

DAILY NEWSP APER ANALYSIS

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**CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH**

New GDP series upgrades FY26 growth to 7.6%

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India's economic growth is expected to touch 7.6% in the current financial year 2025-26, showed the second advance estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) based on the new and updated series released by the government on Friday. This is faster than the 7.4% predicted in the first advance estimates for 2025-26 released in January, which was based on the older series.

The new series of data, released by Statistics Secretary Saurabh Garg and Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran, has incorporated several improvements, including an updated base year of 2022-23 from the earlier 2011-12.

The new series has revised downward the growth for 2023-24 to 7.2% from the 9.2% estimated in the old series and has revised the growth for 2024-25 to 7.1% from the earlier

estimate of 6.5%. According to the data, India's nominal GDP has been revised downward for the three years spanning 2023-26, which will have a negative impact on several fiscal ratios pegged to these numbers, such as the fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio and the debt-to-GDP ratio.

The government also released the GDP growth data for the third quarter of 2025-26 based on the new series, which stood at 7.8% as compared to 8.4% in the second quarter and 6.7% in the first quarter.

Growth in current year

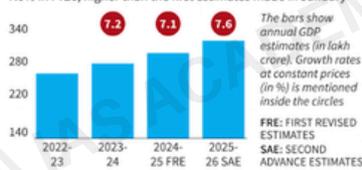
According to the second advance estimates for 2025-26, the secondary sector is expected to grow at 9.5%, up from 7.3% in 2024-25. This growth is to largely be driven by the manufacturing sector, which is estimated to grow 12.5% in 2025-26 as compared to 8.3% in the previous year. The construction sector is set to grow at

6.9%, down from 7.1% over the same period. Notably, the primary sector is expected to see a significant slowdown, with growth expected to be 2.8% in 2025-26 as compared to 5% in the previous year. This is due to growth in the agriculture sector expected to slow to 2.5% in 2025-26 from 4.3% in 2024-25, and in the mining and quarrying sector to 5% from 11.2% over the same period.

The tertiary sector, comprising the services

Stronger outlook

The second advance estimates peg India's economic growth at 7.6% in FY26, higher than the first estimates made in January



sectors, is expected to see growth to quicken to 8.9% in FY26, up from 8.3% in the previous year. This is a result of double-digit growth in the trade, hotels, transport and communication grouping (10.3%), and the financial, real estate, IT, and professional services grouping (10%).

The data in the new series shows that the size of the economy is expected to be ₹345.47 lakh crore in 2025-26, which is about 3.3% smaller than what was predicted in the first

advance estimates based on the old series. Further, the size of the economy in both 2023-24 and 2024-25 has been revised downward by 3.8% each. According to economists, this would not only revise upwards the government's fiscal deficit ratios over the past few years but would also make its planned debt reduction path a significantly steeper one.

"On a current-price basis, nominal magnitudes for 2023-24 to 2025-26 are lower than those under the old series," D.K. Srivastava, chief policy advisor at EY India, said. "This also means the overall size of the economy now appears smaller."

According to Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, the new data implies that the fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio would be around 15-20 bps higher on an average during the previous year as compared to the earlier estimates.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- Government released Second Advance Estimates of GDP for FY 2025-26.
- Real GDP growth projected at 7.6% (higher than earlier 7.4%).
- Base year revised to 2022-23 (earlier 2011-12).
- Nominal GDP for 2023-26 revised downward, impacting fiscal ratios.
- FY26 size of economy estimated at ₹345.47 lakh crore (lower than earlier estimate).

Important Facts

- Growth Revisions
 - 2023-24: Revised to 7.2% (earlier 9.2%).
 - 2024-25: Revised to 7.1% (earlier 6.5%).
 - FY26: 7.6% (Second Advance Estimate).
- Sectoral Growth (FY26)
 - Primary Sector: 2.8% (Agriculture slowdown to 2.5%)
 - Secondary Sector: 9.5%
 - Manufacturing: 12.5%
 - Tertiary Sector: 8.9%
- Fiscal Implications
 - Lower nominal GDP leads to higher:
 - Fiscal Deficit-to-GDP ratio
 - Debt-to-GDP ratio
 - Estimated increase in deficit ratio: approximately 15-20 basis points.

Static Concepts for Prelims

- GDP at Market Price = GVA + Net Indirect Taxes
- Real GDP: Measured at constant prices (inflation adjusted)
- Nominal GDP: Measured at current prices

- Advance Estimates released by NSO:
 - First Advance Estimate: January
 - Second Advance Estimate: February
- Base Year Revision Purpose:
 - Reflect structural changes in the economy
 - Update price weights
 - Improve data coverage (GST, MCA-21 database)

Constitutional & Policy Linkages

- FRBM Act, 2003:
 - Fiscal deficit targets
 - Debt sustainability
- Fiscal deficit expressed as percentage of GDP.
- Debt sustainability depends on:
 - Growth rate
 - Interest rate
 - Primary deficit

Mains Angle

- Importance of Base Year Revision
 - Improves statistical accuracy and credibility.
 - Captures formalisation and digital economy trends.
 - Aligns with international standards such as UN System of National Accounts (SNA 2008).
- Concerns
 - Downward revision increases fiscal ratios.
 - May affect fiscal consolidation roadmap.
 - Primary sector slowdown may impact rural income and demand.

Way Forward

- Strengthen agricultural productivity and climate resilience.
- Improve tax buoyancy to maintain fiscal discipline.
- Continue capital expenditure-led growth.
- Ensure transparency in statistical methodology.
- Maintain balance between growth and fiscal consolidation.

Judicial officers will not be influenced, says SC

Court dismisses Trinamool's apprehension, says officers deployed to verify claims, objections by voters excluded from Bengal SIR will accept citizenship, identity documents listed in its orders

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday assured that judicial officers deployed for the verification of claims and objections filed by voters excluded from the electoral roll during the West Bengal special intensive revision would remain objective and accept documents of proof of citizenship and identity listed in successive top court orders.

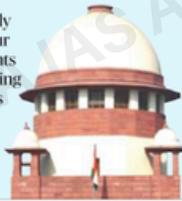
The court dismissed the ruling All India Trinamool Congress government's apprehension that the Election Commission was trying to "influence" judicial officers by giving them "training".

In an oral mentioning made before a Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joydip Bagchi, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the ruling party, said the poll body's training module may breach the orders of the Supreme Court itself.

Mr. Sibal submitted that the module may even include instructions not to receive verification docu-

We have clearly specified in our orders which documents must be examined during verification. Our orders are as clear as daylight. The EC cannot override our orders

SUPREME COURT BENCH



ments approved by the Supreme Court.

Faith in officers

"We went beyond our own imagination in this case... There has to be an end to all this. We know our judicial officers. They will not be influenced by anything. A person argues a case before the judiciary, the opposite party counters the arguments, and ultimately we take the decision impartially," Chief Justice Kant observed, explaining the impartiality of justice administration from the Bench.

Mr. Sibal said judicial officers cannot take instructions from the Election Commission.

"The EC cannot tell judicial officers 'don't take

that or this certificate'. They are not bound by such instructions," the senior advocate submitted.

Justice Bagchi pointed out that the EC was authorised to impart training. "Who else will give the training? They are being trained to understand the modalities of the EC Net and the process of verification of documents... We have made it very clear in our orders on the documents which need to be looked into during the verification process. Our orders are as clear as daylight. The EC cannot override our orders," Justice Bagchi observed.

