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Daily News Feed

D.N.F

21.02.2025

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Strong resistance to Trump's Gaza plan expected at mini-Arab summit today

NEWS ANALYSIS

Kallol Bhattacharjee
RIVADIH

President Donald Trump's plans for resolving the Israel-Palestine crisis by "re-locating" the Palestinian population of Gaza to other Arab states are expected to face strong opposition as Saudi Arabia prepares to host a mini-Arab summit in Riyadh this weekend.

Apart from the summit, the region is also tense over the funeral, in Beirut, of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was assassinated in a missile attack in the Lebanese capital on September 27, 2024 by Is-

rael. The funeral is expected to be a show of strength for the Iran-Lebanon Shia crescent. The summit of the five Arab powers was earlier planned for Thursday but has now been pushed to Friday and expanded where all the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman, and Qatar) will be joined by Egypt and Jordan to brainstorm over the U.S.-Israel plans.

While the mainly Arab Muslim nations will display unity of purpose, the funeral of Nasrallah is expected to showcase the people power of the Iran-Lebanon Shia crescent that can heat up further in case Israel,

now armed by the U.S.-made 2000-pound bunker buster bombs, carries out an attack on Iran in the coming weeks.

Diplomats participating in the dialogues told *The Hindu* that the impact of President Trump's Gaza plans will play out in the region over a span of the next six months and the latest round of talks being held in Riyadh is an attempt to stop sudden escalation from breaking out.

Analysts pointed out that the solution that President Trump has been suggesting is inherently weak as it is part of the 'America First' policy which does not take into consideration the interests of other stake-



Displaced Palestinians wait along the Salah al-Din road in Nuseirat to cross to the northern part of the Gaza Strip. FILE PHOTO

holders such as the European powers, who are expected to face the blowback if the Arab bloc chooses to form a common front in support of the two-state solution for the Palestinians.

Najib Saab, Secretary General of Beirut-based Arab Forum for Environment and Development, said the just concluded meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign

Minister Sergei Lavrov has shown that the Trump administration is not giving importance to the opinion of the European Union. Mr. Saab did not rule out an Arab pushback as a U.S.-Israel led attempt to relocate the Palestinian population from the Gaza Strip could destabilise Egypt and Jordan, triggering existential concerns across the major states of the region.

Trump got no worries

On the sidelines of the Saudi Media Forum, a media conclave being held parallel to the peace talks on Ukraine and Gaza here, Mr. Saab told *The Hindu* that President Trump's Gaza plans are supported by the

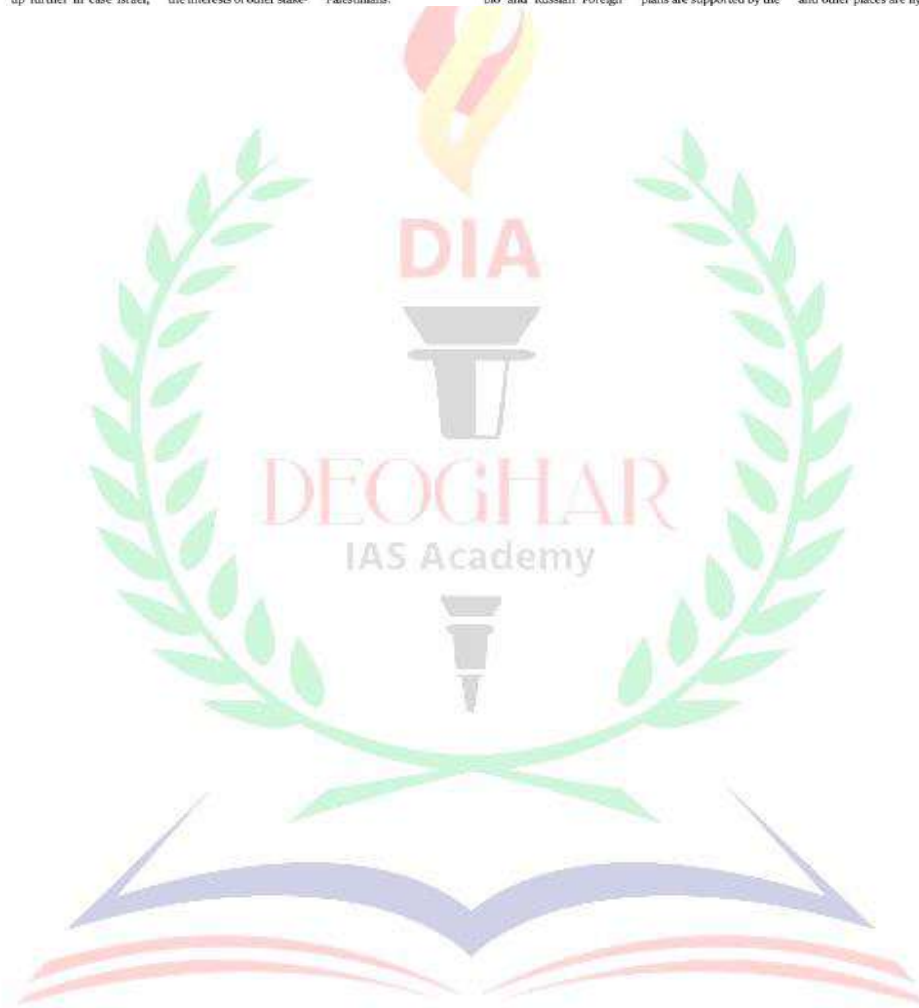
fact that he does not have to worry about disruption of energy supplies to the U.S. as the country is now energy sufficient. "However, the same is not true for Europe which remains dependent on the Gulf for energy supplies and Europe will face energy disruption if President Trump's Gaza formula destabilises the region."

The Arab powers that will meet in Riyadh this weekend also have to contend with the fact that any display of weakness by them will give an opportunity to the Shia front that will carry out a show of strength on Sunday as people from Iran, Iraq, Syria and other places are flying

into Beirut to attend the funeral of Nasrallah.

To counter any such impression, the UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Wednesday hosted U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Abu Dhabi and opposed proposals for displacing Palestinians from Gaza.

Mr. Saab pointed out that Abu Dhabi has followed the plan as laid down by Saudi Arabia, which had quickly opposed Mr. Trump's plans in the first week of February. "The Arab position is more or less clear that without an independent Palestine, Israel will not get to normalise relation with major Arab powers," he said.



