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Neeraj Thakur
IS EDITOR, *OUTLOOK*

Democracy's Heartbreaks

BELIEF

in love and the purity of political movements comes naturally to the young, especially when it is their first encounter with either. Both demand a certain innocence—a willingness to place hope above experience and ideals above practical calculation. It is often said that the first experience of love is less about the person than the idea of being in love. Political movements inspire a similar faith. Their earliest followers are drawn not merely by the logic of their demands but by the possibility of the world they promise to create.

Yet, in this temporary world, innocence is transient, and so is the belief in love and in the idea that a political movement can make the world any better than the one we inherited.

The struggle for India's independence culminated in Partition. The faith invested in the JP Movement gave birth to a government that lasted less than two years. Those who rallied behind Anna Hazare's call for a Lokpal and a corruption-free India eventually realised that movements may change governments, but they rarely change the character of the republic.

Yet, heartbreak never kills the heart. It makes it wiser. Political disappointment works much the same way. The long arc of failed movements does not extinguish the possibility of change; it tempers the expectations with which we pursue it. The freedom movement could not prevent Partition, but it did give birth to a republic on the eastern side of the Indus where every individual, at least in principle, stood equal before the state. The leaders who emerged from the JP Movement failed to live up to the expectations of political purity and the chastity of public life they had inspired, yet, they ensured that no political leader would again romance the

idea of dictatorship without fearing not only the loss of power but also history's unforgiving judgement.

To the millennials who proudly wore Anna Hazare's white caps, the movement eventually ended in disappointment. Its leaders publicly fought among themselves for political power, and many of the promises that had once inspired millions became objects of ridicule. Yet, the movement left behind something that continues to breathe beneath the debris of that dream: a grammar of resistance that compels those who sit inside Parliament to listen to the voices of those who sent them to the temple of democracy.

For a country that has spent less than half as much time as an independent nation as it did under the shackles of colonial rule, India has done remarkably well. Many of the countries that emerged from the collapse of the British Empire alongside India have since slipped into dictatorships or democracies that bear little resemblance to the aspirations of their freedom movements.

India, for all its failures in delivering equality of opportunity, justice and dignity to all, has continued to learn from its mistakes and, in doing so, has managed to keep alive the ideals of its founders.

Nothing illustrates that resilience better than the latest movement led by a motley group of Generation Z. They believed that Indian democracy still possesses the capacity to correct itself after the first flush of arrogance born of an overwhelming electoral majority. Their faith has been rewarded. The resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan is not merely the fall of a minister. It is a reminder that in India, governments may command majorities in Parliament, but they continue to govern only so long as they retain the confidence of the people.

Beware, idealists! Like every movement before it, this one too will have its



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POLITICS, LIKE LOVE,
SURVIVES NOT
BECAUSE IT ESCAPES
DISAPPOINTMENT,
BUT BECAUSE
EVERY GENERATION
DISCOVERS REASONS
TO BELIEVE AGAIN.

heartbreaks. Its leaders, much like those who emerged from the embers of earlier movements, are human. They too will stumble, compromise and, perhaps, betray some of the ideals that brought them to prominence. In search of power, just like their predecessors, these believers in the possibilities of today will question the intentions behind the dreams of tomorrow. For today's conformists are yesterday's revolutionaries. The idea of justice is important to the unprivileged. But if the pursuit of justice is to get aboard the ship of the privileged, sin must consume the ideal. Paradise is always easier to imagine than to govern.

Yet, that will not be the failure of our democracy; it is the way we mature as a country. These are the footprints that future generations will follow with caution, improving upon the mistakes of previous generations. The disappointments of our democracy leave behind institutional memories, giving birth to political instincts that outlive the movements responsible for them. These are merely agents of maturity through mistakes in the long journey of a nation still learning to negotiate between the powerful and the powerless, the faithful and the atheists, the liberals and the conservatives, the advocates of discipline and the champions of anarchy.

India has come this far not because its ideals were free of contradiction. If anything, they often pulled the republic in opposite directions. Yet, it is precisely this dialectic that has generated the political energy to carry the country through the food shortages of the 1960s, the balance-of-payments crisis of the 1990s, communal violence, caste conflicts, violent uprisings against the state and countless other moments of national uncertainty. Every crisis in Indian democracy has left behind a wiser republic, better equipped to negotiate the many identities this nation carries.

As a nation, we have remained committed to the *Discovery of India* in its civilisational identity alongside its modern aspirations. It has required a delicate balance between the love of the past and the possibility

of the future; between Gandhi's village republic and Nehru's modernity; between Ambedkar's unrealised dream of annihilating caste and the Mandal era's embrace of caste identities; between Vajpayee's optimism of India Shining and Manmohan Singh's politics shaped by the realities of persistent poverty; between Modi's pursuit of *Viksit Bharat* and the impatience of those yet to experience its promise.

These competing ideas of raising the republic were perhaps inevitable for a nation whose very existence many believed was an impossibility. They continue to unsettle and inspire in equal measure.

Navigating these complexities has required marriages of convenience that make no promise of "till death do us part". In some of the unlikeliest political coalitions, we have seen communists join hands with conservatives to unseat a prime minister committed to socialism. We have seen champions of swadeshi advocate the free flow of foreign capital to revive India's economy.

Contradiction and role reversal are not aberrations in Indian politics; they make the wonder that is India. It's here that Iqbal's Hindustan metamorphosed into a heartbreak for the Ganga-Jamuna *tehzeeb*.

India is decades young, but its traumas are centuries old. This is why the only enduring constant in Indian democracy is the continual emergence of new love-hate relationships between ideas, ideologies and communities. That is what makes India a democracy unlike any other.

Here, much like our mortal lives, political movements, leaders and coalitions carry an expiry date. Our choice of leaders, our faith in policies and our rejection of governments trace the many paths that love itself takes before teaching us that there is no single idea of love that lasts forever. There are only desires that speak to the needs of their time. Politics, like love, survives not because it escapes disappointment, but because every generation discovers reasons to believe again. 



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A Farewell to Arms

As the guns fall silent, Bastar's challenge shifts from defeating insurgency to rebuilding lives, trust and opportunity



Smoke the Peace Pipe About 4,000 Naxals have surrendered between 2024 and March 2026

WEARING

a Casio watch on his left wrist, Mohan walked into the office of the Dantewada Superintendent of Police, along with his wife, and surrendered in January 2026. It was a message from his mother that melted his heart. “Son, if you don’t come back, who will light my pyre?” she said in a video released to the media towards the end of 2025 after Mohan, famous as Azad Kaddi, escaped an encounter in which Maoist leader Urmila, wife of senior operative Papa Rao, was killed. The world around Mohan has



Nivedita Singh
IS SENIOR
CORRESPONDENT,
OUTLOOK

changed during the past six months. But two things remain unchanged: the Casio watch on his wrist and his wife Sumitra by his side. “This is not a regular watch. It was very helpful. It has an alarm and a torch. It was an essential part of my life, when mobiles

were not allowed [during Naxal days]. It is still very useful,” he says, while talking to *Outlook* at his college where he is learning plumbing work. His wife completed a sewing course from the same place, Livelihood College in Dantewada, Bastar division, around mid-July. He is waiting for July 31 when his course comes to an end and he goes back home to his mother and wife. The duo got married in 2018 in the camp and had rewards of Rs 8 lakh each on their heads when they surrendered. They are both happy to start a new life. For the past three months, they



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were living in separate hostels in the campus and could meet each other only during the college hours. “I spoke to her last night. She has already started sewing. She earned Rs 500 by investing only Rs 50 in threads,” says the 32-year-old.

Several men and women across Bastar and Dantewada, once considered a Naxal hotbed, are trying to build a new life after surrendering during the past eight to 10 months.

Twenty-three-year-old Faguni surrendered before the Chhattisgarh police in 2025, after spending almost five years with a Naxal squad. Her eyes hold a vision for a colourful future, one without any violence and full of promise. Wearing a mustard yellow uniform of the Pandum Nukkad Cafe in Bastar’s Jagdalpur, she says she wants to lead a happy life. With a reward of about Rs 1.50 lakh, Faguni was among the last recruits before a massive crackdown on Naxalism changed her mind. “I was told more people from the village would join me later, but they never came,” she says. When asked as to what she really wanted to do in her life, she says she is yet to discover her liking, but right now she wants to earn some money and continue her education.

Though their time of entry and specific reasons differed, all of them say that they went to the ‘organisation’—the Communist Party of India (Maoist)—CPI (M)—because they were unhappy with the atrocities and had no money and food to survive. The same police and administration that once were the villains of their stories are now helping them to build a new life.

Lakman, Faguni’s friend from the camp, is also part of the cafe that started in November 2025. While she has been part of the cafe since the beginning, Lakman joined in July 2026. Carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh on his head, he now works as a cleaner in the cafe due to lack of formal

SEVERAL MEN AND WOMEN ACROSS BASTAR AND DANTEWADA, ONCE CONSIDERED THE NAXAL HOTBED, ARE TRYING TO BUILD A NEW LIFE AFTER SURRENDERING IN THE LAST EIGHT TO TEN MONTHS.

training in the hospitality business.

He was the bodyguard of Rupesh, a former high-ranking central committee member of the CPI(M) and military intelligence chief. Lakman was among those who surrendered along with Rupesh in October 2025 in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh.

In their fight to protect ‘Jal, Jangal and Jameen’ (water, forest and land rights), the former Naxalites were accustomed to using weapons and faced direct combat with security forces for many years. Today, they are learning how to brew coffee, stitch clothes, repair electrical appliances and weld, rebuilding their lives one trade at a time.

For Lakman and Faguni, just like Mohan, the family was their motivation to quit, but for Lakhmu (25), another surrendered Naxal who works in the cafe, it was the budding romance in the camp that made him quit everything. “She [his partner from the camp] was not happy there. One day, she expressed that she wanted to leave. I wanted to make her happy. It was during a conflict with the police that I wrote a letter to the leader and ran away with her,” says Lakhmu.

Rehabilitation Initiatives

The cafe is a part of the Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy and is operated under a partnership between the Bastar police and the Team Nukkad cafe. It employs about 20 people from families that have suffered from Naxal violence and those who have surrendered.

While these are some who have found a way forward, many of their former comrades are still in rehabilitation camps awaiting training and inclusion in the real world.

India won its battle against Naxalism officially in March 2026 when the government declared the country ‘Naxal-free’ after a mass-scale surrender and crackdown. About 4,000 Naxals have surrendered between 2024 and March 2026, but that has made their rehabilitation challenging. Shalabh Kumar Sinha, Bastar’s superintendent of police, acknowledges that rehabilitation is a major challenge.

Sinha, who has held the position since February 2024 and witnessed the mass-scale surrender, says that thousands from the cadre have surrendered in the past couple of months.

“A number of cadres have joined the mainstream in a very short period of time. We have a very elaborate rehabilitation policy. What makes it challenging is the fact that we are expected to provide them these facilities as soon as possible. We are doing everything in a very structured way,” he says.

Sinha says that the end of Naxalism has put pressure on the administration to take development to the last mile and into the interiors of Bastar at the earliest. “It is important that people must have faith in the administration that is working to make their lives better,” he says. Guiding the youth in the correct direction and



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Stitching a New Life Women being trained in weaving at the Livelihood College in Dantewada to build sustainable livelihoods

engaging them in a productive way is an important task for both the police and the administrative department, says Sinha.