Mr. Sibal said the judicial officers were told not to accept domicile certificates from Sub-Division Of-

ficers. The court, however, said the documents mentioned in its orders had to be accepted.

Chief Justice Kant said verification of documents for the SIR was a "completely alien responsibility" for judicial officers. They were neither trained for it in the judicial academy nor was it part of their daily work.

The court reminded that both the EC and the State government were supposed to provide a congenial working atmosphere for the judicial officers.

"Look at the extent to which we have gone in this case... We have almost evacuated the State judiciary..." Justice Bagchi pointed out.

'Publish list'

The court further asked the Election Commission to publish and upload supplementary voter lists as soon as they were ready.

The court had earlier allowed the EC to publish a voter list in West Bengal on February 28. However, supplementary lists are to be published on a continuous basis till nomination for the Assembly election.

Governance & Institutional Issues

- Balance between ECI's administrative authority and Judiciary's constitutional supremacy.
- Deployment of judicial officers in non-judicial functions.
- Transparency in electoral roll verification.
- Ensuring non-discretionary acceptance of documents as per court directions.
- Maintaining free and fair elections (Basic Structure doctrine).

Static Concepts Linked

- Independence of constitutional bodies.
- Separation of powers.
- Electoral integrity and procedural fairness.
- Natural justice in administrative processes.
- Role of supplementary electoral rolls.

Analytical Points

Positives

- Reinforces judicial supremacy in constitutional interpretation.
- Protects voters against arbitrary exclusion.
- Enhances transparency through continuous publication of supplementary lists.
- Strengthens procedural safeguards in electoral roll revision.

Concerns

- Judicial officers performing executive verification tasks.
- Potential federal friction between State government and ECI.
- Risk of politicisation of electoral roll verification.
- Administrative burden during election year.

Way Forward

- Clear Standard Operating Procedures aligning ECI guidelines with Supreme Court orders.
- Public disclosure of admissible documents.
- Independent grievance redressal mechanism.
- Strengthening digital verification systems with audit trails.
- Safeguarding judicial capacity from diversion.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- The Supreme Court addressed concerns regarding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.
- Judicial officers were deployed for verification of claims/objections of excluded voters.
- Allegations were raised that the Election Commission of India (ECI) training module might influence judicial officers.
- The Court clarified:
 - ECI can impart procedural training.
 - Documents recognized in Supreme Court orders must be accepted.
 - ECI cannot override judicial directions.
- Court directed continuous publication of supplementary voter lists until nomination for Assembly elections.

Key Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- Article 324 – Superintendence, direction and control of elections vested in ECI.
- Article 326 – Elections based on adult suffrage.
- Representation of the People Act, 1950 – Preparation and revision of electoral rolls.
- Representation of the People Act, 1951 – Conduct of elections.
- Judicial Review – Basic Structure (Kesavananda Bharati, 1973).
- Article 329(b) – Bar on judicial interference in electoral matters once election process begins (except through election petitions).

Kerala's paradox can spark its global vision

Long before "globalization" became the lingua franca of Davos economists, Kerala, sandwiched between the verdant Western Ghats and the cerulean Arabian Sea, was practicing it with cosmopolitan flair. History whispers to us from the excavations of Muziris, where the clinking of Roman sestercii once drowned out local Malayalam dialects. The Chinese, Arabs, Jews and Europeans all arrived in pursuit of our spices and textiles, creating a syncretic civilisation where church bells, the muezzin's call, and temple chants harmonised into a symphony of coexistence.



Shashi Tharoor is the fourth-term Member of Parliament (Congress) for Thiruvananthapuram (Lok Sabha), a member of the Congress Working Committee, and the award-winning author of 28 books

Switch from remittance to innovation
This indomitable spirit has metamorphosed into the "Global Malayalee". From the oil rigs of the Middle East to the boardrooms of Silicon Valley, the Keralaite is omnipresent, constructing a "Remittance Economy" worth an estimated ₹1.3 lakh crore annually. We are the super-exporters of the 21st century. But the challenge for Kerala is to transform this "Remittance Economy" into an "Innovation Economy". For too long, Kerala's economic discourse has been entrapped in a futile exercise of self-flagellation, comparing ourselves to our neighbours, wondering why we cannot replicate the automobile factories of Tamil Nadu or the industrial belts of Maharashtra. But this ignores the crucial truth: Kerala is an anomaly. We are a state boasting first-world social indicators amidst third-world infrastructure pressures, possessing the population density of the Netherlands (901 per square kilometre), the literacy of Singapore (96.2%), and the ecological fragility of Costa Rica. To try to force-fit the heavy industrial models of continental India onto the delicate geography of Kerala is an error of imagination. Our fate does not lie in competing with Chennai or Mumbai for smokestacks; it lies in looking outward, across the seas, to the small States that have turned their constraints into competitive advantages. Kerala is already the nursing capital of the world; we must now aspire to be its healing garden. Our demographic reality – we are the fastest aging society in India – presents us with a unique genetic admixture – a blend of Dravidian, Aryan, Arab, and European markers – we must move beyond general health care to precision medicine. Like Iceland, which utilised its population data to drive biotech, we can establish a "Gene Valley", mapping disease risks and drug responses specific to diverse populations, transforming our diverse heritage into a scientific asset. Why should we import 80% of our medical devices when we possess the engineering talent to create them? We must look to Costa Rica, a small nation that became a med-tech powerhouse. By leveraging institutions such as

The State must look across the oceans to chart a bright future

the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute, we can manufacture high-value components – stents, heart valves, and surgical robots – for the world. We already are a leading State in blood-bags.

Furthermore, we must cease viewing our aging population as a liability and recognise it as an economic engine. By emulating the Japanese model and developing "retirement villages" in our climate-friendly highlands, we can offer world-class assisted living not just for locals, but for the "grey nomads" of the West. Additionally, we must elevate Ayurveda from "wellness" to "cure", much like China successfully globalised Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) through scientific validation. By combining our 1,200 species of medicinal plants with modern diagnostics, we can position Kerala as the "Sanatorium of the East".

One of Kerala's greatest, yet most neglected, assets is its biological gene pool; as one of the world's eight "hottest hotspots" of biodiversity, we house approximately 5,679 species of flowering plants (2022-23 data). With no land to spare for low-yield crops, we must adopt the Dutch model of glasshouse farming. The Netherlands is the world's second largest agri-food exporter despite its diminutive size because it prioritises technology over territory. By focusing on climate-resilient local varieties, such as the saline-tolerant Pokkali rice, and vertically extracting high-value spice oleoresins, we maximise revenue per inch.

Possibilities by the ocean side
We must stop being hunter-gatherers of the sea and become farmers. Like Norway, we should lead in sustainable salmon and shrimp farming and extracting pharmaceuticals from marine algae, while investing in deep-sea fishing fleets and cold storage managed with scientific rigour. The Vizhinjam International Seaport is our gateway, but a port without value addition is merely a parking lot. We must look to Singapore and construct a logistics city that refines, assembles, and repackages goods, transforming Vizhinjam from a transit point into a global economic anchor. We can also be the gas station of the Indian Ocean. Like Chile, we can use our solar and wind potential to produce green ammonia for the ships docking at our ports, fuelling the maritime fleets of the future.