Bumpy road ahead for MSMEs as they try to sell to the EV industry

While the electric vehicle supply chain holds potential for micro, small and medium enterprises and startups, it is not an easy ride; from access to finance and technology to availability of skilled workers, there are several roadblocks for these entrepreneurs who are trying to cater to EVs

NEWS ANALYSIS

M. Soundariva Preetha
COIMBATORE

Vijayan Srinivasan of Eco Dynamic in Coimbatore is into the manufacturing of electric three-wheelers for more than a decade and has sold over 4,000 vehicles that are operated within the premises of the buyers. It is only in 2022 that Tamil Nadu came out with a policy for electric three-wheelers and there are a lot of challenges even now in getting approval for commercial sale of e-rickshaws, he says.

Manikandan Palani-muthu, Chief Executive Officer of Greener Mobility Solutions, is one of the few electric vehicle (EV) startups in Coimbatore that has raised funds and develops displays for electric vehicles. Its additional requirement is almost ₹100 crores. "We develop a new model almost every six months," he says. However, a customer suddenly stops purchasing a particular model because of the change in product requirement and safety norms and the stocks of the older models become a financial burden on the company, he says.

Vijayan and Manikandan are among the early entrepreneurs in the growing ecosystem of start-ups in the EV space in Coimbatore,



Rapid boom: More than 300 brands sell electric two-wheelers now across the country. THE HINDU

which is one of the major micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) clusters supplying components to the fossil fuel based automobile sector. While the EV supply chain holds potential for MSMEs and startups, it is not an easy ride, they say.

From access to finance and technology to availability of skilled workers, there are several roadblocks for these entrepreneurs.

The government gave ₹6,825 crore in incentives under the second phase of FAME India scheme, intended to support the manufacture and adoption of EVs. 14.69 lakh two-wheelers and 1.78 lakh three-wheelers, were sold in India till February 19, 2025.



As long as sales of ICE vehicles continue to grow, component manufacturers will have orders. EVs will only be additional business.

K. ILANGO
Auto components manufacturer

Earlier, there were just a handful of big names that were selling internal combustion engine (ICE) two-wheelers. More than 300 brands sell electric two-wheelers now across the country. Most of them prefer to source their component needs from the existing suppliers in the automobile vertical as these MSME units know

the quality standards and the general requirements of the industry, says a Bengaluru-based electric two-wheeler manufacturer, indicating the potential for MSMEs that are already in the automobile supply chain or those that want to enter this industry.

Subsidy misuse

Another original equipment manufacturer (OEM) in Coimbatore says, while the FAME scheme is intended to support EV manufacturers develop a local or in-house supply chain for the component requirements, many brands use it to sell the vehicles at a lower price in the market. The component cost is multiple times higher when sourced locally com-

pared with imports, he said.

Further, most of the EVs sold now are two-wheelers. The MSMEs in the automobile clusters supply components for four-wheelers and heavy vehicles too. As long as sales of ICE cars, trucks, and buses continue to grow, these component manufacturers will have orders. Supply to EVs will only be an additional business, says K. Ilango, an automobile component manufacturer.

Organisations such as the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association (CODISSIA), Southern India Engineering Manufacturers Association (SIE-MA), and the Scientific and Industrial Testing and Research Centre (Si'Tarc) are looking at cluster approach to develop common facilities that will support the MSMEs and startups to venture more into the electric vehicle sector.

Exacting standards

The CODISSIA president M. Karthikeyan and its treasurer P. Ponram say they have conducted skill development programmes for MSMEs so that workers are able to meet the high precision needs of EV manufacturers. They are also exploring ways to make funds available for MSMEs that want to venture into the EV segment.

According to K. Mohan Senthil Kumar, president

of Si'Tarc, who is also supplying to EVs, Si'Tarc, CODISSIA and SIEMA are setting up a common testing and product development centre in Coimbatore with the support of the Tamil Nadu government, especially to support MSMEs to make motors for EVs.

However, Kanishka Arumugam, CEO of Ekki Pumps, says it is not easy for MSME motor manufacturers to start making motors for EVs. It requires more funds and OEMs are currently making the motors in-house or purchasing from large manufacturers. The entire supply chain ecosystem for EVs will take time to stabilise and MSMEs will have a clear path ahead only then.

K. Barathan, founder of Ozotec Automobile, says the vendor requirement ratio for electric and regular two wheelers is 1:5. 60%-70% cost in any electric two-wheeler is for battery pack. "If battery technology is developed in India, EV is the future," he says.

While the opportunities may be less at present for MSMEs that want to be part of the component supply chain for e-two wheelers, there are new technologies and new skill sets that are in demand. For instance, Ozotec's team of developers are all engineers who have landed their first job. "We need engineers, software developers, data analysts, etc," he adds.



Is consumption enough to drive growth?

An economy's growth depends on two factors. One is the supply or the production of goods and services, and the other is the demand or expenditure for purchasing these goods and services. Among the sources of demand, investment stands out for its ability to create 'multiplier effects'. Consumption can only follow, not lead, growth

ECONOMIC NOTES

Jayan Jose Thomas

An economy's growth is like sailing on two boats tethered to each other. On one side is the supply or the production of goods and services. GDP, or gross domestic product, is the value the production process adds. On the other side, there is demand or expenditure for purchasing these goods and services from the market. Both the supply and the demand boats must move in tandem. If supply proceeds slower than demand, prices rise, leading to inflation. If demand falls behind, firms will be left with unsold inventories, which may lead to cuts in future production, job and income losses, and a worsening cycle of demand and growth slowdown.

The demand or aggregate expenditure in an economy comes from four sources. First is private consumption, which is the sum of expenditures by all individuals on items such as food, clothing, and mobile phones. Second is private investment, which is the amount spent by firms and households on installing new machines and constructing new factories or residences. Third is government expenditure, for consumption and investment. The former refers to the money spent on day-to-day government operations, including paying salaries to officers, teachers, doctors and others attached to public institutions. Fourth is net exports or exports minus import of goods and services while engaging in trade with the rest of the world.

Investment and its multipliers

Among the sources of demand, investment stands out for its ability to create 'multiplier effects'. That is, an increase in investment of ₹100 could increase the economy's overall demand and GDP by more than ₹100 – let us say by ₹125, with the multiplier being 1.25. Consider, for instance, public investment in building a new highway network. The incomes received by workers and firms involved in the road construction project will generate fresh demand in the economy. But that is not all. The highways will trigger the establishment of new shops and create opportunities for new industries, all of which translate into a much bigger expansion of aggregate demand. The multiplier effect will depend on the nature of the investment and the state of the economy. The multiplier from an investment in a railway line is likely higher in an underdeveloped district than in a region with a well-developed transport network.

