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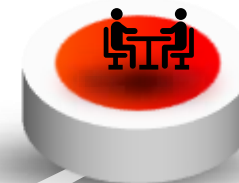
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10 MCQ QUIZ

- Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind."





The judgment *prima facie* refused to accept an argument by the petitioner that a Waqf property would lose its status if it was notified as a "protected monument".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that "every infiltrator" who enters the country from Pakistan, the southern people in Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam are "ruined" because of the safety and security of the nation and its "citizens".

He was addressing a public meeting in Patna on Monday, the day after the election of Bihar, where alleged infiltration from the south has been a major issue and there is a strong demand for a "border wall".

"I want to tell this today from the land of Patna that we will not let any infiltrator, but they (the Congress government) will not let any infiltrator," Modi has been the protector of them for long, but he said, "but in this country is the responsibility of the government of India, only the law of the land will prevail... the people of Bihar are not afraid, they are worried about the safety of their children, their sisters, daughters... The leaders who protect the infiltrators are the traitors and clear that we will not compromise on this. We have announced the formation of a demographic commission."

In his seventh visit to Bihar, Modi arrived on January 8, after 10 days of travel to other states, to inaugurate the new power, water, and energy, railways, housing, and women empowerment projects in Bihar. The Congress-COED crew from the south had been in Bihar since the inauguration are the new terminal of the long-distance train from Patna to Mumbai.

where right-wing activists said on Monday.

At the time, the NDA government was controversially considering a ban on the entry of Bihar. Targeting Congress leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Modi said, "We have to work on the safety of the nation (Bihar) here, but I must say that 'those who are working on the safety of the area must not have anything to do with the mahabha before'." He was referring to Mr. Gandhi's visit to Bihar on January 14 day, covering 1,300 km, and a 14-day tour of Bihar, covering 1,300 km.

The South-eastern area of Bihar is a region where the mahabha prohibition has been in effect since 1980. It will benefit from this," he said of the board. "Until now, the people of the country gets a peace force, Modi said, "The people of Bihar have to have a peace force, but we have already been determined to the people of Bihar, he said."

He said the Congress-KH exploited and betrayed Bihar and neglected its people. He said the Congress-KH had not worked for the welfare, growth and development of Bihar.

SC stays 'arbitrary' Waqf changes; upholds Act

Top Court says judgment based on only a *prima facie* consideration of the 2025 law

Its observations will not prevent parties from making future submissions about the validity of provisions

Bench limits the number of non-Muslims on the Central Waqf councils and State Waqf Boards

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday struck a balance by staying crucial portions of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, which it found “*prima facie* arbitrary” while refusing to freeze the law in its entirety.

In a judgment on a plea for interim stay of the law, a Bench of Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai and Justice A.G. Masih reasoned that a parliamentary legislation was naturally presumed to be constitutional as the lawmakers would only have the public’s best interests in mind, so much so that even discrimination woven into the statute would be based on adequate grounds.

Key provisions

However, this reasoning did not stop the court from staying key provisions of the 2025 Act, including the one which required a per-

son intending to create a Waqf to prove that he had been practising Islam for five years.

The court said there was nothing wrong in requiring a person to prove that he had been practising the faith for at least five years, considering that Waqf endowments were misused as a “clever device to tie up property in order to defeat creditors and generally to evade the law under the cloak of a plausible dedication to the Almighty”.

However, the Bench found it arbitrary that the law failed to provide a basic mechanism or procedure to ascertain whether the person had indeed been practising Islam for at least five years. Chief Justice Gavai directed the provision to be shelved until the government came up with a mechanism.

The court found “totally unconstitutional” a provision in Section 3C, which mandated that a Waqf would lose its character

Yes and no

A look at some of the key features of the Supreme Court ruling on the Waqf (Amendment) Act

■ **‘Prima facie arbitrary’:** The lack of a basic mechanism to ascertain whether the person has been practising Islam for at least five years, which is requirement to create a waqf

■ **‘Totally unconstitutional’:** Section 3C proviso that a Waqf loses its character immediately upon doubt of being government property, before inquiry completion; allowing the designated officer and State government to unilaterally alter revenue and Waqf Board records, respectively, changing the status of a Waqf property into a government property

■ **‘Mandatory registration’:** The court rejected arguments against the mandatory registration of Waqfs prospectively

■ **‘Protected monument’ status:** The argument that Waqf property loses its status if notified as a ‘protected monument’ was termed a ‘fallacy’

■ **Tribal community donations:** It addressed concerns about restricting tribal Muslims from donating land as Waqfs, over the potential threat to cultural minorities



the moment someone raised a doubt that it was government property.

Chief Justice Gavai said though any government property was public asset, a designated officer had every reason to conduct an inquiry, but it could not suddenly cease to be one before the designated officer submits the report. The court stayed parts of Section 3C that allowed the designated officer and a State government to unilaterally

alter revenue and Waqf Board records, respectively, changing the status of a Waqf property into a government property.

Title of properties

CJI held that determination of the title (ownership) of a property came within the ambit of the judiciary, and the executive would be breaching the fundamental principle of separation of powers by one-sidedly depriving citizens posses-

sion of a Waqf property.

“It is directed that unless the issue with regard to title of the Waqf property in terms of Section 3C of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 is not finally decided in proceedings under Section 83 before the Waqf Tribunal, and subject to further orders by the State High Court, neither the Waqfs will be disposed of the property nor the entry in the revenue records and the records of

the Waqf Board shall be affected,” the court said. To balance the equities and to protect valuable government properties, the court said it was imperative that Mutawallis (managers) of these disputed Waqfs did not create any third-party rights until the final decision of the competent tribunal on the status of property.

The Bench directed that Central Waqf Council would not have more than four non-Muslims out of a total 22. State Waqf Boards would limit the number of its non-Muslim members to three out of a total 11. The apex court ordered that the Chief Executive Officers of State Waqf Boards must be picked from the Muslim community “as far as possible”.

“Right from 1923, in all the Waqf enactments we have referred to, there was a requirement of registration of Waqfs. We are, therefore, of the view that if Mutawallis (managers) for

a period of 102 years could not get the Waqf registered, as required under the earlier provisions, they cannot claim that they be allowed to continue with the Waqf even if they are not registered,” Justice Gavai said.

The court noted that the Waqf Act, 1995, had allowed registration without any requirement to provide a formal deed. “If for 30 long years, the Mutawallis had chosen not to make an application for registration, they cannot be heard to say that the provision which now requires the application to be accompanied by a copy of the Waqf deed is arbitrary,” the court reasoned.

The judgment *prima facie* refused to accept an argument by the petitioners that a Waqf property would lose its status if it was notified as a “protected monument”.

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1. Current News (Judgment Highlights)

- **Bench:** Chief Justice B.R. Gavai & Justice A.G. Masih.
- **Observation:**
 - Prima facie, mandatory registration of Waqfs is **not arbitrary**.
 - However, certain provisions were stayed as they were **arbitrary/unconstitutional**.
- **Struck Down (Prima Facie Arbitrary):**
 1. **Five-year practice requirement** → To prove someone creating a Waqf had practiced Islam for 5 years.
 2. **Section 3C** → Allowed government officers to declare Waqf property as govt. property immediately before tribunal decision.
- **Upholdings:**
 - Mandatory registration of Waqfs prospectively.
 - Waqf Boards must have majority Muslims but may include limited non-Muslims.

2. What is Waqf?

- **Definition:** A permanent dedication of movable or immovable property by a Muslim for religious, pious, or charitable purposes.
 - **Types:**
 1. **Waqf-alal-aulad:** For family benefit.
 2. **Public Waqf:** For community purposes (mosques, graveyards, schools, etc.).
 - **Administrator:** Managed by a **Mutawalli** (caretaker).
-

3. Legal & Historical Background

- **Waqf Act, 1995:**
 - Established Waqf Boards in each state.
 - Provided for registration of Waqf properties.
- **Amendment 2013:**
 - Strengthened powers of Waqf Boards to protect encroachments.
 - Result: Waqf land area shot up to **8 lakh acres → 20 lakh acres** in affidavits.
- **Amendment 2025:**
 - Introduced strict provisions (5-year Islam practice, government officer powers, etc.) which SC stayed.

- **Key Supreme Court Directions**

- Title determination of Waqf property = Judicial matter, **not administrative**.
- Mutawallis (managers) **cannot create 3rd party rights** until tribunal decides.
- Central Waqf Council: max. 4 non-Muslims out of 22.
- State Waqf Boards: max. 3 non-Muslims, with Chairperson **from Muslim community**.

(a) Constitutional Aspect

- Linked to **Right to Property (Art. 300A)**.
- **Separation of powers**: Judiciary, not executive, to decide property ownership.
- Balancing **religious freedom (Art. 25, 26)** with **secular governance**.

(b) Economic Aspect

- India has ~8–9 lakh acres of Waqf property → **real estate worth ₹1.2 lakh crore+**.
- Potential for use in **education, welfare, healthcare projects** if managed properly.
- Issues: Encroachment, underutilisation, lack of transparency.

(c) Social Aspect

- Waqf properties provide **mosques, graveyards, madrasas, schools, hospitals** → critical for minority welfare.
- Tribal donations & “protected monument” waqf issues raised by govt. to avoid misuse.

(d) International & Historical Angle

- **Ottoman Empire legacy**: Waqf was a dominant institution in Islamic world for social welfare.
- **British India**: Waqf validated in **Privy Council (1894)** & **Waqf Validating Act, 1913**.
- **Global comparison**: Countries like Turkey & Egypt have state-controlled Awqaf ministries.

Yes and no

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'Aadhaar is part of statute, can be used by voters'

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said Aadhaar was part of the right-to-vote statute, and voters were permitted to utilise the unique identity proof to the extent permitted by the law.

A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi was responding to submissions intended to portray Aadhaar as inferior to the 11 documents listed by the Election Commission for voter verification during the special intensive revision of Bihar electoral rolls.

Plea against order

This has come barely a week after the court declared Aadhaar as the "12th document" aggrieved voters could attach in their

claims and objections for including or excluding names on the voter list.

Petitioner-advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, who wants the court to rethink its August 8 order listing Aadhaar as the 12th document, said any person could get an Aadhaar, and that they need not necessarily be a citizen.

"Aadhaar is not proof of age, citizenship, residence, or domicile," Mr. Upadhyay said.

