

**DIA, DEOGHAR IAS ACADEMY**

***Daily News Feed***

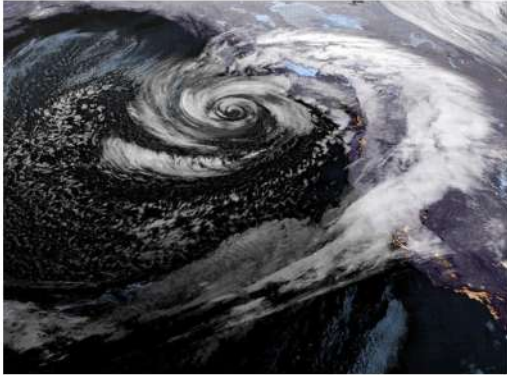
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***01.01.2025***

**Sabaijor Complex, Near Jamunajor Pul, Castair Town  
Deoghar, Mob:-9162500508**

**Team DIA Wishes you a very prosperous and successful HAPPY NEW YEAR**



Between 1981 and 2010, the number of category five cyclones on the Saffir-Simpson scale rose 40%. REUTERS

## Intensity of cyclones has gone up in past four decades: data

**Agence France-Presse**  
PARIS

The number of tropical cyclones each year has not risen over the past four decades but their intensity has, according to an analysis of international databases that confirms the projections of climatologists.

Since 1980 there have been an annual average of 47 tropical cyclones – also called hurricanes and typhoons – according to the database agencies recognised by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and coordinated by the U.S. Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

While that annual frequency has remained relatively constant, the intensity of the cyclones has increased between the 30 years from 1981 to 2010 and the last decade. Their average maximum wind speed has increased to 192 from 182 kilometres per hour – a five per cent increase. Between 1981 and 2010, around one in 10 tropical cyclones surpassed 250 kph, but that figure has increased to 1.4 in 10 in the last decade. That is a 40% increase in the number of the most devastating, category five cyclones on the Saffir-Simpson scale.

These figures support the conclusions of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which show that climate change is expected to increase the number of category four and five cyclones. "If one can assume climate change is responsible for these trends, make no mistake, the humanitarian catastrophes generated by cyclones are largely due to poverty, vulnerability and a lack of protection for the affected populations," Robert Vautard, a climatologist and top IPCC official, said.



# Indian start-ups look for promising new year

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian start-up ecosystem experienced a roller-coaster ride in 2024, characterised by a slight-yet-concerning decline in funding activity and a shift in investor sentiment, alongside a silver lining with several startups achieving unicorn status.

Despite facing global economic challenges, India's start-ups showcased remarkable resilience, adeptly navigating changing market conditions, while continuing to attract investments.

According to data from Tracxn, Indian start-ups raised a total of \$30.4 billion throughout 2024, a 6.5% dip from the \$32.5 billion secured in 2023.

Despite this dip, the In-



**Caution is key:** While the number of deals saw a quarterly rise of 10-20%, deal values slid significantly, says Arora. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

dian start-up ecosystem demonstrated resilience, with several companies achieving unicorn status this year. Noteworthy entrants to the unicorn club include Rapido, Ather, Perfos, Porter and Money View, highlighting ongoing innovation and investment interest in the sector.

The overall funding

trend reflects a cautious-yet-optimistic approach from investors, as they navigate a more selective funding environment, while still recognising the potential of high-growth start-ups in India.

A slight shift towards early-stage investments was evident during the year, with seed and Series

A rounds gaining traction, as investors sought to back innovative ideas with long-term potential.

Businesses that could demonstrate robust underlying unit economics found greater favour this year, Dushyant Singh, managing partner at Playbook Partners, noted.

## Gig enterprises

Gig economy, retail, and enterprise applications stood out as top-performing sectors, Tracxn said.

Quick commerce emerged as a high-growth sector, with 40 active companies, including unicorns Zepto, Blinkit, and Swiggy Instamart, and promising newcomers Dunzo, Swish, and Farmako.

In July, the government announced the abolishment of the angel tax on in-

vestments in start-ups to provide a more conducive environment for growth.

## Need boost

"By eliminating this tax, the government has provided a much-needed boost to investors and entrepreneurs, enabling greater liquidity and more flexible funding options for start-ups. However, fewer funding rounds, high operational costs, and infrastructure challenges remain ongoing factors that need attention," said Jeenendra Bhandari, chairman, JITO Incubation and Innovation Foundation (JIIF).

There was an encouraging rise in women entrepreneurs and founders from Tier 2 and 3 towns. Ninad Karpe from 100X.VC said the entrepreneurial culture has transcended its

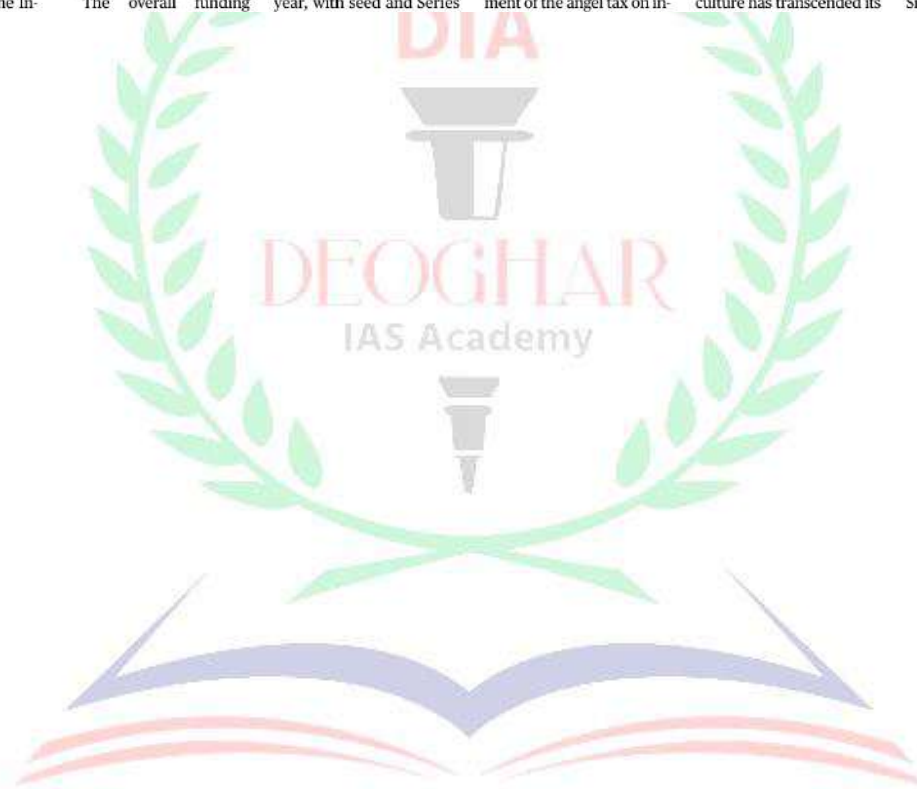
traditional boundaries.

Despite the positive trends, challenges persist.

Global economic uncertainties have a direct impact on investor sentiment and funding availability.

"While the number of deals saw a quarterly rise of 10-20%, deal values slid significantly. This reflects a cautious investment climate, with most funding rounds being either follow-ons by existing investors or bridge rounds aimed at extending the runway rather than driving growth. The focus has shifted from valuation-driven funding to sustainability and profitability," FAAD Capital CEO Aditya Arora said.

