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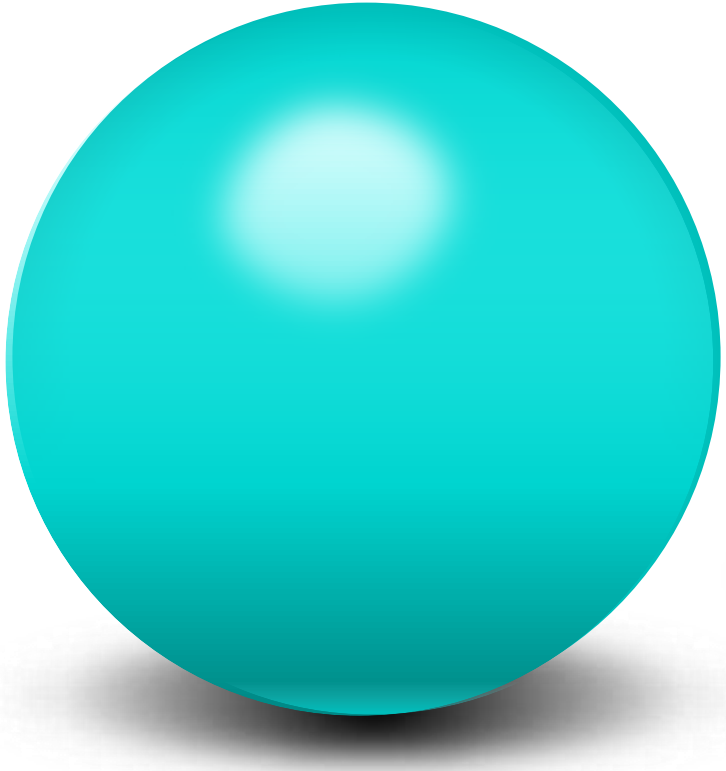

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HAPPY
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Nepal flood toll hits 389; rescue work in top gear

- Over 800 people rescued after the flash flood, 910 remain missing, say authorities
- 517 foreign nationals unaccounted for; PM Shah reaches nearest motorable town
- Alert sounded along Bhotekoshi river as satellite images show blockage upstream
- Probe on to determine the role of glacial lakes in the devastating flood, says Nepal

Swamped by mud: Damaged buildings inundated by sludge in Bidur, Nuwakot district, Nepal, on Thursday, 24 hours after the deadly flood tore through the region. AFP

Sanjeev Satgaiuya
KATHMANDU

The death toll in the flash flood in Nepal's Rasuwa district bordering Tibet reached 389 on Thursday, with 910 people still missing. Nepal's government issued a fresh flood alert after satellite imagery showed that a lake had formed upstream of the Bhotekoshi river due to a blockage, and warned that it could burst.

Nepal's Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal termed the flood "one of the largest natural disasters we have experienced in recent memory" even as authorities continued a massive search-and-rescue operation.

"Towns after towns were wiped out in a span of a couple of hours," he said.

Personnel from the Nepal Army, police, and the Armed Police Force raced against time to rescue survivors from mountain villages that were swept away by the flash flood on Wednesday morning.

According to authorities, more than 800 people were rescued from flood-affected areas as of Thursday night.

Of the 910 missing, 517 are foreign nationals with people from more than 30 countries – many from India, the U.S., the U.K., Ukraine, Malaysia, and remainAustralia among them – remaining unaccounted for, they said.

Separately, the Nepal Tourism Board listed 178 Indians as missing, the highest among missing foreign nationals. Most were Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrims taking the Rasuwagadhi route to enter Tibet. The Board said 21 Indians were rescued.

Raising concerns about another possible flood, the government said "satellite imagery and preliminary analysis indicate that water has accumulated at the site where flooding was reported" on Wednesday. "The lake is continuing to rise, and authorities have warned that it could breach or burst, potentially sending a sudden surge of water downstream," it urged residents, travellers, rescue personnel, and others in the downstream areas to remain alert. "It is advised that people stay away from riverbanks and other vulnerable areas... and move to safer locations until further notice," it said.

19 bridges damaged

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah reached Bhalu, the district headquarters of Nuwakot, which abuts Rasuwa, by road. With 19 bridges and 40 kilometres of roads damaged, it is the last point up to which vehicles can reach.

It is still unclear what caused the flash flood. According to the Nepal government, satellite imagery indicated that an avalanche in the Himalayan region triggered a surge of an unusually large volume of water. "Further investigations are under way to determine the role of possible glacial lakes and related events," it said.

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290 Indians missing, efforts on to locate them, says Jaishankar

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

In a "preliminary assessment" of the situation following the flash flood in Nepal, the External Affairs Ministry on Thursday said at least 290 Indian nationals remain "uncontactable".

"Urgent efforts are under way to ascertain the status and well-being of all Indians in the flood-affected areas," said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, adding that India is "working closely with the Nepalese side".

After sending an aircraft carrying relief materials to the disaster-hit neighbour on Wednesday, the Ministry on Thursday said that a second consignment of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) materials were handed over to Nepal. Additional support would be extended to the Himalayan nation, it said.

"The second consignment of 37.5 tonnes of HADR material, medicines and food packets has been handed over to Mr. Mahabir Pun, Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation to support Nepal's flood relief and rescue efforts. India remains committed to standing by Nepal and its people," official spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry, Randhir Jaiswal, said.

On Thursday afternoon, Mr. Jaiswal said that two separate groups, comprising 37 and 40 people from Tamil Nadu who travelled to Kailash Manasarovar, were among the 268 Indians who could not be contacted. Later, the number was revised to 290. Giving a tentative breakdown of the Indians who remain unaccounted for so far, he said, "There is a group of 32 nationals from West Bengal who travelled with the help of Samrat Travels in Tinsure, which is in Rasuwa district, where this disaster happened. Then, a group of 61 Indian nationals from different States who travelled through Bichu Tours, and then a group of 33 Indian nationals from Kerala."

He said that as rescued people return to Kathmandu, arrangements would be made to facilitate their journey home.

Officials said that 63 Indian nationals employed in the Trishuli-1 project and 21 Indians from Tamil Nadu have been rescued, while the search is on to locate those who have not been heard from for over 24 hours. The situation in the disaster-hit zone from Rasuwa to Chitwan is difficult to assess because of the absence of a stable telecom network, which was disrupted by the flash flood, officials said, expressing hope that more people would be located in the coming hours.

Indian nationals, who were airlifted from Rasuwa district, inside the Maitidali Barrack in Nepal on Thursday. REUTERS

Review meeting

As part of the ongoing process, Mr. Jaishankar held a review meeting with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and other senior officials on Thursday. The meeting was also attended through video link by the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Naveen Shrivastava, and the Indian Ambassador to Beijing, Vikram Doraiswamy.

Meanwhile, family members of several of those unaccounted for so far have taken to social media to express their concern. Government sources said efforts are under way to account for those who remain "uncontactable".

INSIDE

Russian strikes hit Ukrainian cities overnight

KYIV

Explosions rang across Kyiv and civilian areas in Ukraine suffered heavy damage as Russia bombarded cities across the country in aerial onslaught overnight Wednesday. » PAGE 14

Bosnian Serb war criminal Mladic dies in prison

BELGRADE

Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb military chief convicted of war crimes for his role in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, died in hospital on Thursday, according to a United Nations international tribunal. » PAGE 14

4 Nagas killed in Manipur ambush amid peace initiatives

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Unidentified gunmen on Thursday morning ambushed and killed four Naga civilians between Makui Aithang and Thanamba Naga villages in Manipur's Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi district.

Officials said the gunmen opened fire on at least six persons who were travelling from Makui to Senapati, a Naga-majority district. Authorities suspect that some groups are trying to undermine the State government's peace-building measures.

The United Naga Council (UNC), an apex body of Manipur's Naga communities, blamed Kuki extremist groups for the attack though no outfit has claimed responsibility.

It condemned the "barbaric and calculated" attack on the Liangmai Naga civilians and called it a "direct challenge to peace, the India-Naga peace process, and to the very existence of Nagas in our ancestral lands".

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh and Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam condemned the "senseless violence" and said it "strikes at our collective efforts to restore peace and normalcy".

Appeal for vigilance

The UNC also appealed to the Nagas to remain vigilant and stand united against "such external threats".

The apex Naga body identified the deceased as Tadoonghou Ringkangmai, Mariakdihou Wijuanmai, Anil Wijuanmai, and Wiinhou Charenamai. It said Gaikamang Ringkangmai was injured in the attack, while one Japou M.K. was missing.

UNC alleged that the Kuki National Front (KNF), KNF (Presidential) and Kuki Revolutionary Army were behind the attack. The groups had signed the Suspension of Operation agreement with the Centre in 2008. It expressed resentment over the "complete security failure" and demanded that authorities book the perpetrators, form a Special Investigation Team, and deliver speedy justice.

Following the incident, people in Senapati district observed a shutdown. The UNC announced a one-day 'gemei', a period of strict prohibition, rest, and community worship, across Manipur's Naga-inhabited areas on Friday to pay homage to the victims.

The ambush was carried out at a time when the Manipur government is continuing its efforts to restore peace in the ethnic violence-scarred State.

The efforts included the resumption of the Imphal-Guwahati bus service via National Highway-2, which was blockaded for more than three years after the conflict between the Kuki-Zos and Meiteis erupted on May 3, 2023. The highway passes through Kuki- and Naga-inhabited areas.

In February, the situation in Manipur took another turn following a series of attacks, including arson, involving the Kuki-Zo and Naga communities.

At a high-level security meeting held after the expiry of a 15-day ultimatum asking individuals and groups to surrender illegal weapons, the Chief Minister instructed security officials to nab and initiate action against the perpetrators of Thursday's attack.

"We decided to take stringent action against any individual, irrespective of community, found in possession of illegal arms and weapons. We also decided that members of outfits under the SoO or peace talks with the government will face action if found to carry weapons beyond their designated camps," he said.

Mr. Konthoujam, Chief Secretary Punneet Kumar Goel, Security Advisor Kuldeep Singh, Director General of Police Makesh Singh, and heads of Army, paramilitary forces, and intelligence agencies in Manipur attended the meeting.

Continuing hostilities: Burnt out homes set ablaze during violence in Senapati district, Manipur, earlier this week. AFP

Officials said gunmen opened fire on at least six persons who were travelling from Makui to Senapati

Iran executes over 500 people, says rights group

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Iran has executed over 500 people so far this year after a new surge in hangings in recent days, despite President Donald Trump urging the Islamic republic to halt executions, a rights group said on Thursday.