Connecting to Development

Bastar’s district magistrate and collector, Akash Chhikara, says that numerous efforts are being undertaken by the administration to take development to the people with better roads and connectivity and the setting up of schools and health centres in areas that lacked these facilities due to Naxalism.

“The areas that were not developed due to the situation so far have a number of expectations. We have to get not only the approvals quickly, but also monitor the development of the projects,” he says. On rehabilitation, he says that the authorities are engaging with various sectors where

these surrendered Naxals can be utilised. “For that, connected training is essential,” he says.

The rehabilitation underway at the Pandum Cafe and the Livelihood College is aimed at those who have already lived through the conflict. But Sinha and Chhikara are equally focused on a harder and quieter task: making sure that the next generation of Bastar’s youth never has a reason to walk into the forests.

The two officers inducted a new batch of youngsters to a coaching centre launched by the district administration at Gyan Gudi, Bastar. About 50 students from the centre have qualified for the recently-concluded National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) out of the 90 who appeared in the undergraduate exam.

Aryan and Bharti are two NEET aspirants who say the initiative is

allowing students like them to pursue education. Aryan was among several students who qualified the NEET exam by only attending a special one-month crash course before the exam.

Bharti’s rank was 305. She says that students coming from government schools lack a number of opportunities, but places like Gyan Gudi help them with a platform to compete in various entrance examinations. Alexander Cherian, programme in-charge of Gyan Gudi, says that between 2020-21 and 2024-25, 379 students have enrolled in NEET and 240 have qualified and 152 were admitted to government colleges.

Just like Bastar, Dantewada too has a similar coaching centre since 2011 called Choo Lo Aasman (touch the sky). Deepa, hailing from a very small village, Potali, has also qualified the NEET exam with the help of the coaching centre.

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Potali village did not have a dispensary. It was only last year that a health centre was built near the village, which is about 5 km from Deepa's house. With initiatives such as Gyan Gudi and Choo Lo Aasman, the focus is shifting beyond rehabilitation. While surrendered cadres are being trained for new livelihoods, the state is also investing in the next generation through education and creating economic opportunities for women, hoping to rebuild trust in a region where decades of conflict had weakened the relationship between the people and the administration.

For the uneducated women, the main occupation in regions like Bastar and Dantewada is agriculture. Since it is a collective work, women were not given any money. But the government is now working to change this. For a long time, villagers stayed away from security camps that were established across the region to end Naxalism. But these are now being converted into community centres. "My *dadi* always used to say that I should stay away from these camps and police and security personnel. But now I spend my whole day here," says 21-year-old Shami, who is learning stitching at the newly inaugurated 'Seva Dera'.

Welfare Schemes

The security camp in Netanar village in Bastar was converted into a 'Seva Dera' in May 2026 by the Union Minister for Home Affairs Amit Shah. He said that there are about 200 camps in Bastar, and out of these, the government would convert 70 camps into service centres for tribal welfare—as of now only one is functioning in Netanar.

A part of this security camp has been converted into three large halls named Shaheed Veer Gundadhur Seva Dera, where women are being given training for sewing and rice

THE ADMINISTRATION NOW HAS A HARDER AND QUIETER TASK: MAKING SURE THAT THE NEXT GENERATION OF BASTAR'S YOUTH NEVER HAS A REASON TO WALK INTO THE FORESTS.

processing, and one room is kept to enroll people for various government schemes and documentation.

Surrounded by women and working on a laptop is Sumani Baghel. She completed her masters in education, but could not pursue any job because of "some situation at home". Now, she is married and has children too. But she has her own identity: manager *didi*.

Baghel is not associated with a bank in particular, but works on a commission basis. As she types on her laptop, Baghel consoles a rice-processing worker, 36-year-old Ramia, that her wages would be reflected after her paperwork is completed. Baghel says that all women working in the rice processing unit are given Rs 200 per day.

"They cannot run to the bank every day. So I come here thrice a week with my laptop to help them with their bank work. They can withdraw money, deposit money and even check their balance. Money has really empowered the women in the rural belt," she says.

Married women in the state are being given Rs 1,000 every month under the Mahtari Vandan Yojana. Whatever they earn from their work is an additional amount. Koyali, working in the rice-processing unit with

Ramia, says that earlier all women were contributing to the same work at home, but with no income. But now, they are given around Rs 6,000 per month for the same work. "We come here around 9-10 am and work till 4-5 pm. The work is not new, but the only thing that has changed is that we spend the whole day together and work does not feel tiring as we sing and enjoy our time here," she says. Many of the women, with extra money in hand, have been able to send their children to English-medium schools in the area.

So, while every attempt is being made from all sides to ensure that the trust gets strengthened between the surrendered Naxals and the authorities in the Naxal-impacted villages, all are walking on eggshells.

Several surrendered Naxals say that they have so far received only Rs 50,000, though many are entitled to larger rehabilitation packages depending on the rewards on their names. Many are also still awaiting land and housing benefits. The administration says the rehabilitation process is taking longer only in places that witnessed mass-scale surrenders, where processing of thousands of cases has slowed implementation, but officials say that all promised benefits will be delivered on priority.

Bastar is changing, much like the lives of people such as Mohan. He never replaced the Casio watch he wore in the jungle. He simply changed the life around it. The watch that once helped him survive in the forests now tells him when to report for plumbing classes, return home to his mother and build a future with his wife. Bastar, too, is trying to reset its clock. The guns may have fallen silent, but whether this new chapter lasts will depend on whether promises of trust, livelihoods and opportunity reach the last village. 

The Man of Words Late Ajit Dada Pawar Remembering him on his Birth Anniversary



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Building Bastar 2.0

Bullets, Naxalism and conflict have long defined Bastar and Chhattisgarh. But this is history now. The state government is trying to use tribal enterprises, forest produce and farming to redefine its future



Nivedita Singh
IS SENIOR
CORRESPONDENT,
OUTLOOK



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai 'Education is the key to development'

NAXALISM

kept Bastar so far away from the mainstream that even transporting ration to some villages used to take up to five days. There were no roads, not even a path wide enough for a bicycle. People used to carry sacks of rice on their shoulders to their homes.

This was the Bastar that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai inherited when they came to power in December 2023. On August 24, 2024, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs set a target to make the country Naxal-free by March 31, 2026. This target has been achieved successfully.

But as the guns turned silent and violence ended, the government faced a bigger challenge: bringing Bastar into the mainstream economy. That's when the

government launched the roadmap of Bastar 2.0. "The biggest challenge before our government was to bring development to Bastar. Underdevelopment persisted for 40-50 years due to Naxalism. So, a lot of work has to happen and development has to reach the people," says Sai. It is important to understand the living condition of tribals; most of them are from poor and marginalised communities, he says. "In some instances, their houses and living conditions were worse than cattle or goat sheds. Farming, including rice cultivation, was their main livelihood."

From emphasising education to exploring other sources of income and involving the youth towards sports and culture, the government has introduced a multifold approach to bring Bastar into the mainstream.

The chief minister says that education is the key to

development. "Scholars have said that if any region is to develop, education is essential. So, the first thing we're doing is setting up schools. I want education and health schemes to reach every doorstep in the region," he says.

Speaking about the transformation, Sai says that parallel to clearing the Naxalites, the government launched the 'Niyad Nellanar' (our good village) scheme in 2024. The objective of the scheme is to make sure that government schemes reach everyone living in the Naxal-affected districts, including Bijapur, Sukma, Kanker, Dantewada and Narayanpur.

"Through the Niyad Nellanar scheme, we have built roads, provided electricity, water and telecom connections, ration cards and opened schools and hospitals. It was due to these efforts that about 500 villages have been resettled and repopulated over the past two years. Common people also wanted Naxalism to end and that's why we succeeded in winning this battle, he says.

Sai says that the belt has more than 100 types of forest produce, including mahua, custard apple and tamarind and the government wanted people to decide what they want to focus on. A team from the National Institute of Design has visited the region and they will submit a report based on what the local people actually want. "Nothing will be imposed on them," he says.

In different areas, different kinds of income sources are being focused on. "In some places, people prefer goat farming while in others, fish farming is popular. Herbal plants are also another option," says Sai.

In May, the 'Shaheed Veer Gundadhur Seva Dera' project was launched. Sai says these camps were established to protect tribal communities, farmers, women and children from Naxal violence.

The Union government has established security camps across the Bastar region to fight Naxals. Now, the government is working to convert 70 of the 200 Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) camps across the Bastar region into Seva Dera. "These camps will be developed as models for regional development and will also facilitate online access to 370 government schemes," he says. For instance, some of these Seva Deras will be used for the packaging of tamarind and organic paddy for enterprise work.

The government has also decided to convert 37 camps into police stations as more and more security camps will be vacated. Initially, 10 police stations will be set up in 2026-27. Sai says that the process to convert all camps will take another two years.

The Seva Deras, apart from delivering government schemes, will also act as dairy milk collection centres as after cultivation livestock is also a potential source of

'COMMON PEOPLE WANTED NAXALISM TO END. ABOUT 500 VILLAGES HAVE BEEN RESETTLED AND REPOPULATED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS.'

income for the tribals. "We are also promoting animal husbandry. Many farming families also keep livestock alongside with farming. So we've also started a scheme to give two cows to each family from June 2025. This is being done in partnership with the National Dairy Development Board, the same body behind Gujarat's White Revolution and Amul. Essentially, we want to replicate the Amul model here, strengthening cooperatives, whether or not it succeeds is a separate matter, but the push is towards cooperative dairy development," he says.

After gaining victory over Naxalism, Sai says, the government is involving the youth and focusing on development so that Naxalism never resurfaces. He says the tribal communities are inclined toward sports, so they have been running the 'Bastar Olympics' for the past two years. Another initiative is the 'Bastar Pandum' (festival). "It featured seven art forms in its first year and 12 art forms this year, covering local cuisine, singing, dance and lifestyle. That too has been appreciated by the youth," says Sai.

He says the region is full of natural beauty, as he called the place "a heaven on earth". "Come see our waterfalls, jungles, Dhurwa dance, bamboo rafting and the Bastar Dussehra. As for safety, there's no danger of any kind here. You can go out even at midnight," says Sai.

With several ongoing initiatives, the Sai government is aiming to develop Bastar as the "best tribal division" in India. The importance of the belt can also be understood by the fact that the Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said that the dream of a developed India by 2047 remains incomplete without a "developed Bastar".

Apart from development, the government is also working to change the image of the state as well as Bastar. "There is a perception among people that the state is unsafe. We are working on changing this image. We want to emphasise that this is not the old Bastar or the old Chhattisgarh. It has changed now and it will improve further," says Sai.

For the government, the end of insurgency is not the finish line. It is the beginning of a far more difficult task: ensuring that development reaches the last village and that Bastar's identity is no longer defined by conflict. 

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The Rise of **Gen-Z** Politics

The Jantar Mantar protest was a reminder that while governments are formed in Parliament, democracies remain alive on the streets that surround it

Breaking The Barrier Protesters trying to move past the barricades erected at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi



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JANTAR Mantar has long defied the old adage that lightning never strikes twice. The 18th-century observatory built by Maharaja Jai Singh II has, time and again, become the unlikely birthplace of political storms. Governments in India have periodically learnt that movements born on the pavement of Jantar Mantar often have a deep impact, sometimes making the heart of power nervous and uncomfortable.

