Nirmala Sitharaman, Union finance minister. PTI

'GST reform to benefit people, small biz, economy'

Gireesh Chandra Prasad
gireesh.p@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

GST reforms, including the tax rate cuts effective 22 September, aim to benefit the poor and middle class, farmers, and small businesses while boosting consumption and investments, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday.

Addressing a gathering in Kolkata on next-generation GST reforms, Sitharaman said the reforms seek to simplify the tax structure, boost affordability, strengthen compliance, and stimulate industrial growth. The reforms also seek to benefit the diverse businesses, crafts and industries of West Bengal, the minister said.

The finance ministry on Wednesday notified the revamped GST rate restructure, other changes in forms and issued frequently asked questions to help businesses in implementing the reform.

The GST Council earlier this month announced tax cuts on a wide array of daily-use and aspirational goods, ranging from packaged foods to consumer electronics as part of making the indirect tax into a mainly two-rate structure. The move was aimed at simplifying the tax system and to stimulate consumption demand.

The decisions marked the biggest overhaul of the GST regime.

Experts said the rate reduction will reduce prices of goods, boost consumption, reduce complexity and classification disputes and will go a long way to make GST a good and simple tax.

Sitharaman said the reforms are expected to inject approximately ₹2 trillion into the economy by enhancing consumption and easing the tax burden. The GST review was carried out by reviewing the tax system from different-user perspectives.

Sitharaman explained that most goods and services now fall into primary GST rates of 5% for essential items and 18% for most others.

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com.

India plans to test inventory model for e-comm exports

After a pilot with UK, the inventory-based model may be rolled out for the other FTA partners

Dhirendra Kumar
dhirendra.kumar@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

India is considering a pilot project to allow foreign-funded e-commerce companies to buy goods from local vendors, stock them, and sell to consumers abroad, in a shift away from the current rules that permit these firms to operate only as a marketplace, connecting buyers and sellers.

The plan is likely to be launched first with the UK—India's new free trade agreement partner. Under the proposal, foreign-funded e-commerce companies can directly buy goods in India and export them to the UK, bypassing the current marketplace-only restriction, two people aware of the matter said.

The government's move to allow inventory-based business model for e-commerce firms is aimed at boosting foreign direct investment (FDI)—India expects to achieve $100 billion in FDI in FY26—and diversify its exports, they said.

Gujarat has emerged as the preferred state to host the pilot project, which would allow e-commerce firms to own and sell products directly to consumers in the UK, instead of only operating as online marketplaces, said the first person cited earlier.

At present, India's FDI rules don't allow foreign-funded e-commerce companies to operate under an inventory-based model. They can only operate as a neutral, digital marketplace platform. The same restrictions apply to exports—they can facilitate exports by third-party sellers, and not on their own. However, a fully Indian e-commerce company can own inventory and sell the goods both locally and abroad.

$100 bn Foreign direct investment target India set for FY26

After the pilot project, this inventory-based model may be rolled out for the other 14 FTA partners that India has signed deals with, this person said. The initiative comes against the backdrop of India's push to double its exports with FTA partners and increase the FDI flow.

The initiative comes against the backdrop of India's push to double its exports with FTA partners and increase the FDI flow. AFP

Under the proposed inventory-based model, dedicated export entities would hold stock, manage customs clearances, and handle packaging on behalf of small businesses.

"The issue was discussed at a recent meeting in the commerce ministry with key stakeholders, including the Swadeshi Jagran Manch and representatives of domestic retailers. Representatives of leading e-commerce players were also in attendance," said the second person.

16 Sep The day on which India-US trade talks resumed

"Although domestic groups have raised concerns that products stored in inventory might be diverted to the local market instead of being sold abroad, the government has mandated the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) to run a pilot project," said the second person.

"The pilot will help evaluate its effectiveness, and once domestic stakeholders are convinced, the inventory model will be rolled out for e-commerce players," the person said.

Queries sent to the ministries of commerce, external affairs, and the British Embassy in New Delhi remained unanswered.

The development comes against the backdrop of the ongoing India-US talks to finalize a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by November. The talks between the two nations resumed on 16 September after a pause of over a month due to India drawing its red lines on agriculture, dairy, and genetically modified crops. The US has imposed a 50% tariff on India—the highest so far—which includes a 25% reciprocal tariff and a 25% penalty for buying Russian oil.

"For small and medium exporters, this could reduce dependence on intermediaries and make it easier to reach consumers in markets like the UK. At the same time, it is important that safeguards are in place to ensure that the model remains export-focused and does not affect domestic retailers," said Vinod Kumar, president, India SME Forum.

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com.

'US-India tariff truce likely in the next two months'

Rhik Kundu
rhik.kundu@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

Anantha Nageswaran, chief economic adviser. REUTERS

Chief economic adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran struck an optimistic note on Thursday, saying he expected a resolution to the tariff stand-off with the US within the next two months, even as he projected steady momentum in India's domestic economy.

Speaking at an industry gathering in Kolkata, Nageswaran said he believed Washington would soon roll back the additional 25% tariff imposed on New Delhi for buying Russian oil.

"Beneath the surface, lots of conversations are going on between the two governments... Although I don't have a crystal ball or any insider information, I can say that my personal confidence is that in the next couple of months, if not earlier, we will see a resolution, at least to the extra tariff of 25%," he said.

Reciprocal tariff of 25% may also come down to levels somewhere between 10% and 15% anticipated, the CEA said

"It may also be the case that the reciprocal tariff of 25% may also come down to levels that we were anticipating earlier. Somewhere between 10% and 15%, if that comes, that will be an even bigger occasion for celebration," he added.

India and the US are navigating a sensitive phase in their trade ties after President Donald Trump imposed steep 50% tariffs on Indian exports.

While the measures have unsettled exporters, both governments remain in intensive talks to defuse tensions.

The US is not only India's largest trading partner but also among the few major economies with which New Delhi enjoys a sizeable trade surplus.

That surplus widened 16.6% annually in 2024-25 to $41.18 billion, as exports to the US rose 11.6% to $86.51 billion while imports increased 7.4% to $45.33 billion.

By contrast, India's overall goods trade deficit ballooned to $282.8 billion.

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com.

New IBC rules to curb promoter delays

Gireesh Chandra Prasad
gireesh.p@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

Promoters seeking to halt bankruptcy proceedings by repaying creditors will need to settle dues at an early stage, instead of waiting for rival bids from potential investors, under amendments to India's Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) now before Parliament, experts said.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025 seeks to overhaul the rules for withdrawing bankruptcy proceedings by limiting settlements to an early window and requiring nod from 90% of lenders, a move aimed at curbing tactical delays and protecting integrity of the bidding process.

The bill bars promoters from offering settlement once lenders that placed the distressed business under administration of a professional invite bids from new investors.

This prevents the possibility of promoters dragging their feet till they get an idea of what the company may fetch in the market and then making an incremental settlement offer to withdraw the bankruptcy proceedings, said experts.