Justice Bagchi asked then what Aadhaar was meant to prove. Mr. Upadhyay said it was merely a "simple" proof of identity.

Referring to Section 23(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, Justice Bagchi asked if Aadhaar was not part of the statute which governed the EC with regard to the right

Section 23(4) of the Representation of the People Act allows use of Aadhaar to authenticate entries

to vote and inclusion on the rolls.

The Section permits EC officials to use Aadhaar to authenticate entries on the electoral rolls.

To this, Mr. Upadhyay argued that Aadhaar could not be equated with any of the other 11 documents. "So, are you saying that a land record (one of the 11 documents) is more relevant than Aadhaar?" Justice Bagchi queried.

The court issued notice on Mr. Upadhyay's plea, and fixed October 7 to hear arguments on the legality of the special intensive re-

vision. It said its judgment would prevail over anything that may happen.

Mr. Upadhyay argued the SIR order of June 24 envisaged not only a proof of identity but also supporting evidence of eligibility, including place of birth or residence as per the 1950 Act. Consequently, acceptance of Aadhaar alone, without accompanying proof of place of birth or other eligibility criteria, diluted the intended scheme of the order. He also argued in favour of a "pan-India" SIR to root out "foreign infiltrators" who had sneaked their way into the electoral rolls. "Bihar has lakhs of Bangladesh nationals and Rohingyas..." the petitioner-advocate submitted.

To this, Justice Surya Kant responded that the

EC knew the law, and could distinguish between citizens and infiltrators on the voter list.

Senior advocates A.M. Singhvi and Gopal Sankaranarayanan urged the court to hear their petitions on the validity of the SIR exercise itself. They said the EC was well into conducting SIRs in other parts of the country.

"We are watching this with great trepidation... A meeting of the EC was held on September 10. It is crucial that this court hears the case soon or SIR would soon become *fait accompli*," Mr. Sankaranarayanan submitted.

"Why should I, as a citizen, suffer from the illegality of SIR," advocate Vrinda Grover, also appearing for the petitioner's side, asked.

1. Supreme Court's Position (2025)

- **Bench:** Justices Surya Kant & Joymalya Bagchi.
 - **Verdict:**
 - Aadhaar is **part of the statute governing voting rights**.
 - Can be used as an **identity proof** under **Section 23(4) of the Representation of the People Act (1950)**.
 - Permits EC to authenticate entries in **electoral rolls** using Aadhaar.
-

2. Case Context

- **Petitioner:** Advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay.
 - **Issue Raised:**
 - Aadhaar was treated as "12th document" for voter verification.
 - Argument: Aadhaar is not proof of **citizenship/residence/domicile**, hence inferior to other 11 listed documents.
 - **Court's Query:**
 - Justice Bagchi questioned why Aadhaar, as a government-issued identity, should be considered less relevant than land records or other listed proofs.
-

Arguments Presented

For Aadhaar:

- Simple, universal proof of identity.
- Ensures “One voter – One ID”.
- Helps root out *bogus voters* (illegal migrants, duplicate entries).

Against Aadhaar:

- Aadhaar is available to residents, not necessarily citizens.
- Risks **inclusion of non-citizens** (Bangladeshis, Rohingyas).
- May dilute intended scheme of electoral verification.
- Fear of **mass disenfranchisement** if authentication errors occur.

Aadhaar Act, 2016

- Provides unique identity number based on biometrics.
- Initially voluntary → expanded for DBT, subsidies, PAN, etc.
- SC in **Puttaswamy Case (2018)**:
 - Upheld Aadhaar's validity.
 - Restricted mandatory use to subsidies & tax purposes.

Representation of the People Act, 1950 & 1951

- 1950 Act: Deals with preparation & revision of electoral rolls.
- 1951 Act: Conduct of elections, disqualifications, etc.

Voter ID vs Aadhaar

- Voter ID = proof of citizenship (through scrutiny).
- Aadhaar = proof of identity (but not citizenship).

- **Ethical & Security Concerns**

- **Ethical:** Risk of **exclusion** (poor biometrics, rural areas).
- **Privacy:** Aadhaar-voter linkage may enable surveillance.
- **Security:** Illegal migrants may obtain Aadhaar, posing internal security risks.
-

India gets licence to scour Indian Ocean for precious metals

Jacob Koshy
COPENHAGEN

India has bagged an exploration contract from the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to look for a class of precious metals in the northwest Indian Ocean.

This is the first licence granted globally for exploring polymetallic sulphur nodules in the Carlsberg Ridge, M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, told *The Hindu*.

The agreement with the Jamaica-based ISA was signed in Delhi on Monday, he added.

These nodules are concentrations of rock found in the deep ocean and said to be rich in manganese, cobalt, nickel, and copper.

The Carlsberg Ridge is a 3,00,000-sq.km stretch that lies in the Indian Ocean, specifically in the Arabian Sea and northwest Indian Ocean. It forms the boundary between the Indian and Arabian tectonic plates, extending from near Rodrigues Island to the Owen fracture zone.

For exploration in areas part of the 'high seas' or part of the ocean that is so far away from any country, that it is not part of their territories, countries must

obtain permission from the ISA. Currently, 19 countries have such exploration rights.

India too had applied in January 2024 for exploration rights in two regions of the Indian Ocean. While one in the Carlsberg Ridge has been granted, the second - the Afanasy-Nikitin Sea (ANS) mount - is yet to be approved. The ANS is located in the Central Indian Ocean, and the territory has been claimed by Sri Lanka for exploration rights. While countries can claim up to 350 nautical miles from their coasts as their 'continental shelf', those in the Bay of Bengal can, in theory, claim up to 500 nautical miles as per the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Earlier exploration

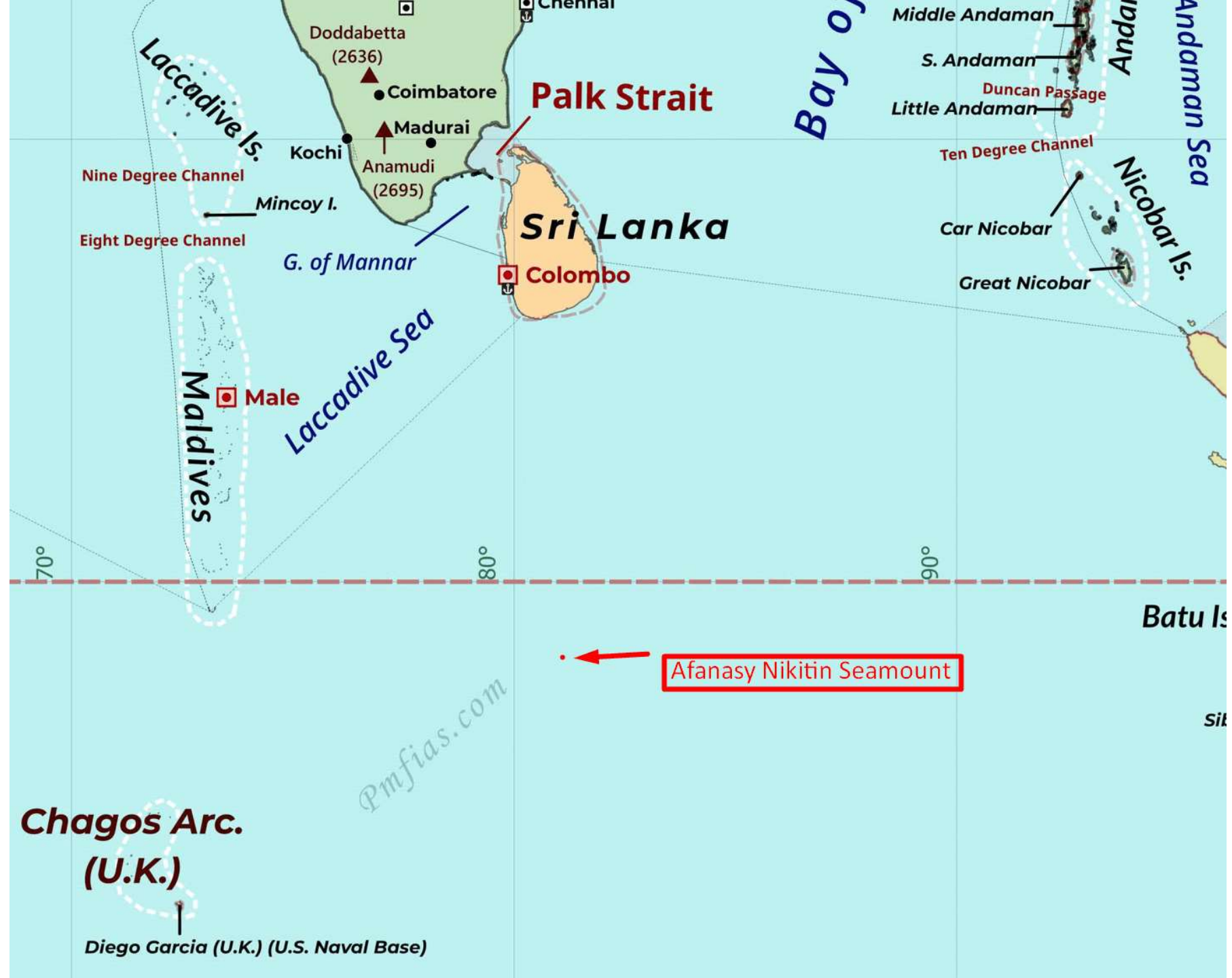
Previously, India had obtained such exploratory rights from the ISA in the Central Indian Ocean Basin. The first was signed in March 2002 and is set to expire on March 24, 2027, after two extensions. The second was for polymetallic sulphides in the Indian Ocean Ridge. It was signed on September 26, 2016, with validity till September 2031.