At least 511 people have been executed so far in 2026, according to Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights, including at least 29 people in connection with anti-government protests in January. At least 16 women are among those executed and at least 13 "political prisoners", it said. Activists accuse Iran of using capital punishment as a means to intimidate people in the wake of the protests and the war against the U.S. and Israel that erupted on Feb. 28.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 14

The changing face of skin lightening practices in India

The language around skin lightening has changed, but the desire for it has remained strong in India; a lot of the advertisement and marketing has now moved online; the country needs strong legislation, campaigns to educate patients, pharmacists and healthcare professionals, and a conversation that shifts the focus to skin health, not colour

Monisha Madhumita

The language of fairness may be changing, but the desire for lighter skin has not necessarily disappeared in our country. As skin-lightening practices move into skincare, dermatological procedures and digital spaces, the health consequences are becoming increasingly harder to recognise and regulate.

Skin lightening in India is changing. The fairness creams that once dominated advertisements are less visible today. The language around them has also shifted. Words such as 'brightening', 'glow', 'de-tan' and 'even tone' are now common across skincare products and digital platforms.

For dermatologists, this change is increasingly visible in clinical practice.

Patients may not come to the clinic saying that they have been trying to become fairer. They often present because something has already gone wrong. There may be acne, redness, thinning of the skin, increased facial hair, pigmentation or infections. Oral agents used with the expectation of achieving lighter skin are also being sought.

"We see patients because of the side-effects of what they have tried, and then work backwards," says Rashmi Sarkar, head and director professor, department of dermatology Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung hospital, New Delhi.

The profile is changing too. What was once viewed largely as a concern among women is now also seen among men, teenagers and transgender persons. This makes skin lightening an important skin-health issue, rather than simply a cosmetic concern.

Not all treatment that reduces pigmentation is skin lightening.

Melasma and post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation are common pigmentary disorders. They can be persistent and distressing, particularly in darker skin tones. These conditions may require treatment. The important distinction, Dr. Sarkar says, is between treating a pigmentary disorder and attempting to lighten a person's normal, constitutive skin colour. This distinction is becoming less clear to consumers.

A product described as 'brightening' may be intended to reduce pigmentation, improve dullness or make the skin appear more even. The term itself does not explain what is being changed.

For clinicians, the focus should remain on skin health. Brighter-looking skin can follow better photoprotection, appropriate skincare, control of inflammation and improvements in general health and lifestyle. None of these requires changing a person's natural skin colour.

Digital shift

The larger change is taking place online.

Skin-lightening messages are no longer limited to television advertisements or product packaging. They are increasingly delivered through influencers, e-commerce platforms, before-and-after photographs and social media.

Need for regulation: Skin-lightening messages are no longer limited to television advertisements or product packaging. They are increasingly delivered through influencers, e-commerce platforms, before-and-after photographs and social media. GETTY IMAGES

Algorithms can amplify these messages. A person who watches one video on pigmentation may subsequently be shown repeated content around brightening products, supplements, peels or procedures. Filters and image manipulation add another layer. Photographs can be altered to make skin appear lighter, smoother or more uniform. Artificial intelligence can make these alterations increasingly difficult to recognise.

Dr. Sarkar believes public education, must therefore, also address digital literacy. People need to learn to recognise filtered or manipulated images and to question the aesthetic standards repeatedly presented to them online.

The impact is particularly relevant for younger users. Repeated exposure can gradually alter what is perceived as normal skin and what is considered a problem requiring correction.

Excessive treatment

The growth of aesthetic skincare has also widened the number of places where people seek treatment.

Patients may move between dermatology clinics, aesthetic centres, salons, spas, social media and online marketplaces. The distinction between medical treatment and cosmetic marketing can become unclear.

Dr. Sarkar stresses that pigmentary disorders should be assessed by qualified dermatologists. Procedures also need to be selected carefully and patients should not be overtreated. This is particularly relevant in darker skin tones, where inflammation caused by aggressive treatment can itself lead to further pigmentation. The treatment can then become part of the problem.

There is also a role for clinicians in managing expectations. Not every variation in skin colour requires treatment. Unregulated over-the-counter skin-lightening products should be avoided and unrealistic expectations need to be addressed early.

The health consequences can be significant. The International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) has warned that the misuse of potent topical corticosteroids in skin-bleaching products can contribute to treatment-resistant fungal infections, irreversible skin damage and systemic side-effects. The organisation has called for stronger regulation, clearer guidance and better public education.

Beyond the clinic

The response to skin lightening therefore also needs to change.

Traditional awareness campaigns remain important, but they may no longer be sufficient when much of the contemporary conversation is taking place online. This is a particular focus of the ILDS Strategic Working Group on Skin Bleaching. The group brings together international dermatology expertise to address harmful skin-lightening practices while also recognising the legitimate need for safe, evidence-based treatment of pigmentary disorders.

The message, says Dr. Sarkar, who is part of the working group, needs to reach people where these practices are now being discussed and promoted. "We need to leverage social media and amplify the message," she says. This includes closer collaboration between the ILDS and national dermatology societies, as well as engagement with pharmacists, educators and credible public voices.

India has previously seen organised campaigns around inappropriate topical steroid use. These efforts included education of both patients and pharmacists. A similar approach is now needed for contemporary skin-lightening practices.

The ILDS initiative also has a wider aim: to move the conversation away from skin colour as an aesthetic hierarchy and towards skin health. The message is simple, but important. Healthy skin exists in every shade.

For those experimenting with skincare routines, particularly skin lightening, it means understanding the difference between a pigmentary disorder and normal skin colour. It means recognising that medicines used without appropriate supervision can damage the skin. It means knowing that repeated procedures are not always better treatment. Increasingly, it also means understanding that the images seen online may have been filtered, lightened or otherwise altered.

Regulation will need to evolve alongside this change. Looking only for products explicitly labelled as 'fairness' products will miss part of the contemporary market. Claims, ingredients, digital advertising, influencer marketing and access to potent medicines all require attention. But regulation alone cannot address the deeper issue.

Greater awareness has made overt fairness advertising less acceptable. Yet, as Dr. Sarkar points out, social perceptions around skin colour continue to persist. The challenge is therefore no longer only the fairness cream. The people seeking these interventions are also changing. The response now needs to change with them.

For dermatologists, professional societies and public-health organisations, the opportunity lies in moving beyond treating complications after they occur. The focus must be on prevention, evidence-based care, digital education and a clearer understanding of what healthy skin actually means.

(Dr. Monisha Madhumita is a consultant dermatologist at Saveetha Medical College, Chennai. mail.monisha.m@gmail.com)

THE GIST

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Salmonella infections: why India needs to look beyond typhoid and diarrhoea

Athira Elsa Johnson

Salmonella is often linked to food poisoning, diarrhoea and typhoid. But the infection can range from mild gastroenteritis that gets better on its own to a serious bloodstream infection, and therefore, say experts, deserves more attention than it is currently being given.

Salmonella is a group of bacteria that can cause different infections. Typhoid and paratyphoid or enteric fever, are caused by Salmonella Typhi and Salmonella Paratyphi. The problem, however, is broader than typhoid. Non-typhoidal Salmonella infections, which often cause gastroenteritis, may go undiagnosed because many people recover without testing. At the same time, antibiotic resistance is making serious infections harder to treat.

Why infections turn serious

Non-typhoidal Salmonella commonly causes gastroenteritis, with diarrhoea, stomach cramps, fever and sometimes vomiting. It is often linked to poultry, eggs and other animal-based foods. Most healthy people recover with supportive care, but the infection can become serious and spread to the bloodstream. "Salmonella should not be seen as only a cause of diarrhoea," said Sweatha Kumar, associate consultant, infectious diseases, Rela Hospital, Chennai. "In some patients, especially young children, older adults and those living with other illnesses or weakened immunity, it can become invasive and life-threatening."

Ramesh Kumar D., senior specialist in infectious diseases, Apollo Speciality Hospitals, Vanagaram, Chennai, said the actual burden of non-typhoidal Salmonella is difficult to estimate as many mild infections are never diagnosed.

Both typhoid and non-typhoidal Salmonella infections spread through the faecal-oral route, but their sources are different. For typhoid, humans are the reservoir. Non-typhoidal Salmonella has a wider ecology, involving animals, food and the environment. Poultry, eggs, meat and other animal-derived foods can be sources. Transmission can also occur when raw meat contaminates ready-to-eat food during preparation.

"Contamination can occur at multiple points, from farms, slaughterhouses and food processing to transportation, storage, restaurants and finally the household kitchen," Dr. Sweatha said. "That is why Salmonella is very much a One Health problem involving humans, animals, food and the environment."

Preventing infections: Typhoid conjugate vaccines, safer water and sanitation, food safety and antimicrobial stewardship all have a role in reducing infections. ANDREW CORNEGE

Food handlers can play an important role in transmission, as those carrying the infection can contaminate food and potentially expose many people to the bacteria. But food safety cannot depend only on individual food handlers. The whole system needs better training, sanitation, refrigeration, monitoring and enforcement. While the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has surveillance and testing systems, gaps remain, particularly in the large informal food sector.

At the household level, it is important follow: washing hands, using safe water, cooking poultry and eggs thoroughly, refrigerating perishable foods appropriately and keeping raw meat separate from ready-to-eat food.

Challenges and way forward

The major concern is the growing antimicrobial resistance in Salmonella. India has seen a major shift in the resistance pattern of S. Typhi. A recent study in *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases* said, culture-confirmed isolates from 1977 to 2024 found that fluoroquinolone resistance rose sharply, reaching 83% in 2018-19, and remains high despite a subsequent decline.

"The emergence and spread of extensively drug-resistant typhoid shows what can happen when resistance accumulates across multiple antibiotic classes," Dr. Sweatha said. "It can leave clinicians with very limited treatment options."

Experts say the answer is not to simply use stronger antibiotics. Blood culture is the main test for suspected typhoid and should ideally be done before antibiotics are started. The Widal test has limitations and should not be used alone to diagnose typhoid. For uncomplicated non-typhoidal Salmonella gastroenteritis, treatment mainly involves adequate fluids and electrolyte replacement. Antibiotics are usually reserved for severe or invasive infections and people at higher risk of complications.

Prevention remains as important as treatment. The World Health Organisation recommends typhoid conjugate vaccines for children from six months of age; however, this not yet part of India's universal immunisation programme.

The challenge is to treat the infections that genuinely require antibiotics while preventing the infections that can be prevented in the first place.

