drug is priced at ₹3,500 for a 2.5 mg vial and ₹4,375 for a 5 mg vial.

Mounjaro, usually taken once a week, would then cost between ₹14,000 and ₹17,500 per month, depending on the dosage recommended by the doctor.

### Average monthly price

The average monthly price of Mounjaro in the U.S. is about \$1,000 to \$1,200 (about ₹86,000 to ₹1 lakh).

“This India-specific pricing reflects Lilly’s commitment to expanding access to innovative treatments in the country,” Eli Lilly said.



The market for anti-obesity drugs in India has seen exponential growth. REUTERS

In India, the demand for GLP-1 class drugs to manage diabetes and obesity has surged, creating a market worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

A key drug in this class, semaglutide is set to go off-patent in March next year and several Indian players, including Mankind Pharma Ltd., Alkem Labs Ltd. and Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories Ltd. are in the fray to launch generic versions of the drug.

Novo Nordisk’s oral semaglutide tablet, Rybelsus, launched in India in 2022, has already captured almost 65% of the anti-obesity drug market along with other weight-loss medications, including dulaglutide and liraglutide.

The market for anti-obesity drugs in India has seen exponential growth, swelling from ₹137 crore in November 2020 to about ₹535 crore in November 2024, as per market research firm Pharmatrac.

India has about 101 million people with diabetes which is linked to over 200 health complications

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# Coventry succeeds Bach as IOC president, becomes first woman and African to lead the world body

**Agencies**  
COSTA NAVARINO (GREECE)

Zimbabwean Kirsty Coventry became the first woman and African to be elected president of the International Olympic Committee on Thursday declaring it to be an “extraordinary moment.” The Zimbabwe sports minister needed only one round of voting to clinch the race to succeed Thomas Bach, winning an immediate overall majority in the secret ballot to take the helm of the world’s wealthiest multi-sport organisation. At 41, the two-time Olympic swimming champion is also the youngest

ever elected to be the most powerful person in sports governance. Coventry said she would work with the six other rivals she defeated. “This is an extraordinary moment. As a nine-year-old girl, I never thought that I would be standing up here one day, getting to give back to this incredible movement of ours,” Coventry said. “This is not just a huge honour but it is a reminder to every single one of you that I will lead this organisation with pride and with the values at the core... I will make all of you very, very proud and, I hope, extremely confident in the decision you’ve taken today. Thank you from the



**All yours!** Outgoing president Bach inviting Coventry to address the delegates. GETTY IMAGES  
Join FREE Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F>  
bottom of my heart.” was thought to be in a tight run race with IOC veteran Juan Antonio Samaranch Junior and World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe. However, to general surprise the race was over after the first round of vot-

ing. Coventry received 49 of the 97 votes possible, with Samaranch obtaining 28 and Coe third with eight votes. The seven-time Olympic medallist, who has been an IOC member since 2013, had been the chairperson of the Athlete Commission between 2018 and 2021. Coventry had claimed in her manifesto that the IOC must prioritise athletes’ mental health and physical recovery throughout their careers and beyond while counting on the expertise of international federations at various events. She has also sought a zero-tolerance approach to corruption, doping and unethical behaviour.



# The TB crisis and women: why gender issues matters more than ever

Gender differences and inequalities play a critical role in how people access and receive TB-related services in the public and private sectors, in India. Women find themselves squeezed between their roles at home and at work. It takes time, prolonged care and money to treat TB and many women have neither

## WORLD TB DAY

Bindu Shajan Perappadan

“I was 24 when I was diagnosed with MDR-TB. The two-years spent in recovery, from 2021 to 2023, was a time when COVID-19 made even the smallest task a logistics nightmare. However, with help from my parents and medical staff, sustained treatment and care was possible,” says Akshata Acharya, an MDR-TB survivor from Maharashtra. “But it wasn’t logistics or access to treatment and good nutrition that was a challenge; for me, hurdles came in the form of my skin discoloration and becoming physically weak, which made going out an impossible task – it was the mental toll that eclipsed my life. Negative comments about my changed physical appearance, and advice from a grassroots healthcare worker to keep the disease ‘hidden’ opened my eyes to the discrimination and disparities that the disease brings along.”

Ms. Acharya adds, “As an actor, writer, and director, TB took away two years of my life. But then, I was more fortunate than some other TB patients. I remember a woman who, after being diagnosed with TB, was sacked from her job (she worked as a house help); also, her family abandoned her. TB. I learnt it can be very isolating and more so if you are a woman.”