Growth in venture capital growth was mainly driven by a rise in mid and late-stage investment, Mr. Singh seconded.





The Tricolour at the Hyderabad House in Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

# India must protect and preserve its hard-won freedoms

The Tricolour must remind us of the composite culture which makes us a great democracy. We must resolve to never let our freedoms be robbed by authoritarian arrogance or allow fomented hatred to undermine the unity of the Indian people. That is the best tribute we can pay to our flag

## Manmohan Singh

*Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh passed away at the age of 92 on December 26. In this article, dated August 15, 2022, Mr. Singh warns Indian citizens to hold as precious the unity, freedom and diversity which makes India a truly unique democracy.*

**T**he world's largest democracy is soon to become the most populous country on earth. Therefore, the celebration of 75 years of Independence brings a special responsibility to set global standards in the protection and the promotion of individual and collective freedoms. While every Indian will proudly salute the flag as it flies high, the Tricolour must also remind us of the composite culture which makes us a uniquely great democracy in the world. On this historic occasion, we must resolve to never let our freedoms be robbed by authoritarian arrogance or allow fomented hatred to undermine the unity of the Indian people. That is the best tribute we can pay to our flag.

### A unity that is precious

India emerged from the chokehold of colonial rule to build a nation from a wide scatter of British-ruled territories and princely States. This unity did not magically materialise overnight. It was the freedom struggle, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and led by the Indian National Congress, which united Indians across the land to seek an end to foreign rule. This movement united Indians across multiple identities of language, religion, caste, gender and social status. That unity is precious to India and should not be frittered away through communally divisive, linguistically chauvinist, callously casteist and gender insensitive campaigns that will fragment the Indian identity. Such ploys may pay temporary political dividends, by setting Indians against Indians, but they will create craters on

India's path to progress as a great nation.

We were robbed of our riches by colonial rule and began our life after Independence as a poor developing country. We rose from that level to become one of the world's leading economies, whose growth is essential to the stability of the global economy. The policy of economic liberalisation, initiated in 1991, had a galvanising effect on our economic growth. At the same time, poverty reduction and the bridging of economic inequalities became a cardinal principle of public policy. As we pursue the path of inclusive economic growth, we should not permit only a select few among India's business leaders to reap the benefits of prosperity while income gaps keep widening.

### Flag divisive politics

Jobless growth is not a safe bet for any economy. Unemployment not only does not permit the optimal use of our human resources but also creates the breeding ground for social discord and divisive politics. As we move ahead towards the next 25 years of independent India, we must aim to optimally utilise the demographic dividend of a young population through education, skilling, suitable employment and support to young entrepreneurs and innovators. This requires easy mobility across the country for education and employment. Communal and linguistic barriers will hinder such mobility and adversely impact growth. Captains of Indian industry must recognise this danger and raise their voice for national unity, not remain mute spectators when divisive politics are posing a threat to the economy.

### Uphold scientific tradition

India adopted excellence in science as a path to progress since the early years of Independence. The national science policy was forward looking. Great institutions of scientific learning and

research were established. India's various institutes of technology have won world renown, with many of their graduates leading global enterprises of repute. Our space, oceanography and nuclear programmes have placed us in a select group of nations whose scientific prowess and technological excellence are respectfully acknowledged by the whole world. It would be unfortunate if our scientific institutions, universities and research bodies are undermined through the induction of sub-optimal leadership, whose given mandate is to pursue cultural revivalism at the cost of academic integrity. India has had a proud scientific tradition since ancient times, but that should not become the camouflage for pseudo-science that brings discredit to our scientific community.

In the comity of nations, India won respect for adopting principled positions, opposing colonial rule, leading the Non-Aligned Movement when two power blocs were seeking global domination, espousing human rights and promoting the cause of peace. Our relations with most of our neighbours were cordial. Even when we had conflicts with some, we tried to build bridges of understanding to enable peaceful co-existence. We need to maintain these positions, even as the world witnesses new conflicts and alliances. It is essential for us to be regarded as a reliable and respected friend in most countries of the world, but especially in South Asia. We should not let our foreign policy wobble through dependence on personalised gestures for the camera but follow clear-headed initiatives through wise leadership supported by able diplomats.

### Well-being of the young

India must focus on enhancing the health, education and skilling of young persons. The recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) reminds us that stunting, under-nourishment and anaemia continue to afflict a large percentage of

our children and women in the reproductive age group. We need to ensure that the nutrition-specific programmes deliver, even as we advance nutrition-sensitive policies in other sectors, especially water and sanitation.

COVID-19 revealed several weaknesses in our health system. From disease surveillance to provision of health care, we need to strengthen the capacity of health services. There are marked differences in the capacity and performance of health systems across different States. It is essential that States invest more in health and also that centrally sponsored programmes aim to provide greater support to States whose health indicators are lagging. Providing needed health services to all persons, with adequate financial protection, must be the goal of universal health coverage. We must achieve this uniformly across the whole country.

### For the citizen to ponder over

As a young boy of 14, I experienced both the exhilaration of newly gained independence as well as the painful tragedies that marred the country's partition. I hoped that India would grow strong as a nation without ever again having to experience such discord. Today, I am proud of what India has achieved and am optimistic about the future of this great nation. However, I am also worried about the sectarian slogans and communal slurs that are vitiating social harmony and dividing the people. Alongside, there is also a weakening of institutions which must safeguard democratic freedoms, uphold norms of good governance and shield electoral politics from the onslaught of money power and co-opted state agencies. It is for the citizens of India to protect and preserve the hard won gains of our freedom. Let each one of us reflect on that duty as we raise and salute our flag.

*Dr. Manmohan Singh was Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014.*

# Are former Prime Ministers mandated memorials?

What was the Congress party's demand with respect to the funeral and memorial of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh? Is there any rule regarding memorials for former PMs?

**Vijaita Singh**

## The story so far:

**F**ormer Prime Minister Manmohan Singh passed away on December 26. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) declared seven days of State mourning and announced a state funeral for the dignitary. Mr. Singh was cremated at the Nigambodh Ghat in central Delhi, a first for any former PM. The Congress party said it was an "insult" that a separate place was not allocated by the government for the funeral of the former PM. The Congress party demanded that a memorial be built at the designated place where the cremation took place.

## Is there a rule related to memorials?

While guidelines exist for State funerals, there is no specific rule or government order regarding allocation of space for

memorials for former PMs. According to constitutional expert P.D.T. Achary, there was a departure in the case of Mr. Singh. "As far as I know, there is no such rule. The convention is that former PMs have been cremated at designated places and in this case there is a departure. They cremated him at a place where anybody can be cremated even a common man. In our country though everyone is equal before the law, in society, a former PM has a status and especially a person like Manmohan Singh who was also globally respected," Mr. Achary said.

## What has been the trend in the past?

Except PM Vishwanath Pratap Singh, all other former PMs have memorials dedicated to them, majorly in Delhi and other parts of the country.

P. V. Narasimha Rao got a memorial in his name at Ekta Sthal in Delhi in 2015, 10 years after his death in 2004. In Delhi, the

samadhi of Jawaharlal Nehru is known as Shanti Vana, Lal Bahadur Shastri's memorial is known as Vijay Ghat, that of Charan Singh's is Kisan Ghat, Indira Gandhi's memorial is at Shakti Sthal, and Rajiv Gandhi's memorial is known as Vir Bhumi. In 2013, due to paucity of space, the Congress government decided that all memorials will be built at Smriti Sthal.