Since heavy industry is ecologically unviable, our path to prosperity lies in the "weightless economy" – sectors requiring high intellect but low physical footprint. We are the Toulouse of India, with the legacy of SSC, LPSC, and ISRO – Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre and Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology – Thiruvananthapuram is already a space citadel. We must encourage private startups, creating a commercial "space coast" for nano-satellite launches and propulsion

systems. Similarly, the presence of Brahmos should be leveraged to set up auxiliary defence production. We must emulate Manchester ("Graphene City") by turning our rare earth minerals (lanthanide, monazite) into the microchips and superconductors of tomorrow. The India Innovation Centre for Graphene in Kochi is merely the seed; we must grow the forest. Given our financial literacy and an economy fuelled by global remittances, we need a regulatory "sandbox" in a Global FinTech Centre, similar to the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), to attract the world's crypto and fintech pioneers. Furthermore, like The Hague or Singapore, Kerala can become a venue for international commercial arbitration, leveraging our legal expertise and the serene "peace dividend" of locations such as Kumarakom to settle global corporate disputes at a fraction of London's cost.

The change begins here
"God's Own Country" is a brilliant slogan, but scenic beauty is no longer enough; the modern traveller craves immersion and activity. We can be the Montreal of Asia, utilising our vibrant cinema culture and artistic youth to become the post-production back office for Hollywood and Bollywood, offering tax credits to attract global gaming studios and VFX houses/visual effects studios. We must pivot from selling handicrafts to selling "heritage luxury". Consider the Aranmula Kannadi or the exquisite Balarampuram handloom; currently, these are marketed merely as curiosities for tourists. We must look to Italy's Tuscany or France's Lyon – why must a Kasavu saree be mere attire when it can be couture? We need to establish a "Kerala Design Institute" partnering with Milan or Paris to elevate our master craftsmen into designers, exporting not just the cloth, but the brand. Imagine a global luxury brand based on Kerala's eco-friendly hand-woven textiles, utilising the narrative of "sustainable luxury".

Finally, we must turn our climate vulnerability into expertise. Like the Dutch, who sell their water management engineering to the world, Kerala can become a "living lab" for disaster-resilient infrastructure, exporting low-cost, flood-resistant housing and soil stabilisation technologies to the tropical world.

The path forward requires a psychological shift. We must cease asking, "How do we catch up with Bangalore?" and start inquiring, "How do we collaborate with Amsterdam? How do we compete with Colombo? How do we learn from Kyoto?" Kerala has historically served as a bridge between the east and the west. It is time we ceased being merely a bridge – and started being the destination. A destination where the best of the world is adapted, improved, and offered back to humanity with a distinctly Malayali touch.

- Population Density: ~860+ persons per sq km (Census 2011).
- Biodiversity: Western Ghats hosts ~5,600+ species of flowering plants (State Biodiversity Board data).
- Coastline: ~590 km, offering Blue Economy potential.
- Space Sector: ISRO presence; private participation enabled under IN-SPACe reforms (2020) and Indian Space Policy 2023.
- Health Infrastructure: Strong public health model; National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly applicable due to ageing trend.
- Agriculture: GI-tagged Pokkali rice; potential for protected cultivation under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).
- Energy: Scope under National Green Hydrogen Mission (2023) and rooftop solar (MNRE).

Static Linkages

- Demographic transition and dependency ratio (NCERT Population Chapter; Economic Survey).
- Federal structure: State role in industrial development (Seventh Schedule – State & Concurrent Lists).
- Sagarmala Programme for port-led development.
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- FRBM Act, 2003 (fiscal constraints on States).
- National Policy on Electronics, 2019.
- National Green Hydrogen Mission, 2023.
- IN-SPACe and space sector liberalization reforms.

Critical Analysis

Advantages

- Strong human capital base.
- Large global diaspora network for FDI and knowledge transfer.
- Sustainable growth aligned with SDGs.
- Diversification reduces vulnerability to Gulf economic shocks.

Challenges

- Fiscal stress due to high welfare expenditure and FRBM limits.
- Land scarcity and high population density.
- Climate risks: floods and landslides (Western Ghats sensitivity; Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports).
- Limited heavy industrial base.
- Regulatory and labour-related bottlenecks.

Way Forward

- Develop innovation clusters in biotech, marine sciences, med-tech, and space-tech.
- Promote regulatory sandboxes for fintech and health-tech.
- Strengthen public-private partnerships.
- Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure and disaster management technology exports.
- Leverage diaspora bonds and green finance instruments.
- Integrate traditional medicine with evidence-based research under AYUSH.
- Promote vertical farming and high-value spice processing.
- Develop Vizhinjam into a value-addition logistics and transshipment hub.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the Issue

- Kerala's economy has historically depended heavily on international remittances, particularly from Gulf countries (Kerala Migration Survey – Centre for Development Studies).
- Remittances are estimated at around ₹1–1.5 lakh crore annually and form nearly 20–25% of State income (Kerala Economic Review).
- Recent policy discussions emphasize shifting towards a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy focusing on biotechnology, marine economy, space-tech, fintech, and high-value agriculture.
- Commissioning of the Vizhinjam International Seaport and expansion of ISRO-linked institutions like Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre strengthen prospects for logistics and space-sector growth.
- Kerala has the highest proportion of elderly population among Indian States (Census projections; MoHFW data), indicating advanced demographic transition.
- The State lies in the ecologically fragile Western Ghats region (UNESCO World Heritage Site), necessitating sustainable development strategies.

Key Points

- Literacy Rate: 96%+ (Census 2011; NFHS-5 indicators).
- High Human Development Index (NITI Aayog SDG India Index).

International law is not dead, its rules stay resilient

Rising tensions between the United States and Iran, with threats of the use of force, have once again triggered a debate on the utility of international law. International relations scholars are writing obituaries of international law, arguing that one should brace for a norm-free world. This precarious argument started with the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022), followed by Israel's military actions in Gaza and West Asia. Donald Trump's presidency, the recent illegal American actions in Venezuela, the U.S.'s withdrawal from numerous international organisations, and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's astute observation of 'rupture' in the global order have given this thought a filip. While it is true that international law is undergoing one of its darkest phases, pronouncing its death is not just merely intellectually lazy but also misleading.



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As Columbia professor Monica Hakimi argues, when international relations are legalised, those wielding public power are compelled to explain their conduct using the framework of international law. The claims that they make about authority will resonate with people only when their actions are grounded in domestic and international rules. Related to this is the point that international law is the only framework that gives the powerless a semblance of agency to ask questions of those wielding public power. A world without such a normative framework would be far more dangerous.

Still, today's breach of Article 2(4) differs qualitatively from the past. In the past, powerful states justified their use of force by employing the analytical framework of international law, demonstrating that even hegemony needed this normative framework. This left open a prospect of dialogue and deliberation. So, in the 1990s and 2000s, the U.S. legally expanded the interpretation of self-defence – an exception to the use of force – to justify its military actions. Whether the American legal interpretations were correct or merely a tool to mask its imperial designs is debatable.

In today's populist authoritarian world, there is brazenness. A scarce attempt is made to justify behaviour as per international law, and the imperial designs stare in one's face. The U.S.'s repeated insistence on Venezuelan oil drives home the point. It is this rising populist-authoritarianism that poses the greatest threat to international law, not the act of a military strike or invasion itself.

Looking beyond the use of force
Concurrently, it would be a mistake to reduce the entire body of international law to the UN Charter. While the UN Charter is undoubtedly a critical pillar, it does not by itself define the legalisation of international relations that has occurred over the last eight decades. Today,

international law is widespread and diverse, governing international trade, foreign investment, civil aviation, maritime resources, outer space, human rights, climate change, chemical and biological weapons, and many other areas. This, as Yale professor Oona A. Hathaway argues, means that international law is flourishing as a social phenomenon.