Compared to investment, the multiplier effect arising from increased consumption is much weaker. If incomes increase, consumption expenditures also increase, but the relation does not work strongly enough in the reverse direction. A rise in consumption cannot lift incomes as much in the rest of the economy. Therefore, according to Keynesian economists, consumption is a passive component of aggregate demand.

Indian and Chinese experiences

In the early 1990s, the per capita incomes of India and China were almost the same. Both countries were equally poor, with the average income of an Indian or Chinese resident being approximately 1.5% of the average income of an American. But by 2023, China's per capita income has grown to five times as high as the Indian level (2.4 times as high if purchasing power differences between



Chart 1: Per capita income and investment rates in India and China

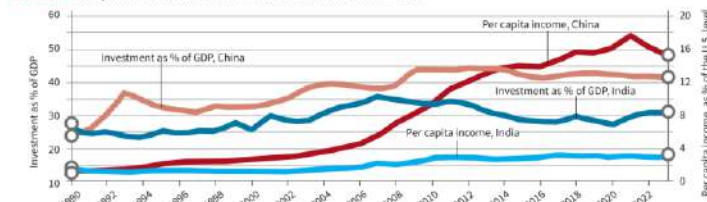


Chart 2: Investment as % of GDP in India by institutional sectors

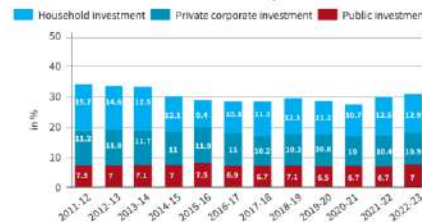


Table 1: Distribution (in %) of GDP by expenditure type: India and China, 2023

	India	China
Private consumption	60.3	35.1
Investment	30.8	41.3
Government consumption	10.4	16.5
Exports	21.8	19.7
Less imports	-24.1	-17.6
GDP	160.0	100
GDP per capita (current US\$)	2481	12,614

GDP = Value added in the production of all goods and services = C + I + Ig + Cg + E - M

Here, C = private consumption; I = private investment; Ig = investment by the government; Cg = government consumption; Cg + Ig = G or government expenditure; E = exports of goods and services; M = imports of goods and services.

Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank, National Accounts Statistics 2024

the two countries are considered). As a proportion of U.S. levels, the per capita incomes of China and India were 15% and 3%, respectively, in 2023 (Chart 1). The speedy growth of incomes in China has been led by investment.

China's investment rates have been significantly higher than India's from the 1970s onward. In 1992, investment as a share of GDP was 39.1% in China compared to 27.4% in India, even though the per capita incomes of the two countries were nearly equal. The gap in investment rates between India and China narrowed during the first half of the 2000s, with India's investment rate climbing to 35.8% in 2007. However, the two countries responded to the global financial crisis of 2007-08 and its aftermath in starkly different ways. The investment rate took a big hit in India, especially after 2012. However, China battled its economic challenges with considerable expenditure, primarily through its state-owned enterprises, in areas such as infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, and artificial intelligence. By 2013, the

investment rate rose to 44.5% in China but dropped to 31.3% in India. In 2023, these rates were 41.3% and 30.8%, respectively, for China and India (Chart 1).

India's economic growth over the last decade has been driven mainly by expanding domestic consumption expenditures. In 2023, consumption as a share of GDP was 60.3% in India compared to 39.1% in China (Table 1). The dominance of consumption in India's GDP structure is mainly due to the weaknesses of the other components of aggregate demand in the country. The shares of investment and government consumption expenditure are relatively low. India also has a trade deficit, with its import of goods and services being larger than its exports, reducing domestic demand.

Economic growth driven by consumption is not only slower than investment-led growth, but it also aggravates inequalities. The growth of jobs, incomes, and consumption has remained depressed for many Indians, and they will be left behind.

There has been a stagnation in the growth of investment by the public and

private corporate sectors in India (it is too early to say if the marginal improvement in investment in 2022-23 is here to stay) (Chart 2). The only segment that has shown some vitality is household investment, especially in residential buildings, and that too during the early 2010s. The continued reluctance of private capitalists to spend more in the economy is a sign of their sagging 'animal spirits'. In times like these, the government needs to step in with its investments, particularly in critical sectors, to boost private sector confidence and help spread the benefits of growth to the broader population.

However, the government has not shown its resolve, including in the latest Union Budget, to provide an investment boost to the Indian economy. Instead, the tax concessions and the unwillingness to significantly raise government spending indicate a preference for a low-growth trajectory pulled by the consumption of the middle and upper classes.

Jayan Jose Thomas is a Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi.

THE GIST

Consider, for instance, public investment in building a new highway network. The incomes received by workers and firms involved in the road construction project will generate fresh demand in the economy.

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Is there a right to take offence?

PARLEY

The popular YouTube show 'India's Got Latent' has sparked controversy after criminal proceedings were initiated against its creators and participants over allegedly obscene remarks in one of its episodes. On February 18, 2025, the Supreme Court granted interim protection from arrest to podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia, one of the participants named in the FIRs. This has reignited the debate on whether stringent criminal sanctions are justified for contentious speech. Is there a right to take offence? Justice Gautam Patel and Dushyant Dave discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Aaratrika Bhaumik. Edited excerpts:

Is there a right to take offence at any form of speech?

Justice Gautam Patel: No such right exists. The reasonable restrictions on free speech under Article 19(2) of the Constitution do not recognise offensive speech as a distinct category. Instead, the restrictions are narrowly defined and include security of the state, public order, decency, morality, and other specific grounds. Therefore, the notion of a right to take offence lies beyond the ambit of constitutionally permissible limitations. While the language used in the show is highly objectionable and unpalatable, it does not necessarily amount to a violation of decency or morality under Article 19(2).

Dushyant Dave: The right to free speech is always subject to certain exceptions, including decency and morality. However, these standards vary across jurisdictions and evolve over time. While I agree that the language used in the show was highly inappropriate, I have serious reservations about whether it meets the legal threshold to constitute a criminal offence. In reality, such language is widely used in everyday discourse and has become common parlance in society. Thus, the outrage surrounding it seems misplaced.

Should laws be paternalistic, or restrict speech only when it poses an imminent risk of public disorder?

DD: I believe that speech should remain unrestricted, except when it is seditious and incites violence. The Constituent Assembly debates reveal strong opposition to the restrictions imposed on free speech under Article 19(2)-19(6), with many members arguing that the government should not have the power to curtail expression. However, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar maintained that in the larger interest of the nation, some restrictions were necessary



Ranveer Allahbadia. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

as long as they remained narrowly defined. However, the irony is that politicians routinely engage in hate speech, yet constitutional authorities fail to take any action. Given this, I would rather grant citizens greater latitude to express themselves than condone such reprehensible conduct from our political leaders.