### Under-diagnosis, finances

Sadly, Ms. Acharya’s is not an isolated or stray case. Gender differences and inequalities play a critical role in how people access and receive TB-related services in the public and private sectors in India. The Union Health Ministry’s India TB Report 2023 indicates that men are more affected by TB compared to women. This higher risk of men developing TB could be attributed to risk factors including smoking and the use of intravenous drugs. Also, men are more likely to be in occupations that expose them to TB, such as mining, quarrying, metals, and construction industries. However, in India, women face challenges such as underdiagnosis and financial barriers to accessing treatment.

A recently published paper titled ‘Women and tuberculosis care in India: a scoping review’ notes that while the variables that impacted women in the past, particularly gender roles and norms, seem to be waning over time, they cannot be ignored in the present. The focus that the government of India is placing on gender equity serves as a reminder that

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In India, women face challenges such as under-diagnosis and financial barriers while accessing treatment. File photograph used for representational purposes

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these problems are still relevant for TB elimination efforts among women.

The author of the paper, Janmejaya Samal, explained that studies spanning 20 years (2004 to 2024) were reviewed to understand the changes, if any, around women and TB care in India. “The draft national strategic plan of India for TB 2017-2025 has estimated that about 3 million women would be affected by TB every year, and TB is one of the top 5 leading causes of death among adult women globally,” he said. He added that women in India deal with multiple hurdles, including stigma, lack of health-seeking behaviour and poverty, when it comes to accessing diagnosis, treatment, and care for TB. “Normalisation of symptoms, less prioritisation, and the role of caregiver in the family put women in a compromised state and need focused attention. This situation remains unchanged after COVID,” added Mr. Samal.

Public health specialist Chapal Mehra notes that at the grassroots level, women have multi-layered problems when it comes to accessing medical care. “Across India there are multiple cases of women being abandoned when diagnosed with TB; there are cases of symptoms not being attended to and the condition being allowed to worsen; women also are prone to stopping treatment mid-way when they feel that symptoms have waned,” he said.

Speaking about the plight of women who do manage to access diagnosis and treatment, Mr. Mehra said that if society and family do not accept and support women diagnosed with TB, they are unlikely to disclose the condition. “Many suffer, knowing that disclosing the disease

**An estimated 331,000 deaths occurred due to TB in 2022, representing 23 deaths per 100,000 population. India accounts for a significant portion of the world’s TB cases, with 27% of the global incidence. Also, 2.5% of new cases and 13% of previously treated cases are estimated to be drug-resistant and 2% of patients are estimated to be HIV positive**

would result in a loss of income. The pressure of housework and little social support are the two major hurdles that we often witness. We have also seen that when women lose their partners to TB, families often abandon them, and they are also plagued by the fear of passing on the disease to their children,” he added.

NGOs working in this field say that Centre and states must ensure that benefit schemes are implemented in a robust manner with essential medicines and nutritional support reaching the poorest.

### India’s targets

India has set itself a target of eliminating TB by 2025. An estimated 331,000 deaths occurred due to TB in 2022, representing 23 deaths per 100,000 population. India accounts for a significant portion of the world’s TB cases, with 27% of the global incidence. Also, 2.5% of new cases and 13% of previously treated cases are estimated to be drug-resistant TB (DR-TB), and approximately 2% of TB patients are

estimated to be HIV positive.

In 2020, the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) was renamed the National TB Elimination Program (NTEP) to emphasise the resolve of the government of India to eliminate TB in India by 2025, five years ahead of the global targets of 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets regarding TB (baseline 2015) include an 80% reduction in incidence. The NTEP focuses on early detection, effective treatment, and prevention. The Union Health Ministry runs targeted programmes for elimination, including Nikshay Poshan Yojana, under which it provides a direct benefit transfer of ₹1,000 each month to TB patients for the entire duration of their treatment, and the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan, a first-of-its-kind initiative to provide additional nutritional support to those on TB treatment, through contributions from the community, including individuals and organisations. Meanwhile, the India TB Report 2023 notes that for the government, prevention is one of the four critical pillars of India’s fight against TB.

“India is running several initiatives, including identifying technical and administrative challenges faced by states/UT and providing course correction, introducing direct benefit transfer to beneficiary accounts, partnerships for private sector engagement and advocacy, communication and social mobilisation, including community engagement to tackle TB,” said a senior Health Ministry official.