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Topic	English	हिंदी
Core issue	The desire for lighter skin continues, but terminology and marketing have shifted from **“fairness” to “brightening”, “glow”, “de-tan” and “even tone.”**	गोरी त्वचा की चाह पूरी तरह समाप्त नहीं हुई है, लेकिन मार्केटिंग में **“fairness” की जगह “brightening”, “glow”, “de-tan” और “even tone”** जैसे शब्द आ गए हैं।
Changing market	Skin-lightening practices are moving beyond creams to **skincare procedures, dermatological treatments and digital marketplaces**.	स्किन-लाइटनिंग अब केवल क्रीम तक सीमित नहीं है; यह **डर्मेटोलॉजिकल उपचार, कॉस्मेटिक प्रक्रियाओं और डिजिटल मार्केटप्लेस** तक फैल गया है।
Medical distinction	Treatment of **melasma, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation and other pigmentary disorders** is different from trying to lighten a person's normal skin colour.	**मेलास्मा, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation और अन्य pigmentation disorders** का उपचार सामान्य त्वचा के रंग को हल्का करने से अलग है।
Clinical concern	Patients may approach doctors only after inappropriate treatments cause **acne, redness, thinning of skin, increased facial hair or infections**.	गलत उपचार के बाद **मुंहासे, लालिमा, त्वचा पतली होना, चेहरे पर बाल बढ़ना या संक्रमण** जैसी समस्याएँ होने पर मरीज डॉक्टर तक पहुँचते हैं।
Digital shift	Advertising has shifted from conventional TV/product packaging to **influencers, e-commerce platforms, before-and-after images and social media**.	विज्ञापन TV और पैकेजिंग से आगे बढ़कर **influencers, e-commerce, before-and-after photographs और social media** पर पहुँच गया है।
Algorithmic amplification	Recommendation algorithms may repeatedly expose users to pigmentation/lightening content, reinforcing unrealistic beauty standards.	Recommendation algorithms बार-बार skin-lightening content दिखाकर अवास्तविक सौंदर्य मानकों को मजबूत कर सकते हैं।
Solution	Regulation must combine **consumer awareness, digital literacy, professional guidance and responsible advertising**.	समाधान में **consumer awareness, digital literacy, professional guidance और responsible advertising** को साथ लेकर चलना होगा।

AI concern	Edited or AI-enhanced photographs can make skin appear lighter, smoother and more uniform, making manipulation harder to identify.	Edited या AI-enhanced तस्वीरें त्वचा को अधिक गोरा और समान दिखा सकती हैं, जिससे वास्तविक और manipulated image में अंतर करना कठिन होता है।
Young people	Repeated exposure may gradually alter young people's perception of what constitutes “normal” skin.	लगातार exposure युवाओं की **normal skin** के प्रति धारणा को प्रभावित कर सकता है।
Unsafe products	Unregulated products can expose people to inappropriate ingredients, including potent topical corticosteroids, causing serious side-effects.	अनियंत्रित उत्पादों में अनुचित तत्व, विशेषकर शक्तिशाली topical corticosteroids, गंभीर दुष्प्रभाव पैदा कर सकते हैं।
Regulatory challenge	Online advertising, influencer marketing and e-commerce make conventional regulation more difficult.	Online advertising, influencer marketing और e-commerce ने पारंपरिक regulation को अधिक कठिन बना दिया है।

- **Key concepts to remember**
- **Colourism** means discrimination or preferential treatment based on skin tone, generally favouring lighter skin. It is different from racism, although the two can overlap.
- **Hyperpigmentation** is excessive pigmentation in particular areas of the skin. Treating a medical pigmentation disorder should not automatically be equated with cosmetic skin lightening.
- **Digital literacy** is increasingly becoming a **public-health tool** because people need the ability to identify manipulated images, misleading advertisements and questionable medical claims online.

- **Old model:**

Fairness cream → TV advertisement → explicit promise of fairer skin

- **Emerging model:**

“Glow / brightening / de-tan” → influencer → algorithm → edited/AI image → e-commerce product/procedure

- Therefore:
- **Social bias → Digital amplification → Consumer demand → Unregulated treatment → Health consequences**

Challenge	Exam-oriented interpretation
Deep-rooted preference for lighter skin	Social attitudes cannot be changed by regulation alone
Euphemistic marketing	“Fairness” claims can reappear through words such as glow/brightening
Influencer ecosystem	Advertisement and personal recommendation can become blurred
AI/manipulated photographs	Creates unrealistic expectations
E-commerce	Questionable products can reach consumers easily
Excessive cosmetic treatment	Medical treatment and commercial cosmetic intervention can overlap
Weak consumer awareness	Consumers may not recognise harmful ingredients or misleading claims
Algorithmic reinforcement	Platforms can repeatedly expose vulnerable users to similar content

- Consider the following statements regarding skin-lightening practices:
  - Treatment of hyperpigmentation and cosmetic lightening of normal skin colour are medically identical objectives.
  - Algorithm-driven digital platforms can potentially reinforce particular beauty standards through repeated exposure.
  - Digital literacy can have relevance to public health in the context of misleading skincare information.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- **A. 1 only**

B. 2 and 3 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Danger from above

Natural outbursts in hilly terrain are rising amid climate change

Disaster struck Nepal on Wednesday after a flash flood ravaged the Himalayas and foothills. As of Thursday, at least 359 people including several foreign tourists, had died, while at least 300 Indians remained missing. Satellite imagery analysed by global agencies, including the Indian Space Research Organisation, points to a glacier collapse or ice-rock avalanche in Tibet, possibly followed by a temporary river blockage and its sudden failure. An earthquake was initially suspected, but evidence has not borne it out. While the immediate flood wave has passed, there are warnings of possible secondary flooding from debris blockages upstream. There has been extensive damage along the Bhote Koshi and Trishuli corridors, with settlements washed away and hydropower and monitoring infrastructure damaged. Nepalese authorities said 35 motorable and 45 suspension bridges and about 40 kilometres of roads had been damaged.

Given that it is the monsoon, north India and the larger Himalayan regions are under the influence of a powerful Western Disturbance. It would thus not have been unreasonable to attribute the floods to these extratropical storms that can cause clouds to collide with mountains and release enormous quantities of rain at short notice. But the ubiquity of satellites is helping establish a more complex picture, pointing to collapsing glaciers and recalling the October 2023 South Lhonak Lake disaster in Sikkim. There, an eponymous Himalayan glacier suddenly gave way, releasing millions of tonnes of water, debris and rock that pulverised Sikkim's largest hydropower project. Subsequent analysis showed that the resulting Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) had been years in the making. The Indian Himalayas have nearly 7,500 glacial lakes and about 18,000 glaciers, some monitored through remote sensing. Yet, fully assessing their condition requires site visits, difficult because these lakes lie in inhospitable terrain while expeditions are generally feasible only from July to September. Even with satellite monitoring, accurately forecasting a glacier collapse remains exceedingly difficult — and can be counterproductive if warnings trigger panic among residents who, often because of habit or lack of alternatives, are unlikely to move out of harm's way. Dams and hydropower projects in such terrain are often among the first casualties of these natural outbursts, which are increasing amid global warming. Beyond relief and rescue, governments must enforce construction codes, discourage settlements and large projects in known vulnerable zones, and invest in better tracking of glacier health. Such monitoring can feed long-term disaster planning into development programmes. A tragedy is frequently not the result of a conspiracy but the product of passive neglect; the latter can be addressed.

New-age fires

Fire accidents in ICUs need better and more evacuation facilities

Not too long ago, India's fire accidents typically occurred in industrial facilities, large offices, mass gatherings, firecracker units and railway compartments, caused by faulty machinery, weak safety procedures and careless use of flammable materials. While these risks persist, what has got added to the country's poor record in fire safety in the last 18 years or so is residential buildings, hotels and hospitals, especially Intensive Care Units (ICU). Electrical fires now seem predominant, often caused by increased appliance use, overloaded electrical systems and poor maintenance. ICUs are especially vulnerable with their oxygen-rich environments. This month, back-to-back accidents at neonatal ICUs in Amravati, Maharashtra, and Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh, claimed the most vulnerable: newborn babies. The Amravati fire was put out in 30 minutes, but the smoke was too much for the three babies admitted because of complications. A faulty ventilator is suspected to be the cause. In the NICU at Chhindwara District Hospital, a short circuit in a warmer triggered a fire and three babies, just days old, suffered burns. Over the past 18 years, ICU fires, including the one in Jhansi in 2024, in which 10 newborns died, have not served as a wake-up call. The Amravati fire shared many features with previous incidents.

Perhaps the best way to respond to these new-age fires would be to treat ICU accidents as a distinct category. ICUs are sealed compartments where smoke fills up very quickly. In an NICU, where patients cannot self-evacuate, evacuation drills are essential. A best-case setup would have three independent exits, with at least two allowing horizontal evacuation, automatic sprinklers, independent power lines for large equipment, oxygen cylinder bed supports, and fire drills every two years. A well-designed ICU also locates oxygen outlets away from sockets. Following a Delhi NICU fire, the National Neonatology Forum called for mandatory fire safety certification for NICU-equipped hospitals, regular power audits, analogue addressable alarms, and an evacuation protocol — now RACE or Rescue, Alarm, Confine, Extinguish/Evacuate. The 2026 National Guidelines on Fire and Life Safety in Healthcare Facilities can be a useful starting point for ICU-NICU safety. Beyond all this lies an issue in power quality: electrical harmonics. NICU equipment is packed with electronic components that draw distorted current, which can silently overheat neutral wiring, transformers, and loose connections without tripping a breaker. Post-fire reports citing generic "short circuits" or "technical faults" may well be missing this harmonic-driven degradation, a largely unaudited risk factor.

Why 543 should remain 543

S.Y. Quraishi
Former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the author of 'An Undocumented Wonder – The Making of the Great Indian Election'

Delimitation, federal fairness and women's representation can all be achieved without enlarging the Lok Sabha

Days after both Houses of Parliament were adjourned *sine die* on August 11, 2026, the monsoon session has yet to be formally prorogued. The delay has prompted speculation that Parliament could be reconvened for another attempt at the constitutional amendment linked to delimitation and women's reservation. Whether or not that happens, it gives urgency to a question Parliament must confront: does delimitation necessarily mean an enlargement of the Lok Sabha?

Numbers alone cannot decide

At first glance, the issue looks like arithmetic. India's population has grown enormously since Lok Sabha seats were frozen half a century ago, so it seems natural to argue that representation must now expand correspondingly. But, constitutional design is not arithmetic alone.