But, history is not liked by the powerful. So, when Abhijit Dipke, the founder of the fledgling Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) arrived at Jantar Mantar in June demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan following the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) controversy after a paper leak, the initial reaction was to dismiss him. His outfit, after all, was only days old, its organisational footprint barely existed and the protest attracted little attention beyond a small circle of Gen-Z supporters. Millions engaged with the party's Instagram page, but a few felt compelled to leave their screens and join the demonstration on the ground.

The political climate offered Dipke little reason for optimism. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), had been consolidating its political dominance through successive victories in state elections, driven by the twin narratives of Hindutva and *Viksit Bharat*. The government's mood was upbeat and hence the demand for the resignation of one of its ministers appeared less like the beginning of a movement than an act of political futility.

The first fortnight did little to alter that impression. Dipke was dismissed as an Opposition proxy, while his supporters were written off as a bunch of online activists unlikely to survive beyond the news cycle.

TRIBHUVAN TIWARI

The script, however, altered almost two months later. Pradhan had to resign.

The resignation of a Cabinet minister has not altered the balance of power in New Delhi. But it has marked something significant. A government that had spent more than a decade cultivating the image of a regime never yielding to the Opposition's pressure had conceded the central demand of a protest movement led by a political unknown and propelled largely by Gen Zs.

What changed in a span of weeks? How did a protest that struggled to gather supporters at Jantar Mantar initially compel the country's most politically dominant government in decades to retreat?

The Weight of a Fast

A meal derives its flavour from many spices. A political movement, too, gathers strength from many ingredients. Anger ignites it, slogans sustain it and crowds give it visibility. History remembers movements for something else entirely—the willingness of an individual to suffer for a larger cause. For CJP, that moment arrived when Sonam Wangchuk joined the movement.

The Ladakh-based engineer and environmentalist, who had himself endured detention under the National Security Act last year while campaigning for statehood and constitutional safeguards for the Union Territory, announced that he would join the protest and begin an indefinite fast until its demands were met.

Few political acts in India possess the moral gravity of a fast. It is among the oldest idioms of democratic dissent, forged during the freedom struggle and carried across generations of protest. Mahatma Gandhi transformed fasting into an instrument of moral persuasion, embedding the idea deep within India's political imagination. Potti Sriramulu's fast redrew the linguistic map of independent India. Anna Hazare's

A POLITICAL MOVEMENT, GATHERS STRENGTH FROM MANY INGREDIENTS. ANGER IGNITES IT, SLOGANS SUSTAIN IT AND CROWDS GIVE IT VISIBILITY.

hunger strike revived a nationwide debate on corruption decades later. Whether one agreed with their demands was secondary. The fast itself altered the moral balance of the argument.

Its power lies in the moral dilemma it creates. Governments can dismiss slogans, question motives and dispute the size of a crowd. They can arrest protesters, erect barricades and wait for public attention to fade. But they can't ignore a human body willingly embracing suffering for a political cause. A fast shifts the contest from politics to conscience. It asks not just whether a demand is justified, but whether a government is prepared to watch an individual suffer rather than respond.

As political scientist Yogendra Yadav observes: "Self-sacrifice establishes authenticity. Fasting is one expression of that tradition, where action communicates more powerfully than speech."

The effect of Wangchuk's fast was immediate. The crowd at Jantar Mantar started swelling. Students who were following the protests on their mobile screens and Instagram feeds started booking their tickets to Delhi. It was no longer restricted to Gen Z. Parents of children who logged for years preparing for competitive exams and whose children died by suicide after the NEET paper leak arrived too. Volunteers arranged for food and water; some organised medical camps. As the mercury rose, the intensity of anger went up as well. What had

begun as an everyday protest in the calculations of the government was becoming one it could no longer afford to underestimate.

Then came the morning of July 18 that changed the course of the movement.

Acting on Delhi High Court's observation that Wangchuk's life had to be "protected", police in plainclothes arrived at Jantar Mantar at around 7 am and took him to the Safdarjung Hospital. What was intended to draw the curtain on the agitation instead became its defining image. The white sheets used to shield the operation from public view evoked a range of emotions—anger, disbelief, sympathy, shock. Those images helped millions following the story on social media connect with the protest.

The government's calculation was precise and logical—remove the fasting leader and the movement might lose its emotional anchor.

The opposite happened at Ground Zero. Word spread within minutes. By sunrise, volunteers had formed a human chain around the stage, fearing similar police action would be taken against others associated with the protest. Over the next 24 hours, ahead of the July 20 'Sansad Chalo' march, people started camping at Jantar Mantar.

After Wangchuk was taken to the hospital, more politicians arrived at the venue. Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhra Azad arrived in the dead of night on June 19 and remained until dawn to ensure protesters were not driven away from Jantar Mantar. A shift was visible in the Opposition's response. Politicians cutting across party lines walked along with the students on July 20. By noon, reports of excessive force by police fuelled news feeds, following which leaders such as Dimple Yadav, Dharmendra Yadav and John Brittas converged at the protest site. Several other leaders reached Jantar Mantar on subsequent days.

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, accompanied by his sister



Frayed Tempers A protester and a policeman captured while having a heated argument

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Karnataka and Kerala chief ministers D.K. Shivakumar and V.D. Satheesan, among others, marched towards the prime minister's residence on Lok Kalyan Marg on July 21, courting arrest. Images of Rahul being manhandled by the police went viral on social media. A bruised nose but an unbroken spirit gave him the political moment every Opposition leader waits for.

From Meme to Movement

It is difficult to judge the significance of a political movement before it becomes one. They seldom emerge where power expects them to. More often than not, they begin at the margins, dismissed as passing spectacles before gathering a momentum that catches governments by surprise.

The CJP came into being just by chance. Its origins lay not in a political manifesto or a mass organisation, but in an internet meme sparked by reports that Chief Justice of India Surya Kant had referred to unemployed youths as cockroaches during court proceedings. Justice Kant later denied ever using the word, saying sections of the media

had inaccurately reported his oral observations. By then, however, the meme had escaped the confines of the courtroom. What began as online satire soon acquired a political life of its own, evolving into an unlikely identity that attracted a sizeable digital following, even if a few initially believed it could ever translate into a movement.

Similarly, a few within the ruling establishment could have imagined that a meme born out of a courtroom exchange would, within weeks, become the banner of a nationwide movement demanding accountability from the government. They never imagined that party leaders would have to defend the country's most electorally dominant government in decades on various platforms—on the streets, in Parliament and across social media.

For the CJP, the journey from meme to movement was as improbable as it was revealing. It showed that in the age of algorithms, political movements can emerge from the unlikeliest places. What determines their fate, however, is not the novelty of their origins but their ability to capture the anxieties of their time.

Political theorist Pratap Bhanu Mehta

believes that such movements often draw strength from their newness. "They are not weighed down by the baggage of the past. There is a yearning for something new, something that allows people to suspend their cynicism, at least for a while," he says.

Young Nation

India possesses one distinction that few nations can rival. It is not only the world's most populous country but also one of its youngest. With a median age of around 29, it has the largest working-age population on the planet. Successive governments have celebrated this demographic dividend as India's greatest strategic advantage, pointing to the country's rise as the world's fifth-largest economy as proof that the promise is being realised.

Yet economic statistics can hide the mood of a generation. Nearly a third of India's workforce continues to depend on agriculture for its livelihood, while millions more survive on informal and gig work that offers little income security or opportunity for advancement. For countless young Indians, admission to a premier educational institution or success in



The Big Clash On July 20, police used excessive force on protesters, resulting in many sustaining injuries

a competitive exam is more than an academic milestone. It is one of the few reliable pathways to social mobility.

Labour economist Santosh Mehrotra argues that we are on the verge of losing our demographic dividend because though the number of young people entering the working-age population is increasing for now, there are very few jobs. Private-sector jobs have not been growing at the rate at which there is a need for them. This has translated into a surge in demand for government jobs in the past 10 years. “This surge reflects a deeper structural weakness in the economy. The large number of candidates appearing for competitive exams is a consequence of rising educational attainment without a corresponding increase in employment opportunities,” he says.

The anxieties of young India have deepened with the arrival of artificial intelligence (AI). For more than three decades, the information technology industry served as the country’s most dependable engine of middle-class aspirations. An engineering degree often promised a first job, a first flight, a first car and, for many families, their

first experience of economic security.

That promise is beginning to fray. Automation and generative AI are steadily reducing demand for many entry-level coding and back-office roles that once absorbed thousands of engineering graduates every year. Concerns over shrinking opportunities have become recurring themes in boardrooms, policy discussions, newspaper headlines and online forums frequented by young professionals. Yet they don’t occupy the centre of India’s political conversation.

Instead, electoral politics has continued to revolve around questions of identity, caste, religion and nationalism.

The gap is not merely political. It is generational.

The generation that dominates India’s political leadership was shaped by the upheavals of the late 20th century. It witnessed the implementation of the Mandal Commission’s recommendations, the rise of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and the transformation of identity politics into the principal language of electoral mobilisation. Those experiences

continue to shape the vocabulary of contemporary politics.

Gen Z, however, has grown up in a different India. For millions of them, the next general election will be their first opportunity to vote. Their formative years have been shaped less by the ideological battles of Mandal and *mandir* than by hyper-competitive entrance examinations, social media, AI and an increasingly uncertain transition from classrooms to careers.

For many of them, the NEET controversy became the moment when private anxieties about education and employment acquired a political expression. Richa, who describes herself as politically non-aligned, had never attended a protest. “Until now, I believed we could only complain about the system. These protests have shown us that, as a collective, we can actually bring about change. I now feel it is our responsibility to take an interest in the country’s politics because it is people like us who can bring real change,” says Richa, who is also preparing for competitive exams.

This perhaps explains why, despite the BJP’s recent electoral successes, thousands of young people took to the streets in dozens of cities. Only a fraction of India’s youth had appeared for the NEET exams, and fewer still were directly affected by the alleged irregularities, yet the movement resonated far beyond those candidates because it came to symbolise a larger anxiety shared by an entire generation—that years of hard work could be undone by forces beyond one’s control.

Political Pragmatism

Democracies are most vulnerable not when electorally chosen governments are weak, but when public anger acquires a momentum of its own.

Over the past two years, India’s neighbourhood has witnessed two powerful youth-led movements—in Bangladesh and Nepal—that



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uprooted incumbent governments through violent uprising. Though the circumstances differed, both demonstrated how student protests could evolve into broader political challenges. Those developments were not lost on the BJP's leadership.

For years, the party has argued that foreign forces exploit protest movements to obstruct India's development trajectory. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself popularised the term "*andolan jeevis*" to describe what he portrayed as a class of professional protesters and political opponents who, in his view, resisted every major development initiative undertaken by his government.

Yet political instinct often demands a different response from political rhetoric.

By the time the NEET agitation gathered momentum, the BJP was politically stronger than it had been at any point since the 2024 General Election. Its expanding numbers in Parliament gave it little reason to fear a challenge from the Opposition. But street movements operate on a different arithmetic. Once the party's internal feedback suggested that the protests were resonating beyond NEET aspirants and beginning to shape wider public opinion, the leadership chose pragmatism over confrontation.

The contrast was striking. Just two days before Pradhan's resignation, a BJP spokesperson had told *Outlook*: "We don't believe resignation is the answer. Unlike the Congress, we believe in fixing the problem and ensuring accountability."