GP: The freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) can be restricted only by the limitations explicitly prescribed in Article 19(2). While the right to free speech is expansive, the restrictions on it remain narrowly defined. Therefore, the state cannot impose restrictions beyond these constitutional limits. More importantly, speech cannot be curtailed through executive action—such restrictions must be imposed solely through duly enacted legislation.

Is constitutional morality a vital safeguard against the moral convictions of the majority?

DD: Constitutional morality upholds the spirit of the Constitution by reinforcing values like social justice and equality. However, restrictions on free speech are governed by statute law. Any evaluation of whether speech constitutes an offence must be confined to these narrowly defined legal parameters, rather than the shifting moral sentiments of the public.

That said, society has every right to condemn the remarks made on the show. It can express discontent through criticism or boycotts. However, criminal sanctions are never the solution. Moreover, the increasing trend of filing multiple FIRs for the same offence constitutes harassment. It not only prejudices the accused but also undermines their right to a fair defence.

GP: Constitutional morality is a nuanced and evolving concept. It is not an inherent sentiment but one that must be cultivated. There is also ambiguity regarding its application to constitutional processes. For instance, Dr. B.R.



Profanity is not humour, it is an indication of thoughtlessness. Intelligent humour does not require offensive language. As a society, we must understand that divergent views are inevitable. We can engage with them or ignore them, but not silence the messenger.

JUSTICE GAUTAM PATEL

Ambedkar believed it was wiser to entrust the legislature with prescribing forms of administration rather than embedding them in the Constitution. That said, I agree that whether a form of speech qualifies as an offence is a matter strictly governed by substantive law.

Can profane speech necessarily be considered "obscene" speech?

GP: A speech laced with profanities is not necessarily obscene. This understanding has evolved over five decades of judicial interpretation. In 1964, the Supreme Court in *Ranjit D. Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra* applied the Victorian-era Hicklin test to ban *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D.H. Lawrence. It defined obscenity as anything with a "tendency to deprave and corrupt" those susceptible to immoral influences. Fifty years later, in *Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal*, the Court embraced the "community standards" test, a more contemporary approach. However, community standards are amorphous and hard to define. Does it mean that discussions about sex in public discourse must be prohibited? If so, what does that imply for our ancient art and sculptures? These standards continue to evolve. Today, few would deem *Lady Chatterley's Lover* obscene rather than a literary masterpiece.

DD: Obscenity is not explicitly defined under criminal law or the Information Technology Act 2000. Instead, its determination is a matter of degree, shaped by society's evolving moral standards. Looking at the erotic art of Khajuraho and Konark, it seems that rather than becoming more progressive, our society has regressed over time. Justice Krishna Iyer captured this dilemma in *Raj Kapoor & Ors. v. State* (1979), where the court quashed criminal proceedings against the makers of the film *Satyaam, Shivam, Sundaram*. He observed: "The relation between reality and relativity must haunt the Court's evaluation of obscenity, expressed in society's pervasive humanity, not law's penal perspective."

A recent study by the research group India Hate Lab found a 74.4% surge in hate speech against minorities by politicians in 2024. Is the relentless targeting of comedians a case

of misplaced priorities?

DD: Yes, definitely. Politicians continue to spew hate speech with impunity. During the Lok Sabha elections, several politicians, including the Prime Minister, made blatantly divisive remarks against minorities. Yet, the Election Commission and the State Police remained silent spectators. Opposition parties also failed to challenge these violations in court. Meanwhile, mainstream television journalists amplify hate speech daily. This should alarm every member of society. Comedians are targeted across political lines because they expose uncomfortable truths. Politicians perceive them as a threat. But dissent and criticism are fundamental to democracy. Silencing them paves the way for authoritarianism.

GP: Comedians play a crucial role in society by challenging authority and reflecting societal realities. I firmly believe in the Latin maxim *"In joco veritas"* – In jest, there is truth." Thus, the targeting of comedians is not just unfortunate but reprehensible. However, profanity is not humour; it is an indication of thoughtlessness. Intelligent humour does not require offensive language. As a society, we must understand that divergent views are inevitable. We can either engage with them or ignore them, but not silence the messenger. I also agree with Dushyant that we are failing to penalise the rising instances of hate speech.

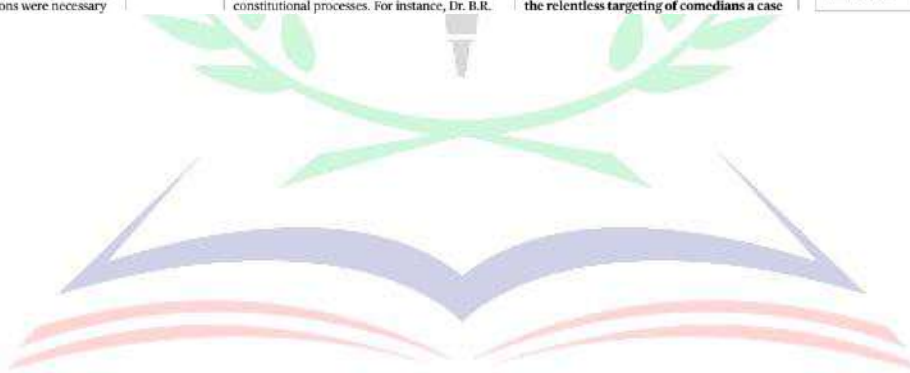
Efforts to regulate digital content, such as the Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, have intensified. What are your concerns?

GP: I do not endorse any such regulatory attempts. Once free speech is restricted, it sets a dangerous precedent. Censorship creates uniformity, compelling everyone to consume the same sanitised information. But the essence of free speech is to prevent such conformity. In a democracy, divergent opinions are essential. Else, we risk sliding into authoritarianism.

DD: My concern is the selective enforcement of laws. Why do censorship laws primarily target Opposition leaders and government critics? People are dragged to court for merely criticising the government, even when their speech falls short of sedition. Laws must be applied fairly and impartially – something the judiciary is failing to uphold. A vibrant democracy demands unwavering protection of free speech.



To listen to the full interview
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The long and winding road of India-China relations

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri was in China in January 2025, during which India and China made several announcements on the future of their bilateral relations. He met Wang Yi, who is China's Foreign Minister, the Director of the Office of Central Commission of Foreign Affairs and also a politburo member of the party, and also Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party.

The Indian statement after this meeting indicated that the process of restoration of several aspects of bilateral relations including media and think tank exchanges, the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, and bilateral flights is on the cards for the summer of 2025.