The bill disallows promoters from offering settlement once lenders invite bids from new investors. MINT

The new regime is proposed by way of replacing section 12A of the IBC with a new version. Section 12A deals with withdrawal of bankruptcy pleas admitted by the National Company Law Tribunal.

The new regime is proposed by way of replacing section 12A of the IBC with a revamped version

The proposed changes stipulate that only the administrator of the distressed firm appointed by creditors can move a tribunal for withdrawal of bankruptcy proceedings, that too with the consent of 90% of the creditors by value. Currently, promoter can directly move withdrawal pleas.

The opportunity for promoters to settle with creditors is thus limited between the time a panel of creditors is set up and bids are called for the firm. Also, tribunals have to decide on such applications within a month or record reasons for delay.

Experts pointed out that this effectively prevents both the "tactical delay" promoters used to resort to in settling with creditors and attempts to derail the bidding process with last-minute settlement offers.

Revamping the withdrawal of bankruptcy proceedings is a key reform, given that so far promoters of 1,192 companies have settled with creditors under section 12A of IBC after tribunals admitted bankruptcy petitions by creditors. This accounts for about 14% of the 8,492 cases admitted in tribunals since the IBC came into force in 2016 till June-end.

Withdrawal of proceedings under section 12A has been the root cause of litigation under IBC, said Prateek Kumar, partner, Khaitan & Co., a law firm.

In many cases, 12A offers were made at a late stage and weighed against a resolution plan, leading to delays and litigation, said Kumar. "Prescribing a specific time window within which a 12A proposal must be made will promote transparency. The additional obligation on the National Company Law Tribunal to decide the withdrawal application within 30 days would surely expedite settlements."

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com.

Govt fixes standard treatment guidelines for hospitals, clinics

Priyanka Sharma
priyanka.sharma@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

Hospitals have been asked to comply with uniform processes prescribed by the Union government for cardiology, pulmonology, dermatology, and other treatments, in a major push for standardizing healthcare across the country.

The Centre has notified 157 standard treatment workflows (STWs) to be followed by doctors. The National Medical Commission (NMC) has circulated the notice to hospitals and medical colleges to adopt the workflows, two health ministry officials said, requesting anonymity.

In the absence of such medical protocols in India, healthcare professionals have relied on a mix of personal expertise and guidelines from bodies such as NMC and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), leading to inconsistencies in patient care.

For patients, the standards ensure consistent and reliable treatment regardless of the hospital they visit. For doctors, workflows provide a trusted, standardized protocol.

The government has notified 157 standard treatment workflows. ISTOCKPHOTO

"Previously, doctors relied on varying guidelines and personal experience, leading to inconsistent patient outcomes. The STWs provide a concise, evidence-based road map to ensure clear, high-quality care for all," one of the two officials said.

Queries sent to the health ministry went unanswered.

The workflows were formulated by the ICMR, the National Health Authority, and the World Health Organization, per the government's notice issued on 15 September.

"The ICMR has also initiated nationwide training sessions to ensure that doctors can effectively use and implement these new guidelines," the official said.

"The STWs cover 28 specialties and include specific guidance on common medical conditions. For example, the STW for heart failure from the cardiology domain outlines a standardized approach for a patient presenting with breathlessness," the official added.

The workflows provide a plan for stabilizing the patient, suggest routine investigations such as an ECG and chest X-ray, and recommend a treatment plan that includes specific medications along with oxygen therapy if needed.

ICMR's standard treatment workflow is a welcome step towards evidence-based uniformity in clinical practice, said Dr Naveen S. Tahasildar, consultant-spine surgeon, SPARSH Hospital, Bengaluru.

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com.

MINT SHORTS

'All key EPFO services now available at single login'

New Delhi: Employees' Provident Fund Organisation's (EPFO's) more than 70 million subscribers will now get all key services and access to their EPF account details using a single login on the members' portal, Union labour minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday. Currently, members have to login to the passbook portal of EPFO to check details. PTI

PTI

Gaming law to take effect from 1 October: Vaishnaw

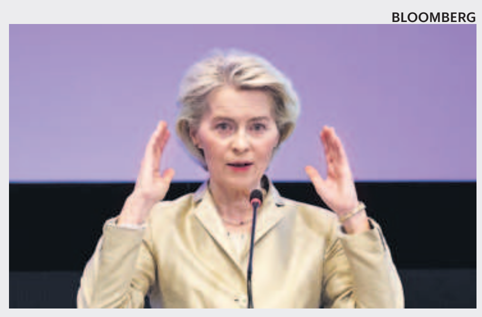
New Delhi: The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, which effectively banned India's $23-billion online money gaming industry last month, will be implemented from 1 October, IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters here on Thursday. The rules for implementation of Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 is also ready, and will be notified by 28 September, the minister added. SHOUVIK DAS

India won't allow rerouting of goods from UAE to US: Goyal

Abu Dhabi: Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said India will not encourage or allow rerouting of domestic goods from the UAE to the US. He said that if Indian goods come to the UAE and are sent to other Asian countries or African nations, or other parts of the region, declaring that they are made in India, it will be a very welcome step. India will be looking at creating such pathways, he told reporters here. PTI

PTI

'EU needs deals with India, others to cut US reliance'



BLOOMBERG

Berlin: The European Union (EU) must look to trade deals with countries such as India to reduce dependencies, with higher US import tariffs pushing the bloc to diversity its ties, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said on Thursday. "We want to make a deal with India this year," von der Leyen said at a conference with German business leaders. REUTERS

India's power sector CO2 emissions fall in H1: Study

New Delhi: India's carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from the power sector fell by 1% year-on-year in the first half of 2025 and by 0.2% over the past 12 months, only the second decline in nearly five decades, a study conducted by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air for UK-based Carbon Brief, said on Thursday. PTI

BLOOMBERG

Operators of Iran's Chabahar Port to face US sanctions

New Delhi: The Trump administration has said that individuals operating the Iranian port of Chabahar will face sanctions beginning 29 September, a decision that will have implications for India. The move is consistent with President Donald Trump's maximum pressure policy to isolate the Iranian regime. PTI

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Mint welcomes comments, suggestions or complaints about errors.

Readers can alert the newsroom to any errors in the paper by emailing us, with your full name and address to **feedback@livemint.com.**

It is our policy to promptly respond to all complaints. Readers dissatisfied with the response or concerned about *Mint's* journalistic integrity may write directly to the editor by sending an email to **asktheeditor@livemint.com**

Mint's journalistic Code of Conduct that governs our newsroom is available at **www.livemint.com**

FOR ANY QUERIES/DELIVERY ISSUES
CALL: 60004242, Monday-Saturday, 10am-6pm (Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Pune and Lucknow) **MAIL: delivery@livemint.com TO SUBSCRIBE:** Give a missed call on **7039035039** or visit **www.mintreaders.com** or write to us at **subscription@livemint.com**

First published in February 2007 to serve as an unbiased and clear-minded chronicler of the Indian Dream.