Article 81 requires representation broadly to correspond to population, "so far as practicable", while Article 82 provides for readjustment after every Census. Yet, Parliament has twice modified the mechanical application of this principle when another compelling national objective was at stake. In 1976, through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment, the inter-State allocation of seats was frozen on the basis of the 1971 Census so that States successful in family planning were not politically penalised for reducing population growth. The freeze was later extended by the 84th Amendment until the publication of figures from the first Census conducted after 2026. Parliament thus recognised that population matters, but it is not the only constitutional value at stake.

The government has reportedly suggested increasing every State's representation by roughly 50%, arguing that this would leave each with the same 'proportion' of Lok Sabha seats that it has today. On the face of it, that appears to answer the fear of the southern States of losing their relative position. But 'proportion' tells only half the story.

Suppose Uttar Pradesh rises from 80 seats to 120, while Tamil Nadu rises from 39 to about 59. Their proportional relationship remains unchanged. Yet, the absolute gap in voting strength rises from 41 Members of Parliament (MP) to around 61. Elections do not vote in proportions; it votes in absolute numbers. Governments are formed by numbers, and confidence motions, legislation, and constitutional amendments are decided by numbers. A 50% pro-rata increase may preserve the ratio while widening the numerical gap.

The 1976 freeze therefore embodied a federal compact: States that succeeded in population stabilisation would not see their political voice diminished for doing what national policy encouraged. That understanding should not now be thoughtlessly discarded.

There is also a misconception that delimitation and enlargement are inseparable. They are not. India has already shown that constituency boundaries can be redrawn without changing the number of seats allocated to each State. The delimitation after the 2001 Census reorganised constituencies within States while maintaining the existing inter-State allocation.

That principle can be adopted again. The 2027 Census can provide the basis for redrawing constituencies within each State so that populations are more evenly distributed. Boundaries can reflect demographic movement and urbanisation. None of this requires increasing the Lok Sabha beyond 543 or disturbing the present federal balance.

A continuously expanding legislature is also not an inevitable consequence of population growth. The United States House of Representatives has remained at 435 voting members (there were some temporary exceptions) for more than a century despite enormous population growth. Switzerland's National Council has remained at 200 members since 1963. Going a step further, Hungary reduced its Parliament from 386 members to 199, while Italy reduced its Chamber of Deputies from 630 to 400. There is no democratic law requiring legislatures to grow whenever population grows.

Bigger House, weaker deliberation

There is another serious concern: what a larger House does to Parliament's own functioning. Parliamentary time does not expand with the number of MPs. Even with 543 members, many MPs hardly get opportunities to speak, ask questions or raise matters of public importance. A Lok Sabha enlarged by 50%, to more than 800 members, would reduce those opportunities further. It may increase representation numerically while weakening the quality of deliberation, one of Parliament's most important functions. Indian MPs already represent the largest average constituencies among the world's major democracies — several times the size of a U.S. congressional district or a U.K. constituency. Freezing the House at 543 while the population keeps growing means that burden only increases after delimitation, and the case for more representatives to improve accessibility is a real one. But it does not follow that the additional representatives must sit in Parliament. Most citizens approach elected representatives over roads, schools, hospitals, local services and State administration — matters substantially within the State sphere. If population growth has made constituencies unwieldy, strengthening representation at the State level is, therefore, a more sensible solution. More MLAs and smaller Assembly constituencies can bring representatives closer to citizens without continuously enlarging the national legislature.

That expansion faces none of the federal-arithmetic constraint that makes Lok Sabha expansion fraught. A larger Assembly shifts no balance between States — each answers only to its own population. Vidhan Sabhas can therefore grow to meet accessibility needs without disturbing the inter-State balance in Parliament that the 1976 freeze was designed to protect. Then comes women's reservation.

One-third reservation for women is now being connected with delimitation, and enlargement of the Lok Sabha is presented partly as a way of accommodating women without disturbing existing political interests.

But women's representation should not become a constitutional justification for enlarging the House. One-third of the present Lok Sabha is approximately 181 seats. Women can receive their constitutionally promised representation within the existing House of 543. The purpose of reservation is to alter who occupies parliamentary seats, not necessarily to create hundreds of additional ones.

A 50% expansion could produce a curious result: the number of women MPs would rise, which is desirable, but so would the numerical dominance of the already larger States. A reform intended to correct one representational imbalance could deepen another. Women's representation and federal fairness are both legitimate constitutional objectives. India need not choose between them.

Preserve 543, undertake reforms

The solution is simple: retain the Lok Sabha at 543; preserve the present inter-State distribution of seats; undertake delimitation within States on updated population figures; implement women's reservation within that structure; and expand the Vidhan Sabhas to absorb the accessibility pressure that population growth has created.

For half a century, States have pursued demographic policies knowing that successful population stabilisation would not reduce their parliamentary influence. Southern States in particular invested heavily in education, health care and family welfare and achieved fertility levels that national policy itself encouraged. To reward that success with a larger political advantage for States where population grew faster would invert the incentive the Union deliberately created.

The question, therefore, is not whether population should matter. Of course it should. The question is whether it should now mechanically rearrange the federal political balance that India consciously preserved for five decades. Twice before, Parliament amended the constitutional framework to preserve the existing inter-State allocation despite population changes. There is no reason it cannot do so a third time. The uncertainty over whether Parliament may be recalled makes this more than an academic debate. Decisions taken now could shape the federal balance of the Republic for decades.

Delimitation is necessary. Women's representation is overdue. Updated constituency boundaries are desirable. But none of these objectives requires an 800-plus-member Lok Sabha.

Sometimes constitutional wisdom lies not in making institutions larger, but in preserving the balance that has allowed them to endure; 543 has served India for more than half a century. There is a strong constitutional, federal and democratic case for letting this number remain 543.

India's return to its Central Asian neighbourhood

Pankaj Saran
Former Deputy National Security Adviser, Ambassador and Consumer, National

The Prime Minister's visit is an opportunity for India to deepen its strategic presence, expand economic ties and strengthen its diplomatic influence

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to travel to Central Asia in the next few days, the first port of call being a state visit to Uzbekistan, followed by participation in the meeting of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, called Frunze in Soviet times. The change of names is not just symbolic. It represents the birth of a new region.

Central Asia is an evocative moniker. The region lies landlocked, situated between two giants, Russia and China. In most of its countries, the post 1991 generation has largely taken over, engaged in finding a new internal equilibrium. Islam is the main religion, but does not define identity and is therefore not a political project. The fight against radicalisation and terrorism is uncompromising. Occasional catastrophes such as the devastating Crocus City Hall terror attack in Moscow in 2024, China's constant fear of spread of radicalisation in the border regions and export of instability and extremist ideology from Afghanistan are everyday reminders of the challenges.

In Central Asia, there are a multitude of ethnicities, languages, geographies and resource endowments. These influence domestic and foreign policy choices, with Turkmenistan practising rigorous neutrality. Relations among countries are complicated by legacy disputes over borders, water resources and overlapping ethnicities. Türkiye and Iran are dominant influences, while the United States and the European Union are working their way in as Russia's hold weakens and China's grows.

Mr. Modi's 2018 visit to all five Central Asian countries was historic. It marked the end of an unstated Indian policy of deferring to Russia in its periphery — politely keeping away. In 2017, India was welcomed into the SCO as a full member by Russia, as Pakistan was, by China. To mark the 30 years of their independence/diplomatic ties, India made an unprecedented gesture of inviting all Central Asian leaders as chief guests for the Republic Day in 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the event to be held only virtually, but not without it leading to the creation of high-level mechanisms for cooperation, including the India-Central Asia Dialogue.

Beyond geography

If South Asia and West Asia, not to speak of East Asia and the Indian Ocean Region are India's neighbourhoods, Central Asia is no less. A lack of overland connectivity does not take away from the civilisational links India has with the region — in culture, religion, language and architecture. Geographically, India and Tajikistan are separated only by the narrow Wakhan corridor that lies in Afghanistan. India is part of the continuum that is the Eurasian landmass.

Pakistan, a historically new piece in the equation, seeks to usurp the historical lineage based on religious affinity. Its tactic to cut India off, physically and otherwise, from these historical connections, like its other India-centric gambits, is, as anecdotal evidence shows, doomed to failure. Yet, India must not allow this to succeed. Countries of the region are today looking beyond Russia and China for partners in their socio-economic development. India's lived experience as a plural, moderate and democratic society is admired not feared in the region.

It is against this background that Mr. Modi's decision to go back to the region must be welcomed. India should build upon the foundations to consolidate its rightful place in the region, whether in the economic, trade, defence, natural resources, technology spheres or in softer areas such as cultural, educational, health and tourism exchanges. The choice of a state visit to Uzbekistan is consistent with the steady improvement of relations under President Mirziyoyev since 2016. It is among the most dynamic countries of the region, and most forward in the diversification of its foreign policy. Any Indian visitor to Tashkent, Samarkand or Bukhara will vouch for the friendship and resonance between the two peoples.

There are also hardnosed reasons — Uzbekistan has been uncompromising in its fight against terrorism and extremism. Its intimate knowledge of Afghanistan, and pragmatic approach towards the Taliban, are of key importance to India. India has had detailed discussions with it on alternative rail and road connectivity routes through Iran and Afghanistan which need to be revisited in the light of recent developments in these countries.

India and the SCO

Starting from the small beginnings of the "Shanghai Five" in 1996, the SCO, in its 25th anniversary, has grown to 10 members, 16 dialogue partners and two observers. With the exception of 2024, Mr. Modi has been a regular participant in SCO Heads of States meetings. India's SCO engagement is driven by geography, not ideology. Within the SCO chambers, negotiating against a China-Pakistan dyad is demanding but essential. India has kept its head above the swamp by suggesting several ideas to enhance cooperation in the economic, technological and civilisational fields. In Tianjin last year, Mr. Modi put forward the vision of security, connectivity, and opportunity for the SCO. In the instant case, for a country as overwhelmingly dependent on China as Kyrgyzstan, the SCO, and India in particular, offers a valuable geopolitical lifeline.

Taken together with his visits to the Indian Ocean Region last month, Mr. Modi would have traversed far-flung corners of India's maritime and continental neighbourhood in quick succession reflecting India's geostrategic imperatives and opportunities.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Himalayan disaster

Two major factors behind the Nepal disaster are its mountainous terrain and the intensity of the cloudburst or the melting of glaciers in the higher Himalayan ranges. The steep slopes would have allowed gushing water to reach the plains quickly, they can also become death traps for those caught in sudden downstream flows. While the media is still trying to assess the toll, it is certain to run into the thousands. This particular disaster is unprecedented in the scale of its destruction, with hundreds of villages and small towns wiped out. It is truly heartbreaking.