Possible reasons

India and China have attempted to move forward after more than four years of tense and stalemate-based relations since the clashes in Galwan in June 2020. Stalemates cannot be permanent. Both sides have made their points and moved to the détente. One can argue that there are several reasons for the timing of this bilateral agreement, the main being the election of Donald Trump, who is a known disruptor and unpredictable in his ways of doing business. The other is about economic concerns in China and in India in recent times.

India and China have been bracing for the Trump impact especially when by the middle of October last year his election was already beginning to look more likely to happen. This possibility may have pushed the October 2024 de-escalation agreement between India and China, and Mr. Trump's gigantic electoral victory in November 2024 may have pushed the January 2025 agreement between India and China. There is a historic logic to this as well. China agreed to



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normalising relations with India, after the 1962 war, only in the backdrop of the backlash in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Again, China may have agreed to normalise its relations with India given that it had to brace for the Trump impact. Thus, there is both internal and external logic around the restoration of normalcy.

However, since we do not know whether patrolling rights have been/are fully restored or whether demobilisation is in its advanced stages, such an absence of communication on the part of the government raises doubts and questions needlessly.

At the LAC

The Government of India has maintained absolute silence on the status of de-escalation, demilitarisation and demobilisation of the fairly large number of troops. Troops were mobilised and deployed on the border, first during the tensions of May-June 2020, and then in even larger numbers in the aftermath of the June 15, 2020 clashes. These troops were on active duty or in newly created barracks close to the six points of tension along the border including in Galwan, Depsang Bulge, Charding Nala, Gogra Post and Hot Springs and on the north bank of the Pangong lake.

There is also no clarity whether the large number of People's Liberation Army troops on the Chinese side, before and after the clashes, have retreated to their bases. Confirmation of this would mean that the actual restoration of normalcy on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has been achieved. India has also made it clear in the aftermath of 2020 that it was China that had violated the several agreements and protocols the two sides had signed. One is not sure about whether these have been rectified in a verifiable

way. This in turn can only be established when patrolling rights have not only been agreed to but also exercised.

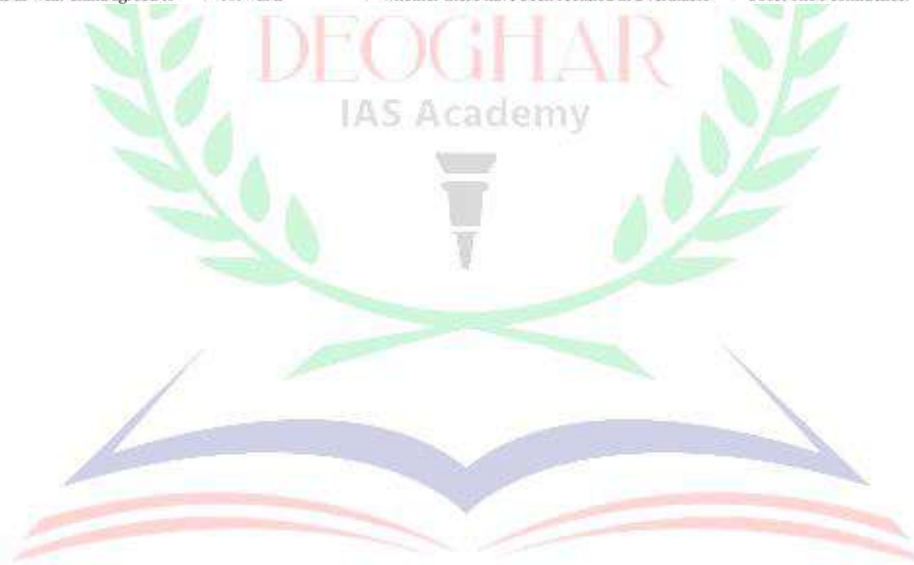
The briefing in October 2024, by the Foreign Secretary, prior to the 16th BRICS summit in Kazan in this respect, was already guarded. It only alluded to an agreement that would lead to the "process of disengagement and resolution of issues that emerged in 2020". A follow-up briefing on this issue would have been useful and necessary to make it clear that India had not given up on its position on the bilateral relations.

India's principled stand in dealing with China in the aftermath of the 2020 crisis has been that the stability on the border and the restoration of the status quo ante are the preconditions to progress in other aspects of bilateral relations. However, it was China that reiterated that India should move on from the clashes and not let the border standoff be a hindrance to the development of overall bilateral relations in the economic, political and social sectors.

The need for clarity

India's silence on the progress on the status of restoration of status quo ante makes it appear as though the Chinese position of "moving on" is succeeding and that India is abandoning its position of stability and restoration before there is progress on other aspects. It was always known that the process of restoring normalcy would be long drawn and fraught with challenges. In addition, the worldviews of India and China will remain divergent as their ideas about the world order are not going to converge anytime soon. India-China relations have seen several cyclical ups and downs in the Xi Jinping era. Therefore, abundant caution would be the best way forward. The Indian government's lack of clarity does not boost one's confidence.

Though India and China have attempted to move forward after Galwan, abundant caution may be the best way forward



AI-powered tools generate real time insights into antibiotic resistance

Ramya Kannan

A team of researchers from Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology-Delhi (IIIT-Delhi) have come up with AI-powered data integration and predictive analytics tools to understand patterns of antibiotic resistance in real time, enabling agencies to act on them speedily.

As part of a collaboration between IIIT-Delhi, CHRI-PATH, Tata Iimg, and Indian Council of Medical Research scientists, the AI-driven tool AMRSense has been deployed to use routine data that is generated in hospitals to generate accurate and early insights on antimicrobial resistance at the global, national, and hospital levels.

In a paper, 'Emerging trends in antimicrobial resistance in bloodstream infections: multicentric longitudinal study in India,' published in *The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia*, authors Jasmine Kaur, Harpreet Singh, and Tavpritesh Sethi show results from analysing six-years of data from 21 tertiary care centres in the Indian Council of Medical Research's AMR surveillance network retrospectively, establishing relationships between antibiotic pairs and the directional influence of resistance in community and hospital-acquired infections.

"There is a shared mechanism of resistance between antibiotics, we already know. Usually to do that, people use genomics, but that's an expensive proposition," explains Dr. Sethi. "We have proposed a way, which is inexpensive because it uses these routine data sets from hospitals. We show that by using routine data effectively, we can discern relationships between different antibiotics pairs and the direction AMR is taking –

whether it is rising or not. Say, for instance, if resistance to one specific antibiotic is going up, some months down the line, it is likely that resistance to an antibiotic pair might also shoot up. With these connections, we generated actionable evidence."