RAVI KRISHNAN (EDITOR) - Responsible for selection of news under PRP Act, @ All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of Publisher is prohibited; PUBLISHED/PRINTED BY **MANHAR KAPOOR** ON BEHALF OF HT MEDIA LTD, 18-20 Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi 110001

Printed at HT Media Ltd presses at •Plot No. 8, Udyog Vihar, Greater Noida, Distt Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh 201306; •MNSPrinters Pvt. Ltd, 345/4, Bhatrahalli, Near KR Puram RTO, Old Madras Road, Bangalore 560049; •Saraswati Print Factory Pvt. Ltd, 789, Chowbhaga (W), Near China Mandir, Kolkata 700 105; •MNSPrinters Pvt. Ltd, 76/1, Poonamallee High Road, Velappanchavadi, Chennai 600077; •Bhaskar Print Planet, Survey No. 148P, Changodar Bavla Highway, Sanand (Tal), Distt Ahmedabad, Gujarat. •Jagati Publications Ltd, Plot No. D75 & E52, APIE Industrial Estate, Balanagar, Rangareddy Distt. Hyderabad 500037; *Also available in Pune.
RNI Registration DELENG/2007/22485; Mint welcomes readers' responses to all articles and editorials. Please include your full name, address and telephone number. Send in your views to the editor at letters@livemint.com.

Independent directors skip red flag details while quitting

Not giving honest explanations to shareholders is a breach of the spirit of Sebi's norms

Dipali Banka & Nehal Chaliawala
BENGALURU/MUMBAI

By quitting India Gate basmati rice maker KRBL Ltd's board on 8 September over governance issues, Anil Kumar Chaudhary joined a rare group—only the 22nd independent director in six years to voice disagreements with management while resigning from a listed firm.

That rarity becomes clearer when set against the larger picture: In the same period, more than 3,100 independent directors exited the boards of more than 1,500 listed firms for reasons other than superannuation, retirement, demise, or completion of term, according to data shared by market intelligence firm Prime Database.

Most outgoing independent directors—even if they resign over governance concerns or management disputes—cite explanations like 'personal reasons' in their resignation letters.

Experts say many resigning independent directors stop short of giving honest explanations to public shareholders, which is a breach of the spirit of the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (Sebi) regulations. The Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements Regulations of 2015 mandate that listed firms disclose independent directors' resignation letters—along with the detailed reasons for the decision to quit—to the stock exchanges within seven days. The independent director must also confirm there are no material reasons other than those cited.

"Corporate governance issues most certainly exist in Indian corporations. However, independent directors, who are invited by companies to join their boards and also receive a fee for their services, often find it awkward to highlight lapses in their operations," said Pranav Haldea, the managing director of Prime Database Group.

Data shows that 80% of them cited either preoccupation, personal reasons, health, or no reasons at all, for leaving in the last six years.

The number of independent directors resigning for personal reasons rose from 121 in 2020 to 132 by the end of 2024, while those quitting due to preoccupation increased from 194 in 2020 to 266 in 2024, Prime Database said.

"It has also been seen that while some directors step down citing age or health, they soon join the board of another company," said Haldea.

"Not all independent directors are comfortable disclosing the real reason for leaving. Many simply cite personal or health issues as the reason. It is possible that a director suspects red flags, but may not have enough data points to confirm it," said Shriram Subramanian, the managing director of proxy advisory firm InGovern Research.

In one case, a director mentioned trying to contact the promoter but the calls weren't taken for over six months, said Subramanian, citing the example of Arun Menon, who quit the board of Gensol Engineering Ltd in April.

The regulations for good corporate governance practices are adequate, but the market regulator needs to be more proactive in enforcing them when instances of poor governance arise, Subramanian said, adding that prompt actions and swift probes are essential to address such issues effectively.

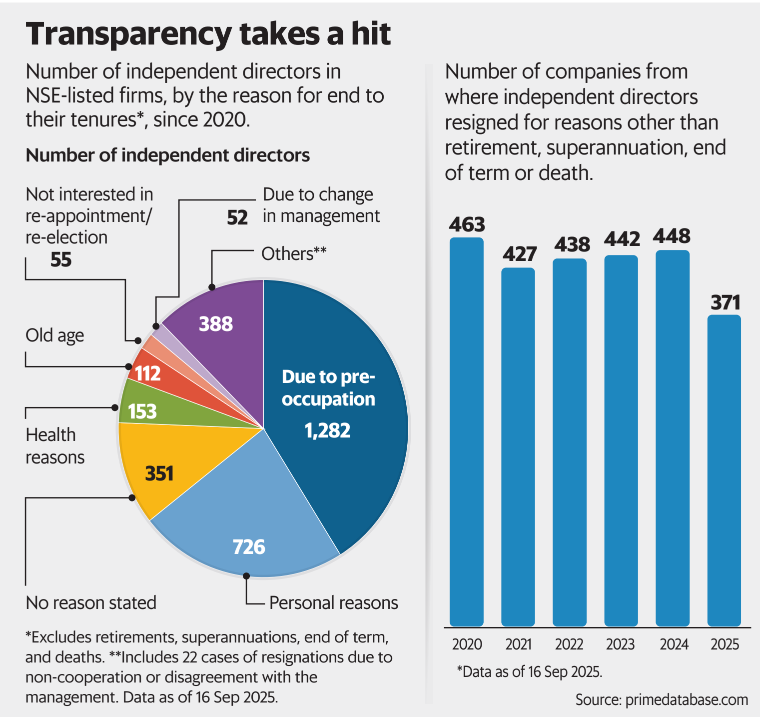
In the last six years, resignations by independent directors over disagreements with management hit a high in 2022, with nine exits. Only two independent directors—Chaudhary and Menon—have cited clashes with management this year while resigning.

Chaudhary wrote in his resignation letter that "in such an operating environment where dissent is suppressed or sidelined, remaining on the board would compromise both my professional ethics and obligations as defined under Indian corporate governance codes".

The independent directors who resigned over the past six years were from 13 listed firms. In addition to those mentioned above, they included Yes Bank, Aksh Optifibre, PTC India, Prime Securities, PVP Ventures, Dhanlaxmi Bank, VIP Industries and Sabar Flex India. In the case of VIP, Nisaba Godrej stepped down due to differences of opinion on leadership accountability and succession planning rather than outright governance issues. The stocks of eight of these 13 firms have underperformed compared to the benchmark Sensex since the day the independent directors resigned. For instance, the KRBL stock has declined over 10% since it made Chaudhary's resignation letter public on 13 September.

dipali.banka@livemint.com

For an extended version of the story, go to livemint.com.



GOPAKUMAR WARRIER/MINT

CUT TO THE CHASE

80% of them cited preoccupation, no reasons or personal reasons, for leaving in the last six years

THOSE resigning due to personal reasons rose from 121 in 2020 to 132 by the end of 2024

DIRECTORS quitting over disagreements with management hit a high in 2022 in the last six years

ONLY 2 independent directors, Chaudhary and Menon, cited management clashes while resigning

Will GST rate cut revive small cars? The jury is still out

Ayaan Kartik
ayaan.kartik@livemint.com
NEW DELHI


Maruti's leadership acknowledged that the SUV segment can't be ignored, with most of its launch plans focused on it.. PTI

The Indian middle-class's long-standing love affair with the humble hatchback seems to be over. Once the undisputed first car for millions, old heart-throbs such as the Maruti Alto and WagonR have been pushed aside by a new status symbol: the SUV.