- India received an **exploration contract** from the **International Seabed Authority (ISA)** to search for **polymetallic sulphide nodules** in the **Carlsberg Ridge (NW Indian Ocean)**.
 - First global licence for this region.
 - Metals: **manganese, cobalt, nickel, copper**.
 - ISA HQ: Jamaica (established under **UNCLOS**).
-

2. Key Details

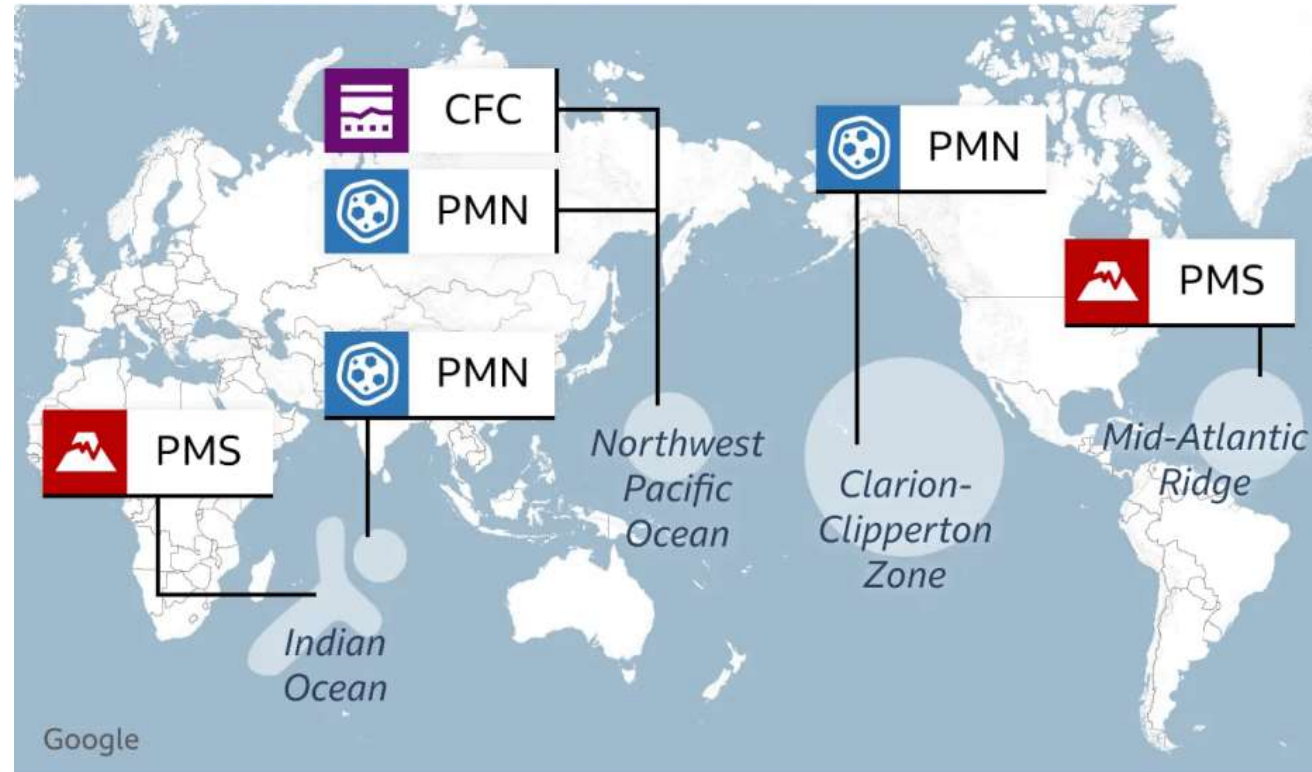
- **Carlsberg Ridge:**
 - 3,00,000 sq. km stretch in NW Indian Ocean.
 - Lies between **Indian & Arabian tectonic plates**, extending from Rodrigues Island to Owen Fracture Zone.
- **Legal framework:**
 - High seas exploration allowed only with ISA approval.
 - Currently **19 countries** have such rights.
- **India's earlier licences:**
 - **2002** – Central Indian Ocean Basin (till 2027).
 - **2016** – Indian Ocean Ridge for polymetallic sulphides (till 2031).
- **India's second application (2024):** Afanasy-Nikitin Seamount (ANS), Central Indian Ocean (pending approval, Sri Lanka also claimed).





Exploration areas for minerals in the international seabed area*

Contracts with the ISA for exploration



Number of active contracts

- Polymetallic nodules (PMN): 19
- Polymetallic sulphides (PMS): 7
- Cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts (CFC): 4

*The part under ISA jurisdiction is defined as “the seabed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.”



Background/History

Polymetallic nodules: Rock-like deposits rich in strategic minerals.

India's **Deep Ocean Mission** (2021) – ₹4077 crore project to harness seabed resources.

ISA created under **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**, 1982.

Divided state

The U.S. needs a new enlightened leadership in the two major parties.

The shooting of Charlie Kirk, a controversial, outspoken conservative commentator and political ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, has reopened debate about the polarization of opinion in the United States and its disturbing proximity towards using lethal violence to settle debates. Ironically, Mr. Kirk was a vocal advocate of the Second Amendment right to bear arms, even as he espoused a range of right-wing values at liberal university campuses, and in curbing abortion rights, and limiting the rights of transgender and LGBTQ persons — all the while recruiting young voters to the Republican cause. The man arrested on suspicion of shooting him, Tyler Robinson, is said to have diverged from his own conservative family roots although few specific or possible motives are established so far. This much is clear: years of political vitriol backed by politics built on the values of superiority, exclusivity, exclusion, religiosity, and a harmful intolerance of social and ideological diversity have brought the shutters down on any channels for open-minded dialogue and bipartisan leadership that might have existed earlier.

The U.S. is at a crossroads in terms of its standing as a moral and economic power espousing, respectively, for the majority of its citizens, freedom and capitalism. Given the crackdown on and deportation of students, academics and residents protesting activities in Gaza and the cruel deaths of thousands resulting from immigration raids, there are many who would claim that the U.S. remains the bedrock of substantial humanitarianism. Economically, the rules-based international order that emerged through the years of the Washington Consensus stands in a shambles in some regards, with Mr. Trump's tariff policy that fuelled a worldwide trade war bringing global supply chains to their knees. Nowhere is the impact of these recent shifts in the U.S.'s ideological and policy posture more keenly felt than on its own soil, with Democrats on the retreat after two Trump terms, and Republicans embracing their President's political agenda, which is only an amorphous version of the classic conservatism that many of them adhere to. When confronted with strategies across the aisle full of silent, far-leftist, large, especially for minorities, pushing the fringes of the political discourse, and the desperate on all sides fall back on toxic gun culture to give voice to their frustration with the status quo. Given that numerous past Presidents have tried and failed to start conversations on common-sense gun control reform, including no fewer than 17 attempts by Barack Obama to introduce such legislation in Congress, it is only the emergence of a new, enlightened leadership in both parties that could help bridge the deep ideological and hateful politics in the post-Trump years.

Field and fraternity

Sport is political, but it must not be the stage for a theatre of conflict.

Sports, like war, can be a continuation of politics by other means, but it always makes sense to question all the forms and avatars of politics. The India-Pakistan Asia Cup match on September 15 was preceded by demands that it be suspended. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray called it an "insult to national sentiment" while the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community leader Ahmad Raza Khan said that commercial gain had been valued over the lives lost in Peshawar. Politicians had also asked the Supreme Court to cancel the game. Yet, India captain Suryakumar Yadav had decided that his team would not shirk the bond with its Pakistani counterpart, calling it an "align ment" with government policy. It is striking that Mr. Thackeray and Mr. Owaisi, from different ends of the political spectrum, echoed the BJP-led government's policy of disavowal of Pakistan, revealing how this debate has become circumscribed by notions of national solidarity. But the ICC is also partly to blame for being so inoperable outside the purview of sports governance law, sustained by its own referees and administrators to ruling parties. Cricket has never been immune to politics; colonial India used it to negotiate power with imperial rulers and independent India and Pakistan invested their encounter with the weight of nationhood. Yet, cricket, especially in the 1970s and 2000s, opened spaces for contact, with the field allowing a rivalry that was sporting rather than political.

Today, this tradition is being eroded by the collective transformation of cricket into another theatre of conflict. Sportsmen are not soldiers and their gestures matter because they dramatise allegiances. To withdraw from international cricket courtesy confuses solidarity with violence of terrorism with the repudiation of fellow athletes. The Asia Cup game showed how far the inordinate influence the ICC exerts on these events. Rather than compound these artificialities, Suryakumar and team should adopt the spirit of sportsmanship and restore frank talking for the rest of the tournament. Sport is political, but it does not have to be war unless the shooting of players and contests initiate racist warfare, but the whole point of sport is that if sportspeople behave as proxies of political leaders seeking to manipulate to polarise people.

Unlocking innovation with India's procurement reforms



Anindan Dasgupta is a research analyst in the high-tech programme at the Tata Institute, Bangalore.

Procurement policies, often designed with transparency and cost efficiency in mind, have long had unintended consequences for research and development. While preventing fraud, these frameworks frequently stifle innovation, one process at a time, by prioritising procedural compliance over scientific needs. India's recent reforms to its General Financial Rules (GFR), particularly exemptions from the Government e Marketplace (GeM) portal and enhanced financial thresholds for research and development (R&D) procurement — are a welcome change.

Procurement as innovation catalyst. The tag-of-war between procurement policies and innovation is not new. Studies have shown that public procurement, when done properly, can give a push to private-sector R&D by creating stable demand for advanced technologies. Moreover, it has been found that targeted procurement spending is associated with increased patent filings and private R&D investment, forming a virtuous cycle of innovation. However, as the Brazilian case study in Gordon's 2023 report notes, generic procurement rules rarely achieve this unless explicitly designed to spur innovation. India's pre-reform framework fell into this trap, mandating GeM purchases for all sub-₹200 crore equipment, regardless of specialisation, which forced scientists into a time-consuming, competitive process for globally benchmarked tools. Vendors on GeM often supplied materials of poor quality, compromising research.

The Government of India's policy changes in June 2025 directly address these issues. By allowing institutional heads to bypass GeM for specialised equipment and raising the purchase limits from ₹1 lakh to ₹2 lakh, the reform is incompatible with R&D's bespoke needs. Delegating approval for global tenders up to ₹200 crore to vice-chancellors and directors eliminates bureaucratic lag — a chronic grievance highlighted by the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council. These adjustments align with theories of "catalytic procurement", where flexibility enables public institutions to act as early adopters of advanced technologies, stimulating private-sector innovation.

Yet, the reform stops short of a full paradigm shift. While empowering institutional leaders, they retain safeguards such as departmental purchase committees for higher-value acquisitions. This could be argued as a necessary balance. However, even the revised ₹2 lakh direct purchase limit could remain inadequate for high-cost tools such as quantum computing or biotechnology. Additionally, the focus on global tenders, while ensuring quality, could marginalise domestic suppliers. Local R&D systems are empowered and left free to collaborate globally, and compete at that level.