Dr. Sethi adds: "We have tried to go beyond the traditional way of looking at AI-asking how it can enable better decision-making for a given patient in a clinical setting or a public health setting. We think AI can also be used to understand AMR stewardship and surveillance aspects, from the hospital level, upwards. Hospitals already routinely send out patient isolates, for example, blood, sputum, urine, pus, etc., for culture sensitivity testing in order to make informed decisions on treatment courses. We are saying that these reports can be used to construct AI-based pipelines and methods that can lead to AI-driven or AI-enhanced antimicrobial stewardship."

The AMROrbit Scorecard that the team developed also won an award at the 2024 AMR Surveillance Data Challenge. Can we use these scorecards to make it more timely? Dr. Sethi explains: "It plots the orbit of resistance, say of every hospital or department, alongside a global median of resistance and a global rate of change. So around those global values, how well does a department, a hospital, or a certain country fare? That is what the scorecard will be able to provide real time data for."

The ideal quadrant for any hospital or country to be in is where there is low baseline resistance and low rate of change as well, said Jasmine Kaur, of IIIT-D. Orbits spiral in or out, but the AI tool can offer information facilitating timely interventions that can bring it to a desirable range of resistance.

How accurate and reliable are these AI models? "In our paper, we have shown that

our models did capture the trends as observed in the period we collected data for. However, unless we have future data, we can't really say, like, for example COVID-19 upended things, right? The only evidence we have currently is that globally it seems that our models are capturing the increasing rate of resistance in various studies."

Clinicians can make informed decisions based on the visual image that OMROrbit provides them using the data generated by the hospital, explains Ms. Kaur. It has been proven that it can augment ongoing surveillance at various levels. Various kinds of comparisons can be done using the tool, she adds. For instance, if it is a chain of hospitals, then the tool can be used to compare AMR rates between different departments, cities and centres across the country. "The only possible limitation would be in circumstances and settings that do not have consistent, granular surveillance data. Then the AI model will not make sense. This could occur in countries where surveillance data is not digitally accessible," she adds.

"We know there are other environmental factors such as antibiotics being used as growth factors in the poultry industry or leachates in the soil, that can also lead to AMR. The ideal would be, if at the public health level, we should be able to use the data we have from the hospitals, matching it with antibiotic sales, and community-level data, and study the environmental factors too. We hope to do that soon, Dr. Sethi explains.

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The silent victims of cancer: the indirect consequences on children

While policies focus on reducing direct treatment costs, easing the indirect burden – through caregiver aid, educational support, and employment protections – is equally crucial. These interventions improve treatment adherence, mental well-being, and safeguard the next generation's opportunities

Vid Karmarkar

When Aarav an 18-year-old from Mumbai, was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2018, he asked his mother, "Why me?" His dream of becoming an investment banker had shattered with the diagnosis. But he didn't just survive – he thrived. I heard him speak at an event organised by a leading cancer hospital in Mumbai for International Childhood Cancer Day, which falls on February 15.

Unlike most teenagers of his age, whose hands are busy scrolling through social media, while one of Aarav's hands received chemotherapy, the other clutched his accountancy books. He didn't let cancer slow him down. Instead, he conquered it – emerging as an All India topper in the Chartered Accountancy exams. But not all childhood cancer stories see a happy end.

Aarav reminded me of Meena, a 10-year-old from Pune, whose story took a different turn. Her mother, a domestic help, was diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer. Her father, an autorickshaw driver, worked hard to ensure Meena got an education, believing it was her path to a better future. But cancer rewrote their fate. Her mother could no longer work, and her father, needing to care for her, lost days of income. With their paltry earnings dwindling further, they had no choice but to pull Meena out of school. Unlike Aarav, she was not lucky – cancer did not just take her mother's life; it trapped Meena in a cycle of generational poverty.

A recent National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP) report found that childhood cancers (0-14 years) account for 4% of all cancer cases in India, while adult cases near a million annually – and these numbers are expected to rise. This leaves lakhs of children vulnerable to the hidden financial toll of cancer. Whether battling the disease or affected by a parent's illness, children are the silent victims.

Protecting the next generation
Children are the future of a nation. To build a strong nation, we need an educated and skilled workforce. Education is also a pathway to their economic empowerment. But cancer disrupts this journey.



Loss of opportunity for education is just one example of the indirect costs of cancer treatment. Photograph used for representational purposes only GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

When a child or parent is diagnosed with cancer, schooling takes a hit. Low-income families are often forced to pull children out due to financial strain, while older siblings in such households take on caregiving or work to supplement income, limiting their future prospects.

For instance, Sridevi, a second-year college student from a low-income family from Hyderabad, had to work as a fast-food crew member and tutor school children to cover her father's escalating oral cancer treatment costs. This impacted her academic performance and took a toll on her mental health.

Disruptions in education have a cascading effect. Studies show that children who drop out of school due to financial distress face lower lifetime earnings and higher rates of economic instability. In the context of cancer, the disease not only devastates the present generation but also risks trapping the next generation in a cycle of hardship.

The other indirect costs
Loss of opportunity for education is just one example of the indirect costs of cancer treatment. Such costs include non-medical expenses and financial losses from diagnosis and treatment. These can be as debilitating as direct medical and non-medical costs.

Loss of income is one of the most significant burdens, as patients may need

Many insurers offer plans with riders covering cancers. They provide income replacement or lump-sum payouts to offset lost wages, caregiving costs, and daily expenses. However, they are often excluded from standard policies, have strict criteria, or come with high premiums

extended leave or even lose their jobs. Family caregivers, often spouses or children, may also reduce work hours or quit jobs entirely, worsening financial strain.

Travel and accommodation costs add to the burden, especially for patients from rural areas who must frequently travel to treatment centres in cities. Daily living expenses rise due to special diets, hospital visits, and caregiving demands, often requiring household help or costly services. The psychosocial and mental health impact further escalates the strain, with many patients and caregivers needing counselling or therapy, which is often unaffordable.

Insurance and government schemes
Government-backed health insurance programmes such as Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) have played a crucial role in

reducing direct medical costs for cancer patients in India. These schemes provide financial coverage for inpatient costs, alleviating the immediate financial stress on affected families. But the indirect costs of treatment are insufficiently addressed.

Disability riders in insurance plans provide crucial financial support for cancer patients facing long-term disability. Many Indian insurers offer term plans with these riders, covering severe accidents and major cancers such as breast, lung, and liver cancer. They provide income replacement or lumpsum payouts to offset lost wages, caregiving costs, and daily expenses. However, they are often excluded from standard policies, have strict eligibility criteria, or come with high premiums, limiting access for those who need them most.