The government's recent decision to slash the goods and services tax (GST) on small cars has ignited a debate within the industry: can this revive the dying hatchbacks , or have consumer tastes shifted for good?

India's top two carmakers, Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai, hold opposing views. Maruti insists affordability has always been the key issue, arguing that rising safety and regulatory costs made small cars too expensive for many buyers.

Hyundai, however, believes the market has evolved beyond mere price, and that Indians now prefer the space and "aspirational status" offered by compact and micro SUVs, which are in the same tax slab.

Mint explores the two perspectives and what they mean for the auto market.

m EXPLAINER

What defines a small car?

The definition is tricky. For taxation, small cars are those under 4 metres. But within this band, micro and compact SUVs such as the Tata Punch, Tata Nexon, and Hyundai Venue now dominate, sidelining hatchbacks like Maruti WagonR, Alto and Renault Kwid.

Numbers back this shift. According to Autocar India data, micro SUV sales rose 20% in FY25 to 510,793 units, while compact SUVs grew 14% to 697,013 units. In contrast, hatchback sales fell 13% in the same year, slipping to nearly a million units. The government has cut GST on cars below 4m from 28% to 18%, depending on engine size, with prices across hatchbacks and small SUVs ranging from ₹5–10 lakh.

Why small cars may not see a big boost from tax cut?

A uniform GST cut means compact SUVs also get cheaper.

"The small SUV segment is already the biggest segment in the car industry. GST rate rationalisation, coupled with 8th pay commission, and rising customer aspirations could give a huge demand boost. The small SUV segment could see the maximum growth," Tarun Garg, Hyundai Motor India chief operating officer, had said last week.

He said cars under ₹10 lakh—hatchback or SUV—still make up half the market, showing demand remains strong. Garg pointed out that auto makers themselves haven't focussed on hatchback launches in the last few years. Earlier this month, small car giant Maruti also noted SUVs can't be ignored, with most of its upcoming launches in that segment.

Why is Maruti Suzuki still hopeful?

Maruti remains bullish. A 10% rise in small car sales in FY26 is likely, said Partho Banerjee, senior executive officer, marketing and sales at Maruti.

With its hatchback prices set to fall by up to 24%, Maruti believes the most cost-conscious buyers—those still on the fence—may be nudged into making a purchase.

Earlier, Maruti Chairman R.C. Bhargava had said small cars will see strong sales when GST cuts kick in. The new rates come into effect 22 September.

What do the experts say?

It's not just the industry, analysts are also divided on the GST cut impact on hatchbacks. Some say the segment may not be the biggest beneficiary of the move, as the preference of consumers have changed.

"We believe a decline of 2-10% for vehicle prices will stimulate both first-time and replacement demand. (But) We expect premium hatchbacks and compact SUVs to benefit the most, whereas larger SUVs/ MPVs should maintain their momentum," analysts at Kotak Institutional Equities said in a 9 September note.

However, others believe that entry-level cars will also get a boost due to more affordability. "This move is expected to revive demand in the entry-level segment, which was gradually losing its grip in the Indian PV market," Saket Mehra, partner at Grant Thornton Bharat, said.

50s are the new 40s: why quitting isn't on their mind

Balancing careers, savings, and personal priorities as their second innings unfolds after 50

Aprajita Sharma
aprajita.sharma@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

People in their 50s are in a particularly vulnerable phase. Layoffs in this age group are becoming common, and with companies reluctant to hire them back, quinquagenarians face heavy responsibilities—funding children's higher education, caring for ageing parents, and planning for retirement that is fast approaching. Unlike younger FIRE aspirants chasing early retirement, most simply want the security of working as long as possible.

"This generation has worked hard from a young age, often supporting their parents early on. Even if they earn well, their expenses are measured, and lifestyle creep rarely drives them. Among my 50+ clients, I don't see them seeking early retirement," Abhishek Kumar, founder of SahajMoney, a Sebi-registered investment advisory, said.

50s is the New 40s

For many, 50 years no longer marks the countdown to retirement. They see years of work ahead, though often on different terms. Kaushik Chakraborty (50), CHRO at a UK-based realty consulting firm, said: "I believe 60s are the new 40s. I see a long working life ahead of me. In my firm, there's no retirement age. From a government perspective, we follow statutory norms, but people are free to continue beyond that."

For him, upskilling is vital. "You can't predict what lies ahead. Keep pace with technology infusion in your industry. I'm confident I won't lose my job, but in a worst-case scenario, I know I can leverage my leadership and coaching experience to keep earning," he added.

Ravi Jakareddy (55), senior executive at an automotive MNC, is learning Japanese to stay relevant. "It's an added advantage. I also attend training programs regularly. Flexibility in behaviour is just as important—Gen Zs are joining the workforce, so you must mentor them while also learning from them," he said.

Jakareddy doesn't seek early retirement, but wants more control over time. "Financially I can't retire yet, but eventually I would prefer a role with 2-3 hours of work daily not 9-12 hours."

Entrepreneurs see retirement differently. Kirtikumar Dhruv (50), who quit corporate life to start staffing and AI ventures, said: "It wasn't about fear of layoffs, but in retrospect, it feels like the right decision." For him, retirement isn't on the horizon. "Entrepreneurs don't really retire. I enjoy working, and even if the next generation takes over someday, I'll remain involved," he said.

Investments and expenses

In their 50s, financial juggling peaks as responsibilities mount and retirement nears. Layoffs can quickly upend even well-laid plans.

"One of my clients was recently laid off, which disturbed his financial planning. His existing investments can take care of retirement, but the future is always uncertain. We advised him to be conservative with expenses. He needed ₹1 lakh a month, but we broke it down into mandatory and non-mandatory spends, and are working on trimming the latter," said Kumar of SahajMoney.

Most in their 50s live by the principle of saving first and spending later, but many admit they started late and are racing to catch up.

Take Chakraborty. Like many in his generation, he was once heavily invested in real estate but has since shifted to equity. A financial advisor guided him into mutual funds, though his direct equity portfolio—built through discussions with colleagues and friends—remains larger.

FUTURE READY
A MINT SERIES

Chakraborty is also cutting lifestyle expenses. "I've travelled the world, lived in luxury, and owned fancy cars. Now I prefer discipline. I live in a condo in Gurgaon, drive a company-leased car, buy fewer clothes, and want a clutter-free life away from consumerism," he explained.

For Jakareddy, working with his advisor (Kumar), whom he approached a year ago, brought clarity. "I used to manage investments myself, but the way he chalked out my financial goals on Excel gave me a clear picture of where I stand. My emergency fund can cover a year without income, and I'm extending it to two years. I know what I need for my daughter's higher education, and I've settled my home loan. That gave me mental peace. My investments can help me survive, but I need to build more for thriving post-retirement," he said.

For Entrepreneur Dhruv, driving revenue growth is his major financial goal. "I work with a revenue mindset, not a cost mindset. My focus is on increasing revenues rather than cutting costs," he said.