V. Lakshmanan,
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

Post-disaster relief is no longer enough. It is most essential that Himalayan nations must collaborate on joint early-warning networks, real-time data sharing, and resilient infrastructure.

Kshirsagara Balaji Rao,
Hyderabad

Revive cultural institution

Tamil Nadu's apex cultural body, the Eyal Isai Nataka Mandram, is inactive, while the Kalaimamani State awards remain suspended. The TVK government should revive the institution, reconstitute its executive/general councils, and reform the awards process by separating classical arts from cinema.

V.P. Dhanarajayan,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Why 543 should remain 543

S.Y. Quraishi

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Delimitation, federal fairness and women's representation can all be achieved without enlarging the Lok Sabha

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Numbers alone cannot decide

At first glance, the issue looks like arithmetic. India's population has grown enormously since Lok Sabha seats were frozen half a century ago, so it seems natural to argue that representation must now expand correspondingly. But, constitutional design is not arithmetic alone.

Article 81 requires representation broadly to correspond to population, "so far as practicable", while Article 82 provides for readjustment after every Census. Yet, Parliament has twice modified the mechanical application of this principle when another compelling national objective was at stake. In 1976, through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment, the inter-State allocation of seats was frozen on the basis of the 1971 Census so that States successful in family planning were not politically penalised for reducing population growth. The freeze was later extended by the 84th Amendment until the publication of figures from the first Census conducted after 2026. Parliament thus recognised that population matters, but it is not the only constitutional value at stake.

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Suppose Uttar Pradesh rises from 80 seats to 120, while Tamil Nadu rises from 39 to about 59. Their proportional relationship remains unchanged. Yet, the absolute gap in voting strength rises from 41 Members of Parliament (MP) to around 61. Parliament does not vote in proportions; it votes in absolute numbers. Governments are formed by numbers, and confidence motions, legislation, and constitutional amendments are decided by numbers. A 50% pro-rata increase may preserve the ratio while widening the numerical gap.

The 1976 freeze therefore embodied a federal compact: States that succeeded in population stabilisation would not see their political voice diminished for doing what national policy encouraged. That understanding should not now be thoughtlessly discarded.

There is also a misconception that delimitation and enlargement are inseparable. They are not. India has already shown that constituency boundaries can be redrawn without changing the number of seats allocated to each State. The delimitation after the 2001 Census reorganised constituencies within States while maintaining the existing inter-State allocation.

That principle can be adopted again. The 2027 Census can provide the basis for redrawing constituencies within each State so that populations are more evenly distributed. Boundaries can reflect demographic movement and urbanisation. None of this requires increasing the Lok Sabha beyond 543 or disturbing the present federal balance.

A continuously expanding legislature is also not an inevitable consequence of population growth. The United States House of Representatives has remained at 435 voting members (there were some temporary exceptions) for more than a century despite enormous population growth. Switzerland's National Council has remained at 200 members since 1963. Going a step further, Hungary reduced its Parliament from 386 members to 199, while Italy reduced its Chamber of Deputies from 630 to 400. There is no democratic law requiring legislatures to grow whenever population grows.

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Issue	English	हिंदी
Present Lok Sabha strength	Lok Sabha currently has **543 elected seats**.	लोकसभा में वर्तमान में **543 निर्वाचित सीटें** हैं।
Core debate	Should population growth automatically result in more Lok Sabha seats? The author argues **No**.	क्या जनसंख्या बढ़ने पर लोकसभा सीटें भी स्वतः बढ़नी चाहिए? लेखक का उत्तर **नहीं** है।
Article 81	Provides that representation should broadly correspond to population, **"so far as practicable."**	अनुच्छेद 81 के अनुसार प्रतिनिधित्व यथासंभव जनसंख्या के अनुरूप होना चाहिए।
Article 82	Provides for **readjustment/delimitation after every Census**, subject to constitutional provisions.	अनुच्छेद 82 प्रत्येक जनगणना के बाद सीटों के पुनर्समायोजन/परिसीमन का आधार देता है।
42nd Amendment, 1976	Froze inter-State allocation of Lok Sabha seats based broadly on the **1971 Census**, protecting States that successfully controlled population growth.	**42वें संविधान संशोधन, 1976** ने राज्यों के बीच लोकसभा सीटों के आवंटन को 1971 की जनगणना के आधार पर फ्रीज किया।
Alternative solution	Strengthen **Vidhan Sabhas, local institutions and accessibility of representatives** rather than continuously enlarging Parliament.	संसद को लगातार बड़ा करने के बजाय **विधानसभाओं, स्थानीय संस्थाओं और प्रतिनिधियों की accessibility** को मजबूत किया जा सकता है।

84th Amendment	Extended the freeze on inter-State seat allocation until the **first Census taken after 2026**.	**84वें संविधान संशोधन** ने इस व्यवस्था को **2026 के बाद होने वाली पहली जनगणना** तक बढ़ाया।
Federal concern	A purely population-based redistribution could increase the political weight of faster-growing States and relatively reduce that of States that achieved population stabilisation.	केवल जनसंख्या आधारित पुनर्वितरण से अधिक जनसंख्या वृद्धि वाले राज्यों का राजनीतिक प्रभाव बढ़ सकता है और जनसंख्या नियंत्रण में सफल राज्यों का सापेक्ष प्रभाव घट सकता है।
Delimitation ≠ Expansion	Constituency boundaries can be redrawn without necessarily increasing the total number of Lok Sabha seats.	निर्वाचन क्षेत्रों की सीमाएँ बदली जा सकती हैं, बिना लोकसभा की कुल सीटें बढ़ाए।
2027 Census	The author says updated Census data can provide the basis for redrawing constituencies within States.	लेखक के अनुसार 2027 की जनगणना के आँकड़े राज्यों के भीतर निर्वाचन क्षेत्रों के पुनर्निर्धारण का आधार बन सकते हैं।
Women's reservation	Women can receive their constitutionally provided representation **within the existing House**, according to the author.	लेखक के अनुसार महिलाओं का आरक्षण मौजूदा सदन की संरचना के भीतर लागू किया जा सकता है।

Bigger House: Author's Concerns

India's MPs already represent exceptionally large constituencies. At first glance, increasing MPs therefore appears attractive.

However, the author raises another issue:

543 MPs → already limited speaking time → Larger House → less time per MP → potentially weaker deliberation

The article gives international comparisons:

Legislature	Size/Observation mentioned
US House of Representatives	435 voting members
Swiss National Council	200
Hungarian Parliament	Reduced from 386 to 199
Italian Chamber of Deputies	Reduced from 630 to 400
India Lok Sabha	543 elected members

The broader lesson is:

Population growth ≠ democratic necessity to continuously expand legislature size.

- Under the **Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 — Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**, roughly **one-third reservation** is provided for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, with implementation linked to a delimitation exercise after the relevant Census process.
- The author argues that:
- **Women's representation should increase by changing WHO occupies parliamentary seats, rather than necessarily increasing HOW MANY parliamentary seats exist.**
- So:
- **543 seats × 1/3 ≈ 181 seats for women**
- This is conceptually important: **reservation and expansion are separate constitutional-policy questions.**

North–South / Federalism Dimension

This is probably the **most important mains angle**.

Southern States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala achieved relatively earlier demographic transition through improvements in areas such as:

Education → Healthcare → Family planning → Lower fertility → Slower population growth

If future representation were based mechanically on population, faster-growing States could receive substantially greater parliamentary weight.

This creates a policy paradox:

Successful population control → slower population growth → relatively fewer seats → reduced political influence

Therefore, delimitation becomes not merely an electoral issue but a question of:

Federalism + Demography + Representation + Regional balance + Cooperative federalism

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Author's Proposed Way Forward

The article essentially advocates:

Retain 543 Lok Sabha seats

↓

Conduct delimitation using updated population data

↓

Preserve inter-State balance

↓

Redraw constituencies within States

↓

Implement women's reservation within existing structure

↓

Strengthen State Assemblies/local institutions where greater representation is needed

The objective is to reconcile three competing values:

Democratic representation + Federal fairness + Women's representation

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- Consider the following statements:
  - Article 81 of the Constitution deals with the composition of the Lok Sabha.
  - Article 82 provides for readjustment following every Census in accordance with law.
  - Delimitation necessarily requires an increase in the total number of Lok Sabha seats.
  - The freeze on inter-State allocation of Lok Sabha seats was originally introduced in the constitutional framework during the 1970s.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- **A. 1 and 2 only**

B. 1, 2 and 4 only
C. 2, 3 and 4 only
D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

IN BRIEF

LIC subscribes to Bajaj Finance's ₹5,000 cr. NCDs

LIC has subscribed to Bajaj Finance's ₹5,000 crore non-convertible debentures (NCDs). The insurer said it has subscribed to five lakh NCDs of face value of ₹1 lakh each, of the deposit-taking non-banking financial company, totalling ₹5,000 crore, LIC said in a filing. The instruments carry a coupon rate of 6.15% per annum and a tenure of 3,653 days. The first coupon payment will be on August 27, 2027 and annually thereafter. The maturity date of the NCDs is August 27, 2030.

KPR Mill to invest ₹1,225 cr. in greenfield projects, expansion

Coimbatore-based KPR Mill, which has integrated textile production capacities, is investing ₹1,225 crore in greenfield projects and expanding existing capacities. The company said it expects ₹2,000 crore additional revenue from the new facilities when they are commissioned and the entire capex will be met through internal accruals. KPR will also set up a new sweater manufacturing factory in Coimbatore at ₹75 crore to make 2.5 million garments.

HCL sets up GCC in Pune for German partner Wacker

HCLTech on Thursday announced that its partner Wacker Chemie AG, a German chemicals and biotechnology company, had established a Global Capability Center in Pune. The GCC, set up and operated by HCL, will support Wacker's engineering, IT and digital transformation initiatives, it said. "The initiative marks an important milestone in Wacker's digital transformation," said Dr. Frank Fehler, Executive V-P and Country Head - Germany, HCLTech.

A.P. to become third subsea hub on data centre buildout

The State is witnessing investments from tech giants Microsoft and Google, which are building fresh subsea cable infrastructure, currently concentrated in Mumbai and Chennai

Arnab Dey
NEW DELHI

As a result of data-centre buildout in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the former's coastline will soon hold new landing stations for subsea cables, which connect global internet with India.

On one hand, Microsoft is participating in a consortium with firms like Lightstorm and Singapore telco Singtel to land the 3,000 km India-Southeast Asia (I-2SEA) submarine Cable System, and Google has the globe-spanning America-India Connect system, which will land in Visakhapatnam, where the tech giant's datacentre complex is being built.