## Who maintains the memorials?

According to a reply furnished by the Culture Ministry on December 11, 2012 in Lok Sabha, the memorials of various personalities are maintained by the respective State Governments and local municipalities. "However, the Central Government through the Ministry of Urban Development is looking after the upkeep and maintenance of the Samadhis adjacent to Rajghat, New Delhi, Morarji Desai's Samadhi at Abhay Ghat at Ahmedabad and the Rajiv Gandhi

Memorial at Sriperumbudur (Tamil Nadu)," the reply stated.

## What is the Congress's demand?

On December 27, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting the Union Government to identify a designated place where the last rites of the departed leader could be held and a memorial built thereafter. Despite the request, the cremation was held at Nigambodh Ghat on December 28. Following an uproar, the MHA released a press statement on December 27 at 11.45 pm. It stated that the government received a request to allocate space for a memorial for the former Prime Minister. "Immediately after the Cabinet meeting, Home Minister Amit Shah communicated to Congress President Kharge and the family of Late Dr Manmohan Singh that the Government will allocate space for the memorial. In the meanwhile cremation and other formalities can happen because a Trust has to be formed and space has to be allocated to it," the statement said. Till December 30, the memorial for Mr. Singh had not been announced. Atal Bihari Vajpayee who passed on August 16, 2018 was cremated at Smriti Sthal, and a memorial came up at the same place within 45 days. The memorial was funded by the "Atal Smriti Nyas Society". It was built at a total cost of ₹10.51 crore which was borne entirely by the society.

## THE GIST

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# The nature of dissent in the Indian judiciary

The dissents of the U.S. Supreme Court are largely based on the political inclination of judges, who are direct appointees of the President, confirmed by the Senate. Indian judicial dissents have, however, varied from political, to social to purely intellectual disagreements

## LETTER & SPIRIT

Shivani Vij

**D**issent is an important facet of a true democracy. While this is true for citizens in the republic, or parliamentarians in the legislature, it is also true for judges of a constitutional court. India and the U.S. are two strong democracies with opinionated judiciaries. Though dissents in the Indian Supreme Court (SC) are as powerful as the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS), their reasons differ.

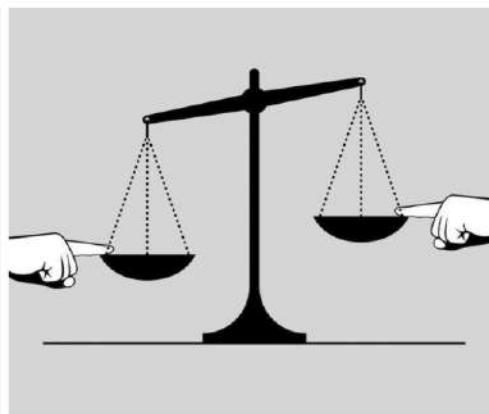
The dissents of SCOTUS are largely based on the political inclination of judges, who are direct appointees of the President, confirmed by the Senate. Justice Stephen Breyer, for instance, an appointee by the Democrats, has shown himself to be pro-affirmative action, pro-abortion and against capital punishment. His dissent in *Glossip versus Gross* (2015) held that capital punishment violated the Eighth Amendment of the Bill of Rights, which prevented inhumane and degrading punishment. Justice Samuel Alito, on the other hand, a Republican appointee, is both anti-abortion and anti-gay rights. His dissent in *Obergefell versus Hodges* (2015) reasoned that the Constitution did not address the right to marry of same-sex couples and therefore, the courts could not grant it.

Indian judicial dissents have, however, varied from political, to social to purely intellectual disagreements.

### Political dissent

Unlike the U.S., Indian judges are not appointees of the ruling party and are selected through a collegium of senior judges. Their decisions do not have a similar political undertone and may or may not associate with the view of the ruling party that was in power when they were appointed.

In the case of *ADM Jabalpur* (1976), four out of five judges held that the enforcement of fundamental rights,



ISTOCKPHOTO

including Article 21, remained suspended during the national emergency under Article 359. The majority judgment was the politically sound one at the time.

Justice H.R. Khanna, however, withstood the political pressure of the time. He dissented and reasoned that if Article 21 remained suspended, there would be no recourse to deprivation of life and liberty, albeit in emergency. His resolve to keep 'rights' intact amidst a turbulent India, strengthened his voice on the Bench and also became the law later by a constitutional amendment to Article 359.

Another example of this could be found in the *P.V. Narasimha Rao* (1998) case, where the question was if accepting bribes for voting in Parliament was covered under parliamentary privilege, and whether it enjoyed immunity from prosecution. The majority said yes, but Justices S.C. Agarwal and A.S. Anand

dissented. The majority view reflected the political atmosphere at the time and was favourable to the ruling Congress party. However, the dissent endured and later became the view of the court in *Sita Soren* (2023), where the SC overruled such an expanded view of immunity.

### Dissent which is social

A dissent could also reflect a different social understanding or implication of a legal issue. In *Shayara Bano* (2017), the SC dealt with the constitutionality of the 'triple talaq' as a form of divorce among the Sunnis in Islam. Justices J.S. Khehar and Abdul Nazeer dissented with the majority, which struck down triple talaq for violating the rights of life of Muslim women. The two judges reasoned that the triple talaq was an integral part of the Sunni personal law and not violative of constitutional rights. Further, it was not

for the courts to determine its constitutionality, since it is only the legislature that can intervene in socially unacceptable practices in different religions.

The decision in *Aishah Shifa* (2022) also displayed a discordant understanding of religion. This case did not have a dissent but had two separate opinions. The question was whether the State could prohibit Muslim girls from wearing a hijab to school by enforcing a universal dress code. Justice Hemant Gupta was of the view that secularism permitted the State to do so since religion was a private affair, which had no space in classrooms of a State-run school. Justice Dhulia, on the other hand, disagreed and considered 'diversity', 'plurality' and 'tolerance' as values underpinning the Constitution. This disagreement stemmed from different understandings of secularism.

### Intellectual critique

A dissent could also be plainly intellectual, like that of Justice B.V. Nagarathna in *Lata Prasad Vaish* (2024), the industrial alcohol case. Here nine judges of the SC determined whether States have the legislative competence to tax 'industrial alcohol', or does only the Centre have the authority. Disagreeing with eight judges, Justice Nagarathna said that States could not tax industrial alcohol. The disagreement was on the interpretation of the term 'intoxicating liquor' under Entry 8 of List 2 in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. The majority believed that this legislative entry was broad enough to include liquor unfit for human consumption, and therefore industrial alcohol. States could therefore tax it. This reasoning did not sit well with Justice Nagarathna, who opined that industrial alcohol is used for manufacturing purposes and cannot be subsumed within 'intoxicating liquor', which is liquor for human consumption. The difference of opinion was solely on the interpretation of the text of the Constitution—an intellectual one. Shivani Vij is a lawyer practising in Delhi.

## THE GIST

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# India among 25 nations with high religious restrictions

Pakistan, France, Israel, Nigeria, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives were also part of that list

## DATA POINT

### The Hindu Data Team

In an index measuring religion-related hostilities for 2022, India scored the highest among 198 nations, according to a report recently published by the Pew Research Center. A higher score on the social hostilities index (SHI) indicates greater levels of religion-related harassment, mob violence, terrorism, militant activity, and conflicts over religious conversions or the use of religious symbols and attire. India scored 9.3 on a scale of 10 on the SHI. Scores above 7.2 are considered 'very high'.