International law works silently
International law-making continues unabated, as evidenced by the conclusion of free trade agreement negotiations between India and the European Union. In recent years, key treaties such as the High Seas Treaty (aimed at the sustainability of marine biological diversity), and a Pandemic Agreement (to strengthen pandemic prevention), have been signed. Over the years, hundreds of international courts, at global (such as the International Criminal Court) and regional levels (such as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights), have been created, demonstrating the judicialisation of international relations. These courts, away from the limelight, continue to resolve complex international law disputes peacefully.

In sum, as international lawyer Philippe Sands reminds us, much of international law operates silently and seamlessly behind the scenes, despite the media grabbing headlines about breaches of the UN Charter. This silent international law enables goods and people to cross borders, and communication networks to transcend national geographies, positively impacting the lives of ordinary people. Just as one does not abandon a liberal constitutional order due to an authoritarian regime running amok, one should fight to preserve the existing liberal international law order against the global bullies. Pontificating on the death of international law only plays into the hands of the global bullies.

The views expressed are personal

• Despite repeated violations, Article 2(4) continues to exist as a binding legal norm.

Important analytical point

- Violation of law does not mean extinction of law. Law continues to serve as a standard to evaluate state conduct.

International Law Beyond Security Issues

International law is not limited to the UN Charter. It regulates:

- International trade (WTO system)
- Climate change (Paris Agreement)
- Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
- Human rights conventions (ICCPR, ICESCR)

• Marine biodiversity (High Seas Treaty)
Judicialisation of International Relations

- International Court of Justice
- International Criminal Court

Numerous global and regional courts continue to resolve disputes peacefully.

Static Linkages for exam

- Principle of sovereign equality of states.
- Collective security system under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
- Customary international law and opinio juris.
- Pacta sunt servanda (agreements must be kept).
- Responsibility to Protect (R2P).
- Article 51(c) of the Indian Constitution – Promotion of respect for international law.
- Article 253 – Parliament's power to implement international treaties.

Critical Analysis

Challenges

- Rise of unilateralism and populist nationalism.
- UNSC veto politics leading to paralysis.
- Weak enforcement mechanisms in international law.
- Selective compliance by powerful states.

Why the "Death of International Law" Argument is Misleading

- States still justify actions in legal terms.
- Legal norms shape diplomatic discourse.
- International trade, aviation, maritime navigation depend on legal predictability.
- Smaller states rely on international law for protection.

Way Forward

- Reform of the UN Security Council.
- Strengthening multilateral institutions.
- Clear norms for cyber warfare and emerging technologies.
- Greater representation of Global South countries in global governance.
- India to promote a rule-based international order while maintaining strategic autonomy.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- Rising tensions between the United States and Iran involving threats of use of force.
- Continuing global conflicts such as:
 - Russian invasion of Ukraine
 - Conflict in Gaza Strip
- Increasing unilateral military actions by major powers.
- Debate among scholars on whether international law, especially the prohibition on use of force under the UN Charter, is weakening.
- At the same time, new treaties like the High Seas Treaty and ongoing Pandemic Agreement negotiations show that international law-making continues.

Core Concept: Prohibition on Use of Force

Article 2(4) of the UN Charter

- Prohibits the threat or use of force.
- Protects territorial integrity and political independence of states.

Exceptions:

1. Self-defence – Article 51.
2. Action authorised by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII.

This is a cornerstone of the post-1945 international legal order.

Has International Law Collapsed?

Historical Violations

- Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (1979)
- US invasion of Iraq (2003)
- NATO intervention in Libya (2011)
- Russian invasion of Ukraine

Proclaiming the death of international law aids world tyrants

Bad publicity

The Delhi police's actions against the IYC protesters are heavy-handed

The India AI Impact Summit 2026, in New Delhi last week, was ostensibly a gathering of industry hands from global and Indian technology communities, and showcased to the general public to inculcate an awareness of the tech phenomenon that is already revolutionising economies worldwide. But the summit also revealed an unedifying aspect of officialdom and exhibitionism. This was evident when a private university participating in the convention falsely claimed a Chinese-made robot to be its own development. Or in how "VIPs" and various functionaries hogged the limelight and blocked product developers and AI enthusiasts from attending the summit on some days. Then there was a protest by some activists of the Indian Youth Congress (of the Congress party) who staged a non-violent "flash mob"-like protest against the India-U.S. interim trade deal. These events only reflected the underbelly of technological promotion in India and its politicisation, as both the BJP-led government and the Opposition sought to use the glare over the summit for publicity rather than public interest. Granted, the Congress party's use of the summit's media coverage and the venue to stage a protest was inappropriate. But the Delhi police, which arrested the activists in the protest, has also blown the actions out of proportion by registering charges that range from rioting, promoting enmity between groups, making assertions prejudicial to national integration, criminal conspiracy, unlawful assembly and common intention. The flurry of arrests also triggered an unprecedented standoff between the Delhi and Himachal Pradesh police following the detention of some of the activists in Shimla.

Too often in recent years, officials in the Union government and BJP-led State/UT governments have treated even peaceful dissent as crimes that are equivalent to riotous and violent actions. This has been the case in the arrests of student activists dissenting communally coloured actions of these governments such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, with many charged under draconian laws and held without trial just for peaceful protest. The BJP-led governments have sought to demonise dissent and muzzle opposition by civil society forces and the Opposition. It is difficult not to read the charges framed against the Youth Congress activists in the same light. It hardly needs stating that dissent is a vital component of democracy, especially in a country that won freedom through acts of dissent and non-violent protests. The police must desist from filing unrelated and outrageous charges against the activists and courts adjudicating on such cases of dissent – including those against the Youth Congress activists – must quash these FIRs forthwith.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- India AI Impact Summit 2026 was held in New Delhi to promote Artificial Intelligence ecosystem and innovation.
- A protest was staged by activists of the Indian Youth Congress against the India-U.S. interim trade deal.
- The Delhi Police registered multiple serious charges including rioting, unlawful assembly, criminal conspiracy, and promoting enmity.
- Inter-state friction reportedly occurred between Delhi and Himachal Pradesh police.
- The episode triggered debate over criminalisation of peaceful dissent and proportionality of police action.

Key Points

- Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 19(1)(b) – Right to assemble peacefully without arms.
- Article 19(2) & 19(3) – Reasonable restrictions (sovereignty, public order, security of state, etc.).

- Public Order – State List (List II, Seventh Schedule).
- Police is a State subject.
- Doctrine of Proportionality – Applied by Supreme Court to test validity of restrictions on Fundamental Rights.
- Democracy and Rule of Law – Part of Basic Structure doctrine.

Static Linkages

- Basic Structure doctrine (Kesavananda Bharati case).
- Right to Protest recognised but subject to regulation (Supreme Court jurisprudence).
- Federalism – Division of legislative & executive powers (Articles 245–246).
- Criminal law & maintenance of public order – State domain.
- Separation of powers & judicial review.

Critical Issues

- Criminalisation of Dissent
 - Peaceful dissent is integral to democracy.
 - Excessive charges may create chilling effect on free speech.
- Proportionality in Police Action
 - Restrictions must be reasonable and proportionate.
 - Preventive policing vs suppression of democratic rights.
- Federal Concerns
 - Inter-state police coordination challenges.
 - Political overtones affecting administrative functioning.
- Technology & Governance
 - Politicisation of tech summits undermines credibility.
 - Need for transparent innovation ecosystem.