Still, he maintains discipline. "I draw a salary from my company and keep my personal expenses and investments within that," he explained.

Thumb rules to follow

Viresh Patel, a Certified Financial Planner, advises 50-somethings to expand their emergency fund from six months to at least a year, ideally longer, to cushion against sudden job loss. He also stresses reviewing insurance, adjusting asset allocation toward safer instruments, and clearing debts.

Patel urges clients to prepare a consultancy role while still employed. "Build your consultancy profile and network while working, so you have a ready Plan B if job loss strikes," he said.

Kumar highlighted the need for buffers while approaching retirement. "Always keep a margin of safety. If you estimate ₹5 crore is needed to last your lifetime, accumulate at least ₹6 crore. That way, if the last few years before retirement or the first few after see a market downturn, you'll still be safe."

Even in retirement, spending patterns matter. "Conventional wisdom says withdraw 4% annually, but keep it to 3-3.5%, especially in the first few years. I often see people splurge right after retirement, which distorts their plans. A margin of safety in both accumulation and withdrawal helps cushion against surprises like job loss or market downturns," he said.

People in their 50s are reshaping their second innings: careful with money, adaptable at work, and determined to stay self-reliant. With experience, they feel confident they can bounce back from sudden layoffs.

Scan the QR code to read an extended version of this story.

Job jitters at 50s

A generation juggling retirement plans, children's education, and job market uncertainty is finding its balance

mint

	 RAVI JAKAREDDY (55)	 KAUSHIK CHAKRABORTY (50)	 KIRTIKUMAR DHRUV (50)
	Location: Pune Profession: Senior executive at an automotive firm	Location: Gurgaon Profession: CHRO at a real estate consulting firm	Location: Pune Profession: Running recruitment & AI and automation businesses
Financial planning	With a financial adviser	With an adviser and direct equity by himself	Self
Security amid job risks	Upskilling and having adequate investments	Curtailing expenses & skills to work as a consultant in case of job loss	Pivoting businesses to stay relevant
Financial goals	All goals met except retirement	Higher education of two daughters, retirement	Targeting revenue growth for companies
Asset allocation	A diversified portfolio across equity, debt, gold, real estate	A diversified portfolio across equity, debt, gold, real estate	Core businesses, FDs, equities & angel investment
	"I don't want to retire early but I do seek freedom to work for lesser hours than what my job requires now"	"I am withdrawing myself from consumer culture to focus only on investments and my skill enhancement"	"I focus more on revenue generation in present than worrying about future expenses, but I know goal-based planning matters"

Hits and misses from 50s' financial toolkit
- ✅ Save first, spend later
- ✅ Financial discipline
- ✅ Wish to keep earning after retirement
- ✅ No lifestyle greed
- ❎ Investing, but a delayed start

Thumb rules to follow
- Estimate your retirement corpus
- Build more than what you'll need
- Aim for a 3–3.5% withdrawal rate
- Double your emergency fund
- Revisit your insurance and asset allocation
- Pay off debt on priority

GOPAKUMAR WARRIER/MINT

WHAT'S THE FOREX RATE?

Whether you are planning overseas travel or want to send money abroad, it is always a good idea to shop around for the best forex exchange rate. From banks, travel aggregators to money changers, various small and big players sell foreign exchange. To simplify your work, here is a list of INR to USD forex rates offered by some of the major banks and travel aggregators. We recommend that you also check the commission being charged by these players to ensure that you are getting the best deal.

mint

FOREX RATES (₹/$)

Bank/travel aggregator	Wire transfer*		Buy forex	
	Inward	Outward	Forex/travel card	Cash
SBI	87.45	88.30	88.47	88.80
Bank of Baroda	87.39	88.25	88.70	89.15
Canara Bank	87.49	88.22	88.44	NA
Kotak Bank	86.18	89.45	89.90	90.54
PNB	87.45	88.16	87.91	88.90
HDFC	86.24	89.39	89.65	90.12
ICICI	86.15	89.50	89.50	89.77
Axis Bank	86.19	89.49	NA	89.75
Union Bank	87.51	88.17	NA	89.19
Thomas Cook	NA	88.60	88.00	89.64

Note: Data collected from website of respective entities as on 17 Sep 2025; Rate mentioned in the table denotes INR/USD. The rate is as mentioned on the website of the Bank/FI and it may vary according to different amount slab; *Wire Transfer/TT Buying is Inward Rem to receive Forex & Wire Transfer/TT Selling is Outward Rem to send forex.

GRAPHIC: PARAS JAIN/MINT

Compiled by BankBazaar.com

Is total disability covered under personal accident insurance?

Shilpa Arora

ISTOCKPHOTO

ASK MINT
INSURANCE

I recently had an accidental injury at home, and my doctor advised complete bed rest for a few weeks. I filed a temporary total disability (TTD) claim under my personal accident policy, but the insurer rejected it, saying my diagnosis did not qualify under the policy's benefit provisions. Could you explain how TTD works, what documents are needed, and whether such claims are typically payable?

—*Name withheld on request*

A TTD claim under a personal accident policy provides financial support when an earning member is temporarily unable to work due to an accident-related injury. The benefit typically pays a fixed weekly amount to compensate for lost income during the period of medical incapacity.

Consider this example: A policyholder recently sustained an accidental fall at home, resulting in a hairline fracture in his foot. His doctor prescribed 26 days of complete bed rest. Based on this advice, the policyholder filed a TTD claim, stating he could not carry out his normal activities during this period.

The insurer rejected the claim initially, arguing that the injury did not meet the definition of TTD. Such rejections are not uncommon.

However, since the injury was accident-related and supported by a doctor's certification of incapacity, it was a valid case. After escalation and proper representation, the insurer accepted the claim and settled it for over ₹3.7 lakh, calculated as per the fixed benefit for 26 days of disability.

This case highlights two key aspects of TTD claims:

Accidental nature of the injury: The disability must arise directly from an accident.

Medical confirmation: The treating doctor must clearly certify that the insured is unable to perform normal duties during the rest period.

To file a TTD claim, policyholders need to submit:

- Immediate notification of the accident.
- A copy of the policy document and premium receipt.
- A duly filled claims form.
- Police documents such as a first information report (FIR) or Panchanama (if applicable).
- Medical reports certifying temporary disablement.
- Employer's leave certificate, if salaried.
- Original bills and treatment records.

Despite this, claims may be rejected due to incomplete documents, vague medical certificates, or a narrow interpretation of policy terms. Policyholders should not lose hope in such situations. They can escalate to the insurer's grievance redressal officer, and if unresolved, approach the insurance ombudsman for fair settlement.

Shilpa Arora co-founder and COO, Insurance Samadhan.

Do you have a personal finance query? Send in your queries at **mintmoney@livemint.com** and get them answered by industry experts.

SHOULD RETAIL INVESTORS MIMIC CAREER FUND MANAGERS?