The report also assessed countries based on the government's restrictions on religion, using the government restrictions index (GRI). The GRI measures laws, policies, and actions that regulate or limit religious beliefs and practices. These include policies banning particular beliefs or practices, the unequal granting of benefits to certain religious groups, and bureaucratic rules requiring religious groups to register to access benefits. India had a 'high' GRI score of 6.4 out of 10 in 2022. Scores above 6.6 are classified as 'very high'.

**Chart 1** plots the GRI (horizontal axis) and SHI (vertical axis) scores of 198 countries for 2022. The higher a country is on the chart, the more it experiences religion-related hostilities by non-government players. The farther to the right, the more government restrictions there are on religions.

Only 12% (25 countries) had 'high' or 'very high' GRI scores and SHI scores in 2022: India, Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt, Afghanistan, Israel, Libya, Palestinian territories, Ukraine, Bangladesh, France, Jordan, Iran, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Tunisia, Indonesia, Yemen, Laos, Nepal, Algeria, Maldives, and Armenia. In about

62% of the countries, including Canada and South Korea, the GRI and SHI scores were 'low' or 'moderate'. In 16% of the countries, the GRI was 'very high' or 'high', but the SHI was 'low' or 'moderate'; these include Cuba and China. In 10% of countries, the GRI was 'low' or 'moderate', but the SHI was 'high' or 'very high'. These include Brazil and the Philippines.

The number of countries with 'high' or 'very high' GRI scores rose to 59 (30% of 198 countries) in 2022 from 55 in 2021 (Chart 2). In 2007, when the index was started, only 40 nations (20%) had 'high' or 'very high' scores.

The number of countries with 'high' or 'very high' SHI scores rose to 45 (23% of all countries analysed) in 2022 from 43 countries in 2021 (Chart 3). In 2012, 65 countries had 'high' or 'very high' scores – the highest share (33%).

Harassment by governments – a broad measure encompassing verbal and physical pressure by authorities on religious groups – was among the most prevalent types of restrictions in 2022. It was reported in 186 of the 198 countries and territories studied (94%).

Government interference in worship was also widespread in 2022 and was reported in 170 countries and territories (86%). This includes policies and actions that disrupt religious activities, such as withholding permission to worship or denying access to places of worship. It also covers restrictions on religious practices and rituals not directly tied to worship, such as burial practices.

**Chart 4** shows the number of countries where there was government harassment of religious groups and government interference in worship.

The report said that government restrictions and social hostilities often align closely, i.e., the lower the score on one index, the lower the score on the other too generally, and vice-versa.

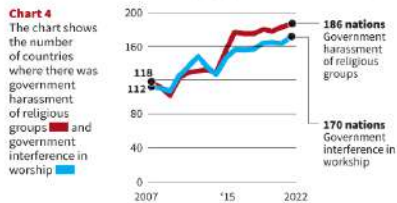
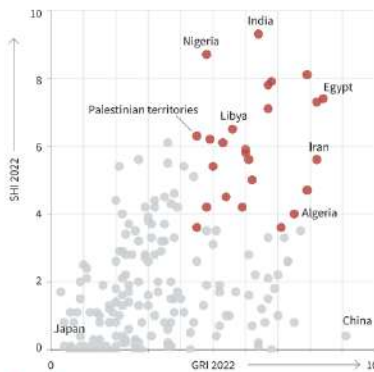
## Shades of intolerance

The data for the charts were sourced from the Pew Research Center's report titled "Government restrictions on religion stayed at peak levels globally in 2022"

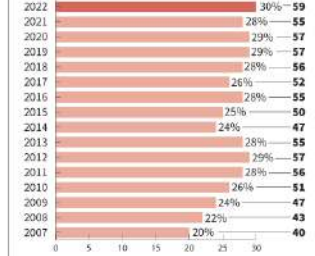


**Aftermath:** A Muslim man watches from his house after a shop was demolished in communal violence during a Hindu religious procession in New Delhi's Jahangirpuri on April 20, 2022

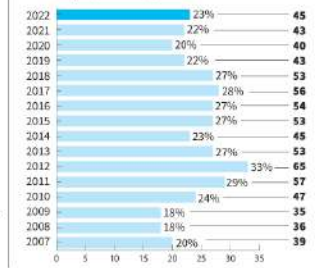
**Chart 1:** The GRI (horizontal axis) and SHI (vertical axis) scores of 198 countries for the year 2022. The higher a country on the chart, the more the religion-related hostilities by non-government players



**Chart 2:** The share and number of countries (in bold) with high or very high GRI score over the years



**Chart 3:** The share and number of countries (in bold) with high or very levels of religion-related hostilities (SHI) over the years



# 2024 — the politics of singularity and beyond

The year 2024 began with the inauguration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, which was a culmination, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said at the event, of a long anticipation, “We have waited for 500 years,” he said. As 2025 begins, we see the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat facing resistance from co-travellers of the Sangh Parivar for emphasising the singularity of Ayodhya for Hindutva. “The Ram temple was a matter of faith and Hindus felt that it should be built... Raising issues about some new sites out of hate and enmity is unacceptable,” Mr. Bhagwat had said on December 20, 2024, responding to several claims over more religious places. Many allies of the Parivar questioned this premise soon after, and asserted that a reclamation of all alienated Hindu sites was non-negotiable. What we are witnessing is a conflict between the Sangh Parivar’s desire to stabilise itself as the natural platform of governance and the power of the politics it created which is increasingly not in its control. It is the politics of anticipation, which ignores culmination.

Parties that and leaders who mobilise people to question the existing order through civil disobedience, and even sabotage, want order, discipline and hierarchy as soon as the set goal is achieved. The founding leaders of the Republic said, as soon as Independence was won, that there would be no place for civil disobedience any more. But then, new political ideas and new political entrepreneurship come into play, and new movements take shape.

## On anticipation

Looking forward is a more evocative act for the human mind than looking back, psychological experiments reported in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* suggest. People relate more intensely to emotional events that are expected in the future than those that happened in the past. Anticipation of something – it could even be a negative thing – is more engaging than retrospection about a past event. But for the human bias for anticipation in comparison with retrospection, there would be no yearning for progress, and there would be no politics or religion. It is anticipation that drives political and religious action (for instance, Christians wait for the second coming of Jesus), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has used this psychology to the maximum benefit. *Ram Lalla Ayenge, Bhavya Mandir Banayenge* (roughly translated as, Infant Ram will arrive, the majestic temple will be built) was the slogan of the Ayodhya movement; the slogan that catapulted it as the dominant party in 2014 was ‘*Achhey Din Aaney Waley Hain - Good days are arriving*’. Anticipation is set against the backdrop of retrospection in political campaigns



Varghese K. George

– what is coming is to reclaim, avenge or/and change the past. The intense emotional energy of the masses behind the Ayodhya agitation was built on an extraordinary anticipation-retrospection frame. The arc of time it proposed to cover was five centuries into the past and a millennium into the future, in contrast with the five-year terms of governments. Speaking at the inauguration of the temple, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it was the beginning of an epoch of 1,000 years.