"As part of this AI hub,... we're bringing in multiple new subsea cables that will land on the coast of Andhra Pradesh around the Vishakhapatnam area," Alexander Smith, a Google executive who oversees several of the firm's physical infrastructure projects in the Asia Pacific region, told *The Hindu* in an interview on Thursday.

"That will mean that essentially India will have, after Mumbai and Chennai, a third digital international subsea gateway... connecting India directly with Southeast Asia, so Singapore and a couple of the other main markets, down into Australia and right around into the Middle East and Europe and beyond. So this will... make India and Vizag in particular one of the most connected places in the world," Mr. Smith added.

Lightstorm CEO Amajit Gupta said in an interview with *The Hindu* in June that I-2SEA "connects South-east Asia, specifically Singapore and Malaysia, to the east coast of India," and that the cable system, which also connects to Chennai, "provides a brand new corridor to South Asia" from South East Asia, where a lot of infrastructure serving Indian enterprises and consumers continues to reside.

The cable system is set to be ready for service in Q4 2029. Mr. Gupta said that new cable buildout in fresh locations was key to preserving Indian internet connectivity from a strategic standpoint.

"If you peel the onion and look at the cables which connect the east coast of India... most of these are pretty old cables," he said. "They are easily about 8, 10, 12, 15 years old... [they] are filled with capacity and are also rapidly running into end of life." Mr. Gupta said that there were geopolitical de-risking tailwinds driving these investments. "I don't need to tell you what's happening in West Asia, which means people are beginning to think, hey, now this is getting so dangerous, why can't we flush the traffic out to the eastern coast of India so that at the least I have resilience and at the best I have an alternate path (in case connectivity is lost)."

On top of the subsea cable landing, both projects require significant infrastructure further inland. "This is a pan-India project," Mr. Smith said.

"We're needing to install and then light and operate thousands of kilometres of new fiber ... I think what's kind of underappreciated is that this will really create a robust new layer of digital connectivity... that will go between some of the mainline metros." Taking a cue from landside fiber built on top of electrical transmission lines, Mr. Gupta said that Lightstorm is "likely to build a terrestrial corridor ... which will connect Machilipatnam to Mumbai, Hyderabad and similarly Chennai to Hyderabad and Mumbai with the same bandwidth".

"Fiber itself is cut of stock across the globe," Mr. Gupta said, adding "inclueding from Indian manufacturers. And then the fiber sub-components, the fiber raw material, the inputs are all in short supply. So that has never been the case for the last 10 to 15 years."

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He added that the Google facility will focus on inference for domestic enterprises and government agencies, as there has been "pretty deep AI adoption across the delivery of government services at the State levels as well as Union level."

SEBI to propose SOP for unscheduled holidays

Ashokamitbran T.
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is set to propose a standard operating procedure (SOP) for operational activities related to unscheduled market holidays, as part of efforts to strengthen market resilience while improving efficiency and ease of doing business.

"Our endeavour has been to build resilience and strengthen the risk management systems. At the same time, we want to facilitate greater efficiency and ease of doing business," SEBI Chairperson Tuhin Kanta Pandey said at an event marking the 30th anniversary of NSE Clearing Ltd. on Thursday.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey

Addressing questions on potential changes to the newly introduced Closing Auction Session (CAS), he said currently there were no plans to modify the system and expressed confidence that participation would increase over time.

GAIL to stretch natural gas pipeline network up to 20,000 km: CMD

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) has about 1,500 km of natural gas pipeline under construction, which upon completion would expand its network to about 20,000 km, Deepak Gupta, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) said at the company's AGM with shareholders.

"Our network now extends over 18,890 km, with nearly 1,800 km under construction. Upon completion of the ongoing projects, the network will expand to almost 20,000 km," the CMD said.

In his address, Mr. Gupta also underlined that GAIL was also expanding their LPG transmission network. He pointed to the Delhi-headquartered distributor expanding the capacity of its LPG transmission pipeline from Jamnagar to Loni, from the present 3.25 MMTPA to 6.5 MMTPA.

This would further build on three LPG pipelines, cumulatively spanning about 1,779 km, for which it recently received a go-ahead from the Petroleum Natural Gas and Regulatory Board (PNGRB).

Zee's Chandra to pay ₹6.5 cr. under IBC vs. ₹22,000-cr. due

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Top banks may face a 90% haircut via the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) ordering Zee Media Group founder Subhash Chandra to pay ₹6.5 crore against ₹22,006.57 crore due to creditors in personal insolvency proceedings.

The NCLT went by the decision of 80.81% creditors who okayed Mr. Chandra's offer. The matter involved Indiabulls Housing Finance and personal guarantor Mr. Chandra.

The tribunal went by the decision of a majority of Committee of Creditors (CoC) to choose the offer.

Allegedly they were related party and associated with Mr. Chandra and a large segment of creditors from Haryana whose claims were admitted by the Resolution Professional without examining the manner in which the alleged debts had arisen.

"The Repayment Plan submitted by the Personal Guarantor is required to be approved ...subject to exclusion of the claims submitted through Anil Kumar on behalf of 960 Individuals and Sunil Jain on behalf of 300 individuals from the final list of creditors and consequential redistribution of the repayment amount among the remaining eligible creditors...," NCLT order read.

"The approved Repayment Plan will be binding on all the creditors," it said.

In this case, the more than 88% creditors who willingly approved Mr. Chandra's proposal saw their credentials questioned by other creditors.

The creditors who opposed the repayment plan included Axis Bank, RBL Bank, IndusInd Bank, IDBI Trusteeship (for Franklin Templeton), LIC Housing Finance and Union Bank of India with a collective vote share of 19.186%.

Subhash Chandra

Those who approved Mr. Chandra's plan included Appearance Corpcall Capital Advisors LLP, Catalyst Trusteeship, World Crest Advisors LLP, Direct Media Distribution Ventures Pvt. Ltd., Lemonade Capital Advisors LLP and Veena Investments Pvt. Ltd. allegedly associated with Mr. Chandra.

Multiple objections

It was submitted multiple creditors raised objections against the inclusion and voting rights of some associate and related entities of the personal guarantor who together hold almost 61.78% voting share in CoC.

As per RP Shiv Nandan Sharma, the personal guarantor's (Mr. Chandra's) estate, in the event of bankruptcy, may not be enough even to cover the expenses of the process. Therefore, the creditors may not be able to get any dividend from the bankruptcy trustee so they had accepted it.

However, a net worth certificate submitted by RBL Bank Ltd. in 2017 showed Mr. Chandra's net worth at ₹7.17 billion, (₹45,888 crore). Also, separate certificate to Canara Bank in 2018 assessed his net worth at ₹40,562 crore. Suddenly, how he turned poor, wondered creditors.

Canara Bank had opposed the plan stating it constituted only about 0.026% of the value of Mr. Chandra's assets. In 2022, Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. moved the NCLT in a case involving personal guarantee given by Mr. Chandra for loans to Essel Group companies.

Anil Kumar and Sunil Jain submitted claims on behalf of 960 and 300 individuals from Haryana, Mr. Chandra's native and it was alleged the RP admitted the claims without undertaking any due diligence or inquiry into the relationship of the concerned individuals with Mr. Chandra or examining the manner in which the alleged debts had arisen. After admitting 'unverified and unsubstantiated' claims of entities alleged to be related/associate parties, the RP permitted them in Repayment Plan voting process.

'Related parties'

It was submitted the documents showed the related-party status of Veena Investments, Direct Media Distribution Ventures, World Crest Advisors, Lemonade Capital Advisors and Corpcall Capital Advisors with Mr. Chandra. Despite such material, the RP disregarded the same and instead relied upon Mr. Chandra's contention that following a "family settlement", the entities no longer were related to him.

Meanwhile, Mr. Chandra said he did not borrow money from any lender and was only a personal guarantor.

Insurers can invest in NDB's onshore rupee bonds, says IRDAI

S. Ravi Kumar
HYDERABAD

Insurance regulator IRDAI permitted insurers to invest in Maharajah INR Bonds (Onshore Rupee Bonds) of the New Development Bank (NDB), an approach that assumes significance ahead of next month's BRICS Summit in New Delhi.

It follows representation from the NDB seeking approval, for the NDB Maharajah INR bonds under which it proposes to raise ₹25,000 crore over a five-year period, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) said communicating its approval to the insurers in a circular.

The multilateral development bank, established by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), intends to use the bond proceeds towards general corporate purposes for financing/onward lending to sustainable development, sustainable infrastructure, green, social projects in India.

"The proposed onshore rupee bond issuances by NDB are covered under the definition of Securities under the Securities Contracts (Regulations) Act, 1956," IRDAI said, explaining it is permitting investments in the same to enable insurers to have more scope for investments. It will be part of the 'approved investments' and subject to the bonds governed by norms, if any, laid by Government of India and SEBI or approval among others."

The NDB is a multilateral development bank.

Yamaha India eyes expansion as plants near full utilisation, sounds cautious on E2Ws

Balasubramanyam C.P.
CHENNAI

Yamaha Motor India expects its combined production capacity in India to be fully utilised within the next two to three years, prompting the Japanese two-wheeler maker to evaluate expansion of its manufacturing footprint, even as it remains undecided on whether to set up a new plant.

The company currently has annual production capacity of nearly 1.5 million vehicles across its facilities in Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, and Surajpur, Uttar Pradesh. The company is already in discussions with the government on optimising and expanding its manufacturing operations.

"Currently, my feeling is that within two or three years, this capacity is going to be fulfilled. In that case, we have to start something for the expansion of the plants," Hajime Aota, Chairman, Yamaha Motor India Group, told reporters in Chennai, at the global launch of the YZF-R3, the company's first offering in the 200cc segment.

Mr. Aota said Yamaha has additional space at its Chennai facility and could expand capacity there before considering investment in a new location.

"At this moment, we have capability and we have space. So in that case, I don't need to commit to making some new purchase or new acquisition of the plant," he said.

Yamaha completed a second engine manufacturing line at its Rajasthan facility this year. Further expansion at the site will depend partly on how the company structures its manufacturing processes, including which activities it retains in-house and which it outsources to suppliers.

Hajime Aota

India a growth engine

Aota described India and Indonesia as Yamaha Motor's two "big engines", with India expected to become the company's highest-growth market and one of its largest markets globally. However, he said Yamaha still needs to narrow the gap with Indonesia in terms of manufacturing quality and technical sophistication while preserving India's cost competitiveness.

"The challenge is to improve quality without allowing costs to rise to a point where India loses competitiveness," he stressed.

Yamaha India currently has a roughly 70:30 mix between domestic sales and exports. Aota said shifting to an equal 50:50 split would be difficult given the size of the Indian domestic market.