It was this intransigence, according to Pratap Bhanu Mehta, that allowed the movement to spread like a wildfire. According to him, the NEET controversy cut across political loyalties because the anxieties surrounding education and competitive exams affected families

irrespective of whom they voted for. "Even BJP supporters were deeply upset because their own children had suffered through examination scandals and faced uncertain futures," he says.

The government tried to win over protestors by announcing the establishment of fast-track courts to expedite paper-leak cases and proposed a law prescribing tougher punishment for those involved in examination fraud. Administratively, the Centre sought to reassure students that the system would be strengthened. Politically, however, the movement had already outgrown the issue of institutional reform. It had become a question of public trust.

With more than five crore cases already pending across India's courts, including in existing fast-track courts, the announcements alone were unlikely to extinguish public anger. The leadership ultimately chose political pragmatism over institutional stubbornness. By asking Pradhan to step down, it absorbed the immediate political cost in order to prevent a larger confrontation, something it had done when it repealed the three farm laws in 2021.

Politics on Parliament Street

Two weeks before the monsoon session of Parliament, political observers were preoccupied with a different question: how long would it take the NDA to secure the elusive two-thirds majority it had sought for years? Opposition leaders were crossing over to the ruling party with increasing frequency, convinced that India's political future lay with a government that had steadily expanded its dominance through successive electoral victories.

Yet the arithmetic inside Parliament has never been the only arithmetic that determines political power in India.

THE PROTEST SYMBOLISED A LARGER ANXIETY SHARED BY AN ENTIRE GENERATION— THAT YEARS OF HARD WORK COULD BE UNDONE BY FORCES BEYOND ONE'S CONTROL.

The other calculation unfolds on the streets outside it, where citizens negotiate with the Republic every day. Electoral victory confers lawmakers with the authority to govern, but they do not suspend the public's right to question them. Between one election and the next, governments continue to seek legitimacy not only through legislations in Parliament but also through the consent they command beyond its walls.

Independent India has witnessed governments of extraordinary parliamentary strength. Jawaharlal Nehru governed with an Opposition too weak to pose a serious challenge. Indira Gandhi's overwhelming majority culminated in the Emergency, when democratic freedoms were suspended. Rajiv Gandhi commanded one of the largest mandates in the country's electoral history. Narendra Modi, too, has presided over a decade of remarkable political dominance.

Yet, each government discovered, in its own way, that parliamentary numbers alone cannot insulate a government from the judgement of the street.

That may be the enduring lesson of the movement that began with an infantile meme. It reminded India that while governments are formed in Parliament, democracies remain alive on the streets that surround it.



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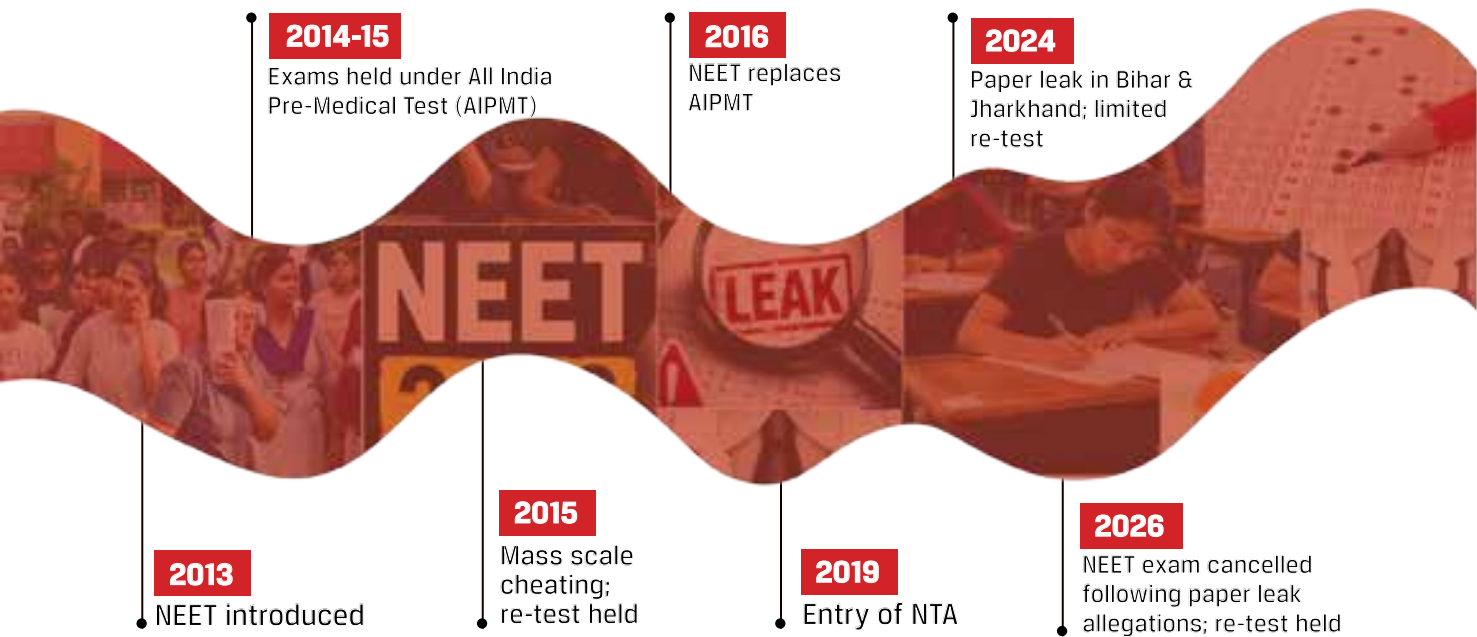
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TESTING TIMES

Between the main NEET-UG exam in May and the re-test in June, at least 12 aspirants have died by suicide.

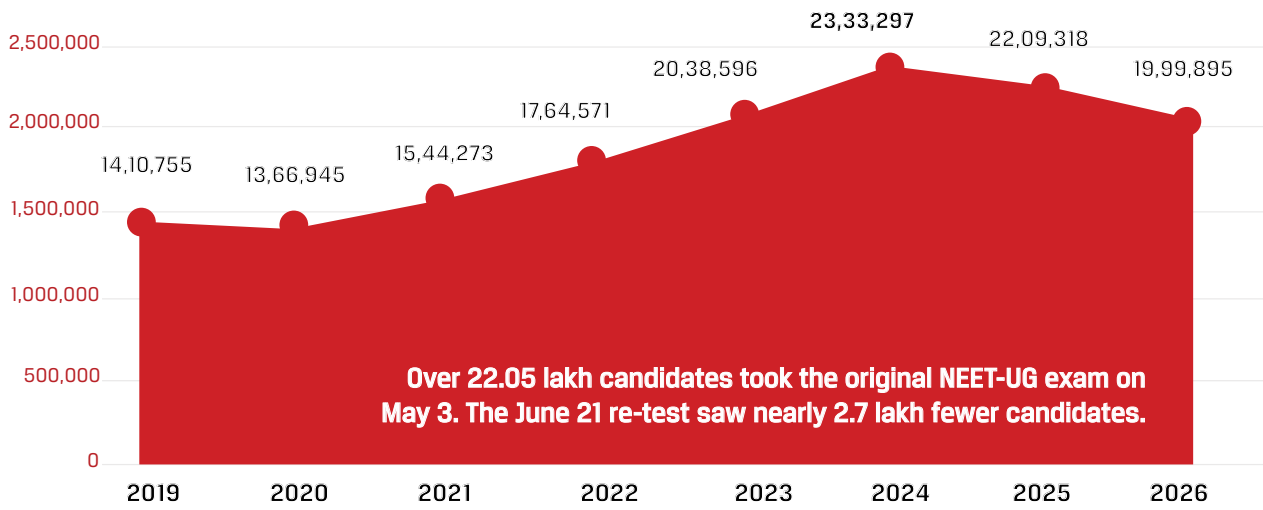
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A Decade of Exam Scandals