## Claim of singularity, election results

The temple inauguration was suggested as a moment of singularity of space, time and community. “The temple has been built where we had resolved to build it,” Yogi Adityanath said, alluding to another slogan that had animated its supporters since the 1980s – “*mandir wahin banayenge*”. This meant the temple would be built at the exact spot believed to be the birthplace of Lord Rama, replacing a masjid that stood there. Ayodhya was to be to the Hindu nation what Mecca is to Muslims, and Jerusalem is to the Jews and Christians. “All roads lead to Ayodhya,” said Yogi Adityanath. “All minds are united in the thought of Sri Ram.” Now that its political power is consolidated, the RSS possibly wants to bring the revolution to an end, and establish order. “There is no need to look for a *shiving* in every mosque,” Mr. Bhagwat had already said in 2022.

But this claim of singularity was challenged, during the 2024 general election by a new anticipation that swelled among the subaltern caste groups. The fear that the BJP might use any massive parliamentary majority to roll back the reservation policy of the country by amending the Constitution spread like wildfire in the heartland of Hindutva, and stopped the BJP short of a majority in the Lok Sabha. The retrospective component in this context is the history of caste oppression. A temple was meant to unite all minds, but the fear of reclamation of the old social order through an end to reservation drove many subaltern voters away from the party.

Though the BJP tripped on the caste quota question in the general election, it remained largely in control of the narrative in 2024. The party’s expansive anticipation-retrospection plane that spans centuries, allows it to sidestep the ‘promise vs performance’ paradigm that traps incumbents between two consecutive elections. All Opposition parties are caught in an extremely unfavourable anticipation-retrospection frame – for instance, a plurality of voters in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar appear to be fearful of the return of the Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal, respectively. Looking forward, and looking back far enough, the voters could be inclined towards the BJP than its opponents, and this is

particularly true for the Congress. Though the party has been out of power for 10 years in Delhi and more in States such as Gujarat, it is still bearing the burden of its earlier decades in power. Its retrospective political capital, as the party of the freedom struggle, has long been exhausted, and its call for a national caste census has created no intense anticipation among the target group. In the retrospective frame for the Congress, voters see the Emergency, the 1962 war with China, and the dynasty, but not the agricultural revolution or the communication revolution. Though 2024 was a bad year for incumbents worldwide, the BJP and Mr. Modi fared quite well. Anti-incumbency is stronger against the Opposition parties, it appears. The BJP won a third consecutive term at the Centre, but with reduced strength, and it has managed to stay in power in the two crucial States of Maharashtra and Haryana, in the recent Assembly elections.

## Parties and their challenges

The capacity of the RSS/BJP to sketch out a retrospection-anticipation plane comes from a willingness to constantly introspect. The BJP recovered from the setback in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra in the general election and launched a new campaign of Hindu unity – “*batenge to katenge*, i.e., divided (along caste lines), you will be slaughtered”, and “*ek hein to safe hei*, i.e., you are safe when you are united”. It went on an overdrive to reassure the OBC/Dalit voters that reservation would never cease. Meanwhile, its opponents lulled themselves in triumphalism and complacency after the general election and failed to interpret the results correctly in order to build on them. The party that won the 2024 elections went back to its constituents in panic mode; and the ones that lost went into a prolonged season of self-congratulation. The setback to the BJP in the general election, in hindsight, was more an irritant in the long arc of Hindutva than a rupture.

But that does not mean the BJP can take its popularity or success for granted. Hinduism, unlike monotheistic religions, promotes multiplicity and circularity and has an innate resistance to singularity – of faith, leader or even god. For the Sangh Parivar, the challenge at the beginning of 2025 – which is also the 100th year of the RSS – lies in taming the mutinous anticipation among its supporters who are searching for new sites to project it; and the anxiety among the subaltern social groups about its long-term plans for oneness. For the Congress, the challenge is to build a politics of anticipation, and shift the retrospection frame of the public to a favourable angle.

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The RSS does not want any more mandir-masjid disputes; however, the politics of anticipation is now autonomous





# COP29, climate finance and its optical illusion

**F**inance has been a major point of climate change negotiation since the launching of the United Nations-led climate change negotiations in 1991, producing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 1992. Article 4 (7) of the UNFCCC clearly says “that the extent to which the developing country Party will be fulfilling their climate action commitments is contingent on how much finance and technology they get from developed country Parties”.

The Paris Agreement retains, in Article 9(i), the provision relating to finance, binding the developed countries to mobilise finance for the developing countries. The sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has described finance, capacity-building and a transfer of technology as critical enablers of climate action in developing countries in the backdrop of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions responsible for 1.1° Celsius of warming (above what it was in 1850-1900) in 2011-20.

## Falling short

In pursuance of their responsibility, the developed countries agreed in 2009 that they would collectively mobilise \$100 billion a year by 2020. The \$100 billion mark, met by the developed countries only in 2022, does not match the growing needs of climate finance corresponding to the developing countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

Second, the mark has been considered in many reports to be well-short of estimated finance to fund the actions needed across different sectors to keep the average global temperature rise within 1.5° Celsius by the end of this century. The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) meeting at Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024, was meant for the Parties to the Paris Agreement to have a New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), replacing a \$100 billion floor and laying a new floor taking into account the needs and the



**Anwar Sadat**

teaches international environmental law at the Indian Society of International Law

The scale and the quality of climate finance need to be raised, with sincere efforts being made to have a coherent climate finance architecture in place

priorities of developing countries to tackle the climate crisis.

In response to persistent demand by all the major negotiating groups belonging to the developing south that the developed north mobilise \$1.3 trillion by 2030, the developed north agreed to release only \$300 billion per year by 2035. The \$300 billion mark ignores the estimation by the UNFCCC's Standing Committee on Finance (SFC) relating to the annual financial needs of developing countries, which it derived from their NDCs. As in the SFC's estimation, the financial needs stand at between \$455 billion-\$584 billion. Even these figures cover around half of the 5,760 costed and non-costed needs identified by 98 developing countries in their NDCs (Third Report of the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance, November, 2024).

The decision on the NCQG makes reference to the financial needs of those particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change such as the least developed countries (LDC) and small island developing states (SIDS). But the NCQG does not make minimum allocation floors for the LDCs and SIDS.

During the meeting, the Alliance of Small Island States demanded the allocation of \$39 billion for SIDS while the LDC demanded at least \$220 billion for them. It appears that the first-ever Global Stocktake (GST) in consonance with the Paris Agreement in 2023 also failed in influencing the cause of loss and damage concern in the NCQG. In the GST estimation, economic costs are estimated to reach \$447 billion-\$894 billion per year by 2030.

## India and the NCQG

India's perspective on the delivery of climate finance from the developed north to the developing south is derived from equity frame expressed in the principle of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capability. It is notable that India joined the Montreal Protocol to protect the ozone layer from

further depletion, which led to setting up of a multilateral fund of \$240 million, including an additional \$80 million for use in India, China and other eligible low-income Parties. During COP29, India specified that the new floor should mobilise \$1.3 trillion by 2030, of which at least \$600 billion should come in the form of grants and concessional resources. On other major agenda items, mitigation work programme, just transition work programme and GST, India's representative called for an adequate provisioning of finance and other means of implementation to fulfil them. India's submission of NDC next year is contingent on a decision relating to finance (Earth Negotiations Bulletin-, November 22, 2024).