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## THE GIST

Post treatment women face the challenge of skin discoloration and weakness, which makes a return to a routine very difficult. ‘It was the mental toll that eclipsed my life. Negative comments about my appearance exposed me to the discrimination that the disease brings with it’

Women in India deal with multiple hurdles, including stigma, lack of health-seeking behaviour and poverty. ‘Normalisation of symptoms, less prioritisation, and the role of caregiver in the family put women in a compromised state’

‘Across India there are multiple cases of women being abandoned when diagnosed with TB; there are cases of symptoms not being attended to and the condition being allowed to worsen; women also are prone to stopping treatment midway when they feel that symptoms have waned’

## Engaged communities are key to ending TB

Chapal Mehra  
Vashita Madan

It’s World TB Day again on March 24 and despite bold claims tuberculosis (TB) remains one of the most pressing global health challenges, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities. Despite being preventable and treatable, TB continues to take a significant toll on humanity. According to the World Health Organization’s Global Tuberculosis Report 2024, an estimated 10.8 million people developed active TB in 2023, resulting in approximately 1.25 million deaths worldwide. While medical advancements in TB treatment and diagnosis play a crucial role, they alone cannot eliminate TB. What we need is the power of community engagement to ensure TB prevention, timely diagnosis, treatment adherence, and public awareness. The health system forgets that TB is not a medical condition alone; it exists and is fought in a social context and within families and communities. This makes active community participation a fundamental part of an effective TB response.

So what does community engagement in TB care mean? It involves those most impacted – TB affected, survivors, families, communities and grassroots organisations. Their participation is essential at multiple levels – in co-designing care models, shaping awareness campaigns, and creating treatment support pro-



TB exists and is fought in a social context and within families and communities. Photograph used for representational purposes only

grams that address both the medical and also the social and economic barriers in TB care.

If we integrate the lived experiences of those affected by TB into our healthcare response, communities can accurately define gaps, challenges and also what kind of support systems those affected need, what messages resonate with them, and how best to design services to ensure equitable access to care. The role of communities is not just to contribute ideas but also to actively participate in TB care itself. Survivors, for instance, can play a key role in sensitising healthcare workers and volunteers, helping them understand the lived realities of those affected.

**Community engagement key** Beyond improving care access, community engagement also plays a crucial role in reducing TB-related stigma. Stigma remains one of the biggest barriers

to early diagnosis and treatment, as fear of discrimination often discourages affected individuals from seeking medical help or speaking about their experiences. Survivor-led advocacy and family and community-driven narratives can transform public perceptions of TB. Despite the clear benefits, meaningful community involvement in TB policy remains absent. Individuals affected by TB are excluded from advocacy, policymaking, and communication efforts due to persistent stigma. Additionally, national TB programmes often find it difficult to integrate community members into their medicalised, expert-led frameworks.

Often, community participation is reduced to tokenism, where engagement is sought only for validation rather than equal partnership. Also, without adequate funding and institutional support, grassroots organisations struggle to create impact and bring about long-term change. Many TB programmes still operate within a rigid, top-down structure, where policies are created without meaningful input from the communities they aim to serve. This disconnect weakens effectiveness and perpetuates barriers to care.

### Where the model has worked

There are notable examples where community-driven initiatives have successfully demonstrated the power of community engagement. In India, Survivors Against TB (SATB), India’s first survivor-led advocacy movement, has effectively

raised and advocated for patient rights, policy changes, nutritional and mental health support, and public awareness. In South Africa, the Desmond Tutu TB Centre has combined research, community participation, and policy advocacy, with innovative programs like the “Kick TB” campaign, which uses soccer to educate schoolchildren about TB. These initiatives prove that when communities are given leadership roles, they can drive sustainable change.

The fight against TB requires a shift in mindset that puts those affected first, before numbers. This is a difficult transition. Medical interventions alone will not eliminate TB. By placing those affected at the center of TB policy, care provision, and research, we can move away from tokenism and towards substantively redefining the TB care paradigm, making it empathetic, equitable, and person-centered.

*(Chapal Mehra is a public health specialist and the convenor of Survivors Against TB (SATB), a collective of survivors, advocates, and experts working on TB and related comorbidities. Vashita Madan is the communications lead with SATB. [chapal.mehra@gmail.com](mailto:chapal.mehra@gmail.com))*



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