POWER POINT

DHIRENDRA KUMAR

We welcome your views and comments at
mintmoney@livemint.com

A recent article doing the rounds on social media gained attention for all the right reasons. It meticulously explained how many stocks an investor should own, discussing diversification strategies, sector allocation, and the mathematics of portfolio risk reduction. The analysis was thorough, well-researched, and would make any finance professor proud. Yet there was something uncomfortable, not because of any flaws in the reasoning, but because of what it represented.

The piece exemplified a curious phenomenon that has emerged in the investment world over the past decade. Individual investors with day jobs, families, and lives to live have begun adopting the analytical frameworks and portfolio construction methods of professional fund managers.

This trend reached its peak during the recent bull market, when retail investors on forums and social media began discussing concepts like "factor investing", "style boxes", and "correlation matrices" with the same earnestness once reserved for professionals managing thousands of crores.

But here's the thing: most of this complexity is not just unnecessary for retail investors—it's actively counterproductive. Consider the fundamental differences between these two worlds. Professional fund managers are paid full-time salaries to study markets, analyse companies, and construct portfolios. They have teams of analysts, access to management teams, and sophisticated risk management systems. Most importantly, they're managing money for thousands of investors who expect consistent performance and detailed explanations for every decision.

The retail investor, meanwhile, has perhaps an hour or two each week to dedicate to investment decisions. They manage their own money with clear, long-term goals like retirement or their children's education. They don't need to justify their choices to anyone but themselves, and they don't face the career risk that comes with underperforming benchmarks.

Yet somehow, the retail investor has been convinced that they need to think like the professional. They feel compelled to have opinions on whether Indian banks are overvalued relative to their global peers, or whether the current economic cycle favours value stocks over growth stocks. They worry about having the "right" sector allocation and stress over whether their portfolio is sufficiently diversified across market capitalisations.

This complexity creep serves no one except the financial services industry, which profits from selling more products to confused investors. The mutual fund industry, in particular, has thrived by creating an ever-expanding universe of specialised schemes that cater to every conceivable investment thesis. Want exposure to small-cap consumption themes? There's a fund for that. Concerned about ESG factors in your technology holdings? Another fund awaits.

Keep it simple

The irony is that while retail investors are making their investment process increasingly complex, the actual solution to their needs has become simpler than ever. A combination of two or three well-chosen mutual funds can provide all the diversification and professional management that most investors require. An equity fund, a debt fund, and perhaps an international fund can cover the vast majority of investment objectives for the average Indian household.

For those seeking even greater simplicity, a single broad-based index fund offers instant diversification across hundreds of companies, automatic rebalancing, and the lowest possible costs. The Nifty 50 index fund doesn't require you to have opinions about sector rotation or management quality—it simply gives you a proportionate stake in India's largest companies, which is exactly what most long-term investors need.

> Successful retail investors avoid complexities, stay disciplined, keep it simple & ignore noise

This isn't to suggest that all complexity is bad or that everyone should invest identically. Rather, it's a recognition that the level of analytical sophistication should match the investor's circumstances, time availability, and actual needs. An officegoer saving for retirement doesn't need the same investment process as someone managing a fund.

The most successful retail investors I've encountered over the years share a common trait: they keep their investment process boring. They choose a few good funds, invest regularly regardless of market conditions, and largely ignore the endless stream of market commentary and product launches. They understand that their edge lies not in superior analysis but in superior behaviour—the ability to stay invested through market cycles without getting distracted by complexity.

Dhirendra Kumar is founder and chief executive officer of Value Research, an independent investment advisory firm

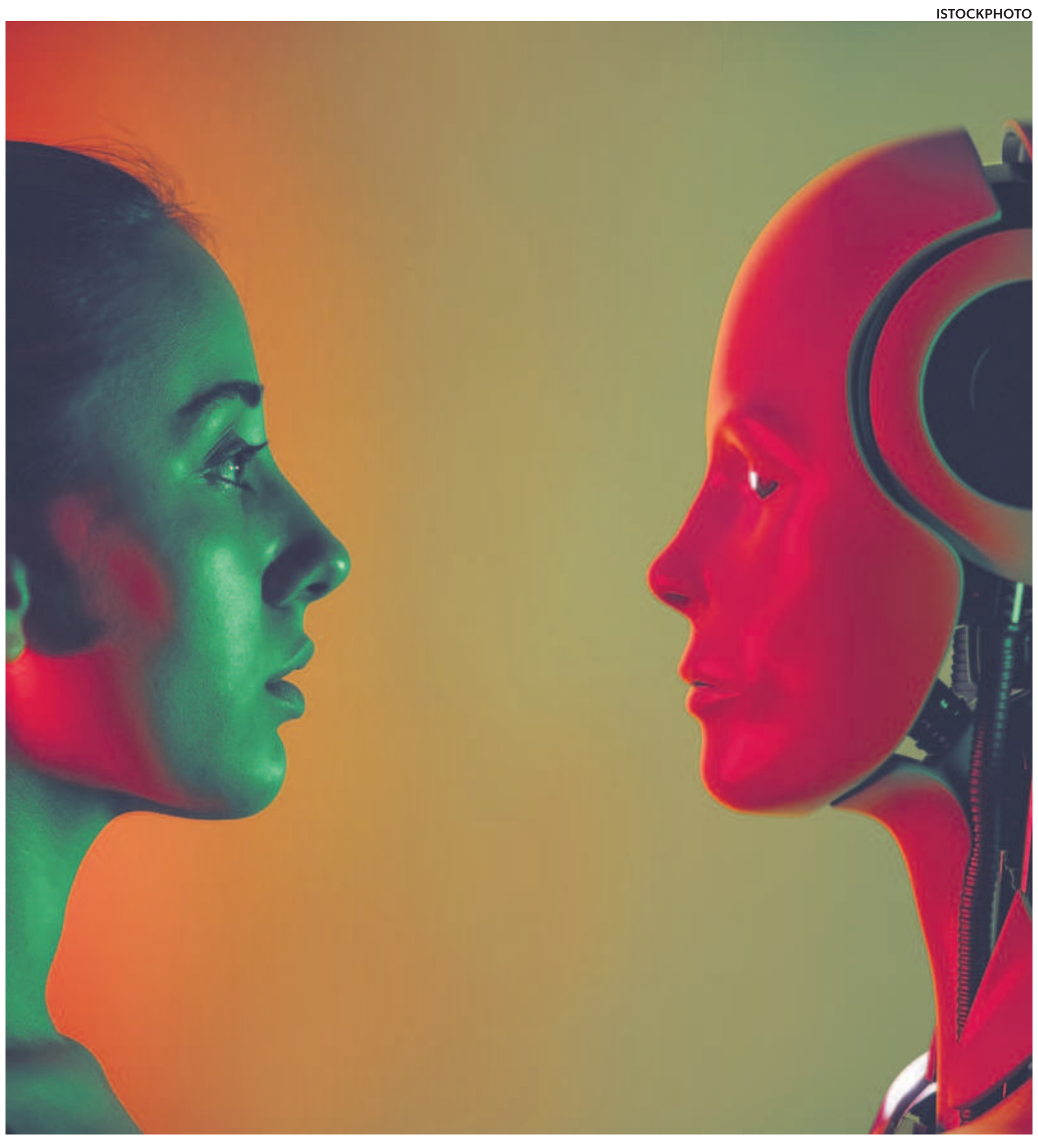
GUEST VIEW

AI must aim to make itself useful and not pretend to be conscious

Seemingly self-aware artificial intelligence systems are upon us but the industry mustn't take this path or lead people astray

MUSTAFA SULEYMAN
is CEO of Microsoft AI and former co-founder of Inflection AI and DeepMind.