The base YZF-R3 is priced at ₹3,30,500 (ex-showroom, Delhi), while the Quick Shifter variant costs ₹3,39,900 and the range-topping R3 M is priced at ₹3,51,000.

Yamaha has set a rolling one-year sales target of 50,000 units for the R3. The company will initially focus on the Indian market while assessing export opportunities.

The unibo company is also evaluating whether the newly developed engine can be used in other global markets. Potential export destinations identified include Japan, Europe and Taiwan. The company has overall made a cumulative investment of more than ₹3,800 crore, including ₹2,000 crore in R&D and manufacturing in India over the past eight to 10 years. Yamaha does not expect to become a volume leader in electric two-wheelers, with Mr. Aota saying the company currently lacks the ability to produce EV volumes of 40,000-50,000 units a month.

Profitability and the battery supply chain remain key constraints. Unlike conventional motorcycles, for which Yamaha manufactures its own engines, its electric vehicles currently rely on externally sourced battery cells and motors. Mr. Aota also highlighted challenges in securing battery cells specifically suited to two-wheelers, as suppliers often prioritise the much larger requirements of the four-wheeler industry.

E20 pressure

On the government's E20 ethanol-blending policy, Mr. Aota said Yamaha supports the move as it can help reduce India's dependence on crude-oil imports. However, he called for greater policy stability once the specification is finalised.

Deepa Jewellers sets IPO price band at ₹168-177 a share

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based Deepa Jewellers has set the price band for its initial public offering (IPO) at ₹168-177 per equity share, with the issue set to open on September 1 and close on September 3. The equity shares have a face value of ₹2 each.

The IPO comprises a fresh issue of up to ₹260 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 1.18 crore equity shares by promoter selling shareholders.

The minimum bid lot has been fixed at 84 equity shares. At the upper end of the price band, investors will need to commit ₹14,868 for one lot.

Aragen Life Sciences files DRHP for ₹800 cr. fresh issue

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Contract research, development and manufacturing organisation (CRDMO) Aragen Life Sciences has filed its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) with SEBI for an initial public offering (IPO).

The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of ₹800 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 27,329,492 equity shares, with a face value of ₹10 each, by existing selling shareholders.

The company plans to utilise the fresh issue proceeds primarily towards repayment and/or pre-payment of borrowings.

A.P. to become third subsea hub on data centre buildout

The State is witnessing investments from tech giants Microsoft and Google, which are building fresh subsea cable infrastructure, currently concentrated in Mumbai and Chennai

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

As a result of data-centre buildout in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the former's coastline will soon hold new landing stations for subsea cables, which connect global internet with India.

On one hand, Microsoft is participating in a consortium with firms like Lightstorm and Singaporean telco Singtel to land the 3,600 km India-Southeast Asia (I-2SEA) Submarine Cable System, and Google has the globe-spanning America-India Connect system, which will land in Visakhapatnam, where the tech giant's datacentre complex is being built.

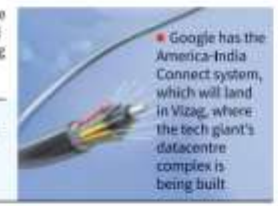
"As part of this AI hub... we're bringing in multiple new subsea cables that will land on the coast of Andhra Pradesh around the Vishakhapatnam area," Alexander Smith, a Google executive who oversees several of the firm's physical infrastructure projects in the Asia Pacific region, told *The Hindu* in an interview on Thursday.

"That will mean that essentially India will have, after Mumbai and Chennai, a third digital international subsea gateway... connecting India directly with Southeast Asia, so Singapore and a couple of the other main markets, down into Australia and right around into the Middle East and Europe and beyond. So this will... make India and Vizag in particular one of the most connected places in the world," Mr. Smith added.

Network busy

A.P.'s coastline will soon hold new landing stations for subsea cables, which connect global internet with India

- Essentially India will have a third digital international subsea gateway connecting India directly with Southeast Asia
- Microsoft is part of a consortium with firms like Lightstorm and Singtel to land the 3,600 km I-2SEA Submarine Cable System



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Topic	English	हिंदी
New subsea hub	Andhra Pradesh is expected to emerge as India's **third major international subsea gateway**, after Mumbai and Chennai.	आंध्र प्रदेश के **मुंबई और चेन्नई के बाद भारत का तीसरा प्रमुख अंतरराष्ट्रीय subsea gateway** बनने की संभावना है।
Location	New cable landing infrastructure is being developed around **Visakhapatnam**.	नया cable landing infrastructure **विशाखापत्तनम** के आसपास विकसित किया जा रहा है।
Why Vizag?	Its east-coast location provides strategic connectivity towards **Southeast Asia and beyond**.	पूर्वी तट की स्थिति के कारण Vizag को **दक्षिण-पूर्व एशिया** से रणनीतिक connectivity मिल सकती है।
Microsoft project	Microsoft is part of a consortium with **Lightstorm and Singtel** for the **I2-SEA submarine cable system**.	Microsoft, **Lightstorm और Singtel** के साथ **I2-SEA submarine cable system** में भाग ले रहा है।
I2-SEA length	The proposed cable is approximately **3,600 km** long.	प्रस्तावित केबल लगभग **3,600 किमी** लंबी है।
Energy requirement	Large AI/data-centre facilities require substantial electricity; Google intends to procure significant renewable power.	AI/data centres की बिजली मांग बहुत अधिक होती है; इसलिए renewable energy procurement महत्वपूर्ण है।

I2-SEA connectivity	It connects Southeast Asia, particularly Singapore/Malaysia, towards India's east coast.	यह दक्षिण-पूर्व एशिया, विशेषकर Singapore/Malaysia को भारत के पूर्वी तट से जोड़ता है।
Google project	Google's **Americas-India Connect system** is planned to land in Visakhapatnam.	Google का **Americas-India Connect system** विशाखापत्तनम में land करने की योजना है।
Google data centre	Google is simultaneously developing a major data-centre complex in Vizag.	Google Vizag में एक बड़ा data-centre complex भी विकसित कर रहा है।
Expected timeline	The article says the I2-SEA system is targeted to be ready for service in **Q4 2029**.	लेख के अनुसार I2-SEA system को **Q4 2029** तक service-ready करने का लक्ष्य है।
Domestic infrastructure	International cables require extensive inland fibre connectivity to distribute capacity across India.	अंतरराष्ट्रीय केबलों के साथ भारत के भीतर व्यापक **terrestrial fibre network** भी आवश्यक है।
AI connection	Google's Vizag facility is expected to focus significantly on **AI inference**.	Google की Vizag facility का महत्वपूर्ण focus **AI inference** पर होगा।

What is a Submarine Cable?

Submarine/undersea fibre-optic cables are cables laid on the seabed that carry digital information between countries and continents.

समुद्र के तल पर बिछाई गई fibre-optic cables जो देशों और महाद्वीपों के बीच digital data का transmission करती हैं।

A simplified chain:

Global Internet
↓
🌊 **Submarine Fibre Cable**
↓
🏢 **Cable Landing Station**
↓
Domestic Fibre Network
↓
Data Centres / Telecom Networks
↓
📱 **Users**

Important exam fact

International Internet connectivity depends heavily on **undersea fibre-optic cable networks**. Satellites are important, particularly for remote connectivity and resilience, but subsea cables form the backbone for enormous volumes of international data traffic.

Why Data Centres Need Submarine Cables

Think of it as:

AI boom

↓

More computation

↓

More data centres

↓

Huge data movement

↓

High-capacity fibre connectivity

↓

Submarine cable investment

Therefore, the article is useful for **GS-III: Digital Infrastructure + AI + Cybersecurity + Energy**.

- Consider the following statements regarding submarine communication cables:
  - They use fibre-optic technology for transmitting digital information.
  - Cable landing stations connect submarine cable systems with terrestrial communication networks.
  - Submarine cables can contribute to the resilience of a country's international digital connectivity when routes and landing points are diversified.
  - Submarine communication cables are useful only for voice communication and cannot carry Internet data.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- **A. 1 and 2 only**

B. 1, 2 and 3 only
C. 2, 3 and 4 only
D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

India to Host 18th BRICS Summit — 2026

Point	English	हिंदी
Summit	18th BRICS Summit	18वाँ BRICS शिखर सम्मेलन
Host	**India**	**भारत**
Year	2026	2026
City	**New Delhi**	**नई दिल्ली**
Chair	India holds BRICS Chairship in 2026	भारत 2026 में BRICS की अध्यक्षता कर रहा है
Chairship began	**1 January 2026**	**1 जनवरी 2026**
2026 Theme	**Building Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**	**लचीलापन, नवाचार, सहयोग और स्थिरता का निर्माण**
Importance	2026 marks **20 years since the first BRIC ministerial process began in 2006**	2026 में BRIC प्रक्रिया की शुरुआत के **20 वर्ष** पूरे होते हैं

BRIC → BRICS → Expanded BRICS

2001

↓

Economist **Jim O'Neill** popularised the acronym **BRIC** for Brazil, Russia, India and China.

2006

↓

BRIC cooperation began formally at the foreign-ministers level.

2009

↓

First BRIC Summit — Yekaterinburg, Russia

2010/2011

↓

South Africa joined → BRIC became BRICS

2024 onward

↓

Major expansion of membership.

Original BRICS

B – Brazil BR

R – Russia RU

I – India IN

C – China CN

S – South Africa ZA

Members	Brazil China Egypt Ethiopia India Indonesia Iran Russia South Africa United Arab Emirates

Dimension	Significance
Multipolarity	Provides India a platform to advocate a more representative international order
Global South	Strengthens developing-country participation in global governance
Financial governance	Supports reform of institutions such as IMF and World Bank
Development finance	New Development Bank provides an alternative/additional source of development finance
Trade	Promotes economic cooperation among large emerging economies
Energy security	Expanded BRICS includes several important energy producers
Climate change	Platform for sustainable development and climate-finance discussions
Technology	Cooperation in AI, digital economy, innovation and emerging technologies
Strategic autonomy	Allows India to cooperate across different geopolitical groupings

Feature	Fact
Established	Agreement signed in **2014**
Operational	2015
Headquarters	**Shanghai, China**
Purpose	Infrastructure and sustainable-development financing
First President	**K.V. Kamath of India**
Nature	Multilateral Development Bank

- **India's BRICS Chairships**
- India previously chaired BRICS in:
- **2012 → 2016 → 2021 → 2026**
- This is a straightforward factual area for competitive exams.
- India's 2026 chairship is especially significant because it comes amid an **expanded BRICS architecture** and heightened debate over reform of global institutions.
-

2026 Theme — Remember as RICS

The theme can be remembered through:

R – Resilience

I – Innovation

C – Cooperation

S – Sustainability

The official wording is:

“Building Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.”