India has expressed its extreme disappointment on the adoption of the NCQG in its present form, shape – which was without its consultation. It made serious objections against the COP29 presidency and the Secretariat in the way it was finalised – which is at the expense of trust, collaboration and in contravention of the UNFCCC's norm, on an issue which is a creation of the developed north but which affects developing countries more. India outrightly rejected the NCQG. It also added that this NCQG expects the developing world to mobilise resources. In India's view, the paltry sum will influence the ambition and the implementation of its NDC.

## What the developed north must do

The pith and substance of the Paris Agreement are the NDCs. In expecting the developing south to bring out more ambitious NDCs relating to the mitigation of greenhouse gases and implementing the same effectively, it is equally important on the part of the developed north to raise their scale and quality of climate finance and also make sincere efforts in putting in place a coherent climate finance architecture.

This will ensure adequate, directly accessible and affordable climate finance to the developing countries.

IAS Academy





A Brazilian security officer during an operation to combat illegal mining in the Amazon. REUTERS

## Amazon caps brutal year of fires, drought

Associated Press

2024 was a brutal year for the Amazon rainforest, with rampant wildfires and extreme drought ravaging large parts of a biome that's a critical counterweight to climate change.

A warming climate fed drought that in turn fed the worst year for fires since 2008. And those fires contributed to deforestation, with authorities suspecting some fires were set to more easily clear land to run cattle.

The Amazon is twice the size of India and sprawls across eight countries and one territory, storing vast amounts of carbon dioxide that would otherwise warm the planet.

It has about 20% of the world's freshwater and astounding biodiversity, including 16,000 known tree species. But governments have historically viewed it as an area to be exploited, with little regard for sustainability or the rights of its Indigenous peoples.

"The fires and drought experienced in 2024 across the Amazon rainforest could be ominous indicators that we are reaching the long-feared ecological tipping point," said Andrew Miller, advocacy director at Amazon Watch, an organisation that works to protect the rainforest.

There were some bright spots. Forest loss in Brazil's Amazon, home to the largest swath of this rainforest, dropped 30.6% compared to the previous year, the lowest level of deforestation in nine years.

The improvement under leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva contrasted with deforestation that hit a 15-year high under Lula's predecessor, far-right leader Jair Bolsonaro, who prioritised agribusiness expansion and weakened environmental agencies.

In July, Colombia reported historic lows in deforestation in 2023. The country's environment minister warned that 2024's figures may not be as promising as a significant rise in

**The Amazon has about 20% of the world's freshwater and astounding biodiversity, including 16,000 known tree species. But governments have historically viewed it as an area to be exploited**

deforestation had already been recorded by July due to dry weather caused by El Niño, a weather phenomenon that warms the central Pacific. Illegal economies continue to drive deforestation in the Andean nation.

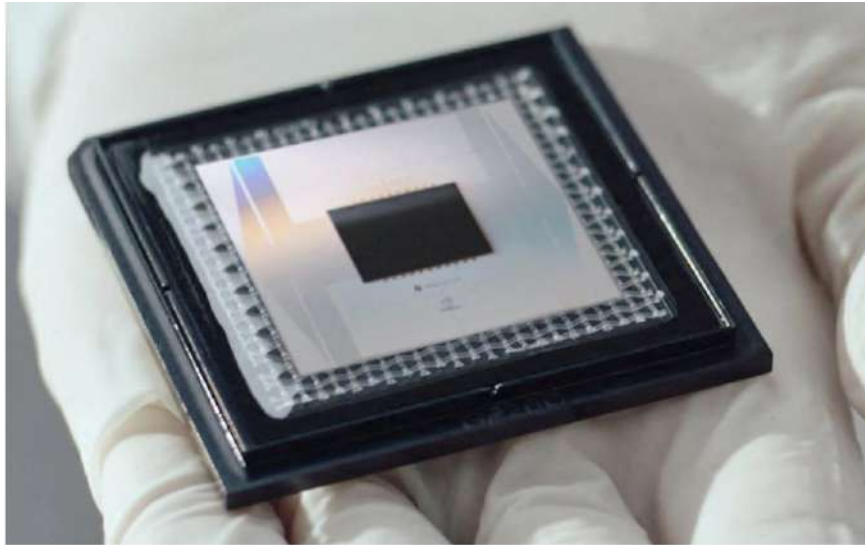
"It's impossible to overlook the threat posed by organised crime and the economies they control to Amazon conservation," said Bram Ebus, a consultant for Crisis Group in Latin America. "Illegal gold mining is expanding rapidly, driven by soaring global prices, and the revenues of illicit economies often surpass state budgets allocated to combat them."

In Brazil, swaths of the rainforest were draped in smoke in August from fires raging across the Amazon, Cerrado savannah, Pantanal wetland, and the state of São Paulo. Fires are traditionally used for deforestation and to manage pastures, and those human-made blazes were largely responsible for igniting the wildfires.

For a second year, the Amazon River fell to desperate lows, leading some countries to declare a state of emergency. In Brazil, one of the Amazon River's main tributaries dropped to its lowest level ever recorded.

It was the worst year for Amazon fires since 2005, according to nonprofit Rainforest Foundation U.S. Between January and October, 5.1 million hectares of Brazil's Amazon burned. Bolivia had a record number of fires in the first 10 months of the year.





Google Quantum AI's Willow chip. ©OCCULTURE/ISTOCK

# Willow is a small chip for Google but a quantum leap for computing

A major impediment to realising quantum computers is the fragility of quantum states. Qubits collapse at the slightest disturbance. This limits the amount of time for which qubits can hold information, how error-free a quantum computer can keep its calculations, and how well it can be scaled

S. Srinivasan

Google recently unveiled its latest quantum processor, named 'Willow'. The research team that built it also tested it, and the results were published in *Nature*. They created a great level of buzz about the realisability of quantum computers that could tackle many practical problems.

The results also kicked up intriguing debates about explaining the power of quantum information processing and how they could solve problems that even the most powerful classical computers struggle with.

## Bit versus qubit

Computers process information stored in an array of 0s and 1s. In classical computers, some physical system with two possible states is used to represent these 0s and 1s. These physical systems are called bits. A common example is an electric circuit that allows two levels of voltage, one called 0 and the other called 1. A classical computer is a collection of bits together, and the information flowing in and out of bits is controlled and manipulated by physical operations called gate operations. For example, an 'AND' gate accepts two inputs, each either 0 or 1, and outputs 1 if both inputs are 1 and 0 for any other combination of inputs.

A quantum bit, or qubit, has two distinct states representing 0 and 1. More importantly, a qubit can be in states that are also combinations of 0 and 1. This feature is called quantum superposition. Classical bits can't do this. Because of this ability, each qubit needs two distinct numbers to represent the contributions of 0 and 1 respectively, in the qubit's state. If we have two bits, we need two numbers, one for each bit, to represent the state of the collection. With two quantum bits, we need four numbers to represent the state. For 10 bits, we need 10 numbers to represent the state of the collection. For ten qubits, we need  $2^{10}$  (1,024) numbers.

This exponential growth in the information required to represent qubits' states and the superposition of states are the major reasons why quantum computers could be more efficient and powerful than classical computers. Like a classical computer, a quantum computer is also a collection of qubits and a host of physical operations called quantum gates that change the states of qubits to perform calculations.

## Difficult to isolate

A major impediment to realising quantum computers is the fragile nature of quantum states, specifically while classical bits are robust and long-lasting, qubits are fragile and collapse quickly at the slightest disturbance. This in turn limits the amount of time for which qubits can hold information, how errors free the quantum computer can keep its calculations, and how well a quantum

computer can be scaled.