Way Forward

- Clear SOPs for handling peaceful protests.
- Strict adherence to doctrine of proportionality.
- Judicial scrutiny of FIRs involving dissent.
- Strengthening federal coordination mechanisms.
- Promote constitutional literacy among enforcement agencies.
- Depoliticise scientific and technological platforms.

Up in the air

Flights by non-scheduled operators need better enforcement

A series of flight incidents within a month – two crashes involving small aircraft, at Baranmati (Maharashtra) in January, and near Simaria (Jharkhand), and a helicopter crashlanding in the Andamans – is a reminder that charter aviation in India cannot be treated as a lightly regulated adjunct to commercial flying. The troubled charter aviation sector is expanding and the need for oversight has become critical. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) website lists 133 non-scheduled operators, or NSOs (updated till September 30, 2025), using a mix of fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft. The meeting on February 24 that the DGCA held with all NSO permit holders was thus long overdue. The proposal to rank charter operators based on safety performance and the requirement for NSOs to disclose critical safety information on their websites, which covers aircraft age, maintenance history, and pilot experience, could be the first steps towards basic transparency. Equally significant is the DGCA's line that commercial considerations must not be allowed to affect safety, a pointer to pressures to prioritise VIP schedules and even business commitments. The regulator's focus on maintenance standards, particularly among operators with in-house maintenance, repair, and operation facilities, is another critical, but late, intervention. Cockpit voice recorder audits, fuel records and ADS-B data scrutiny as well as enforcement of flight duty time limitations are pivotal, though belated, steps. Most importantly, holding senior management accountable for systemic failures is another corrective measure.

Adverse weather has been a contributory factor in several charter and non-scheduled flight accidents, which includes the Bell 430 helicopter crash in Andhra Pradesh in 2009 and the Beechcraft C-90 King Air accident in 2001 that claimed the lives of prominent political leaders. The DGCA has specified that recurrent training of pilots must focus on 'weather awareness strategies and decision-making in uncontrolled environments'. The rollout of safety audits, with a physical workshop on safety, may help align all operators with the safety mandate. However, the fact is that there are some operators with poor safety records. There are also gaps in pilot training and experience on type, scant simulator training centres in India, a dearth of quality instructors and weak audits. It is acknowledged that the regulator itself is short-staffed in certain safety critical departments. Earlier this month, the Civil Aviation Minister spoke of conducting a "very thorough study" of flight operations by non-scheduled operators and to uncontrolled airfields. But for such a safety drive to lock into place there has to be consistent enforcement and committed transparency.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- Within one month (Jan–Feb 2026), multiple incidents involving non-scheduled/charter aircraft occurred:
 - Small aircraft crashes in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.
 - Helicopter crash-landing in Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- As per the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) (updated till Sept 30, 2025):
 - 133 Non-Scheduled Operators (NSOs) in India.
- DGCA convened a meeting (Feb 24, 2026) with NSOs to address safety concerns.

Key Exam-Relevant Points

1. Regulatory Framework

- Aircraft Act, 1934 – Parent legislation.
- Aircraft Rules, 1937 – Operational and licensing norms.
- DGCA functions under the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- Accident investigation conducted by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).
- India is a signatory to the Chicago Convention, 1944 (ICAO standards).

2. DGCA's Recent Measures

- Safety ranking of charter operators.
- Mandatory public disclosure:
 - Aircraft age
 - Maintenance history
 - Pilot experience
- Strict audit of:
 - Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR)
 - Fuel records
 - ADS-B surveillance data
 - Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL)
- Management accountability for systemic failures.
- Focus on weather-awareness training.

3. Key Issues in Charter Aviation

- Adverse weather linked to past accidents:
 - Bell 430 crash (2009).
 - Beechcraft C-90 King Air accident (2001).
- Gaps in:
 - Simulator training centres
 - Type-rated pilot experience
 - Quality instructors
- Operations to uncontrolled airfields.
- DGCA manpower shortages.

Static Concepts

- Difference between:
 - Scheduled Operators (Airlines)
 - Non-Scheduled Operators (Charter/air taxis)
- Flight Duty Time Limitations (crew fatigue norms).
- Safety Management System (SMS).
- ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme.
- Regulatory independence and delegated legislation.

Mains Pointers

Issues

- Regulatory capacity constraints.
- Commercial pressure (VIP schedules vs safety).
- Weak audit mechanisms.
- Transparency deficit.

Significance

- Aviation as critical infrastructure.
- Rapid expansion under regional connectivity initiatives.
- Need for data-driven safety governance.

Way Forward

- Strengthen DGCA staffing.
- Independent safety audits.
- Expand simulator infrastructure.
- Annual public safety rating publication.
- Strict and consistent enforcement

Before 'judiciary corruption', the other NCERT revisions that sparked controversy

Abhinaya Harigovind
New Delhi, February 27

THE NEW NCERT class 8 social science textbook, which was to be taught in the ongoing academic session in schools, had a short shelf life: just one day.

The new book — part two of the textbook — was released on Monday after a long wait: part one came out in July 2025. *The Indian Express* reported Tuesday that the new book featured a section on "corruption in the judiciary".

NCERT swiftly pulled the book from sale on Tuesday and a day later, expressed regret for the "inappropriate textual material and error of judgement" that "have inadvertently crept" into the chapter on the judiciary's role. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said later that he had directed its immediate withdrawal.

Having registered a suo motu case, the

Supreme Court on Thursday imposed a "complete blanket ban" on the book's further publication, reprinting, or digital dissemination.

For NCERT, which has made sweeping changes to school textbooks in recent years, this expression of regret and the book's withdrawal, even before the court's order, is rare.

Need for revisions

New NCERT textbooks for all classes are being developed and released in line with the recommendations of the National Education Policy, 2020, and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), 2023.

Based on the 2005 curriculum framework, the old books were first published from 2006 to 2008. Under the new NCFSE, new books were released for classes 1 and 2 in 2023, classes 3 and 6 in 2024, and classes 4, 5, 7, and 8 in 2025.

NCERT undertook four rounds of textbook revisions since 2014, including a round of "rationalisation" in 2022-23 in the wake of Covid-19 to reduce content load.

Notable changes

Here are a few instances of revisions and changes, as reported by *The Indian Express*, that have sparked controversy.

- The class 12 political science textbook, published after a 2017 review, described the 2002 Gujarat riots as only the "Gujarat riots". The old book called it the "anti-Muslim riots".

- In the 2022 rationalisation exercise, the section on the Gujarat riots in the class 12 political science book was trimmed. Deletions included references to the National Human Rights Commission's criticism of the Gujarat government for failing to control the violence, and a paragraph on the chronology of events.

- Yet another reference to the Gujarat

riots was removed from the class 12 sociology book in 2022. In a section on 'Communism, Secularism, and the Nation-State', sentences that were dropped include: "In fact, the two most traumatic contemporary instances of communal violence occurred under each of the major political parties. The anti-Sikh riots of Delhi in 1984 took place under a Congress regime. The unprecedented scale and spread of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 took place under the BJP government."

- In a class 12 sociology textbook in 2022, references to how "untouchability" operates were dropped.

- From a class 6 social science textbook, a box describing a common stereotype about Muslims — and why this is far from the truth — was removed.

- From a class 12 sociology book, a paragraph on how minorities are politically vulnerable was removed.