The policy's success will depend to a large extent on implementation. Trusting institutional heads with procurement discretion assumes high ethical standards, which is something that will have to be built up slowly, in a system that has been historically plagued by inefficiency. As the policy rolls out, monitoring mechanisms will be vital to prevent misuse while preserving agility.

Research and development can be transformed by embracing these changes with global best practices in market-shaping, cognitive tools and hybrid governance.

How has procurement evolved globally? Globally, nations leading in R&D outcomes have already optimised procurement and sourcing that act as a catalyst for innovation — not just a cost-control mechanism. India can learn from their experience. Procurement processes have evolved from ancient record-keeping to Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven strategies. India would do well to learn from these.

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also, as that would probably open up the procurement process. However, it would be wise to consider that the debate over privatising India's national labs hinges on a false binary. As the U.S. experience shows, privatisation is not their experience. Procurement processes have evolved from ancient record-keeping to Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven strategies. India would do well to learn from these.

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India's economic ambitions need better gender data



Pooja Sharma is a research analyst in the gender and social equity programme at the Tata Institute, Mumbai.



Vikas Kumar is a research analyst in the gender and social equity programme at the Tata Institute, Mumbai.

Women contribute just 18% to India's GDP today, but continuing with business-as-usual means that trillions of dollars will be left on the table. India's aspiration to become a \$30 trillion economy by 2047 rests on a single truth: inclusive growth cannot happen if half its population remains invisible to the data that drive policy and investment. Nearly 100 million employed women are outside the workforce. While the Female Labour Force Participation Rate has improved to 41.7%, only 16% of these women are in formal employment. The question is not just how India creates opportunities for women, but how it ensures that these opportunities are visible, measurable, and acted on across every economic layer: employment, education and skills, entrepreneurship, livelihood and mobility, and safety and inclusive infrastructure. Its significance lies beyond the index. It signals a shift toward embedding a gendered lens into the economic levers: employment, education and skills, entrepreneurship, livelihood and mobility, and safety and inclusive infrastructure. Its significance lies beyond the index. It signals a shift toward embedding a gendered lens into the economic levers: employment, education and skills, entrepreneurship, livelihood and mobility, and safety and inclusive infrastructure.

A district-level tool. The launch of the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Index by the Government of Uttar Pradesh — the first in India — offers a glimpse of what is possible. This district-level tool tracks women's participation across the economic levers: employment, education and skills, entrepreneurship, livelihood and mobility, and safety and inclusive infrastructure. Its significance lies beyond the index. It signals a shift toward embedding a gendered lens into the economic levers: employment, education and skills, entrepreneurship, livelihood and mobility, and safety and inclusive infrastructure.

The Great Nicobar project is a strategic and national importance. Editorial page, September 12, 2025). By the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupendra Yadav, merits a response.

The Government of Uttar Pradesh's Women's Economic Empowerment Index is a model that can be replicated across the country.

When inequalities become visible, action follows. In Uttar Pradesh's transport sector for instance, data quality of employment, particularly in stages after Class 12 in school and post-graduation, where female dropout rates surge.

Equally important is the need for a rethink on gender budgeting. Too often, gender budgeting is confined to finance departments or specific women's schemes. True gender budgeting applies a gender lens to every rupee spent on education, energy, infrastructure, and more. It is simple — you cannot budget for what you do not measure.

Help for States moving ahead. While Uttar Pradesh has pioneered a foundation that can be replicated and scaled. States such as Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Telangana have already set trillion-dollar economic goals. To achieve them, they must leverage their gender dividend. A robust framework such as the WEE Index can help States translate intent into implementation — turning data into district-wide gender action plans that guide budget allocations, infrastructure priorities and programme reforms.

India's gender gap is not new, but India's response to it must evolve. The solution would involve a fundamental change in how India sees, measures and responds to gender across every level of governance.

The WEE Index is not the finish line but the starting block. It makes visible what has long been invisible and offers a road map to move women from the margins to the mainstream of India's growth story.

It also calls for moving beyond surface-level counts to tracking leadership, re-entry, data quality of employment, particularly in stages after Class 12 in school and post-graduation, where female dropout rates surge.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Great Nicobar project. The article "A project of strategic and national importance" (Editorial page, September 12, 2025), by the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupendra Yadav, merits a response.

The environmental impact assessment began even before the project was rushed, incomplete and flawed. That further impact studies have been mandated after the project has been granted clearance shows up to 16 initiatives, it is surprising that the

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Field and fraternity

Sport is political, but it must not be
the stage for a theatre of conflict

Sports, like war, can be a continuation of politics by other means, but it always makes sense to question all the forms and avatars of politics. The India-Pakistan Asia Cup match on September 14 was preceded by demands that it be suspended. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray called it an "insult to national sentiment" while the AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi argued that commercial gain had been valued over the lives lost in Pahalgam. Petitioners had also asked the Supreme Court to cancel the game. Yet, India captain Suryakumar Yadav had decided that his team would not shake hands with its Pakistani counterpart, calling it an "alignment" with government policy. It is striking that Mr. Thackeray and Mr. Owaisi, from different ends of the political spectrum, echoed the BJP-led government's policy of disengagement from Pakistan, revealing how this debate has been circumscribed by notions of national solidarity. But the BCCI is also partly to blame for having long operated outside the purview of sports governance law, sustained by networks that still link administrators to ruling parties. Cricket has never been immune to politics: colonial India used it to negotiate power with imperial rulers and independent India and Pakistan invested their encounters with the weight of Partition. Yet, cricket, especially in the 1970s and 2000s, opened spaces for contact, with the field allowing a rivalry that was sporting rather than military.

Today, this tradition is being eroded by the collective transformation of cricket into another theatre of conflict. Sportspersons are not soldiers and their gestures matter because they dramatise fellowship. To withdraw from even this minimal courtesy confuses solidarity with victims of terrorism with the repudiation of fellow athletes. The Asia Cup game showed how far Indian cricket has moved from the position that sport affirms the fraternity of ordinary life, with its rituals of rivalry and joy rising in defiance of violence and bloodshed. It is bad enough that the ICC places the India and the Pakistan teams in the same group in multilateral tournaments, creating repetitive match-ups to go with the inordinate influence the BCCI exerts on these events. Rather than compound these artificialities, Suryakumar and team should adopt the more responsible course and restore hand-shaking for the rest of the tournament. Sport is political, but it does not have to be war minus the shooting. International contests might mimic warfare, but the whole point of sport is lost if sportspersons behave as proxies of political leaders seeking to inflame passions to polarise people.

1. News in Brief

- Debate over **India-Pakistan Asia Cup match (Sep 14, 2025)**.
 - Political leaders (Uddhav Thackeray, Asaduddin Owaisi) opposed the game citing "national sentiment" & terror attacks.
 - Indian captain **Suryakumar Yadav** announced refusal to shake hands with Pakistani players, citing govt. alignment.
-

2. Key Issues Raised

- **Politicisation of sports:**
 - Sports events increasingly seen as extension of national policy.
 - Cricket used historically for political signaling.
- **Role of BCCI:**
 - Long functioned outside strict governance law.
 - Heavy influence on ICC scheduling → repeated Indo-Pak matches in tournaments.
- **Symbolism vs Fellowship:**
 - Players' gestures (handshakes, camaraderie) reflect fraternity.
 - Withdrawing such gestures confuses solidarity with militarism.

3. Background/History

- **India-Pakistan cricket rivalry:** Rooted in **Partition legacy**.
 - **1970s–2000s:** Cricket acted as “bridge diplomacy” (e.g., Vajpayee’s 2004 Indo-Pak series).
 - **Past boycotts:** Sporting bans used as political tools (e.g., South Africa apartheid era, Cold War Olympics).
-

4. Polity & IR Angle

- **Soft power & diplomacy:** Sports as tool of people-to-people ties.
 - **Government policy:** India follows disengagement stance post-Pulwama & border tensions.
 - **Debate:** Should sporting bodies follow govt. policy or remain autonomous?
-

5. Society & Ethics Angle

- **Fraternity (Preamble of Indian Constitution):** Sport seen as a unifier.
- **Moral dilemma:** Balancing solidarity with terror victims vs preserving cultural/sporting exchange.
- **Civil society role:** Cricket matches have mass emotional impact, risk of political exploitation.

Court's nod to mental health as right

In July 2023, the Supreme Court of India pronounced a verdict which has been called a constitutional landmark. The case, *Sukdeb Saha vs. The State Of Andhra Pradesh*, was decided in the anguish of a father who had lost his 17-year-old daughter, a NCTC victim, to a Vinnakapattam hotel. Disoriented with what he believed was the failure of the local police to make a full investigation of the case, he demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry. His petitions were rejected by the Andhra Pradesh High Court, which then saw him approach the Supreme Court. The result was not only an order shifting the investigation to the CBI but also a much needed acknowledgment of mental health being an integral part of the right to life, under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The top court's argument transcended the specific case and revolved around a crucial social issue India's runaway epidemic of student suicides. From a criminological perspective, the case highlights what can be termed structural victimisation. Student suicides are rarely framed in these terms. Yet, systemic neglect of mental health combined with the exploitative culture of coaching centres and the indifference of schools and universities, produce an environment where young people become vulnerable and prey, failing to provide safeguards, the state and institutions become complicit. When institutions create or ignore conditions that drive individuals to the brink, the line between personal tragedy and institutional culpability becomes blurred.

The gaze of victimology, which has long examined the dynamics between victims and perpetrators, can be extended to state institutions as the fact perpetrators. Students are not just "victims" of internal psychological battles. They are the victims of an education system that treats them shabbily. It is also about social



Shabbir Qazi
is Assistant Professor, Jyoti Basu Institute, Patancheru campus



Debashis Siddiqui
is Assistant Professor, Vinayaka Mission's Law School, Missions Research Foundation. E-mailed to the University, Chennai

The Supreme Court's judgment in *Sukdeb Saha vs. The State Of Andhra Pradesh*, acknowledges mental health to be an integral part of the right to life

values that link self-esteem to hierarchy and of a governance collapse that subordinates mental health to a secondary concern. By recognising mental health as an inherent right, the Court was recognising the structural aspect of victimisation. It recast the problem not as a personal bereavement but as a public injustice.