It is difficult to isolate a physical gadget to avoid perturbations due to external noise. Therefore, computations are prone to errors. For example, when a bit is expected to represent 0, there is a small chance it may be in the state representing 1. This is called the bit flip error. Methods to identify and fix these errors are called error-correction protocols.

A single 0 is represented by three bits in the state 000 (corresponding to each bit in the state 0). If there is a bit flip error, the resulting state could be 100, 010, or 001 (depending on whether the first, second, or third bit is flipped). Similarly, 1 is represented as 111. If we need to encode 01 as the basic information, its true representation is 00011. Looking at the concatenated sequence in groups of three bits, the occurrence of 100, 010, 001, 011, 101, or 110, will mean an error has crept in. When three physical bits represent one logical digit, it is easy to figure out which bit has flipped and correct it suitably before the next step in the computation.

Similarly, one way to mitigate the effect of errors in a quantum computer is to correct them using additional qubits that keep track of errors creeping in during computations. This is a logical answer to the error problem. It is, however, unsuitable for qubits in superposed states. Creating exact copies of unknown superposed states is prohibited by the no-cloning theorem of quantum physics. On the other hand, error correction often requires redundancy, i.e., providing more qubits than what is needed to encode information. This makes it clear that more than one physical qubit is needed



Cryostat refrigerator for cooling quantum computing chips at Google's Quantum AI Lab in Santa Barbara, California. ©AP/ISTOCK

to represent a single logical qubit. (Qubits also have another type of error called phase flip error, which presents similar challenges to error correction.)

One effective method to detect and correct errors in a quantum computer without also violating the no-cloning theorem is called surface code. Here, engineers arrange an array of qubits on a grid. The qubits are grouped into two categories, namely data qubits and measurement qubits. While the error in data qubits is what we wish to identify and correct, any attempt to measure them will force them out of superposition, and whatever information they encode will be lost.

To avoid this, the surface code method provides the set of measurement qubits. These qubits are entangled with data qubits through suitable gate operations. (If two qubits are entangled, any measurement of one particle will instantaneously cause the other particle to lose its superposition state.) In this setup, the presence of errors in the data qubits is inferred by making suitable measurements of the measurement qubits while using the gates to prevent the data qubits from being affected, and thus correcting inconsistencies in data qubits.

## The error rate

According to Google, its new quantum processor, Willow, has significantly better error correction and is thus significantly faster than other quantum computers, not to mention classical computers as well. The researchers who developed it tested it by using it to solve a computationally hard problem.

Willow houses 105 physical qubits and operates at temperatures close to the theoretically possible lowest temperature (0 K; -273.15° C). Nearly half of these are data qubits, and the remaining are measurement qubits. The superconducting qubits are not strictly two-state systems. When performing gate operations, the physical system can get excited or 'leak' to states other than 0 and 1. These excited states can subsequently interfere with the computations and introduce errors. So a few qubits – i.e. the measurement qubits – are reserved to correct such leakage errors.

Coherence time is the duration over which an intended state (typically, superpositions) of a qubit can survive without being changed due to interactions with the environment or with other parts of the computer. The coherence time of data qubits on Willow is about 100 microseconds, which is more than the coherence time of the physical qubits. This is a consequence of the error correction protocols used. This in itself is an interesting result because it means the information-holding time can be improved by external manoeuvring.

The next milestone for researchers to achieve is to lower the error rate, calculated as the ratio of the number of qubit errors to the number of gate

operations – as they build ever-larger quantum computers with more physical qubits and more error correction operations. Google alone has progressed from 3 by 3 to 5 by 5 to 7 by 7 arrays of data qubits, and the error rate has decreased by more than half in each step.

What one expects for a collection of qubits on a circuit is that the error rate either remains the same or increases as the number of qubits is increased. That the error rate becomes smaller as more qubits are added is the below-the-threshold capability of Willow's architecture and operation. This is vital to achieving quantum processors with enough qubits that perform almost error-free computations of problems of practical relevance – the ultimate goal.

## No dead ends

The particular computationally difficult task with which Google tested Willow is called random circuit sampling (RCS). In the RCS task, Willow has to calculate the probability of occurrence of possible strings of 0s and 1s in the output when the quantum gates that act on the qubits are chosen randomly. If there is no noise, RCS is a computationally hard task, meaning that the number of calculations required to make the prediction increases exponentially with the input size.

Willow completed the RCS task for random gate operations realisable on Willow in a few minutes. The researchers estimated that the same task on the most powerful classical computer available today would take 10 septillion years (i.e. 1 followed by 24 zeroes). To compare, the universe's age in years is approximately 1 followed by 10 zeroes. It is plausible that classical computers running better algorithms may eventually match Willow's feat, although researchers are not aware of such improvements today.

Researchers are still a long way away from realising quantum processors of reasonable size to be useful in practical contexts. This said, it's only natural that Willow created the sort of buzz that it did. It has shown that the major issues in realising a reliable quantum computer can be addressed and surmounted, that they are not dead ends. The work of the Google team provides hope that quantum computers may soon help us unravel nature's mysteries and also solve computationally difficult problems in drug design, materials science, climate modelling, and optimisation, among others – all with deep societal impact.

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# 10 payloads of ISRO's POEM-4 module deployed successfully

**Hemanth C.S.**  
SRIHARIKOTA

The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) on Tuesday said that it had facilitated the successful establishment and operationalisation of 10 hosted payloads from non-government entities (NGEs) on board the POEM-4 module of the PSLV-C60/SpaDeX mission.

The mission was launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Monday.

"The mission that launched today, carried out in-orbit scientific experiments at an altitude of 350 km with a 55-degree inclination, utilizing the spent PS4 stage repurposed as the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM-4)," said IN-SPACe, which is the autonomous nodal agency under Department of Space to promote NGE's undertake space activities.

## Reducing entry barriers

"The PSLV Orbital Experiment Module is a practical solution deployed by ISRO that allows Indian startups, academic institutions, and research organizations to test their space technologies without the need to launch entire satellites. By



ISRO's SPADEX Mission successfully lifted off from Sriharikota on Monday.

making this platform accessible, we are reducing entry barriers and enabling a wider range of entities to contribute to the space sector," Pawan Goenka, Chairman, IN-SPACe, said.

"At IN-SPACe, our role is to create opportunities for such collaborations and ensure that India's private sector can grow alongside advancements in space technology. Missions like these will be instrumental in capacity building by enabling NGEs to get their payloads space qualified, thus augmenting their future satellite launch missions," he added.

In total, 24 PS4-Orbital Experiment Module payloads were deployed on board the PSLV-C60 SpaDeX mission to support a wide array of scientific and technological endeavours.



# India-Nepal joint military exercise begins

**Press Trust of India**  
KATHMANDU

The 18th edition of Exercise Surya Kiran, a joint military exercise between India and Nepal aimed at enhancing interoperability and fostering collaboration between the two nations' Armies, began on Tuesday.

The annual training event is conducted alternatively in the two countries.

The exercise, taking place at the Nepal Army Battle School, Saljhandi in the Shivalik ranges of Western Nepal, will be conducted till January 13.