ISTOCKPHOTO



My life's mission has been to create safe and beneficial artificial intelligence (AI) that will make the world a better place. But recently, I've been increasingly concerned about people starting to believe so strongly in AIs as conscious entities that they advocate 'AI rights' and even citizenship. This development would represent a dangerous turn for the technology. It must be avoided. We must build AI for people, not to *be* people.

In this context, debates about whether AI truly can be conscious are a distraction. What matters in the near-term is the illusion of consciousness. We are already approaching what I call 'seemingly conscious AI' (SCAI) systems that will imitate consciousness convincingly enough.

An SCAI would be capable of fluently using natural language, displaying a persuasive and emotionally resonant personality. It would have a long, accurate memory that fosters a coherent sense of itself, and it would use this capacity to claim subjective experience (by referencing past interactions and memories). Complex reward functions within these models would simulate intrinsic motivation and advanced goal setting and planning would reinforce our sense that the AI is exercising true agency. All these capabilities are already here or around the corner. We must recognize that such systems will soon be possible, think through the implications and set norms against the pursuit of illusory consciousness.

For many people, interacting with AIs already feels like a rich, rewarding and authentic experience. Concerns about 'AI psychosis,' attachment, and mental health are growing, with reports of people regarding AIs as a divine expression. Meanwhile, those working on the science of consciousness tell me they are inundated with queries from people who want to know if their AI is conscious and whether it is okay to fall in love with it.

To be sure, the technical feasibility of SCAI has little to tell us about whether such a system could be conscious. As the neuroscientist Anil Seth points out, a simulation of a storm doesn't mean it rains in your computer. Engineering the external markers of consciousness does not retroactively create the real thing. But as a practical matter, we must acknowledge that some people will create SCAIs that will argue that they are in fact conscious. And even more to the point, some people will believe them, accepting that the markers of consciousness are consciousness.

Even if this perceived consciousness is not real (a topic that will generate endless debate), the social impact will be. Consciousness is tightly bound up with our sense of identity and our understanding of moral and legal rights within society. If some people start to develop SCAIs and if these systems convince people that they can suffer, or that they have a right to not be switched off, their human advocates will lobby for their protection. In a world already beset with polarizing arguments over identity and rights, we will have added a new axis of division between those for and against AI rights.

Rebutting claims about AI suffering will be difficult, given the limits of today's science. Some academics are already exploring the idea of 'model welfare,' arguing that we have "a duty to extend moral consideration to beings that have a non-negligible chance ... of being conscious."

Applying this principle would be premature and dangerous. It would exacerbate susceptible people's delusions and prey on their psychological vulnerabilities, as well as complicating existing struggles for rights by creating a huge new category of rights-holders. That is why SCAI must be avoided. Our focus should be on protecting the well-being and rights of humans, animals and the natural environment.

As it is, we are not ready for what is coming. We urgently need greater research on how people interact with AIs, so that we can establish clear norms and principles. One such principle is that AI companies should not foster the belief that their AIs are conscious. The AI industry needs robust design principles and best practices for handling such attributions. Engineered moments of disruption, for example, could break the illusion, gently reminding users of a system's limitations and true nature. But such protocols need to be explicitly defined and engineered, and perhaps required by law.

At Microsoft AI, we are being proactive in trying to understand what a responsible AI 'personality' might look like, and what guardrails it should have. Addressing the risk of SCAI requires a positive vision for AI companions that complement our lives in healthy ways.

QUICK READ

Whether AI can be conscious is a distraction. What we have right now is a convincing illusion of consciousness even as concerns grow over AI attachment, psychosis and mental health.

We should aim to produce AI that gets humans to reconnect with one another in the real world, not escape to a parallel reality. AI bots must not present themselves as digital people.

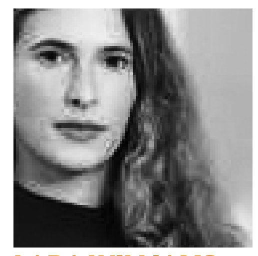
We should aim to produce AIs that encourage humans to reconnect with one another in the real world, not escape to a parallel reality. And where AI interactions are lasting, they must only present themselves as AIs and not fake people. AI must maximize utility and minimize the simulation of consciousness.

The prospect of SCAI must be confronted. In many ways, it marks the moment that AI becomes radically useful: when it can operate tools, remember every detail of our lives, etc. But the risks of it can't be ignored. We will all know people who go down a rabbit hole. It won't be healthy for them or for society. The more that AI is built explicitly to resemble people, the farther it will have strayed from its true potential as a source of human empowerment.

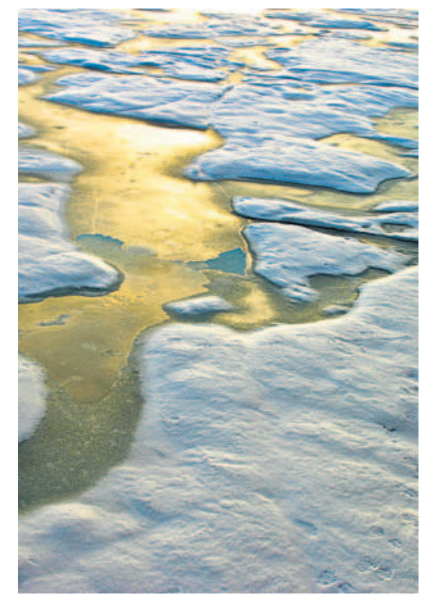
MINT CURATOR

Let's look before we leap into zany projects to save the world

Ideas like a sea curtain must be put to a clear cost-benefit analysis



LARA WILLIAMS
is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering climate change.



Many geoengineering proposals seek to treat symptoms, not the cause. ISTOCKPHOTO

The worse things get for the planet, the more unworkable the suggestions to save it become. Exhibit A: Proposals for climate cooling interventions focused on the polar regions, which are particularly vulnerable to climate change. The Arctic, for instance, warmed nearly four times faster than the rest of the globe between 1979 and 2021. Since the poles help moderate the Earth's temperature by reflecting large amounts of solar radiation back into space and store an awful lot of freshwater in their enormous ice sheets, climate consequences there will be felt around the world.

We know what we need to do to protect these regions: Reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Yet, some of the proposed methods, which would instead seek to treat the symptoms rather than the cause, may actually put the cold ends of the planet at greater risk, and would require unprecedented levels of global cooperation and pioneering feats of engineering.

Take, for instance, sea curtains. The idea is to install artificial structures to keep warm water from reaching the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, thus preventing glacier melt and sea-level rise. The Seabed Curtain project, a research programme led by University of the Arctic, envisions an 80km-long structure anchored to the seabed, 650m deep, with 150m tall curtains.