Legally, the verdict fills a vital gap. The Mental Healthcare Act 2017 already studies the right to receive mental health care. But it has not been implemented consistently, and enforcement mechanisms are still poor. By entrenching mental health in the Constitution, the Court has established an elevated normative benchmark. Citizens can insist on safeguarding their psychic health as a fundamental right, not just a statutory right. To ensure that this did not become mere rhetoric, the Court ordered a package of binding interim orders — now referred to as the "Sukdeb Guidelines". Here, schools, colleges, hostels and coaching institutes are required to proactively develop support systems to address the issue of mental health. They instruct States and Union Territories to bring the rules into force in two months and obligate the setting up of district-level monitoring committees. Until Parliament passes a full code, these guidelines will have legislative force.

The ruling also poses significant criminological questions regarding state responsibility. If suicide among students are partially an outcome of institutional neglect, can this form of neglect be regarded as structural violence? And if culpability lies with the structural violence posing that structural structures causing systematic harm to individuals by depriving them of basic needs are also blameworthy as direct violence. By not creating a safe environment, the state and educational institutions indirectly perpetrate harmful circumstances. This perspective

changes student suicides from being viewed as "individual failures" to a result of systemic injustice. As a victimology case, it is a point where hidden victims become visible. Students, frequently silenced by stigma or system competitiveness, are no longer heard as rights holders when it comes to mental health. Placing psychological integrity to be located and safeguarded, leaves the door ajar for restorative measures — counselling, reform in institutional mechanisms of accountability that go beyond retaliation to prevention.

The way the judgment has been received by mental health activists and professionals highlights its revolutionary potential. But along with optimism there must be caution. Powerful judicial pronouncements cannot, by themselves, uproot established cultural and institutional norms. The verdict is whether schools, universities, and state governments will meaningfully internalise the guidelines, invest in resources, and train personnel to deliver real mental health care. Ultimately, *Sukdeb Saha* represents a convergence of law, sociology and victimology. It recognises that harm can be produced not just by individuals but also by institutions and systems. It acknowledges that students, often treated as passive subjects of education, are rights holders whose mental well-being deserves constitutional protection. And it challenges society to confront an uncomfortable truth — that neglect, indifference and structural violence can be as harmful as direct violence. Whether this vision translates into meaningful change will determine whether the judgment remains a beacon of hope or a missed opportunity.

Strengthening Kerala's secular legacy

Sabarimala's inclusivity stands in opposition to sectarian narratives

STATE OF PLAY
M.A. BABU

As one of the largest annual pilgrimages in the world, Sabarimala has long symbolised devotion, discipline and fraternity. The Global Ayappa Pilgrimage and the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) as part of its platform jubilee celebrations — on September 20, is a step towards recognising this unique appeal and strengthening Kerala's secular legacy.

Sabarimala is more than just a temple. It is a symbol of Kerala's social and cultural synthesis. Pilgrims from across caste-based and religious boundaries, about the sacred hill after weeks of penance and self-discipline, reaffirming equality and collective spiritual pursuit. The presence of Vajrapada, a Hindu deity, and a Muslim companion of Lord Ayappa, is a reminder of interfaith harmony. The pilgrim routes also connect with the Arunachal and a Christian pilgrim centre of historical significance.

Equally symbolic is the rendering of the devotional song *Pranava Namam*, played as a lullaby to Ayappa and his devotees at the temple every day. The song was composed by the late G. Thevarajan, also a committed atheist and communist, and immortalised in the voice of K.J. Yesudas, an iconic singer and a Christian by birth. Together, these elements highlight Sabarimala's secular, harmonious, and inclusive legacy — a space where religious diversity is reduced to communal identity.

The TDB is celebrating and reaffirming this long-standing secular tradition. It signals a recognition that Sabarimala



belongs to the world, which is reflected in the words that greet one at the shrine, *Thiruvannamalai* (Thiruvannamalai), indicating that the same spirit abounds in everyone, or no one is alien. Yet, Opposition parties have opposed this progressive step. Adding to this, the Sabarimala Karma Samithi, dominated by communal forces, has announced its plan to hold a so-called *Vinayaka Sankranti* (Path Congress) on September 22. It is a calculated attempt to inject a communal narrative into what has historically been a unifying space.

It is crucial to recognise the distinction between believers and non-believers. The first draws from faith a sense of discipline, moral strength, and fraternity. The second manipulates religious sentiments for narrow, political gain. Kerala's history has shown that believers have often stood on the side of reform and progress. The struggles led by Sri. Marthanda Varma, Ayyappan, and other reformers emerged from within society and religious traditions, and yet they pointed towards liberation, equality, and social reform. It is this reformist tradition that the *Pranava Namam* must be located.

The secular character of Sabarimala is the outcome of centuries of reform, negotiation, and the struggles of or-

inary devotees. Reforms at Sabarimala and other temples came from within society itself. The left has always held that such internal reform movements are essential to weaken caste hierarchies and communal divisions. This is also why the attempts to communalise the Sabarimala must be resisted. The left and its affiliates have long sought to weaponise Sabarimala for political gain, portraying progressive reform as an attack on faith. Sabarimala has never belonged to communal forces, to inclusivity, its connections across communities and its history of reform, stand in opposition to sectarian narratives. Efforts are on to portray the event as an effort by the CPI(M) to interfere in a religious gathering as communists are critics of religion. Communalist study and critique all aspects of the society so that a better future can be ensured. So, quite naturally, religion also falls within their radar, as it is part and parcel of the society. Marx said, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature... It is the opium of the people." He was highlighting the fact that religion helps the oppressed to forget their sufferings. Back then, opium was used by practitioners of medicine as a pain reliever.

The Global Ayappa Sankranti is also a platform to discuss developmental projects — the Sabarimala Master Plan, the proposed airport and other initiatives. It is a political statement, which asserts that Kerala's public sphere will not be surrendered to divisive forces. It also declares that Sabarimala is not an abstract constitutional principle, but a living practice embodied in our pilgrim traditions.

M.A. Babu is CPI(M) General Secretary

Rising obesity, children's exposure to ultra-processed foods

Data show greater availability and widespread promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages

DATA POINT
The Hindu Data Team

A recent UNICEF report, *Feeding Profits: How Food Environments Are Failing Children*, estimates that one in five children and adolescents between 5 and 19 years are living with overweight. It highlights that children and adolescents are increasingly being exposed to "unhealthy food environments" through advertisements and food service facilities, and even lack adequate legal protections against such environments.

Children between 5 and 9 years and 10 to 14 years make up the highest shares of children who are living with overweight (Chart 2b). The report explores how the retail environment shapes what foods children are exposed to. UNICEF found a rise in the density of 'chain' outlets, which include convenience stores, supermarkets and hypermarkets with more than 10 outlets (Chart 3).

According to the report, chain outlets influence food access and diets by facilitating the widespread availability and promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages. But children's exposure to these foods does not stem from chain outlets alone. UNICEF's *U-Report* poll in 2023, which explored both the availability and marketing of foods in secondary schools across eight South Asian countries, showed that unhealthy foods and beverages were more commonly available in schools than fresh fruits or vegetables (Chart 4a).

The report emphasised that mandatory national legal measures and policies are vital to creating healthy food environments. Data show that only 18% of the 202 countries analysed had mandatory nutrition standards for school meals, and only 19% have national taxes for both unhealthy foods and sugar-sweetened beverages (Chart 5).

Unhealthy diets

Charts were sourced from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s *Feeding Profits*. How food environments are failing children, published in September 2023. For Chart 5, the data were examined for 202 countries and for a set of 10 legal measures and policies spanning front-of-pack and first foods, school food environments, marketing to children, food reformulation, food labelling, food subsidies and taxation. "Guidelines to the International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions.

Chart 1: The number (in millions) of children and adolescents living with overweight by age group

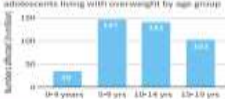


Chart 2: Percentage of children and adolescents with overweight, by age group, globally (in %)

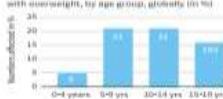


Chart 3: Trends of chain and non-chain outlets over time by income classifications of countries

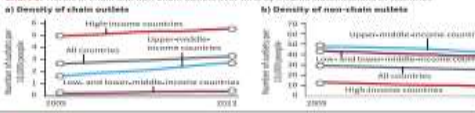
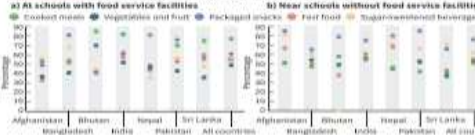


Chart 4a and 4b: Types of foods and beverages available in South Asia in 2023 (in %)



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 16, 1975

Colonial Rule Ends in Papua New Guinea

PORT MORESBY (Papua New Guinea), Sept. 15. Trumpets sounded the Last Post and drums beat the Retreat as the Australian flag was lowered for the last time in Papua New Guinea, ending 69 years of colonial rule.

Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, the Australian Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Gough Whitlam, and about 6,000 Australians and Papua New Guineans were at the dusk ceremony in the small stadium on the shore of Port Moresby Harbour.

Soldiers of the Pacific Islands Regiment fired three volleys to salute Australia's blue flag with its white stars of the Southern Cross and a ten-gun salute from Australian and New Zealand warships anchored off shore.

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Rising obesity, children's exposure to ultra-processed foods

Data show greater availability and widespread promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

A recent UNICEF report, 'Feeding Profit: How Food Environments Are Failing Children', estimates that one in five children and adolescents between 5 and 19 years are 'living with overweight'. It highlights that children and adolescents are increasingly being exposed to "unhealthy food environments" through advertisements and food service facilities, and even lack adequate legal protections against such environments.

Children between 5 and 9 years and 10 to 14 years make up the highest shares of children who are 'living with overweight' (Chart 2).

The report explores how the retail environment shapes what foods children are exposed to. UNICEF found a rise in the density of 'chain' outlets, which include convenience stores, supermarkets and hypermarkets with more than 10 outlets (Chart 3).

According to the report, chain outlets influence food access and diets by facilitating the widespread availability and promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages.