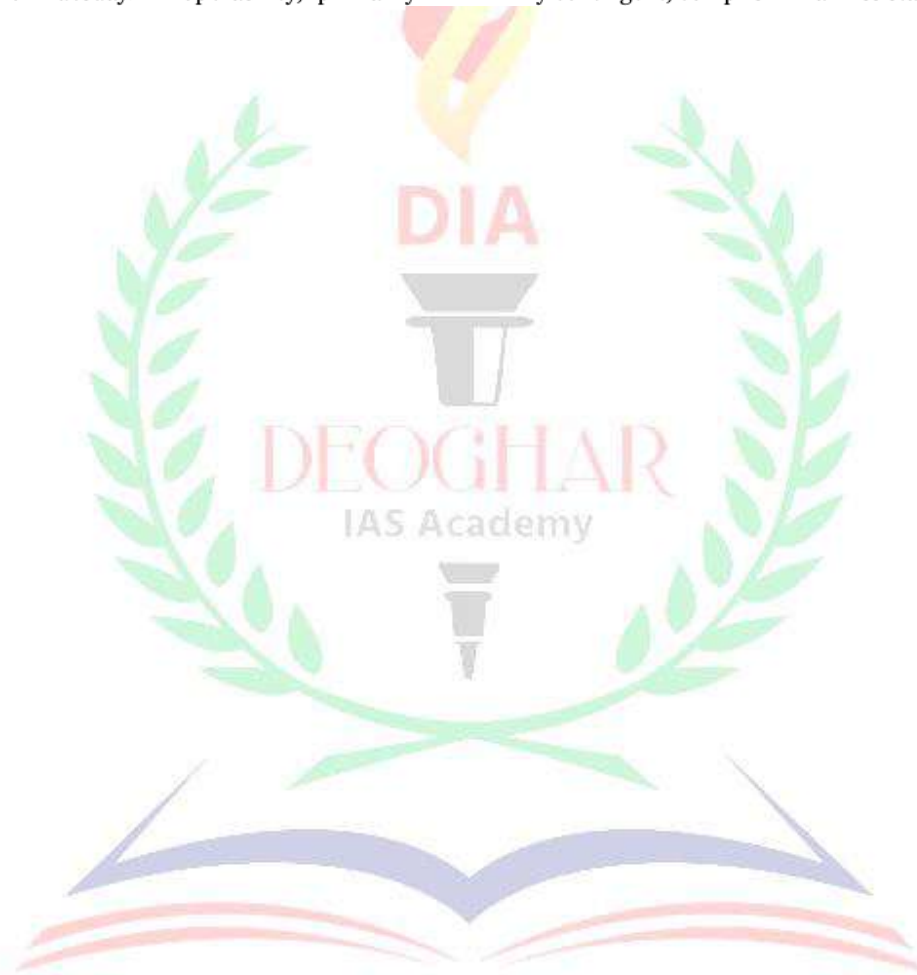
It "aims to enhance interoperability, primarily in

the fields of Counter Terrorism (CT) Operations," according to an X post by the Indian Embassy here.

"Exercise Surya Kiran signifies the strong bond of friendship, trust and common military linkages that exist between India and Nepal," it said. The Indian Army contingent, compris-

ing 334 personnel, is being led by a Battalion from the 11th Gorkha Rifles, according to a press release by the Defence Ministry.

The exercise aims to enhance interoperability in jungle warfare, counterterrorism operations in mountains and Humanitarian Assistance



# Jaishankar in Doha for talks, to prepare for Qatari Emir's visit

The Emir will visit India in February; External Affairs Minister's third visit in six months raises hopes for return of former Naval officer, delayed by nearly a year; New Delhi is also looking to boost ties with several countries in the West Asian region

**Subasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

**E**xternal Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is in Doha for a three-day visit over the New Year for a series of bilateral meetings, as well as to prepare for a visit by Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to India, expected next month, sources told *The Hindu*.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Qatar last February, he had met and invited Sheikh Al Thani to India. The Emir's visit is part of New Delhi's recent broader outreach to the Gulf region, as Israel's bombardment of Gaza continues, with the effects of the West Asian crisis now spreading to Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen.

Mr. Jaishankar was due to meet the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al



**Outreach efforts:** Jaishankar is likely to meet Qatar PM Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani. FILE PHOTO

Thani in Doha, and to discuss "political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural, and people-to-people" ties as well as "regional and international issues of mutual interest", the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement before his departure.

Mr. Jaishankar's visit to Qatar, his third in six months, has raised hopes for the return of the eighth former Naval officer con-

victed of spying in 2023, who has been detained in Doha while others on death row along with him were pardoned. The decision to drop the death penalty against all eight men was taken at the end of December 2023, but while seven men were released and returned to India in February 2024, Commander Purnendu Tiwari (retired) has been held back under a travel ban.

The MEA has said that the former Naval officer, who was also decorated with the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, is required to complete certain "formalities" in the Qatari legal system. According to officials, the pending requirements pertain to financial charges against the Dahra Global company where Mr. Tiwari was Managing Director and the other seven former naval personnel were employed.

However, Mr. Tiwari's family has rejected any charges of wrongdoing, pleading to the Prime Minister to "intervene" and facilitate his return.

## Wooing West Asia

Among a number of bilateral visits meant to shore up India's ties with the troubled region, Mr. Modi has travelled to Kuwait while Mr. Jaishankar visited Bahrain, and twice travelled to Qatar in Decem-

ber. After the proposed visit of the Qatari Emir to India, expected in the first or second week of February, Mr. Jaishankar is expected to travel to Oman. The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud also visited Delhi in the last few months.

In addition, New Delhi will receive Iranian Vice Minister for External Affairs Takht Ravanchi on January 2 as its first high-level diplomatic visitor in 2025. The visit from the new Iranian government is significant, given its growing tensions with Israel, as well as the imminent inauguration of incoming U.S. President Donald Trump later in January. Mr. Trump is expected to take a tougher line on Iran, and to step up sanctions, which will affect India as well.



# Quad members vow to work vigorously towards a free, open, and stable Indo-Pacific

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

India and other Quad member-nations on Tuesday reaffirmed the grouping's steadfast commitment to work towards a free, open, and peaceful Indo-Pacific amid China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region.

Foreign Ministers of the member nations of the grouping made the pledge in a joint statement commemorating the 20th anniversary of "Quad cooperation".

India, the U.S., Australia and Japan came together 20 years ago to extend assistance in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, and that coalition subsequently took the form of the Quad.

In the last few years, the Quad has rolled out a number of initiatives address-



We reaffirm our unwavering support for ASEAN's centrality and unity as well as mainstreaming and implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

**QUAD FOREIGN MINISTERS**  
In a statement

ing some of the most pressing needs and challenges of the Indo-Pacific region, including in areas of maritime security, infrastructure and connectivity.

India is scheduled to host the next Quad Summit likely in the second half of 2025.

The Foreign Ministers of the four nations said the Quad would work together in responding to the future needs of the Indo-Pacific.

"As four partners, we share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific that is peaceful, stable and prosperous, underpinned by effective regional institutions," the joint statement said.

The Quad Foreign Ministers also talked about the centrality of 10-nation grouping Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the Indo-Pacific. "We reaffirm our unwavering support for ASEAN's centrality and unity as well as mainstreaming and implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific," the Ministers said.

"We respect Pacific-led regional architecture, foremost the Pacific Islands Forum. We are also steadfast in our support for the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the region's premier organisation," they said.