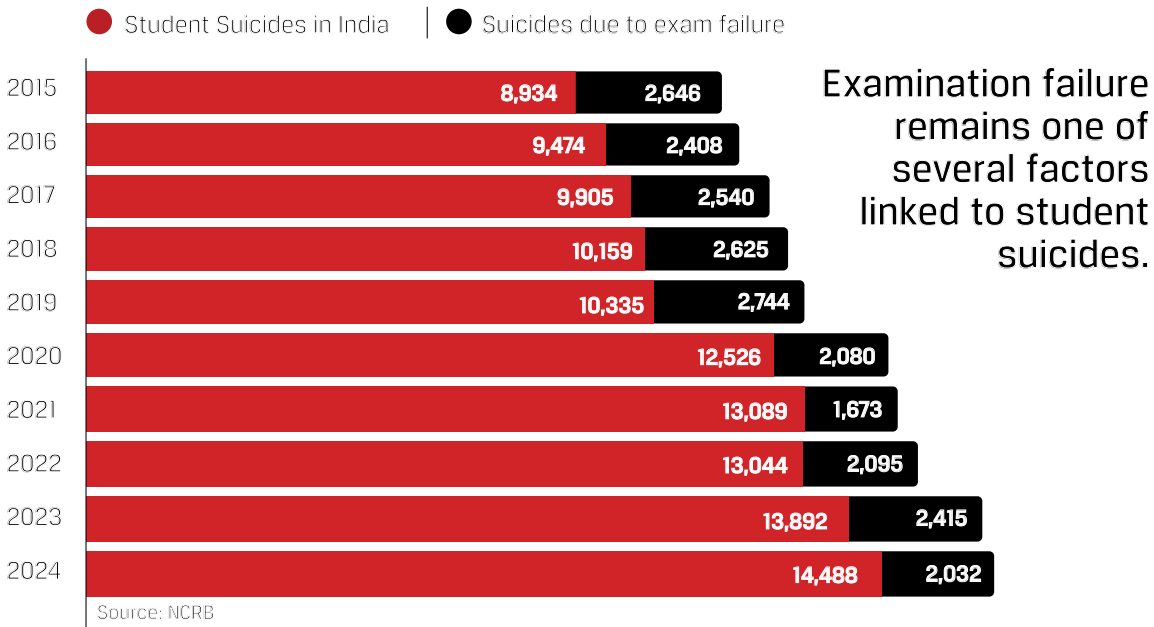
Source: Media Reports

Students Appearing for Exams

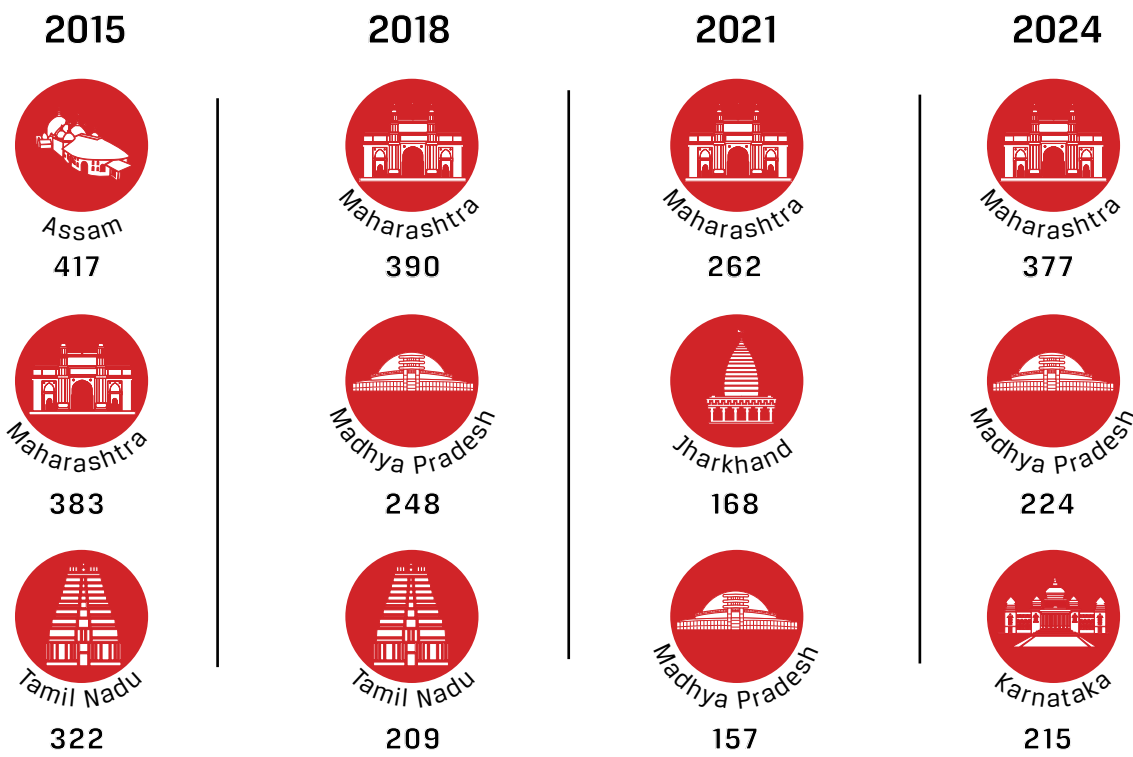


Source: NTA

About 32 Students Die By Suicide Every Day (2015-2024)



Maharashtra Leads in Exam Failure Suicides



Source: NCRB

The Face of Hunger Strikes

A section respects him for the causes he has taken; another feels he changes his political stance often. Will the real Sonam Wangchuk please stand up?



Zenaira Bakhsh
IS AN ASSISTANT EDITOR AT *OUTLOOK*. SHE COVERS GOVERNANCE, MINORITY RIGHTS, GENDER AND CONFLICT

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Political Cause Sonam Wangchuk at Jantar Mantar

TO Ladakh, Sonam Wangchuk is the man who helped turn a long-standing demand for recognition into a political reality. But to his critics and political observers, he is a more contested figure, someone whose political positions have shifted with the changing tides around him.

Irrespective of whether people support him or not, his style of protest has stood out because he chooses hunger strikes. It's a trait he inherited from his father, Sonam Wangyal. Long before the 59-year-old educationalist turned to fasting as a form of protest, Wangyal had used the same Gandhian method to raise his voice for public

causes, passing down not just a strategy of resistance but a political tradition. Over the past few years, Wangchuk has carried that legacy forward, undertaking four hunger strikes, three for his home, Ladakh, and the latest one in solidarity with the Cockroach Janta Party. When he started his hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, it evoked a range of emotions. But by the time the protest ended, people were strongly divided. After he broke his fast, his images with Bharatiya Janata Party member J.P. Nadda became a moment of sharp political interpretation. The photograph captured the contradictions that have come to define Wangchuk's public life.

"It is difficult to understand what his ideology actually is and what he stands for because there have been contradictions," says Mustafa Haji, who has been working closely with Wangchuk in recent years. "As an activist and educator, he understands many things, but Indian politics is extremely complicated. I think he does not understand it deeply," he adds.

The Politics of Wangchuk
A mechanical engineer, education reformer, innovator and environmental activist from Ladakh, Wangchuk came to be known for founding the Students' Educational and Cultural Movement



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of Ladakh (SECMOL), developing the ice stupa artificial glacier technique and co-founding the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh (HIAL). But over the years, his public role expanded beyond education, first into climate activism and later into politics.

His transformation mirrors Ladakh's own political journey after 2019, when the former state of Jammu and Kashmir was reorganised and Ladakh was carved out as a separate Union Territory without a legislature following the abrogation of Article 370.

Initially, Wangchuk welcomed the government's decision. He believed that it would give Ladakh greater political attention and autonomy. "People in Ladakh, including him, later realised how much damage followed the abrogation. Our democratic rights have been taken away. We no longer have a meaningful political voice," says Sajjad Kargili, a political activist.

A Ladakh-based political observer says Wangchuk's position must be understood in the context of changing circumstances. "Many Ladakhis believed separation from Jammu and Kashmir would empower them. But it weakened their position. Their approach changed from cooperation to confrontation," he explains.

According to him, Wangchuk's political evolution followed Ladakh's own disillusionment. "Earlier they welcomed the BJP's initiative. Later, when they realised Ladakh had lost in terms of status and internal power dynamics, they started distancing themselves."

While one can give Wangchuk a benefit of doubt in the case of Ladakh, his backing of several major decisions of the BJP government puts the ball back in his court. Wangchuk described demonetisation as an economic reform. He first hailed the National Education Policy as transformational, but later opposed it for its systemic failures.

Commenting on the contradictions surrounding his recent involvement in the CJP protest, academic and political

WANGCHUK WEARS MULTIPLE HATS—HE IS AN EDUCATOR, CLIMATE ACTIVIST & POLITICIAN.

commentator Apoorvanand questions Wangchuk's decision to immediately adopt a maximalist position by going on hunger strike. "Taking water from the hands of government representatives is a significant political decision. The people who came here were outraged by the same government removing Wangchuk. They felt betrayed," he says.

The Educator

Wangchuk's influence in Ladakh rested on a different kind of leadership—one built around classrooms and communities. He was a teacher who challenged the very structures that had once alienated him. "Before anything else, he was known as a teacher. He inspired people and became an intellectual whose ideas were revolutionary for the people of his community," says Ghulam Mehdi Shah, one of his close aides.

Born in 1966 in Uleytokpo, a remote village in Leh district, Wangchuk received his earliest education at home from his mother, Tsering Wangmo, as there was no school in the village. His understanding of education shifted when his family moved to Srinagar after his father, Wangyal, entered politics. Thrust into a school system dominated by Urdu and English, he struggled with language and cultural barriers—an experience that later shaped his critique of Ladakh's education system.

After graduating in mechanical engineering, Wangchuk co-founded SECMOL. His work expanded through initiatives such as Operation New Hope, which sought to improve government schooling in Ladakh through

collaboration between communities, educators and the administration.

Championing Ladakh

For Wangchuk and civil-society groups like the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance, the promise of empowerment after 2019 never translated into reality. Instead, Ladakh was placed under a lieutenant governor-led administration with limited public participation.

His entry into the movement raised its profile. "The moment he joined and became part of the Apex Body, our voice also got amplified. Before that, national and international media did not cover the Ladakh issue that much. He has supporters across the world and that helps amplify our demands," says Kargili.

In 2023, Wangchuk undertook a five-day climate fast highlighting the ecological vulnerabilities of the Himalayas. A year later, he launched a 21-day hunger strike in Leh.

In September 2024, Wangchuk took the movement beyond Ladakh with the nearly 1,000-km Delhi *Chalo Padayatra* from Leh to Delhi. Carrying the movement's four-point agenda—statehood, Sixth Schedule status, a dedicated public-service commission and greater parliamentary representation—the march sought to bring Ladakh's demands to the national stage. When the march reached Delhi's Singhu border, Wangchuk and several supporters were detained by the Delhi Police before being released.

In 2025, Wangchuk was detained following protests in Leh. He was released six months later after the Centre revoked his detention under the National Security Act.

Despite his sacrifices, Wangchuk remains a deeply contested figure. As one political observer puts it: "People in public life change depending on changing circumstances, new experiences, hopes and aspirations. This is part of political calculation." ■

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'The Right to Express One's Voice Must be Respected'

For 16 years, Irom Sharmila refused food and water in one of the world's longest hunger strikes, demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. Arrested repeatedly, force-fed through a nasal tube and kept in judicial custody for years, the 'Iron Lady of Manipur' became a global symbol of peaceful resistance and dissent. Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk's ongoing hunger strike has revived memories of Sharmila's own ordeal. Mrinalini Dhyani speaks to Sharmila, reflecting on the government's response to peaceful protests and the changing nature of democratic dissent. Edited excerpts.



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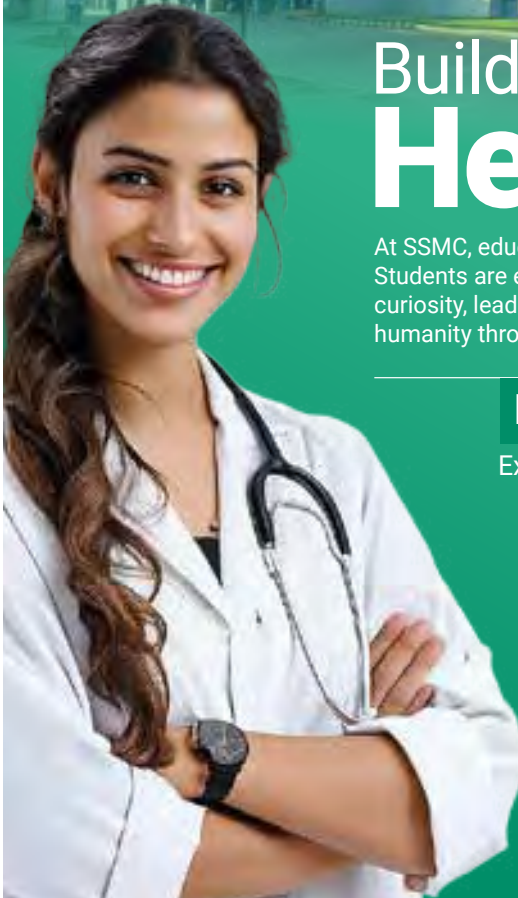
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The Delhi Police wanted Sonam Wangchuk to end his fast.

The Indian administrative system needs to respect real democracy. This is the voice of a person using his own body. It is a rightful demand for future generations, mainly for students. They are the pillars of democracy.

When someone individually fights against a wrong system using his own body, the democratic government needs to respect it. Otherwise, India's democracy will be seen poorly by the outside world. Before the situation becomes worse, the government should initiate a dialogue and solve the problem. How hard can it be to address the demand?

I feel sorry for him. Delhi is the capital city of India. Millions of students are studying here. This is the right opportunity for young people to contribute, to show civic sense and to stand by him physically.

You undertook a very long hunger strike and were force-fed. How do you feel when the government attempts to force-feed someone who is protesting in this way? When Anna Hazare used the same tactic, the government respected him. I feel there is some discrimination. I feel a little displeased. Wangchuk is not asking for something for his personal gain. For so long—and not just in this case—he has repeatedly put himself in such a condition. We are all responsible for this because we cannot do this alone. I just feel sorry, that's all.

Do you think such protests can influence the government? Do they still have relevance today? The Union government removed the provision that treated an

THE DIFFERENCE IN MY CASE WAS THAT PEOPLE LACKED CIVIC SENSE. THEY WANTED TO PLACE THE RESPONSIBILITY AND BURDEN ONLY ON ME.

attempt to die by suicide as an offence under the Indian Penal Code [now the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita]. Then why are the security forces acting in such a harsh way? They are doing it in a dirty way, wearing civilian dress and carrying out such actions without transparency. The government needs to respect demonstrations as people's rights. The right to express one's voice and the right to dissent must be respected.