But children's exposure to these foods does not stem from chain outlets alone. UNICEF's U-Report poll in 2023, which explored both the availability and marketing of foods in secondary schools across eight South Asian countries, showed that unhealthy foods and beverages were more commonly available in schools than fresh fruits or vegetables (Chart 4a).

The report emphasised that mandatory national legal measures and policies are vital to creating healthy food environments. Data show that only 18% of the 202 countries analysed had mandatory nutrition standards for school meals, and only 19% have national taxes for both unhealthy foods and sugar-sweetened beverages (Chart 5).

Unhealthy diets

Charts were sourced from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s 'Feeding Profit: How food environments are failing children', published in September 2025. For Chart 5, the data were examined for 202 countries and for a set of 10 legal measures and policies spanning breastfeeding and first foods, school food environments, marketing to children, food reformulation, food labelling, food subsidies and taxation. *Code refers to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions.



Chart 1: The number (in million) of children and adolescents living with overweight by age group

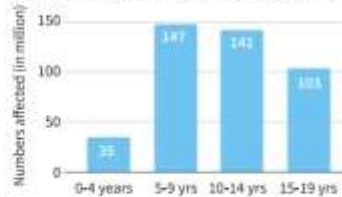


Chart 2: Percentage of children and adolescents with overweight, by age group, globally (in %)

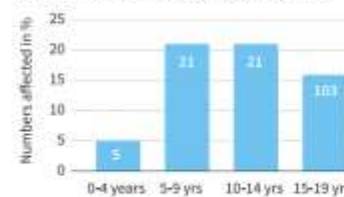
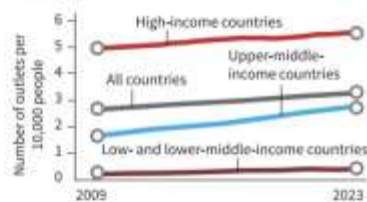


Chart 3: Trends of chain and non-chain outlets over time by income classifications of countries

a) Density of chain outlets



b) Density of non-chain outlets

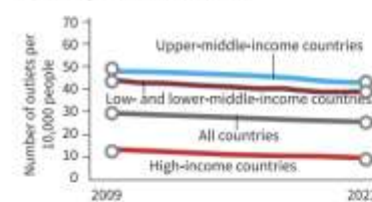
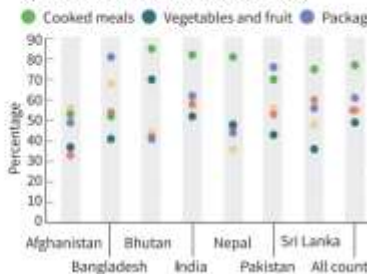


Chart 4a and 4b: Types of foods and beverages available in South Asia in 2023 (in %)

a) At schools with food service facilities



b) Near schools without food service facilities

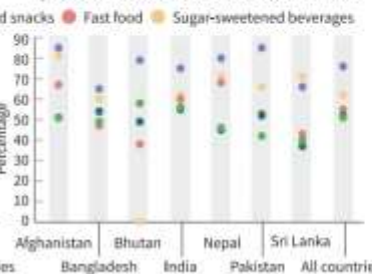


Chart 5: Share of countries with mandatory measures to protect children from unhealthy food environments

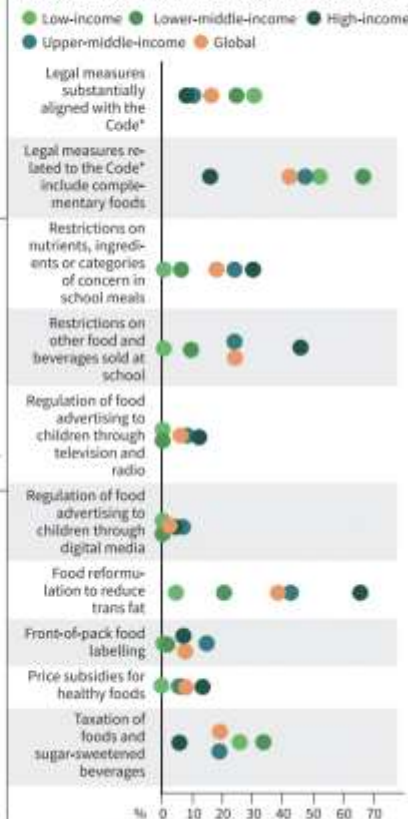


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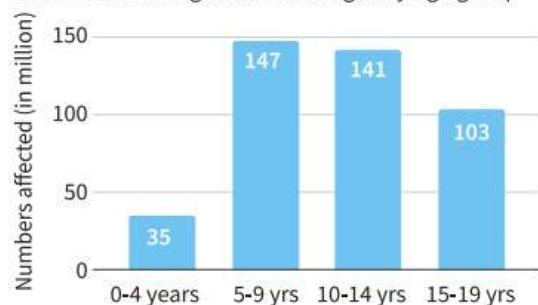


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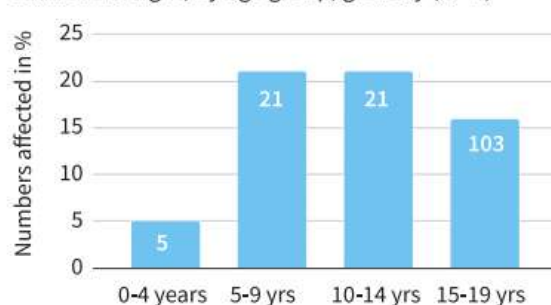
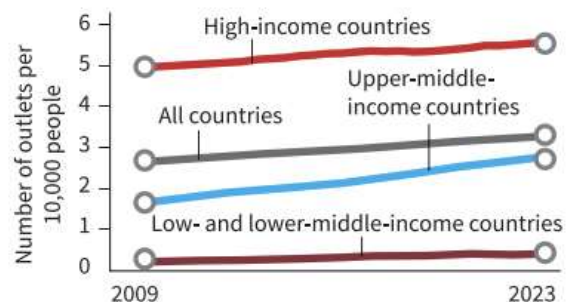


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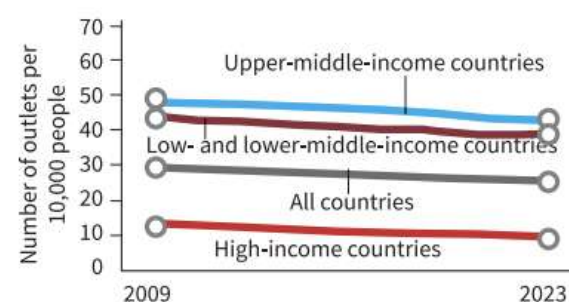
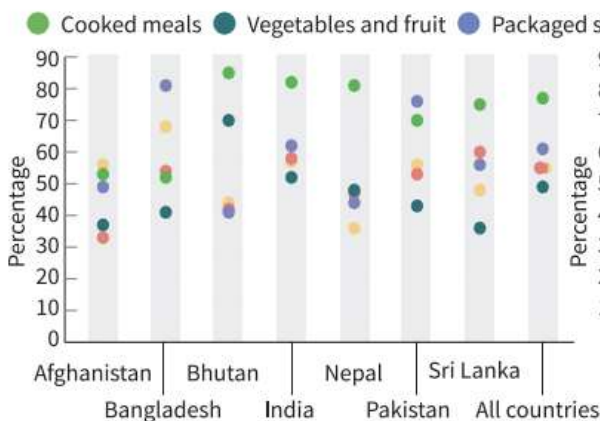


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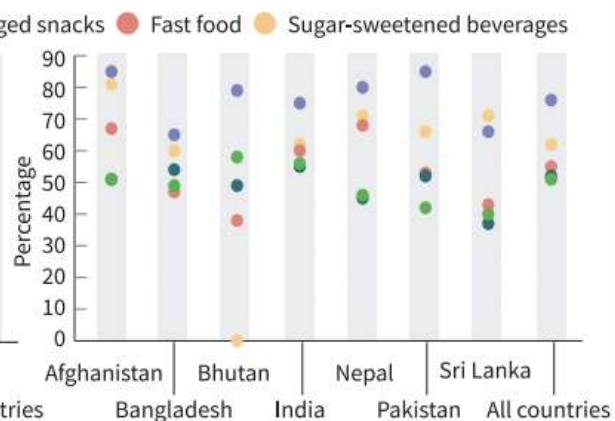
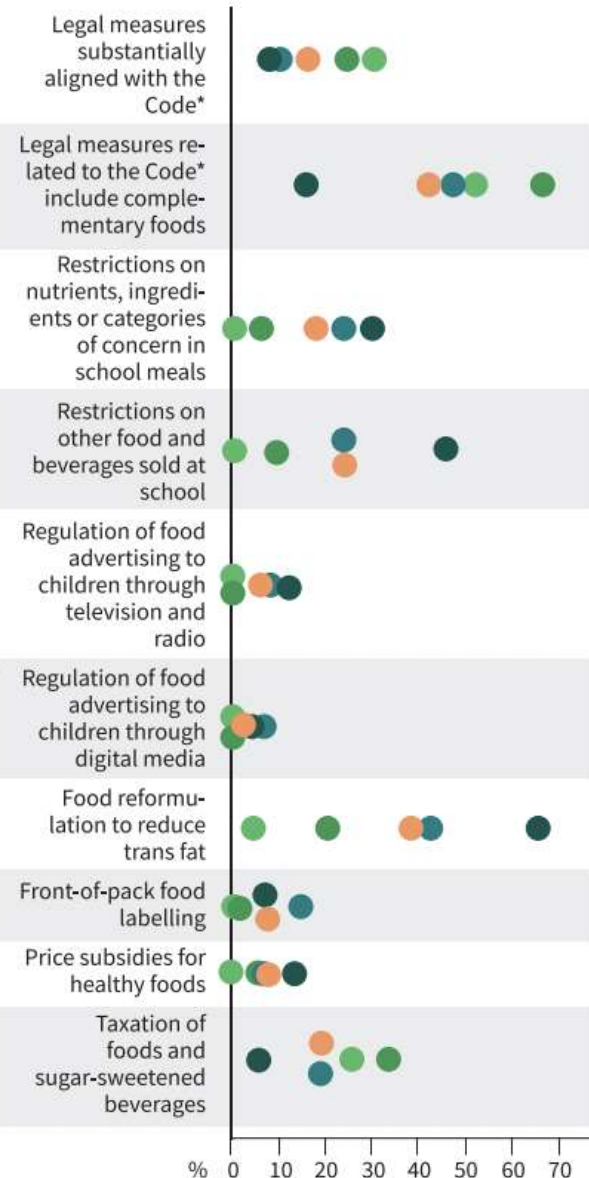