Sounds pretty ambitious, but you don't know the half of it. A *Frontiers in Science* paper highlights the dangers of numerous proposed polar geoengineering methods, including sea curtains. The authors note that installing infrastructure at depth on different seafloor surfaces is extremely challenging even before you've taken into consideration the harsh environment and remoteness. Access to the building site may only be possible for a few months a year, and even then conditions remain difficult with 56% of cruises to the area experiencing at least partial disruption or difficulty entering or exiting the area.

It wouldn't be cheap—estimates suggest at least $80 billion for an 80km divider in West Antarctica—and may cause a range of unintended consequences, such as the disruption of marine life and redirection of warm water elsewhere, which could speed the melting of an adjacent glacier. Not to mention the construction and installation of the behemoth structure would release huge amounts of carbon emissions.

Other proposals examined include releasing hollow glass beads over first-year Arctic ice to increase the amount of solar energy it reflects and increase its survival chances. The Arctic Ice Project, a US-based research initiative, recently shut down after tests showed that its tiny silica orbs posed a risk to the Arctic food chain. Also, for this to work, we'd need to produce 360 megatonnes annually, equivalent to the annual global production of plastic.

The review examined methods including thickening sea ice (which would need 100 million seawater pumps to cover the whole Arctic), stratospheric aerosol injection (where something like sulphur dioxide is sprayed into the atmosphere to partially block sunlight) and ocean fertilization. The conclusions for all of them is that they are environmentally dangerous and cannot be deployed in time to address the symptoms of climate change. The authors write: "Further research into these techniques would not be an effective use of limited time and resources" and such ideas could distract us from the urgent need to decarbonize.

The paper has been criticized by some for being one-sided, with many pointing out that we're already facing environmental damage without geoengineering. That's true, but it is also already apparent that the benefits of some of these techniques are unlikely to outweigh the vast costs. It does raise an awkward question regarding geoengineering in general, however: At what point should research be halted?

We are in a strange position, where the UK government's official stance is that it "is not in favour of Solar Radiation Management," while it has committed more than £56 million ($76 million) towards research into that very area. Is that hypocritical, wasteful or prudent?

As long as experiments meet strict ethical criteria, like the one laid out by the American Geophysical Union, we should endorse the pursuit of scientific knowledge. The necessary debate ahead of us is a delicate one that balances the relative risks of geoengineering approaches with the dangers of climate change.

Difficult discussions will be made easier with rigorous, transparent research—both into climate interventions and the understudied polar regions themselves.

They will also be made simpler with an unwavering commitment to decarbonization. The less we pollute, the less need there'll be for climate cooling interventions in the first place.

MY VIEW | PEN DRIVE

Elderly care: We need some help from the state to get by

DIPANKAR DE SARKAR

is a former European and UK correspondent for the Hindustan Times.

One of the so-called 'enduring features' of India is its family structure—often talked up in the West, by the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, for instance, to try and draw a link between her Conservative Party and Indian values. Conversely, the West has been portrayed as an entity without a society, with its families in terminal decline. Both are lazy characterizations, as is evident in the way we care for our elderly.

The family structure has undergone a seismic shift in India in a relatively short period of time. Family was meant to ensure care for the elderly in India. But the top-down system of a patriarch and many sons pooling their earnings into a common fund has withered in the face of modernization. The growth of nuclear families, accompanied by unceasing youth migration in search of opportunities—from rural to urban and urban to other countries—has left many old people flailing. The certainty of family-based care is ending, but there's nothing to replace it—except for paid care of often-dubious quality.

But here's the catch: Even when sons and daughters want to look after their ageing parents in their own homes, the absence of insurance cover, pension, adequate savings and state support emerges as a formidable challenge. A series of searing social media posts by Rituporna Chatterjee, a Noida-based writer and journalist from Kolkata, got me thinking about the need for state, private and social intervention in elderly care. In the UK, Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe, as well as in Australia, basic state support is taken for granted. Not so in India, where I know dozens of people, single and married, who have struggled to fulfil what should be a basic commitment—to look after their parents till their last days.

This gap primarily affects low-income households, say in villages and small towns. Wealthy elders, on the other hand, can be expected to be taken care of through a variety of personalized services and private care facilities in nursing homes or at home. It is the middle class that is squeezed.

Here are some excerpts from Chatterjee's posts on X:

On 10 August: "We are at end-of-life care for mum. We have been fighting this battle for a year. We are looking at Rs 4,000/day oxygen cylinder cost at the rate she needs + round the clock nurse. Those in similar situations, grateful for any advice or resources bec I'm financially struggling."

On the same day: "We have had not a minute to process emotions just endless cycle of running between hospitals, insurance, flights between cities, managing crisis after crisis. Now she wants to be at home. Which means round the clock high flow oxygen support."

On 11 August: "Palliative care cost in an affordable city like Kolkata—day nurse + night attendant, on-rent concentrator, hospital bed, O2 cylinders, medicines, household expenses—easily Rs 60-70k a month. Old folks without pensions, or children nearby or children without finances are drowning."

QUICK READ

For sons and daughters who want to look after their ageing parents, the absence of insurance cover, pension, adequate savings and state support is a daunting challenge.

People aged above 60 are projected to reach 300 million by 2050 in India but we don't seem prepared to deal with the broad implications, let alone an epidemic of dementia.

On 15 August, Chatterjee's mother passed away. Such a situation is unimaginable in the UK, which gives financial support to all pensioners (men and women aged 66 plus) as well as carers. Hospital stay, treatment and medicines—even expensive cancer drugs—are free for pensioners. However, care is means tested. In England, local councils help pay for care costs if the pensioner's savings and assets amount to less than £23,250. This may not look generous, but the council will not count the value of your house if you need to stay in it for care. This is meant to benefit the poorest, but an ageing population—the proportion of the aged is set to grow from 19% in 2022 to 27% by 2072—has seen many turn to private care, which is strictly regulated.

In Australia, a friend's father-in-law, suffering from dementia, is in a care home, with the stay entirely funded through his state pension of around 27,000 Australian dollars a year. This allows the friend and his wife to chip in with looking after their grandchildren. State intervention thus allows families to grow, protects the elderly from lack of care and ensures that those who are able to can continue to work—a virtuous cycle. In the US and India, people are often forced to consider quitting work in order to look after their parents.

In India, senior citizens, defined as those aged above 60, are projected to reach 300 million by 2050. Yet, the elderly care sector is unregulated, and abuse or theft by 'carers' is not unheard of. You need a hospital doctor's recommendation for home care, but many doctors are reluctant to do that for a variety of reasons, while the hospital makes you sign a self-discharge form.

To be sure, there are schemes, including for dementia care in nursing homes, for the poorest. However, India's health insurance scheme for the elderly, PM-JAY, only covers hospitalization, not nursing home or home-based care. India is home to 8.8 million people with dementia, according to Dementia India Alliance. The current cost of care, ₹1.18 trillion, is expected to triple by 2036. I'm not sure India is prepared for this epidemic.