In Wangchuk's case, the Delhi Police said they acted based on a Delhi High Court order. The order, however, only said that intervention was required if his condition became very serious. Do you think the courts should intervene in such a situation? I think the high court is concerned about his health. But the police, if they have a duty to perform, need to do it openly and transparently. That is what I am saying.

Does this remind you of your own struggle? Do you think anything has changed since your hunger strike or has the system remained the same?

Yes, it does. The system and the way of dealing with protesters are still the same. The difference in

my case was that people lacked civic sense. They wanted to place the responsibility and burden only on me. They wanted me to handle everything individually. From time to time, they supported me, but the moment when I was released without the nasal tube and my body had deteriorated, no one wanted to help seriously.

The right approach at the right moment was missing. If it had happened in Delhi, at a place like Jantar Mantar, it would not have been just about keeping someone alive in a hospital like it happened with me. There would have been real public support, like the support Mahatma Gandhi received.

Now that Wangchuk was hospitalised and later released, what do you think is the future of this movement? Many people had begun speaking up because of his presence. How do you see the protest going forward?

Somehow, the Union government sees him differently. They are not giving him the kind of respect that Hazare received. With this kind of treatment, I do not know what will happen, but I want to know what the youth think. As students and as a young generation, this concerns their future. What Wangchuk is doing is not only about Ladakh. It is about the future of the whole country and its youth.

What are the young people doing? I know they do not want to miss their classes or lose their precious time. But this is the right moment and the right opportunity for them to come forward and show what they are learning. Let them do something. Stand by him. Don't leave him alone. Take the movement forward. The youth are very important. Just keep democracy alive. 

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'Pradhan's Resignation was in National Interest'

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national general secretary and former Member of Parliament Dushyant Gautam responds to questions on Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, student anger, demands for ministerial accountability and the Opposition's allegations of political failure. Edited excerpts from an interview with Ashlin Mathew.

Why was it decided that Dharmendra Pradhan had to go?
The country's former education minister Dharmendra Pradhan was responsible for many important changes in the education segment. He has made laws that were important for students. However, after the NEET-UG question paper leak, students demanded his resignation. This was despite the fact that the re-examination was conducted successfully and immediately. Students did not have to wait for another year. Though it was a student's protest, there were other forces behind them that were making the situation in the country volatile. Anti-national forces were in play against the unity of the country. The prime minister has taken a positive step. Even Dharmendra Pradhan *ji* said that he stepped down after seeing how the young generation was being influenced at Jantar Mantar. It is because of this reason that his resignation was sought and he resigned. He put the country first.

Why was Pralhad Joshi given additional charge of the education ministry?
It is the right of the prime minister to decide who will be given the charge. After all, it's an important ministry and it cannot be kept vacant. Joshi *ji* is our senior leader and he is already looking at another ministry, so he knows how it should be done.

Shouldn't the education ministry be handled by a separate minister?
What is the problem is he has been given the additional charge? He knows how to get things done. The work should not get disrupted. We don't have to be worried about this. The prime



SURESH K. PANDEY

minister is concerned and he will look into it.

Do you think after one resignation, there will be growing demands for resignations of more ministers?
No. It doesn't work like that. The Cabinet takes a call on these decisions. This resignation was in national interest and for the nation. We should not consider it otherwise. Dharmendra Pradhan *ji* is a tall leader and we should not make him smaller. This was a step taken after much thought and discussion.

How does the BJP view the recent protests?
In a democracy, people have the right to raise demands, protest and agitate. If paper leaks have occurred due to lapses, those responsible must be punished. Action has been taken against those involved. The government has also taken



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steps to rectify the situation. However, there is no need to politicise the issue. More than half the people present at the protest had no connection with the issue. Why was a 50-year-old man speaking about the NEET exam? What was a 10-year-old or a Class X student doing at these protests? Anti-national slogans were being raised. The entire 'tukde-tukde' gang was there. We should examine the backgrounds of those who participated in these protests and where their funding is coming from.

If political parties like the Congress, Samajwadi Party and Aam Aadmi Party are serious about resolving the issue, they should discuss it in Parliament. With elections taking place in the country almost every year, they see this as another electoral opportunity. At least 12 or 13 exam papers were leaked between 2004 and 2014. Why were they silent then?

Considering a large number of students joined the protests, do you think there is a growing sense of anger among young people?

Students need not worry about their future under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. We care about their future. We have launched several schemes, increased the number of universities and expanded seats in medical colleges. The prime minister regularly interacts with students. Compare the period between 2004 and 2014 with the present. Look at how students and protesters were treated then and how they are treated now. We took no action against those demonstrating. We should not view students through the prism of politics or treat them as a vote bank.

Students were protesting since June 6, but the government did not initiate talks with them. Why was that?

The protesters never came forward for talks. No one approached the government for discussions.

Did you reach out only after Rahul Gandhi's protest?

They were celebrating Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's birthday and had invited everyone for the occasion, only to then march towards the prime minister's residence. There are law and order concerns in such situations. As the leader of the opposition, it was his responsibility to inform the authorities if he intended to lead a march. Instead, he seemed more concerned about his vote bank and keeping his supporters happy. He simply wanted to hijack the protest.

If a minister does not resign for weeks after such a major controversy, what situation would warrant political accountability?

Accountability will be fixed. Everyone found responsible will be identified and charged. Public opinion alone cannot determine guilt. A proper investigation must establish who leaked the paper, how it happened and the motive behind it.

"DEMANDING RESIGNATION THROUGH PROTESTS IS NOT THE RIGHT APPROACH. THAT IS NOT HOW A DEMOCRACY FUNCTIONS."

Does BJP believe a minister should be made to resign?

If anyone is found guilty, action will be taken. Demanding someone's resignation through protests is not the right approach. That is not how a democracy functions.

PM Modi has stated that the toughest punishment must be handed out to the culprits of the NEET paper leak scandal. Will accountability include ministers?

We have always maintained that whoever is found guilty, regardless of how senior or influential they are, will be punished. Everyone involved in paper leaks must face the law.

Do you think there is a genuine crisis for the students in the country and it isn't merely Opposition driven?

I do not think there is a broader crisis for students, but I understand why those who have prepared for and appeared in the examination are worried. Delays naturally cause anxiety. Not every student comes from a privileged background, and for many this is their only opportunity. The NEET paper leak was the result of the actions of anti-social elements.

Does BJP think that there will be political ramifications?

Votes, democracy and elections have their own place, but examinations and students' futures are a separate matter. This should not become an electoral issue. Some political parties are trying to exploit the situation. People, however, know the BJP has worked hard and believe the prime minister has governed honestly and in the public interest. That trust remains.

Does the government believe the use of police action and pellet guns sends the right message about handling dissent?

The police are expected to protect themselves. If officers are being assaulted, vehicles are being overturned and public property is being damaged, we need to ask who is taking the law into their own hands. Neither the police nor the protesters should take the law into their own hands.

Do you think it was the right decision to move Sonam Wangchuk to the hospital against his will?

He is a citizen of this country and it is the government's duty to be concerned about his health. The doctors and the court were also concerned about his condition and he was treated in accordance with his wishes. 

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In Solidarity with Students Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi being detained by the police during a protest near Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence on July 21, 2026

The Opposition's Late Embrace

More important than the timing of when the Opposition showed up at the student protests is the question of whether it can sustain the momentum



Fozia Yasin
IS SENIOR ASSOCIATE
EDITOR WITH OUTLOOK

FEW would have guessed, in its first days at Jantar Mantar, that the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) would grow into a movement capable of drawing in the Opposition's tallest leaders, making its way into the national political conversation and forcing Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation. There were no queues of politicians waiting behind the stage then. Only fast-ing students, volunteers sleeping on plastic sheets and a movement still uncertain whether anyone beyond Jantar Mantar was paying attention.

PHOTOGRAPHS: IMAGO



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BY THE TIME PARLIAMENT'S MONSOON SESSION BEGAN, THE POLITICAL EQUATION HAD SHIFTED. THE MOVEMENT HAD SPREAD ACROSS CITIES, ENTERED PARLIAMENT AND DOMINATED THE SOCIAL-MEDIA ALGORITHMS.

The images that would come to define the Opposition's role in the movement were not taken at the protest site. They were captured instead at police barricades outside the prime minister's residence. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi being led away by policemen, a thin streak of blood beneath his nose that he later posted online without comment. Minutes later, his sister and Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was bundled into a police vehicle and held for nearly three hours at Mandir Marg police station while their mother, Sonia Gandhi, waited outside for her release.

For a party that had spent the movement's first month maintaining a deliberate, calculated distance from Jantar Mantar, it was an unusual point of entry, not through a statement of support or a visit to the protest site, but through detention.

"The Congress was careful not to be overshadowed by the CJP. It waited for the right moment," says political analyst Rasheed Kidwai. "But more important than timing now is whether the Opposition can sustain the momentum."

A Manufactured Distance

The CJP had no organisational history to speak of. Its founder, Abhijeet Dipke, had previously worked in the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) communications team. The CJP's sudden viral rise struck many Opposition leaders as suspicious rather than promising. Within the Congress, according to party sources, the agitation was initially viewed as a possible Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-sponsored distraction, intended to blunt the party's own cam-

paign around paper leaks and allegations of embezzlement linked to the Ram temple trust in Ayodhya.

There was a deeper reason for the caution, too. The memory of Anna Hazare's 2011 anti-corruption movement still loomed large. That agitation began at the very same Jantar Mantar as a citizens' campaign before eventually giving birth to the AAP and contributing to one of the Congress' most damaging political setbacks. The Congress had already watched one "non-political" movement transform into an electoral rival. It was unwilling to risk history repeating itself, particularly when the founder of the new movement had emerged from the same AAP ecosystem. "The Congress was very conscious of not playing second fiddle to the CJP," says Kidwai. "Perhaps they were looking back at 2011-13, when the India Against Corruption movement was launched against Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the United Progressive Alliance government. That movement became hugely successful because the BJP largely stayed in the background. In hindsight, we came to understand that the BJP and elements within the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh were strategising behind the scenes."

Kidwai says the circumstances today are fundamentally different from those of 2011. The Anna Hazare movement had broad support from sections of the media, which amplified its message and, indirectly, the BJP's political narrative. The UPA government remained on the defensive, guided by a stronger sense of political accountability, while the Opposition was united in purpose. That

cohesion, he says, no longer exists.

A senior Opposition leader also questioned why the Congress should suddenly share a stage with Dipke, who had openly criticised Rahul only months earlier, when the party had already launched its own youth outreach campaign, *Chhatron Ki Goonj*, "raising the same issues on a much bigger scale".

Not everyone in the Congress agreed. Shashi Tharoor wrote an open letter to educationist and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and the three students who were on hunger strike, urging Wangchuk to end his fast because the protest had succeeded in drawing national attention. Former West Bengal Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury called the hunger strike "a wake-up call for this government".

An Unintended Advantage

By the time Parliament's monsoon session began, however, the political equation had shifted. The movement had spread across cities, entered Parliament and dominated the social-media algorithms. Remaining absent now carried a greater political cost than joining.