Chart 5: Share of countries with mandatory measures to protect children from unhealthy food environments

● Low-income ● Lower-middle-income ● High-income
● Upper-middle-income ● Global



JERUSALEM

U.S. will steadfastly back its ally in Gaza war, says Rubio on Israel visit



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Monday, during a visit to Israel, that Washington would remain steadfast in its support for its ally in the Gaza war. Mr. Rubio criticised plans by Western nations to recognise a Palestinian state. Mr. Rubio also said that he would discuss with Mr. Netanyahu Israel's plans to seize Gaza City. AP

BEIJING

China says U.S. firm Nvidia 'bouted' anti-trust law, vows extra probe



China said on Monday that a probe found that U.S. chip giant Nvidia had run afoul of the country's anti-trust rules, and vowed an additional probe after trade talks between Beijing and Washington entered a second day. Beijing is engaged in a contest with the U.S. for supremacy in the field of semiconductors. AP

PESHAWAR

Pakistan 'kills 31 militants' in the northwest as TTP offers dialogue



Pakistan's security forces killed two separate militant hideouts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the country's northwest, killing 31 insurgents. In a surprise move, the Pakistan Taliban under the group TTP offered to hold talks with the Pakistani government to end the "root causes" of two decades of conflict. AP

LOS ANGELES

Adolescence and The Studio win big at television's Emmy Awards



Teen murder saga Adolescence was the big winner at the Emmy Awards, claiming eight prizes including best limited series, while The Firm prevailed in a tight race for best drama at television's equivalent of the Oscars. Seth Rogen's The Shallows dominated comedy categories with 11 Emmys — a record for comedies. AP

Deal reached over future of TikTok, says Trump

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has posted on his social media site that a meeting between the U.S. and Chinese officials went well and that a deal was reached regarding "a versatile company" that young people in our country very much wanted to have.

Mr. Trump's comment suggests that the agreement is TikTok, the social media company associated with China, that U.S. law requires to be sold or else cease operations.

The Republican President has repeatedly extended the deadline on TikTok's fate and was non-committal on any agreement when asked by reporters on Sunday evening. Mr. Trump also said that he would be speaking on Friday with Chinese leader Xi Jinping. There was no immediate confirmation from China.

TikTok is one of more than 100 apps downloaded in the past decade by ByteDance, a technology firm founded in 2012 by Chinese entrepreneur Zhang Yiming and headquartered in Beijing's northeastern Haidian district.

TikTok gained more traction during the shutdown of the COVID-19 pandemic, when short dances that went viral became a mainstay of the app.

Trump to arrive in the U.K. as Starmer's leadership is tested

The U.K. and the U.S. will sign a nuclear energy deal, part of which will facilitate the building of small modular reactors through multinational partnerships, and a tech cooperation agreement

Alexian Lakshman
LONDON

U.S. President Donald Trump is due to arrive on an unprecedented state visit to the U.K. on Tuesday as Prime Minister Boris Johnson tries to manage growing dissatisfaction within his party over his leadership.

Mr. Trump and U.S. First Lady Melania Trump are due to arrive in London on Tuesday evening and travel to Windsor Castle, outside London, where they will spend the night. Wednesday's event are largely ceremonial. Britain's monarch King Charles III and Queen Camilla will welcome their American guests at a reception, and the party will take an open carriage ride. Mr. Trump will visit the tomb of Queen Elizabeth II, where they will spend the night.

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Wellington: The U.K. has secured relatively favourable trade terms with the U.S. compared with India and the EU. AP

that this is an unprecedented second state visit for a U.S. President. The Trumps were hosted by the late British monarch, Elizabeth II, and her husband, Prince Philip, in 2005, under Boris Johnson's Conservative government.

The U.K. has secured relatively favourable trade terms with the U.S. compared with India and the EU. The U.K.'s 'reciprocal tariff' rate for U.S. exports is at the base level of 10%, but some goods such as steel and aluminium are tariffed at a higher rate under section 232 (the U.K. still faces 25% tariffs for these goods with other countries facing up to 50%). These tariffs are likely to be slashed on Thursday, when Mr. Starmer hosts Mr. Trump for bilateral

talks at his official country residence, Chequers.

The meeting comes days after the Prime Minister was compelled to fire the British Ambassador to the U.S., Peter Mandelson, whose links to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, were closer than previously thought.

Under threat

The visit also comes as Mr. Starmer's political fortunes have been under threat. Days before the Mandelson scandal, Starmer and Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner resigned for not paying enough tax on a house. This resulted in a hasty Cabinet reshuffle. Mr. Starmer

Nepal PM expands Cabinet with three new Ministers, orders probe into violence

Sanjeev Satish
KATHMANDU

Nepal President Ram Chandra Poudel announced the oath of office to three newly inducted Ministers in the interim Cabinet led by Prime Minister Shree Krishna Karki on Monday.

Two days after his appointment, Mr. Karki on Sunday formed the Cabinet with Kamadure Khatiwada, Kulman Ghising, and Chandra Prasad Sharma.

Mr. Karki, Nepal's first woman Chief Justice, also became the first woman to lead the country last week after nationwide anti-corruption protests, launched by the youth, killed at least 72 people and led to the fall of the K.P. Sharma Oli government.

The first Cabinet meeting on Monday evening decided to declare all those killed during the youth protests, martyrs. The meeting also decided to declare a public holiday on Wednesday in memory of those who lost their lives.

In another decision, the Cabinet agreed to form a judicial commission to investigate violent incidents during the two-day protests.

"We have agreed in principle to form such a



(From left) Kamadure Khatiwada, Kulman Ghising, and Chandra Prasad Sharma at the presidential building in Kathmandu on Monday. AP

commission," newly appointed Home Minister Aryal said after the meeting. "Who will be on the commission and its formation will be decided later." As Mr. Karki, according to sources, plans to form an 11-member Cabinet, more appointments are expected in the coming days. The Karki government is mandated to hold elections in a general election on March 8, 2020.

Economic reforms Mr. Khatiwada, 58, is a former Finance Secretary who recently submitted a recommendation of over 400 pages to the erstwhile Oli Government, outlining economic reforms.

After assuming office as Finance Minister, Mr. Khatiwada said he would implement the recommendations he had made for economic reforms. He made national headlines in 2018 when he abruptly resigned as Fi-

nance Secretary, citing political pressure from business groups, including investigations into the fake VAT bill scam.

Home Minister Aryal, 48, is a Supreme Court advocate known for challenging corruption and filing high-profile public interest litigation.

A close confidant of PM Karki, Mr. Aryal played a key role in her behind-the-scenes negotiations with President Poudel to resolve the standoff over House dissolution last week.

'India is keen to preserve its ties with U.S., but not at any cost'

'As a rising power, India needs to be proactive; it has been second to none in contributing to the global commons such as vaccine matri during COVID-19 or in combating climate change. However, the world expects India to play a bigger role in conflicts and geopolitics; we need to get our geopolitics right,' says the former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

INTERVIEW

T.S. Tirumurti

Stanley John

The U.S. has to decide, first, whether they see India fit into their scheme of things, says T.S. Tirumurti, India's former Ambassador/Permanent Representative to the UN, New York. In an interview with *The Hindu*, Mr. Tirumurti speaks about the foreign policy challenges and opportunities India is facing in an uncertain world. Edited excerpts.

What are your thoughts from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to China to attend the SCO summit? Can we say India and China are now settling into a "new normal" despite persisting differences?

I think we are still quite far from reaching a new normal in our relations with China. Yes, it is true that

both sides have signalled an intention to move forward. We have certainly taken some initial steps, which are important but probably more symbolic than substantive, about a thaw like remaining activities, Kalash-Manasarovar yatra (pilgrimage), the visa regime, etc. However, we still need to address larger issues such as trade imbalance, market access issues, de-escalation, etc.

Moreover, the Chinese have become active again in our neighbourhood, from their attempts to gain support to Pakistan during Operation Blunder and their attempt to encircle India through our neighbours. On the other hand, through groupings are all manifestations of this. In addition, we now have to deal with China both as a rising power and as a No.2 power. For the first time, we have a superpower as a neighbour. All this is changing the template in our relations with China. The old template is not enough

to deal with China in both these aspects, so, for more needs to be done to restore trust before we can reach a new normal in our relations.

Some say Donald Trump's tariffs have helped India's trade balance. Do you agree?

While it is true that President Trump has disrupted the trade balance of the U.S. with India, I doubt that the U.S. tariffs nudged us closer to China in any substantial way since it was being clear to both India and China that the four-year stand-off at the border was becoming counterproductive for both.

Consequently, we have stepped back a bit in October 2024 and worked on the first truce of some symbolic steps.



However, what we have done in Tianjin is to show the U.S. that we have open markets and no differences with China and should not be taken for granted.

But how serious these

The U.S. has to decide first whether they see India fit into their scheme of things. Secondly, they will have to make sure that conditions are not epidemic to holding India's feet with the U.S. episode cannot affect our relations to trial by fire.

You will also notice that the countries which have capitulated to the U.S. tariff threats and agreed to one-sided deals are the closest allies of the U.S. such as the European Union, Japan, South Korea, etc. They said that price was for the trade deal but for keeping their close countries and call out it, they are rubberless in the so-called liberal world order.

However, when the U.S. tried the threat to first countries, such as India, it is not working out well. That's because we are keen to preserve our relations with the U.S. but not at a tabular cost. The U.S. copying up to Pakistan after Operation Blunder is a clear indication that the U.S. is not serious in its trade relations with India. We also need to see

how the U.S.-China deal affects our geopolitical interests.

The tensions in Indo-U.S. relations also hold India's feet with Russia under spotlight. With no end in sight for the Ukraine war, how do you assess the position comes under great criticism from the U.S. How do you assess India's Ukraine policy?

I am convinced that we took the right decision in 2022 to abstain on the UN Security Council resolution on Ukraine. We have been clear in our writings, it is India should not be dragged into the Ukraine front, at the very least, we should move to defuse tension.