To ease non-medical expenses, Indian Railways and Air India are offering discounted fares for patients and caregivers, while Himachal Pradesh and Haryana provide free bus travel for cancer patients. Additionally, monthly pension schemes in states such as Haryana, Tripura, and Himachal Pradesh are helping mitigate the financial burden of indirect cancer costs.

The way forward

While policies focus on reducing direct treatment costs, easing the indirect burden – through caregiver aid, educational support, and employment protections – is equally crucial. These interventions improve treatment adherence, mental well-being, and safeguard the next generation's opportunities.

Ensuring equitable education for cancer-affected families requires empathetic, multi-level action – from government policies and CSR funding to state income support and school-level interventions. Recognising that cancer brings not just medical but also financial and emotional distress, policies must address these broader challenges. Simple yet impactful measures – use of calculators, extra coaching, extended deadlines, free school meals, and mental health support – can make education more inclusive. By integrating such interventions, we can prevent cancer from becoming a lifelong barrier to economic and educational equity.

(Dr. Vid Karmarkar is the founder of Canseva Foundation. vid.karmarkar@gmail.com)

THE GIST

Childhood cancers account for 4% of all cancer cases. This leaves thousands of children vulnerable to the financial toll of cancer. Whether battling the disease or affected by a parent's illness, children are the silent victims.

Education is a pathway to economic empowerment for children. When a child or parent is diagnosed with cancer, families are often forced to pull children out of schools, while older siblings take on caregiving or start working, limiting their prospects.

Disruptions in education have a cascading effect. Children who drop out face lower lifetime earnings and higher rates of economic instability. Cancer not only devastates the present generation but also risks trapping the next generation in a cycle of hardship.



I&B Ministry warns OTTs against ‘obscene content’

Ministry cites complaints from general public, MPs and statutory bodies; directs streaming services to enforce age-based ratings for mature content in accordance with 2021 IT Rules

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Warning over-the-top (OTT) streaming services against transmitting “any content that is prohibited by law”, the Union Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry on Thursday said they should ensure “age-based classification of content” under the Information Technology (Intermediary Liability and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

The OTT platforms should enforce age-gating requirements for mature content, the Ministry said in an advisory citing complaints from MPs, statutory organisations and the public.

It is unclear specifically what “obscene, pornographic and vulgar content” the circular is referring to. In December 2024, the Ministry flagged some shows “promoting, glamorising or glorifying the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through such portrayal by the main protagonist and other actors”.

The IT Rules have extensive regulations pre-

Screening content

The I&B Ministry’s latest advisory has issued the following directives to OTT platforms on ‘obscene’ content

- Ensure age-based classification
- Enforce age-gating for mature content
- Avoid prohibited content (obscene, vulgar, pornographic)
- Follow IT Rules, 2021 for content moderation
- Comply with laws such as POCSO Act, IT Act, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita



Legal framework for OTT regulation

- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act
- IT Act – prohibiting obscene digital content
- IT Rules for streaming platforms
- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita expands content regulation

scribing age ratings for content on Indian streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. Those regulations require streaming services to have a formal grievance redress system. They should be part of a three-tier system, under which users who are offended by certain content can first approach the platform, then a self-regulatory body, and further an inter-departmental committee of the Union government.

SC seeks action

On Tuesday, a Supreme Court Bench, led by Justice Surya Kant, orally observed that the government needed to take some

action on obscene content on social media.

The present advisory has only been sent to online curated content platforms, the legal term for streaming platforms such as Netflix, as opposed to user-generated content platforms such as YouTube. The court was hearing a case on clubbing the FIRs against Ranveer Allahbadia, the podcaster who has been at the centre of a storm over a joke he cracked on the YouTube show *India's Got Latent*.

Not completely banned

The IT Rules do not completely ban swearing, sex or nudity; they instead require that shows and films

that feature these – along with substance abuse and violence – be rated for older audiences.

Apart from the IT Rules, the advisory points to other laws to warn streaming providers against content that features obscenity. “Attention is also invited to the provisions of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023; the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act; and the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, wherein publication of obscene/pornographic content is a punishable offence,” the advisory reads.

Defence Ministry signs contracts worth ₹1,917 crore for radios, forklift trucks

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry on Thursday signed two contracts worth ₹1,917.47 crore for the procurement of 149 software-defined radios (SDR) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and 1,868 rough terrain forklift trucks (RTFLT) for the three Services.

The contract for 149 SDRs is with defence public sector undertaking Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Bengaluru at a total cost of ₹1,220.12 crore. "Induction of SDRs marks the transition from present single purpose radios to multi-band, multi-mode and multi-role radios of the future. ICG units require high-speed secure communication along with secure networking capability for seamless information exchange for coordinated operations at sea," the Ministry said.

"SDRs will enable se-



Ministry officials sign contracts with ACE Ltd. and JCB India in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh. PTI

ecure and reliable information sharing, situational awareness and network-centric operations through high-speed data and secure voice communication capability."

The SDRs are indigenously designed, developed, and manufactured providing a significant boost to the country's ma-

nufacturing capabilities for advanced military-grade communication systems. The statement added that this will strengthen the ICG's capability to fulfil its core responsibilities including maritime law enforcement, search and rescue operations, fisheries protection, and marine environment protection. Ad-

ditionally, these radios will enhance interoperability for joint operations with the Indian Navy.

Critical equipment

The other contract for 1,868 RTFLTs at a total cost of ₹697.35 crore was signed with ACE Limited and JCB India Limited. It is a critical equipment which will assist in various combat and logistics support tasks by avoiding manual handling of an enormous number of stores thereby enhancing the operational effectiveness of the three Services.

The present case being a buy Indian case will enhance national defence equipment manufacturing capabilities, the Ministry said in another statement adding that this project has immense potential of direct and indirect employment generation by encouraging Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises sector through component manufacturing.



Turning a page in Malayalam in cyberspace

Devoted to Malayalam language and its literature, open website thaalilakkam.in, started in the year 2020, has a vast collection of useful resources for teachers, students, and language lovers

A.S. Jayanth
KOZHIKODE

An open website fully devoted to Malayalam and its literature with a vast collection of useful resources for teachers, students, and language lovers. What thaalilakkam.in has in store is that and much more.

The website has sections such as library, 'bhasha' (language), 'sahityam' (literature), 'puthiyava' (what is new), 'mattullava' (others), 'kalakal' (arts), and links to websites of various platforms working for the



promotion of Malayalam. The library section has online (Malayalam, Sanskrit, and Tamil literary works) and offline (pdf versions of Malayalam books, links to 'Granthapura' website, titles sourced from the digital library of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi, among

others) options. The 'bhasha' section has dictionaries and Malayalam grammar books. 'Sahityam' has articles on language and literature; poems and essays that appeared on defunct magazines; research papers from various universities; book

reviews; and links to the websites of writers. The 'mattullava' section has information on the literary works of eminent writers, apart from proverbs and riddles. 'Kalakal' has details on art museums in Europe, U.S. and U.K., Asia, and Australia, and information on Kathakali songs, among others.