- Sections on the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal empire were removed from the class 7 history textbook in 2022.

- In 2023, from a class 12 political science textbook, a paragraph on the ban on the RSS after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, and Hindu extremists having disliked Gandhi was removed.

- In 2024, the class 12 political science textbook did not mention the Babri Masjid by name, calling it a "three-domed structure". The old book had described the mobilisation on both sides and communal tension, which the revised version left out.

- A revised class 11 political science book (released 2024) stated that vote bank politics in India is associated with "minority appeasement" (not mentioned in old version).

- The new class 6 social science textbook (released 2024) refers to the Harappan civilisation as "Sindhu-Sarasvati" civilisation (unlike the old one) with references to

the "Sarasvati river".

- Part one of the class 8 social science textbook (released 2025) described Babur as a "brutal and ruthless conqueror, slaughtering entire populations of cities", and Akbar's reign as a "blend of brutality and tolerance". The book's history section is preceded by a "note on history's darker periods", which explains the importance of studying these darker developments dispassionately without blaming anyone living today for them.

- In the chapter on the colonial era and resistance to the British, the book skipped mentions of Tipu Sultan, Haidar Ali, and the Anglo-Mysore Wars, unlike the old book.

- Part 2 of the class 7 social science textbook (released 2025) has a larger section on the Ghaznavid invasions, focusing on the Mahmud of Ghazni's "destruction and plunder", including the Somnath temple.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- The Class 8 Social Science (Part II) textbook released in 2026 by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was withdrawn within a day of publication.
- The withdrawal followed reports that a chapter included references to "corruption in the judiciary."
- The Supreme Court of India took suo motu cognisance and imposed a blanket ban on its publication, reprinting, and digital dissemination.
- The revision exercise is part of reforms under:
 - National Education Policy (NEP 2020)
 - National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE 2023)

Why This is Important for Exam

- Tests concepts of Separation of Powers
- Raises questions of Judicial Activism vs Overreach
- Linked to Education Policy Reforms
- Connects to Basic Structure Doctrine
- Involves themes of Secularism, Academic Autonomy & Constitutional Morality

Key Facts

- Education moved to the Concurrent List by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976.
- NCERT is an autonomous body registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (not a constitutional/statutory body).
- Supreme Court can take suo motu cognisance under Articles 32 and 142.
- Secularism is part of the Basic Structure (S.R. Bommai case, 1994).
- Article 21A – Right to Education.
- Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 51A(h) – Duty to develop scientific temper.

Static Linkages

- Judicial Review as part of Basic Structure (Kesavananda Bharati, 1973).
- Institutional integrity of constitutional bodies.
- Federal structure in social sector governance.
- Role of NHRC under Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
- Curriculum development under NCF (2005 vs 2023 framework).

Mains Analysis

Separation of Powers

- Judiciary intervening in textbook publication raises debate:
 - Protection of institutional credibility.
 - Scope of judicial review in academic matters.
- Balance between:
 - Academic autonomy
 - Constitutional supremacy
 - Judicial restraint

Education Governance & Federalism

- Education under Concurrent List → Shared responsibility.
- Centralised curriculum reforms under NEP 2020.
- Implications for State boards aligned with NCERT.

Constitutional Morality & Secularism

- Textbooks must align with:
 - Secular values
 - Scientific temper
 - Pluralism
 - Social harmony
- Avoid selective historiography or ideological bias.

Ethical Dimensions (GS4)

- Objectivity in public institutions.
- Transparency in decision-making.
- Institutional accountability.
- Trust in constitutional bodies.

Critical Evaluation

Arguments Supporting Withdrawal

- Safeguards dignity of judiciary.
- Prevents erosion of public trust.
- Ensures constitutional sensitivity in school education.
- Immediate corrective response by NCERT.

Concerns Raised

- Potential chilling effect on academic freedom.
- Questions about transparency in revision process.
- Risk of judicial overreach.
- Politicisation of curriculum.

Way Forward

- Institutionalise independent textbook review panels.
- Pre-publication constitutional vetting for sensitive content.
- Transparent public disclosure of revision rationale.
- Strengthen peer-review mechanisms.
- Promote critical inquiry rather than deletion-based correction.
- Balance institutional respect with democratic debate.

In the name of realism, power becomes truth

THE CAPTIVE Mind. Czesław Miłosz's searing anatomy of authoritarianism, tells a story drawn from an older Polish novel by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz. Inevitably, Europe is about to be overrun by a Sino-Mongolian army that dominates from the Pacific to the Baltic. The country facing invasion is unhappy and paralysed. Suddenly, lawbreakers appear, peddling something called the 'Murti-Bing pill'. Those who take it become so happy that they do not even regard colonisation as a tragedy for their civilisation. They adapt cheerfully to their new rulers.

Miłosz's book is a catalogue of the many Murti-Bing pills by which citizens, but especially intellectuals, justified submission to power: Ideological adjustment, self-deception and fear. But even he might not have reckoned that the most effective Murti-Bing pill of our time would be something called 'realism' in both international and domestic affairs. In India, realism presents itself as tough-minded and unromantic. It claims to grasp the world as it is. It prides itself on puncturing the illusions of moralists. In its imagination, moralists are mere sloganeers, whining away. Realism invokes prudence and responsibility, contrasting them with what it portrays as empty idealism.

We are told in international relations to "understand the nature of power". We must adapt to new imperial realities. Of course, bargains with the United States will be asymmetrical; you are dealing with a more powerful actor. Only a dimwit would fail to grasp this. Offering moral *carte blanche* to Israel, as our Prime Minister recently did, is described as realism. To question such policies is to indulge in moral narcissism. It is manifest

to accept the world of power and adapt, any talk of justice be damned.

This supposed realism in international affairs also has an exact domestic analogue. When faced with authoritarian tendencies at home, citizens are told not to ask what their rights are, but to understand how power works and adapt accordingly. Speaking up is naive. Protesting is foolish. Pointing out that the emperor has no clothes is irresponsible. The logic is identical: Power is truth. Take the Murti-Bing pill of realism and you will sleep soundly. As Miłosz understood, this narcotic sustains both imperialism and authoritarianism.

India needs to be aware of this self-deception. Realists will often lend more succour to imperialists and authoritarians than ideological zealots ever could, because they cloak adaptation in the language of truth. Any serious thinker knows that moral aspiration collides with constraint. Conviction without understanding causal realities can shade into irresponsibility. As Max Weber, a realist of a different mould, reminded us, political action requires an ethics of responsibility, not mere purity of conviction.

But our contemporary realists are not exemplars of tragic wisdom. They practise a subtle alchemy. Miłosz charted the shift whereby we move from a moral question—is this right?—to a seemingly sober question: Is this historically possible? The twist is that historical possibility quietly becomes "whatever those in power declare feasible". What presents itself as analysis becomes a counsel of submission.

Three features define this contemporary Indian realism. First, in



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

international relations, whatever the regime does is christened realist. Submit to America: Realist. Engage China: Realist. Buy oil from Russia: Realist. Stop buying oil from Russia: Realist. Placate Benjamin Netanyahu: Realist. Placate Saudi Arabia: Realist. Start a war: Realist. Avoid a war: Realist. Realism here has no criteria independent of power's choices. It does not discipline policy, it ratifies it. This is not tragic responsibility. It is an adaptation-preference formation in service of authority—the Murti-Bing pill administered after the fact.