BRICS	G7
Strong representation of emerging/developing economies	Primarily advanced industrial democracies
Strong Global South dimension	Predominantly Western advanced economies + Japan
Includes China and Russia	Does not include China or Russia
New Development Bank	No directly equivalent “G7 Bank”
Diverse political/economic systems	More politically/economically aligned members
Focus includes reform of global governance	Major role in coordinating advanced-economy policies

Why Expanded BRICS is Significant

Expansion increases the grouping's:

Population weight

+

Energy significance

+

Economic influence

+

Global South representation

+

Geopolitical diversity

But enlargement also creates challenges:

More members → More diverse interests → Harder consensus-building

This gives a strong mains argument:

- **Challenges for India within BRICS**
- **China factor**
- China's economic weight within the grouping is substantially larger than India's.
- **India-China differences**
- BRICS cooperation exists alongside unresolved bilateral strategic issues.
- **Russia-West tensions**
- India must balance its strategic relationships with Russia, the U.S., Europe and other partners.
- **Expanded membership**
- More members make consensus increasingly complex.
- **Institutional effectiveness**
- Declarations must translate into measurable cooperation.
- **Strategic autonomy**
- India participates simultaneously in BRICS and forums such as the **Quad and G20**, reflecting issue-based partnerships rather than rigid bloc politics.

- Consider the following statements regarding BRICS:
  - India holds the BRICS Chairship in 2026.
  - The first BRIC Summit was held in Russia.
  - The New Development Bank is headquartered in Shanghai.
  - Indonesia is a member of BRICS.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- **A. 1 and 2 only**

B. 1, 2 and 3 only
C. 2, 3 and 4 only
D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

US FDA Approves Daraxonrasib for Pancreatic Cancer

Topic	English	हिंदी
Drug	**Daraxonrasib**	**डारैक्सोनरासिब**
Brand name	**RASONQUE**	**RASONQUE**
Approved by	U.S. Food and Drug Administration (**FDA**)	अमेरिकी खाद्य एवं औषधि प्रशासन (**FDA**)
Approval date	**26 August 2026**	**26 अगस्त 2026**
Disease	Metastatic pancreatic adenocarcinoma	मेटास्टेटिक पैंक्रियाटिक एडेनोकार्सिनोमा
Drug type	**RAS inhibitor**	**RAS inhibitor**
Administration	Oral tablet, once daily	प्रतिदिन एक oral tablet
Developer	Revolution Medicines	Revolution Medicines
Major trial	Phase III **RASolute 302**	Phase III **RASolute 302**
Trial participants	**500 patients**	**500 मरीज**
Median overall survival	**13.2 months vs 6.7 months** with standard chemotherapy	**13.2 माह बनाम 6.7 माह** standard chemotherapy
Median PFS	**7.2 vs 3.6 months**	**7.2 बनाम 3.6 माह**
Objective response rate	**30% vs 11%**	**30% बनाम 11%**

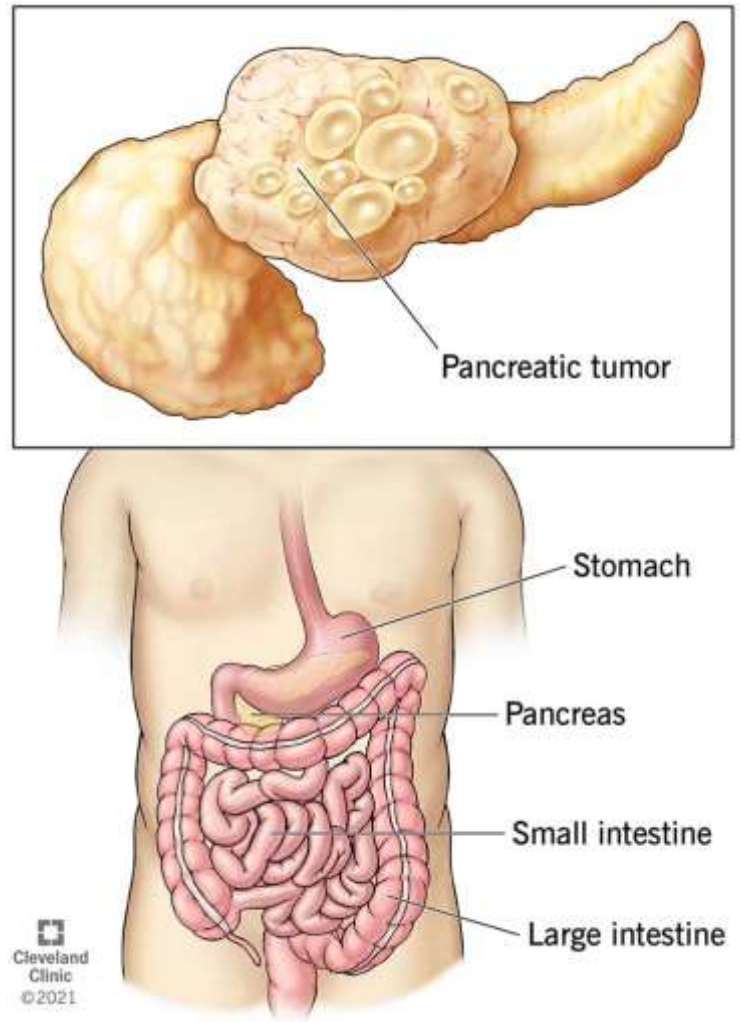
- **Traditional approach**

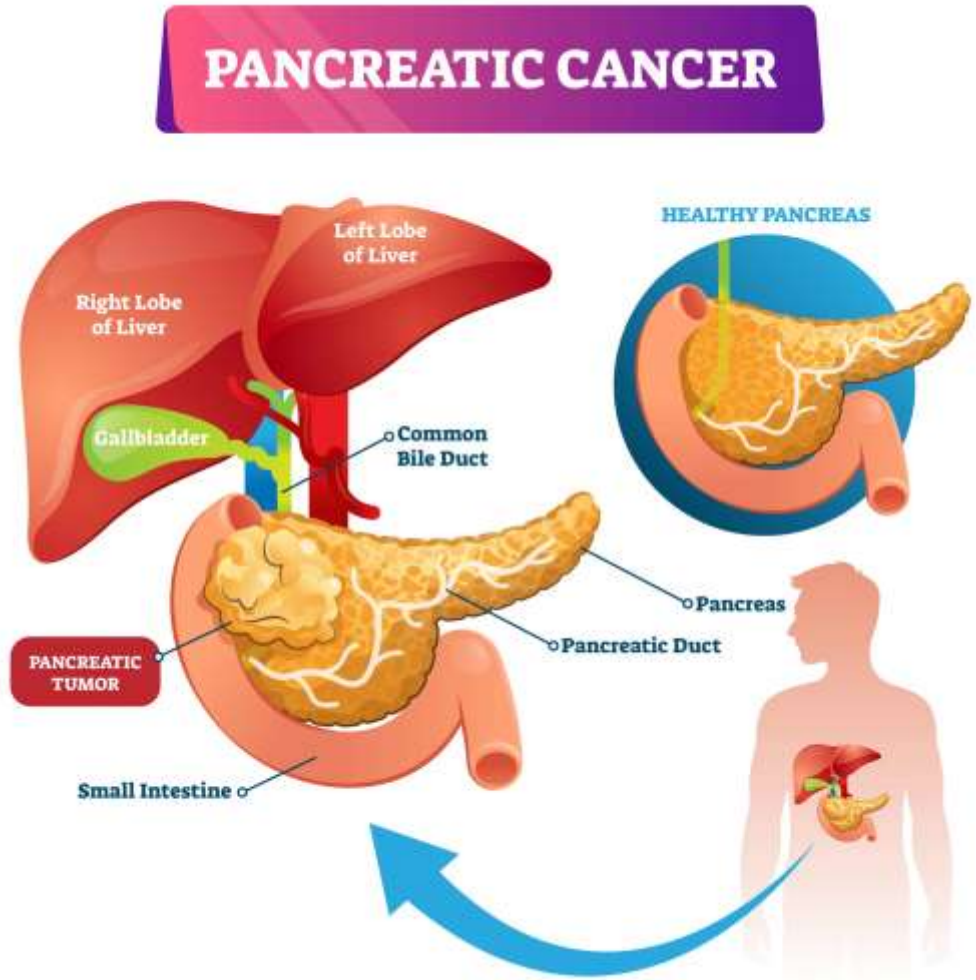
Cancer → broadly acting chemotherapy → healthy + cancer cells affected

- versus
- **Targeted therapy**

Cancer → identify molecular driver → inhibit specific signalling pathway → suppress tumour growth

- **What is Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma?**
- The **pancreas / अग्न्याशय** is located behind the stomach and performs both:
- **Exocrine function → digestive enzymes**
Endocrine function → hormones such as insulin and glucagon
- **Pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC)** arises from cells associated with the pancreatic ductal system and is the dominant form of pancreatic cancer.
- **Metastatic cancer** means:
- **Primary tumour in pancreas → cancer cells spread → distant organs/tissues**
- Hence, metastatic PDAC is an advanced-stage disease.


Pancreatic tumor
Stomach
Pancreas
Small intestine
Large intestine
Cleveland Clinic
©2021


PANCREATIC CANCER
Left Lobe of Liver
Right Lobe of Liver
Gallbladder
Common Bile Duct
HEALTHY PANCREAS
Pancreas
Pancreatic Duct
PANCREATIC TUMOR
Small Intestine

Phase	Main purpose
Pre-clinical	Laboratory/animal studies
Phase I	Safety, tolerability, dosage
Phase II	Preliminary efficacy + safety
Phase III	Large-scale comparison to establish efficacy/safety
Regulatory approval	Regulator assesses evidence
Phase IV	Post-marketing surveillance

- **Consider the following statements:**
  - Daraxonrasib is a RAS-targeted therapy.
  - KRAS belongs to the RAS family.
  - Daraxonrasib was approved by the U.S. FDA for metastatic pancreatic adenocarcinoma under specified eligibility conditions.
  - FDA approval automatically constitutes marketing approval for the same drug in India.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- **A. 1 and 2 only**

B. 1, 2 and 3 only
C. 2, 3 and 4 only
D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Word of the day

Impetuous: characterised by undue haste and lack of thought or deliberation

Synonyms: impulsive, adventurous, fearless

Usage: His impetuous decision to quit his job surprised everyone.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/impetuous

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪmpetʃuəs/

Thank you