This does not mean mediation to remain passively engaged, especially when we know the West has been quiet with us. I had pointed out to the

active role India played in the Korean war in UN Security Council between 1951 and 1952, in recognition of which, we were made Chair of Neutral Nations Repatriation Committee after the armistice. Operation Blunder shows us that if we seek greater engagement of our partners with our conflicts, we need to engage more with our conflicts.

How do you look at the shifts in the global world order? What guiding principles should shape India's foreign policy in such uncertain times?

There are certainly serious disruptions to the global order. On the one hand, forces are tearing each other apart in conflicts and violating international law with impunity.

On the other hand, global challenges such as climate change, energy security, cyber threats, etc. are forcing the world to come together and work together.

That's the irony. At which point these two forces meet will determine the trajectory of the global order. Also, let us not get too nostalgic about a world order which is neither shaped nor did it really help us even if we learnt to use it to our advantage despite all odds.

We were never for status quo and always called for meaningful reform whether in the Bretton Woods or other IMF architecture-linked institutions such as World Bank, IMF or WTO. Looking ahead, I can only say that as a rising power, we need to be proactive.

We have been second to none to contribute to the global commons such as vaccine matri during COVID-19 or to combat climate change, etc. However, the world expects us to play a bigger role in conflicts and geopolitics. No more can we just put our head down, mind our own business and expect to come the third largest economy or visit Bharat by 2047. We need to get our geopolitics right.

LOS ANGELES

Adolescence and *The Studio* win big at television's Emmy Awards



AFP

Teen murder saga *Adolescence* was the big winner at the Emmy Awards, claiming eight prizes including best limited series, while *The Pitt* prevailed in a tight race for best drama at television's equivalent of the Oscars. Seth Rogen's *The Studio* dominated comedy categories with 13 Emmys — a record for comedies. AFP

77th EMMY AWARDS: THE BIG WINNERS

**BEST ACTOR,
DRAMA**
Noah Wyle,
The Pitt

**BEST ACTOR,
COMEDY**
Seth Rogen,
The Studio

**BEST ACTRESS,
DRAMA**
Britt Lower,
Severance

**BEST SUPPORTING
ACTOR, LIMITED
SERIES**
Owen Cooper,
Adolescence



BEST DRAMA
The Pitt (HBO Max)

BEST COMEDY
The Studio (Apple TV+)

BEST LIMITED SERIES
Adolescence (Netflix)

WITH US-CHINA DEAL ON TIKTOK, RECALLING THE APP'S JOURNEY

UNITED STATES Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Monday announced a framework deal for the ownership of the social media app TikTok, after trade talks with Chinese officials in Spain. It follows repeated official extensions, which were aimed at preventing a ban on the Chinese-origin app in the US.

Bessent said that US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping would speak on Friday to finalise the deal.

How did TikTok arrive in the US?

TikTok was formally launched in 2016 by the Chinese company ByteDance as a challenger to the wildly popular Musical.ly, also a Chinese company. TikTok and its Chinese counterpart, Douyin, replicated Musical.ly's short video format, where users lip-synced to audios and songs.

ByteDance acquired Musical.ly in 2017 and later merged it with TikTok. The app subsequently gained global popularity, a rare feat for a Chinese tech company. One key factor was its algorithm, which accurately predicted user interests based on the topics they engaged with.

Who owns TikTok?

Concerns have long been raised by US officials about user privacy and data, with several media reports claiming that TikTok censored information critical of the Chinese government.

Its ownership has been contentious. TikTok's Singaporean CEO, Shou Zi Chew, told a congressional hearing in 2023 that the app was not available in China (only Douyin was) and that TikTok was headquartered in Los Angeles and Singapore.

But a CNN report said the app is owned by California-based TikTok LLC, which in turn is controlled by Shanghai-based TikTok Ltd. TikTok Ltd is ultimately owned by ByteDance Ltd, also based in Beijing.

Also of concern is China's unique political structure, where the state exercises significant power over private entities. ByteDance might potentially have to



TikTok was launched in 2016. *The NYT*

hand over user information if the state demanded it.

In 2022, TikTok claimed that it migrated its user data to US servers managed by the US tech firm Oracle, but officials continued to exercise caution.

What has happened under Trump?

At the end of his first presidential term (2017-21), Trump was critical of TikTok, claiming it mishandled the Covid pandemic and spread conspiracy theories. He banned American companies from entering into any "transaction" with ByteDance and its subsidiaries. He later ordered ByteDance to divest from TikTok's US operations within 90 days. TikTok then sued the Trump administration for allegedly violating due process in its executive orders.

There was further bipartisan scrutiny of the app in Joe Biden's (2021-25) presidential term, with a Bill to transfer TikTok's ownership to a US company clearing congressional approval and getting Biden's assent in 2024.

After his re-election, Trump approached the US Supreme Court to pause the TikTok ban until a "political resolution" could be reached. The court upheld this ban in January 2025, leading to a temporary blackout of the app in the US.

Following his inauguration in January, Trump issued an executive order to delay the ban and eventually gave the app several extensions. The last deadline was September 17. **ENS WITH AP INPUTS**

1. Recent Development

- US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced a **framework deal** on TikTok's ownership after trade talks with China in Spain.
 - Aim: Prevent ban on TikTok in the US.
 - US President Donald Trump & Chinese President Xi Jinping to finalize soon.
-

2. TikTok's Entry into the US

- Launched in **2016** by **ByteDance** (China) as competitor to **Musical.ly**.
 - ByteDance acquired Musical.ly in **2017** and merged it with TikTok → boosted global popularity.
 - TikTok's **algorithm-driven personalized content** led to its explosive success.
-

3. Ownership & Privacy Concerns

- TikTok's ownership has been contentious:
 - Headquartered in **Los Angeles & Singapore**.
 - Controlled by **Shanghai-based ByteDance Ltd.** (Beijing HQ).
 - US concerns: Chinese state influence over private entities → possible **forced data handover**.
- 2022: TikTok claimed user data migrated to **US servers (Oracle)**, but scrutiny continues.

4. Trump Era Issues (2017–21)

- Trump accused TikTok of:
 - Mishandling **COVID-19** info.
 - Spreading **conspiracy theories**.
 - Actions taken:
 - Banned US companies from transactions with ByteDance.
 - Ordered divestment of TikTok US operations within 90 days.
 - TikTok sued US Govt. for alleged violation of due process.
-

5. Biden Administration (2021–24)

- Bipartisan scrutiny continued.
- 2023 Bill proposed **forcing TikTok US ownership transfer**.
- Biden approved it in 2024.

Current Status (2025)

Trump (after re-election) approached **US Supreme Court** to pause the ban until a "political resolution."

Court upheld temporary blackout till **Jan 2025**.

Trump later issued **executive order** delaying ban, allowing negotiations → deadline **Sept 17, 2025**.

A. Geopolitical Angle

- US-China tensions in **technology & data governance**.
- TikTok as symbol of **digital sovereignty & cyber security concerns**.
- Similar debates: Huawei (5G), WeChat.

B. Economic Angle

- TikTok valued at **\$200+ billion**, huge role in global creator economy.
- US wants **domestic control** over a platform with ~170M American users.

C. Polity & Governance

- **US Executive Orders** → role of **Presidential powers** vs. **Judiciary checks**.
- Reflects **data protection** vs. **free speech** debates.

D. India's Angle

- TikTok banned in India in **June 2020** under **Section 69A of IT Act**, citing national security.
- Case study in **cyber sovereignty & Atmanirbhar Bharat app ecosystem** (rise of Chingari, Moj, Josh).

Australia Approves First Vaccine to save Koalas from Chlamydia

-
- **Australia** has approved the **first vaccine** to protect its **shrinking koala population** against **chlamydia**.
 - **About**
 - The vaccine was found to have **decreased mortality by at least 65%**.
 - **Chlamydia**: It is a sexually transmitted infection caused by the **bacterium Chlamydia pecorum** that can cause infertility and blindness. In koalas, chlamydia is a threat to survival and a key conservation issue.
 - It is also found in humans caused by **Chlamydia trachomatis**, in humans, chlamydia is a major sexually transmitted infection (STI) but treatable.

About Koala

The koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) is a **tree-dwelling marsupial native to Australia**.

- Often mistakenly called the “**koala bear**,” it is **not a bear** but a **marsupial** (a mammal that carries its young in a pouch).

Physical Characteristics: Thick, soft, grey or brown with lighter underside – provides insulation.

- Large and black, with a strong sense of smell (helps detect eucalyptus leaves)



-
- **Habitat & Distribution:** Found mainly in eastern and southeastern Australia (Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia).
 - **Diet:** Herbivores – almost entirely eat **eucalyptus leaves**.
 - **Behavior:** Mostly nocturnal and sedentary.
 - **Threats:** Along with habitat loss, climate change and bushfires, a major reason for koalas' vulnerability is chlamydia.
 - Since 2022, they have been **listed as endangered in Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory under Australia's national environmental law**.
 - **IUCN Status – Vulnerable.**

Pink Tax



- As per International Finance Students Association's (IFSA) research 'The Gender Tax: Assessing the Economic Toll on Women,' almost **67% of Indian individuals have never heard of the Pink Tax.**

- **Pink Tax**

- **Pink tax** is neither a real tax, nor is it a government-imposed fee.

- It's just a **pricing phenomenon** wherein **women pay more** for buying a product exclusively made for them or enjoying a service tailor-made for them.

- Pink toys, haircuts, drycleaning, razors, shampoos, body lotions, deodorants, facial care, skincare items, beauty care, clothing, T-shirts, jeans, salon services etc. suffer the tax.

- **The term "Pink Tax"** is believed to have originated in the U.S. in California in 1994.

Regulation in India

While there are **no specific laws in India** to address the issue of Pink Tax, the **National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission** ruled that companies must **follow fair pricing policies** and avoid gender-based price discrimination.

In July 2018, the **Union Government exempted sanitary napkins and tampons from the Goods and Services Tax (GST)**. Prior to this rule, these hygiene items were levied 12% GST.

Ways to Avoid Pink Tax

Choose gender-neutral products or men's variants whenever possible.

Compare the quality and if the men's variant is better, skip the pink packaging or choose unisex products.

Instead of comparing prices of the entire package, check the price per unit.

Word of the day

Doughty:

brave and persistent

Synonyms: fearless, confident, determined

Usage: *Our doughty colleague kept working late.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/doughtypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /daʊti/



Thank you 😊