Second, this realism reveals a curious psychological affinity between imperialism abroad and authoritarianism at home. Anti-imperialism and anti-authoritarianism should spring from the same disposition: Resistance to arbitrary and concentrated power. Yet, the habit of submitting to global hierarchies in the name of historical necessity easily mutates into submission to domestic concentration of power. The underlying disposition is the same.

Third, this realism suffers from a striking lack of imagination. Miłosz's deepest complaint against those who accommodated authoritarianism was not that they were wicked, but that they ceased to think. Appeals to necessity, historical or geopolitical, foreclose political options. Moralists can indeed hide behind slogans. But at least they preserve the possibility that the world might be otherwise. All boundaries are first pushed in the imagination. The comfort of contemporary realism is to insist that adaptation to power is all there is. In doing so, the realist

forecloses the possibility of alternative political action. Often, you open up new spaces and possibilities by trying out new forms of political action, not by taking the constraints of power as fixed.

Realism promises toughness. In practice, it produces softness: Softness toward power, hardness toward the powerless. This is why the damage realism does is so corrosive. It becomes a "suck up, kick down" philosophy. Many well-intentioned realist friends will counsel, "do not criticise Donald Trump or Narendra Modi". They do so not because they might disagree on the substance of the criticism but because it is apparently imprudent. In the next breath, however, they will excoriate a minor bureaucrat, a small-time swindler, a protestor blocking traffic, or even the leader of the Opposition, or some middle-power country. If prudence demands silence before concentrating on executive power, why does it not demand restraint before lesser actors? If power must always be accommodated, why is this accommodation selectively upward? It tells you more about the courage of the realist than it tells you about the demands of the world. If your philosophy of criticism is that you will stay silent in the face of massive power, you ought to forfeit even the right to criticise minions.

The realist uses adaptation to power like a Murti-Bing pill, passing off abdication as wisdom. No wonder we are more genuflecting to imperialism now than when we were weak, and happier with authoritarianism than when we were poorer. This kind of realism is seldom on the side of the future.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

Realism promises toughness.

In practice, it produces softness: Softness toward power, hardness toward the powerless. This is why the damage realism does is so corrosive. It becomes a 'suck up, kick down' philosophy

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- A recent opinion debate in Indian public discourse critiques the growing invocation of "realism" in both foreign and domestic policy.
- The argument draws from *The Captive Mind* by Czesław Miłosz, which describes how intellectuals rationalise submission to concentrated power.
- In India, "realism" is increasingly used to justify:
 - Strategic decisions in foreign policy (relations with USA, China, Russia, West Asia).
 - Acceptance of executive centralisation and reduced tolerance for dissent.
- The debate is relevant amid:
 - Rising geopolitical competition (US–China rivalry, Russia–Ukraine conflict).
 - Expanding executive influence in governance.
 - Discussions on civil liberties, dissent, and constitutional morality.

Key Points

- Realism in International Relations
 - Emphasises national interest, balance of power, strategic autonomy.
 - Prioritises prudence over moral idealism.
 - Sees international system as anarchic (no central authority).
- Indian Foreign Policy Context
 - Strategic Autonomy (evolved from Non-Alignment).
 - Multi-alignment: Engagement with US, Russia, China, West Asia.

- Energy security decisions during Russia–Ukraine war.
- West Asia diplomacy balancing Israel and Gulf nations.

Domestic Governance Context

- Increasing executive dominance in policymaking.
 - Debate over:
 - Civil liberties.
 - Freedom of speech (Article 19).
 - Federal balance.
 - Concerns about centralisation vs cooperative federalism.
- ### Core Ethical Question
- Does realism mean pragmatic governance?
 - Or does it become justification for submission to power?

Static Linkages

- Preamble – Justice, Liberty, Equality.
- Article 19 – Freedom of speech and expression.
- Basic Structure Doctrine – Limits on parliamentary power.
- Separation of Powers – Executive accountability.
- Rule of Law – Equality before law (Article 14).
- Constitutional Morality – Ambedkar's emphasis.
- Ethics of Responsibility vs Ethics of Conviction – Max Weber.
- Balance of Power Theory – International relations.
- Strategic Autonomy – Post-Cold War Indian diplomacy.

Critical Analysis

Merits of Realism

- Ensures protection of national interest.
- Avoids moral grandstanding in geopolitics.
- Recognises power asymmetry in global order.
- Enhances strategic flexibility (multi-alignment).

Limitations

- May rationalise executive overreach.
- Risks erosion of democratic dissent.
- Encourages selective silence toward powerful actors.
- Can undermine constitutional morality.
- Weakens anti-authoritarian vigilance.

Stakeholder Perspective

- Government: Needs pragmatic policy space.
- Opposition: Seeks institutional accountability.
- Civil Society: Protects rights and liberties.
- Judiciary: Guardian of constitutional balance.
- International Actors: Evaluate India's normative positioning.

Way Forward

- Balance realism with constitutional morality.
- Strengthen institutional checks and balances.
- Preserve space for democratic dissent.
- Develop principled strategic autonomy (values + interests).
- Encourage evidence-based policymaking.
- Promote ethical leadership in public administration.

India-Canada reset is vital in the time of Trump



AMEN
NAITHANI
AND
ELIZABETH
ROCHE

CANADIAN PM Mark Carney's visit to India this week is expected to place the bilateral relationship — which touched a nadir in 2023 with Ottawa accusing New Delhi of being involved in the murder of a Canadian national — on a more stable footing. The logic for the reset in India-Canada ties was outlined by Carney himself in a speech at the WEF in Davos in January: "The middle powers must act together, because if you're not at the table, you're on the menu." Amid cracks in the global order, Ottawa has pivoted from a "laid-back" observer to a vocal protagonist, aggressively courting new alliances in the Indo-Pacific to absorb the shocks delivered by President Donald Trump to the once unified West.

Canada's transformation also comes at a critical time for India, which is looking to diversify its partnerships. What will prove helpful is Carney's economic expertise. With Canada looking for new markets to replace the business opportunities lost in the US, Carney should look at India, with a middle class comparable in numbers to the entire US population, as an economic opportunity, replacing surface-level engagements with deep-rooted linkages. In September 2023, ties hit a historic low when then PM Justin Trudeau accused the Indian government of involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, an Indian-origin Canadian Sikh. The result was a total diplomatic freeze that lasted nearly two years. But ahead of the visit, Ottawa concluded that India was not involved in violent criminal activity on Canadian soil.

A quiet, constructive meeting between PM Narendra Modi and Carney at the G7 summit in Kananaskis in June 2025, followed by deeper and longer bilateral meetings at the G20 in Johannesburg in November 2025, set the stage for a reset. Incidentally, bilateral goods trade grew to roughly \$13.3 billion in 2024, despite the chill in relations. During Carney's visit, both are expected to conclude a \$2.8-billion deal for uranium supplies to India for a decade. For an India aiming to massively expand its civilian nuclear energy capacity, Canadian uranium is a necessity. The official reboot of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations is also on the cards. CEPA has the ambitious goal of doubling bilateral trade to \$60 billion by 2030.

That being said, challenges remain. The deep-seated disagreements that triggered the 2023 crisis have not vanished; they have simply been moved to a different track. But the diplomatic channels are back at work along with the reinstatement of the high commissioners. NSA Ajit Doval's visit to Ottawa earlier this month ensured the delicate balance: Security dialogues run parallel to economic progress, rather than impeding it. Doval and his counterpart, Nathalie G. Drouin, agreed to a "shared work plan" to guide cooperation. The real anchor of this relationship remains the people. With nearly 4,30,000 Indian students in Canada and a diaspora that is deeply integrated into the Canadian political and economic fabric, the people-to-people ties were always too strong to snap. They are the reason why, even at the height of the freeze, the two nations never stopped talking entirely.