M.K. Praveen Varma, who is behind the initiative, says the website was started in December 2020 to help Malayalam literature grow in the cyberspace. "Acquiring knowledge is the right of every individual and its distribution should be free for everyone," he says.



Rekha Gupta takes charge as 9th Chief Minister of Delhi



Narendra Modi with Rekha Gupta and other Ministers during the oath ceremony in Delhi on Thursday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party's MLA Rekha Gupta took oath as the ninth Chief Minister of Delhi at the Ramli-Maidan on Thursday. A six-member Council of Ministers were also sworn in to office in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior BJP leaders.

Ms. Gupta will handle key portfolios such as Finance, Revenue, Women and Child Development, Services and Vigilance, and other unallocated departments.

The Cabinet comprises Parvesh Sahib Singh, who will handle the Public Welfare Department and Water; Ashish Sood, who will take charge of the Home, Power, Education and Urban Development portfolios; Manjinder Singh Sirsa, given charge of Food & Supplies, Forest Environment and Industries; Ravinder Indraj, who will look after Social Welfare, SC and ST Welfare, Cooperatives, and Elections; Kapil Mishra, who has been handed the Law and Justice, Labour, Employment and Tourism Departments; and Pankaj Singh who will handle Health and Family Welfare, Transport and Information Technology.

Hours after the new Chief Minister and Minis-

ters were sworn in, BJP leaders offered prayers at the Yamuna Ghat. Cleaning of the Yamuna is expected to be BJP's top priority during their five-year tenure.

Three-time Rohini MLA Vijendra Gupta thanked the party for giving him the responsibility of Speaker of Delhi Assembly.

Cabinet decisions

After her first Cabinet meeting, Ms. Gupta said the government would table 14 pending CAG reports in the first session of the new Delhi Assembly, and would also work towards implementing the Centre's flagship health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat in Delhi as quickly as possible.

Earlier, the first-time MLA from Shalimar Bagh was administered the oath by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by the BJP's top brass, including Union Ministers Amit Shah, J.P. Nadda, and Rajnath Singh, and the Chief Ministers and Deputy Chief Ministers of several NDA-ruled States.

The BJP has come into power in the capital after 26 years, with 48 seats in the Assembly.

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SC stays Lokpal order on power over judges

Special Bench terms top anti-corruption ombudsman's interpretation 'very disturbing' as it passed an order giving itself jurisdiction to investigate complaints against High Court judges; Bench issues notice to the Centre, the Registrar of Lokpal and the complainant on whose plea the January 27 order was passed; court lists the case for March 18

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a Lokpal order bringing High Court judges under its jurisdiction, terming the top anti-corruption ombudsman's interpretation "very disturbing".

Taking *suo motu* cognisance of the January 27 Lokpal order, a Special Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai, Surya Kant and A.S. Oka, three senior judges of the Supreme Court and Collegium members, said it impacted the independence of the judiciary.

The Bench, in a brief hearing, was offered assistance by senior advocates Kapil Sibal and B.H. Marlapalle even as Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta appeared for the Union

government. The Bench issued notice to the Centre, the Registrar of Lokpal and the complainant on whose plea the January 27 order was passed. The court listed the case on March 18. It enjoined the complainant from disclosing the name of the High Court judge in question and ordered the former to keep the contents of the complaint confidential.

Mr. Sibal said the court sorely needed to lay down the law on this issue. Mr. Mehta categorically submitted that High Court judges would never fall within the ambit of Lokpal.

'Public servants'

The order of the Lokpal, chaired by a former Supreme Court judge, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, was based on a complaint that an Additional High Court

Redefining jurisdiction

Lokpal's January 27 order defines the rules and conditions under which it will inquire into complaints against High Court judges

- SC judges are public servants under the Prevention of Corruption Act but are not public servants under the Lokpal Act.
- The SC was 'established' by the Constitution. The HCs pre-existed the Constitution and are only 'recognised' by it.
- A judge of an HC established by an Act of Parliament will come within the ambit of expression 'any person' in Section 14(1)(f) of the Lokpal Act.
- There is a precondition to consult the Chief Justice of India before initiating, under Section 20 of the Lokpal Act, a preliminary inquiry into a complaint lodged against an HC judge.

judge had influenced an Additional District Judge, and later another High Court judge, to decide in favour of a private company. It was alleged that the company had been a client of the judge during the latter's earlier years as an advocate.

In a 13-page order, the

Lokpal concluded that High Court judges were 'public servants' and came within the ambit of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act of 2013.

The anti-corruption body assumed jurisdiction to inquire or investigate complaints about High Court judges on the ground that,

unlike the Supreme Court, the High Courts in India were constituted by British Parliamentary Acts – Indian High Courts Act, 1861 and Government of India Act 1935 – and Letters Patent of the British Monarch. In fact, the High Courts pre-dated the Constitution, the Lokpal reasoned.

Article 214 of the Constitution, which said "there shall be a High Court for each State", had only "intrinsicly recognised" the existence of the High Courts. The Constitution did not establish the High Courts, the Lokpal argued in the January 27 order. On the other hand, the Supreme Court was completely a child of the Constitution, the ombudsman noted.

A few days before the January 27 order, the Lokpal,

in a decision on January 3, had declared that it had no power over Supreme Court judges, including the Chief Justice of India.

In the January 3 order, the Lokpal had explained that the Supreme Court was not a "body" established by an Act of Parliament or financed or controlled by the Central government. It had observed that Supreme Court judges, including the CJI, even though 'public servants' in terms of the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1988, were not amenable to the jurisdiction of the Lokpal.

Argument 'too naive'

But, the Lokpal, in its January 27 order, found the argument that a High Court judge was outside the ombudsman's jurisdiction, "too naive". The Lokpal

said a High Court judge came within the ambit of clause (f) of Section 14(f) of the 2013 Act.

A clause of Section 14 notes the Lokpal has jurisdiction over "any person who is or has been a chairperson or member or officer or employee in any body or Board or corporation or authority or company or society or trust or autonomous body (by whatever name called) established by an Act of Parliament or wholly or partly financed by the Central government or controlled by it".

The term 'any person' in the clause would include a judge of a High Court established by an Act of Parliament.

In this case, the judge in question was serving in the High Court of a State reorganised by an Act of the Parliament, it pointed out.