Ironically, the Congress's caution may also have been what allowed the protest to grow, according to experts. Had Rahul or any other major opposition leader stood on the stage during the first week, the BJP could have portrayed the agitation as another partisan campaign. Instead, for nearly a month, the movement belonged to Wangchuk, the fasting students, the volunteers and thousands of "cockroaches" who had arrived at Jantar Mantar. By the time political leaders came in force, they were entering a movement that had already earned



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WHEN POLITICAL LEADERS CAME IN FORCE, THEY WERE ENTERING A MOVEMENT THAT HAD ALREADY EARNED LEGITIMACY ON ITS OWN TERMS.



United Front Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav interacts with Sonam Wangchuk on the 19th day of his hunger strike at the CJP-led student protest at Jantar Mantar

legitimacy on its own terms rather than one they had created themselves.

Week after week, the crowds at Jantar Mantar grew larger, the slogans louder and the list of visitors longer, until it was no longer just a protest site but a destination in national politics. But no one knew whether the agitation would survive another week, let alone become one of the largest youth-led protests the capital had seen in years, till the fasting Wangchuk was removed from the stage. Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad arrived at Jantar Mantar around two in the morning. He remained until dawn, returning again on subsequent nights to sit with fasting students as volunteers kept vigil.

Among the CJP volunteers, Azad came to be seen less as a political visitor than as someone whose physical presence offered reassurance if the protest

turned confrontational.

The rest of the Opposition moved more cautiously. Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Dimple Yadav addressed the gathering and appealed to students and opposition parties to join the proposed march to Parliament, while SP chief Akhilesh Yadav conveyed his support over the phone. Mamata Banerjee deputed Rajya Sabha members Sagarika Ghose and Mahua Moitra, who described standing with the protesters as “a democratic duty”.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray called the agitation an issue “beyond politics”, while Uddhav Thackeray publicly urged Rahul to visit Jantar Mantar.

When Politics Came Looking

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal arrived at Jantar Mantar on July 16, over three

weeks after the agitation had begun. By then, the CJP had itself begun inviting political parties to join, writing to leaders across the spectrum, including Rahul and BJP leader J.P. Nadda, urging them to stand with the students. Kejriwal demanded Union education minister Pradhan’s resignation and proposed Wangchuk as his replacement. This endorsement reflected a changing political reality: the movement had become too large to ignore.

During the first week, political visitors were sporadic but by the final week, leaders from across the country were waiting behind the stage for their turn at the microphone. Among them was Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Jagdish Avade from Maharashtra, AAP MLA Mehraj Malik who came from Jammu and Kashmir, and Swami Prasad Maurya, national president of the Apni



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'This Lives in the Heart of Gen Z'

Saurabh Bharadwaj, Delhi Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) president and former minister was one of the visible political supporters of the CJP-led student protest, making many visits to Jantar Mantar

IN conversation with Fozia Yasin, Saurabh Bhardwaj reflects on how the Congress was slow to extend support to the CJP-led movement and how this protest compares with the Anna Hazare movement that eventually gave birth to the AAP.

The Congress Arrives

It took time for the Congress to extend its support. But I think it has understood now that this is not the protest of any one political party. Leaders from different parties came to Jantar Mantar and expressed solidarity. That is how a democratic movement should grow.

The Gen-Z Wave

During the Hazare movement, most participants were in the 30-50 age group. This movement belongs to people below 30. It lives in the heart

of Gen Z. If you want to understand this movement, you have to look at Instagram. You won't find its pulse on Twitter, Facebook or WhatsApp. Twitter is dominated by journalists and politicians. Facebook is mostly used by people passing the time. WhatsApp belongs to an older generation. This movement is unfolding on Instagram, and those who are not on Instagram often assume that nothing significant is happening.

Whether it was the Hazare movement, the farmers' protest, the wrestlers' protest or this one, whenever people stand up against the government for their rights, opposition parties support them—and they should.

The reason support took longer to build this time is that the media landscape has changed. During the

Hazare movement, many large media organisations supported the agitation. The Congress government did not have the kind of influence over the media that exists now. Today, a large section of the media is controlled by big corporate houses and those corporate interests are aligned with the government. That is why the energy of this movement is far more visible on Instagram than on mainstream television or in large sections of the traditional media. 



the Hazare movement, that unity was missing. The AAP has its own position, some regional parties appear closer to the government on certain issues, the CJP itself does not have a clearly articulated ideology, and the Congress is struggling to keep the Opposition together. For a movement to sustain itself, Kidwai says it would need much more than major leaders appearing on a stage. "It needs students, lawyers, chartered accountants, civil society groups, local and digital media, everyone. Right now, I don't see it happening. I'm not being cynical. I'm simply pointing to the scale of the challenge before the Opposition," he says. 

Together, But Not United

Nearly every major Opposition formation went to Jantar Mantar. Sharad Pawar and Supriya Sule met the injured protesters. Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs Sanjay Raut and Arvind Sawant visited the site. Delegations from the Left parties, AAP, the Trinamool Congress and others followed. But according to analysts, their convergence did not amount to a common political project. Unlike in

Janta Party, who made the journey from Uttar Pradesh. "The movement has already outgrown Anna Hazare's. The future of the country is on the roads, and every part of society is here, irrespective of religion, caste or region," Maurya told *Outlook* after stepping off the stage.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti's speech reflected how far the movement had expanded. The stage was no longer discussing only paper leaks or Wangchuk's fast. It had become a platform for a much broader critique of governance. She referred to the Chief Justice of India's reported remark that he did not have time to watch videos of the July 20 violence. "Why?



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‘Geopolitical Interests are Clearly at Play’

Amid the Cockroach Janta Party protests in Delhi, Anish Kumar speaks to Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, the former foreign minister of Nepal, on how Gen-Z protests are gaining ground in South and Southeast Asia. Edited excerpts.

Nepal’s Gen-Z protests toppled the K. P. Sharma Oli government about a year ago. Did you sense a wave against the government?
The Gen-Z youth sought permission for a peaceful demonstration demanding that the government lift the ban on a social-media platform, which had been restricted to compel

its local registration in Nepal. The government permitted the youth to protest. However, no one—not even the government—could have anticipated the dangerous game unfolding behind the scenes. Within two hours after the demonstration began, various elements infiltrated the crowd. They breached the restricted zone and used innocent college students as human shields while inciting them to set fire to the parliament building. In the ensuing chaos, police firing occurred, claiming the lives of 19 young people.
The government had hoped that the movement would remain peaceful.

However, it failed to foresee that the demonstration would be hijacked and become deadly, or that the loss of young lives would be exploited to push the country down a dangerous path of destruction, leading to the overthrow of an elected government and the dissolution of parliament within 24 hours.

What parallels do you see between the uprising in Nepal and what happened in India?
We are observing the inception of the Cockroach Janta Party and its demonstrations in India. We do not

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know everything, nor are we fully aware of its key figures and some of the references surrounding it seem unusual. Nevertheless, every democracy must guarantee its citizens' rights to peacefully assemble, organise and protest. Citizens must be able to present their demands to the government. However, any transition of power must adhere to the democratic processes prescribed by the constitution.

Initially, the Oli government dismissed the protests. What would you suggest to the political leadership in India?

The fact that a permitted peaceful protest turned violent so rapidly remains a mystery in itself. On the evening of the first day of protests, September 8, the home minister resigned, taking moral responsibility for the tragic incident. The cabinet expressed deep sorrow over the loss of life and decided to lift the social media ban, order a judicial inquiry into the incident and provide free medical treatment to the injured.

However, those who hijacked the peaceful movement had a different motive. They launched a nationwide rampage the following day, which persisted until the army was deployed to restore order. Our experience shows that the proper approach is to respect the rights of peaceful protesters and seek solutions through dialogue. If underlying motives exist, it is the duty of the government to investigate and unearth the truth.

Why are these Gen-Z uprisings happening in South and Southeast Asia—Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and the Maldives? Do you think foreign actors are involved?

The unprecedented advancement of information technology, the expanding influence of social media,

the proliferation of online misinformation and a growing sense of youth alienation from family, society and traditional democratic institutions represent the global challenges today. Young people in developing countries often appear dissatisfied with the hard-won achievements of their nations. Absorbed in the virtual world, they compare their societies to Western standards and demand immediate transformation overnight. Their aversion to—or limited understanding of—the complex processes of history and democracy appears to be a common structural challenge.

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Beyond these widespread issues, geopolitical interests are also clearly at play. It can reasonably be assumed that the shifting global balance of power, the rise of Asia and the growing influence of groupings such as the BRICS [an intergovernmental organisation of 11 major economies] and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are viewed unfavourably by certain powers that dominate world politics. Their tendency to create instability and exploit it to their advantage is well known. Therefore, I cannot dismiss the assessment that geopolitical factors played a role in the developments observed in the aforementioned countries.

Could sustained unrest in India affect Nepal-India relations?
Undoubtedly. Nepal and India share such a close and multifaceted relation

that even minor developments across the border resonate on the other side. Positive developments yield positive outcomes, while negative events bring adverse consequences. Instability harms every sector, including economic development, cross-border trade, cultural exchange and tourism. It was alarming to hear certain protesters in Delhi chanting slogans such as “We will burn down Parliament like in Nepal”.

What structural reforms did Nepal’s interim government prioritise after the protests and would you recommend anything similar for India?

The primary focus of the interim government—and the administration formed following the March elections—was political revenge and retaliation. Instead of managing the transition efficiently, addressing the legitimate concerns of the youth and strengthening democratic institutions, their energies were spent in dehumanising leaders and political parties that had championed democracy for over half a century, fabricating false charges against political figures and shielding the perpetrators of violence. There is a real fear that violence could become the normalised medium to express grievance and a routine mechanism for political turmoil. We have strived to prevent this outcome.

Though holding the election by the interim government was a positive step, the promises to establish a Gen Z Youth Council, providing relief to the families of martyrs and constructing a memorial for them remain unfulfilled. Consequently, the very youth who led the movement are now returning to the streets or voicing sharp criticism against the government. While these domestic experiences may not apply to India, we believe proactive dialogue is essential to prevent youth disillusionment. 