Naithani is research associate, CSDR, and Roche is associate professor, O.P.J.S. Global University

A quiet, constructive meeting between PMs Narendra Modi and Mark Carney at the G7 summit in Kananaskis in June 2025, followed by deeper and longer bilateral meetings at the G20 in November 2025, set the stage for a calibrated reset

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- Visit of Canadian PM Mark Carney to India marks a reset in bilateral ties after a diplomatic freeze since September 2023.
- 2023 crisis followed allegations by then PM Justin Trudeau regarding India's alleged involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
- Diplomatic downgrade lasted nearly two years; high commissioners reinstated in 2025.
- Bilateral engagement revived through:
 - G7 Summit (Kananaskis, 2025)
 - G20 Summit (Johannesburg, 2025)
- Proposed \$2.8 billion uranium supply agreement (10 years).
- Reboot of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations.

Key Facts

- Bilateral goods trade: ~\$13.3 billion (2024).
- CEPA target: \$60 billion trade by 2030.
- Canada is:
 - A major global uranium producer.
 - A member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
- India received NSG waiver in 2008, enabling civil nuclear trade despite not being an NPT signatory.

- Approx. 4.3 lakh Indian students in Canada (one of the largest foreign student groups).
- India's Net Zero target: 2070 (COP26 commitment).

Static Linkages

- 2008 NSG waiver and civil nuclear cooperation.
- Three-stage nuclear power programme of India.
- Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs).
- Energy security as part of national security.
- Role of diaspora in foreign policy.
- Trade agreements (FTA/CEPA) and tariff liberalisation.
- Indo-Pacific strategic framework.

Importance for Mains

Strategic Significance

- Strengthening middle-power cooperation in a fragmented global order.
- Indo-Pacific alignment and diversification of partnerships.

Energy Security

- Uranium supply critical for nuclear expansion.
- Nuclear energy contributes to:
 - Clean energy transition.
 - Base-load power stability.
 - Climate commitments.

Economic Dimension

- Market diversification for both countries.
- Boost to services, mobility, agri-trade, and investments.

Diaspora Diplomacy

- Indian diaspora as stabilising factor.
- Student mobility and remittances.

Challenges

- Residual trust deficit post-2023 allegations.
- Political sensitivities related to separatist movements.
- Trade negotiation hurdles (dairy, agriculture, mobility).
- Domestic political pressures in both countries.

Way Forward

- Institutionalised 2+2 dialogue.
- Fast-tracked CEPA with phased tariff reduction.
- Enhanced counter-terror intelligence cooperation.
- Clean energy collaboration (SMRs, nuclear tech).
- Structured diaspora engagement mechanisms.

PM's Israel visit frames a Delhi shift

IT IS unsurprising that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel this week has revived arguments about India's foreign-policy values. Since independence, India's policy towards Israel and the wider Middle East has been held to a moral standard rarely applied to other bilateral relationships. The expectation that Delhi must express unequivocal outrage at Israeli actions in Gaza — while remaining largely silent on comparable behaviour by other states — reflects this. The debate is further distorted by domestic politics. Congress is often accused of posturing on the Middle East to woo the minority vote, while the BJP's enthusiasm for Israel is seen as an extension of its Hindutva agenda. But India cannot allow internal politics to overwhelm its national interests in a region central to its peace and prosperity.

Undeniably, the PM's visit marks a shift toward greater pragmatism in India's Middle East policy. Arriving at a moment of regional transition, Modi used his address to the Knesset to underscore India's shared interests with Israel in countering terrorism and extremism, and to signal an unambiguous commitment to elevate the partnership to a higher strategic level. At the same time, he signalled that India is not abandoning its support for the Palestinian cause. At the core of this calibrated approach was Modi's endorsement of US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan. India's focus is now shifting from rhetoric to signalling readiness to contribute to peace and reconstruction of Gaza.

The moral burden on India's Israel policy is increasingly untenable in the face of profound changes sweeping the Middle East. Israel has emerged as a dominant military power with expanding ties across the region — including with former adversaries. Meanwhile, the willingness of leading Arab and Muslim states to work with Trump's peace plan — even after accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza and the US of complicity — underscores the gap between their rhetoric and individual national interests. Several influential Islamic countries have joined the Board of Peace and agreed to participate in the Gaza Stabilisation Force. The unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 2803, widely viewed as favourable to Israel, highlights how far the global approach to the Palestinian question has shifted. It also exposes the growing disconnect between global realpolitik on Gaza and the performative moralpolitik embedded in India's domestic discourse.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- Prime Minister's recent diplomatic engagement with Israel signals a calibrated shift in India's West Asia policy.
- India endorsed the U.S.-backed Gaza peace and reconstruction framework earlier proposed under Donald Trump.
- Address at the Knesset emphasized counter-terror cooperation, technology partnership, and strategic convergence.
- India reiterated support for the Palestinian cause while deepening bilateral ties with Israel.
- The changing global stance on Gaza reflected in discussions at the United Nations Security Council.

Key Facts

- Diplomatic Relations: Full diplomatic ties established in 1992.
- Defence Cooperation:
 - Israel among India's top defence suppliers (SIPRI).
 - Key systems: Barak missiles, UAVs, surveillance radars.
- Agriculture Cooperation:
 - Indo-Israel Agricultural Project (Centres of Excellence in multiple states).
 - Focus on drip irrigation and water efficiency.
- Trade:
 - Bilateral trade (excluding defence) ~USD 10 billion (Ministry of Commerce).

- Energy Context:
 - West Asia supplies over 50% of India's crude oil imports (MoPNG data).
- Diaspora:
 - ~8–9 million Indians reside in Gulf countries (MEA).
- India's Palestine Position:
 - Supports two-State solution based on peaceful coexistence.

Static Linkages

- Article 51 (DPSP) – Promotion of international peace and security.
- Principles of:
 - Strategic Autonomy
 - Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) legacy
 - Panchsheel
- Executive conducts foreign policy (Parliamentary oversight in financial/legislative implications).
- Energy Security as component of National Security (Economic Survey).
- West Asia as part of India's "Extended Neighbourhood".

Critical Analysis

Strategic Rationale

- Israel as reliable defence and technology partner.
- Intelligence cooperation strengthens counter-terror capabilities.
- Agriculture and water innovations support India's climate resilience goals.
- Pragmatic approach aligns with multi-alignment strategy.

Concerns

- Risk of alienating Arab partners critical for:
 - Energy imports
 - Remittances
- Domestic political polarization affecting foreign policy discourse.
- Balancing moral support for Palestine with realpolitik.

Geopolitical Dimension

- Arab-Israel normalization (post-Abraham Accords) reduces earlier diplomatic constraints.
- Shift from ideological solidarity to interest-driven diplomacy.
- Growing multipolarity encourages flexible engagement.

Way Forward

- Maintain calibrated balance: Support two-State solution while expanding Israel ties.
- Institutionalize trilateral cooperation (India-Israel-UAE models).
- Diversify energy sources to reduce vulnerability.
- Strengthen parliamentary debates on foreign policy transparency.
- Enhance developmental role in Gaza reconstruction consistent with international law.