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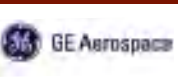
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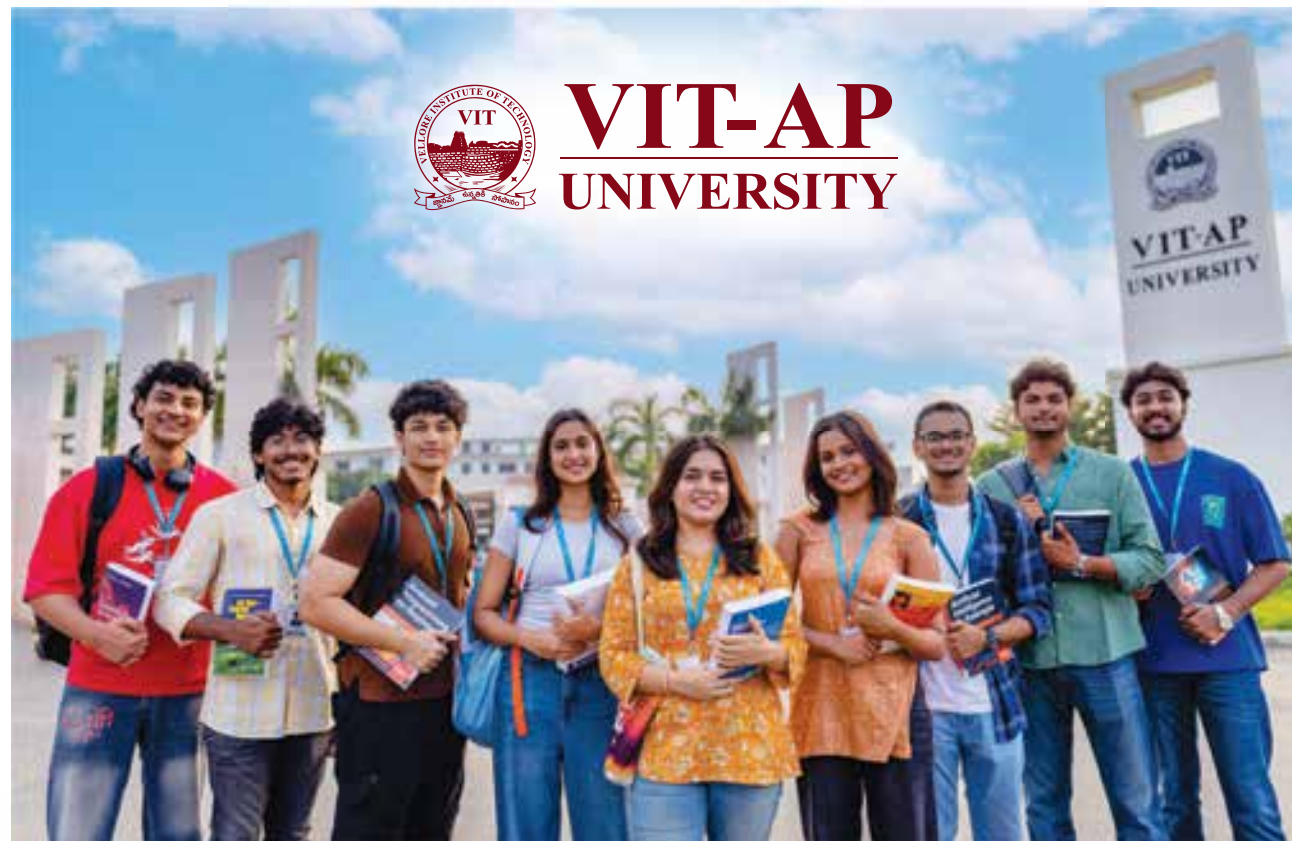


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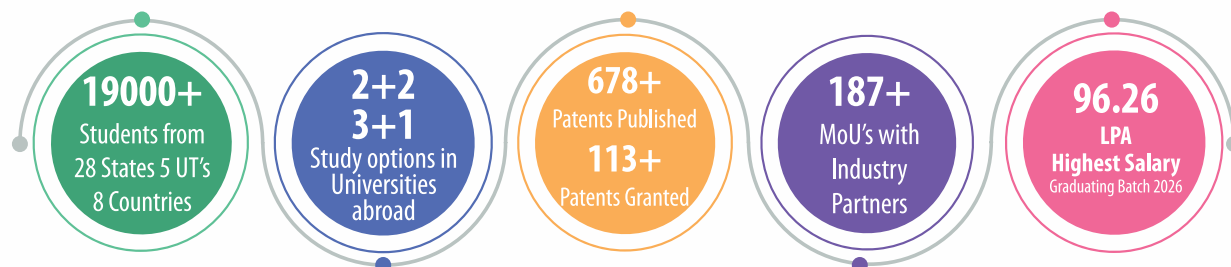
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HIGHLIGHTS



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A portrait of a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue pinstripe suit, a white shirt, and a red tie. He is sitting outdoors with a green building in the background. His hands are clasped in front of him.

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Public Unrest Protesters run for cover as soldiers fire tear gas during a protest in Colombo on July 13, 2022

but the frustration would eventually have resurfaced since the deeper issues were not addressed. Technology has given people a voice. The challenge for governments now is to make sure that people also feel that they have a stake in how decisions are made.

How important was the role of young people, students and civil society? It was absolutely central. Young people, students, trade unions and civil society drove the movement in its early stages. Later, political parties became more involved. Young people were among those who were worst hit by the economic crisis, but they were also frustrated by years of governance failures and a political system that they felt wasn't responding to them.

India has a stronger tradition of civic engagement, although it is often more issue-based and decentralised.

Sri Lanka's protests became a national political movement. India's size and federal structure probably make a similar nationwide movement less likely, but civic engagement itself is alive and well.

What advice would you offer to policymakers? I'm not sure I'm in a position to give advice, but if I had to make one observation, it would be this: building a public narrative is no longer enough. Technology has fundamentally changed how citizens engage with politics, so our institutions have to evolve as well.

Governments should be willing to engage with protesters, understand their concerns and separate the demands that genuinely improve the country from those that don't. You won't be able to implement everything, but if good ideas emerge from outside government, there's no

reason not to adopt them.

Do you believe foreign governments played a significant role?

I think it's unrealistic to assume that major powers have no interest in influencing developments in strategically important countries. History tells us that states constantly pursue their national interests. Having said that, I think it is important to distinguish between possible external attempts to influence events and the genuine aspirations of citizens. The fundamental drivers of the *aragalaya* were domestic—economic hardship, governance failures and growing public frustration. External actors, if they existed, may have acted as a catalyst, but they were not the root cause. Ultimately, resilient institutions and good governance remain the best defence against both domestic instability and external influence. 

GETTY IMAGES

'Separate Public Concerns From Political Narratives'



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mariya Didi served as the first-ever female minister of defence of the Maldives from November 2018 to November 2023. She strongly opposed the 'India Out' campaign—spearheaded by Maldivian opposition parties for the withdrawal of Indian military personnel alleging they compromised Maldivian sovereignty—dismissing it as dangerous political rhetoric and baseless propaganda driven by vested interests. Edited excerpts from an interview with Anish Kumar.

What factors contributed to the youth-led protests and the 'India Out' campaign in the Maldives between 2023 and 2025?

There were several factors, which included economic inequalities and limited employment opportunities. There was also a growing public concern about corruption, governance, accountability and the ineffectiveness of the existing political institutions to respond to people's grievances. Concerns about national identity and the increasingly polarised nature of political discourse also played a role. Narratives that portrayed political opponents as being against Islam contributed to divisions within society and heightened political tensions. Social media further enabled young people to mobilise rapidly and amplified competing political narratives. In the case of the 'India Out' campaign, concerns about

national sovereignty and the perceived presence or role of foreign military personnel became important issues. But at the same time, the campaign took place in a very charged political environment, where these concerns were strongly amplified through political mobilisation and nationalist rhetoric. So I think it is important to separate genuine public concerns about sovereignty from the political narratives that may have shaped or intensified those concerns.

Did the Maldives government misread the mood among young people by failing to keep a closer ear to the ground?
To some extent, yes. I think the government may have underestimated the depth of frustration among young people, particularly over economic pressures, the lack of opportunities and concerns about governance and accountability. When a government does not engage meaningfully with young people or listen closely to their concerns, a disconnect can develop. And today's young people are politically aware, well-informed and very vocal. So, I think governments need to be much more attentive to what young people are saying and feeling before that frustration builds up.

What indicators can help distinguish a protest reflecting a genuine public concern from one that is more short-lived or narrowly driven?
I feel a protest is more likely to reflect genuine public concern when it has broad and sustained participation, when it resonates with different sections of society and when it is driven by clearly articulated grievances rather than simply being a reaction to one particular political moment.
I believe governments should objectively look at the underlying issues. They should directly engage with the protesters and with the wider community and use tools such as independent public consultations, surveys and established institutional mechanisms to understand what people are really concerned about. Protests should not simply be dismissed as being politically motivated.

How do the demands of youth movements develop over time and what approaches can governments adopt to engage with protesters early on?
Youth movements often begin with specific grievances, but can broaden into wider demands for accountability, political reform and social change as more people get involved. Governments should engage early through genuine dialogue, youth consultations, accessible institutional channels and visible responses to legitimate concerns—rather than waiting until the frustration escalates into mass protests.

Drawing on the recent experiences in the Maldives

WHEN GOVERNMENTS DO NOT ENGAGE OR RESPOND THROUGH CREDIBLE INSTITUTIONS, PROTESTS CAN BECOME A DEMOCRATIC WARNING SIGNAL.

and India, what role can dialogue, public consultation and institutional mechanisms play to address youth grievances and how do these interact with the right to peaceful protests?
Dialogue, public consultations and strong institutional mechanisms can provide young people with meaningful avenues to express their grievances and influence policy before frustration escalates into street protests. However, these mechanisms should complement—not replace—the right to peaceful protests. When governments listen, engage and respond through credible institutions, protests can become a democratic warning signal rather than a crisis.

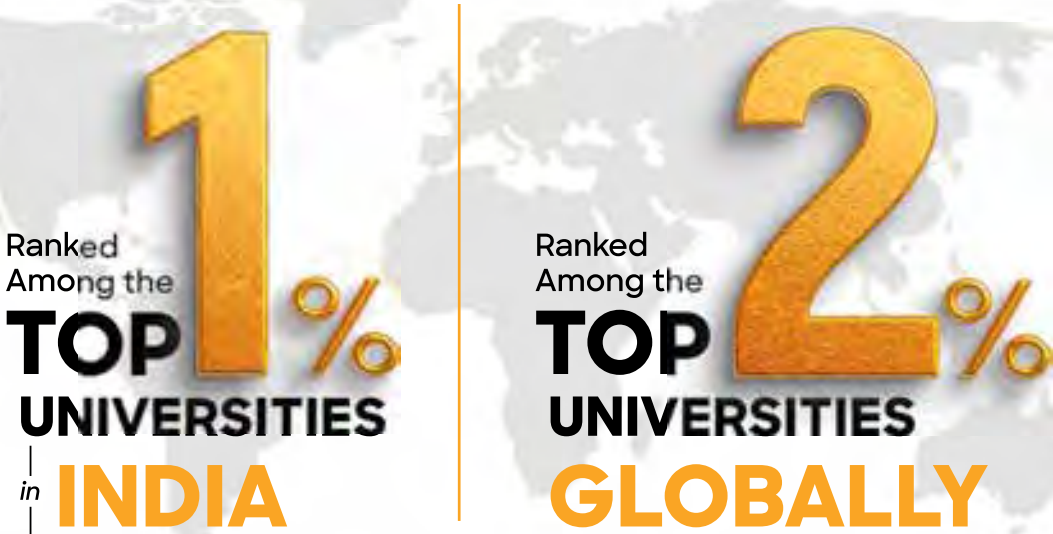
How has social media shaped the mobilisation of young protesters in both countries and how can governments balance democratic freedom with public order?
Social media has made mobilisation faster, more decentralised and more powerful by allowing young people to share their grievances, organise protests and reach large audiences instantly.
Governments must, therefore, protect freedom of expression and peaceful protests while addressing misinformation, hate speech and genuine threats to public safety—without using public order concerns as a pretext to suppress legitimate dissent.

South Asian countries have experienced a number of major protest movements in recent years, with some leading to significant political changes. To what extent do you believe external actors have played a role in influencing or shaping these movements?
There is certainly a possibility that external actors can influence protest movements through funding, media narratives, diplomatic pressure or information campaigns. But I think it is important to not overstate their role.
In most cases, the underlying grievances are domestic. External actors may amplify or exploit existing discontent, but ultimately the scale and sustainability of a protest movement depends on whether there is genuine public frustration and whether the domestic political conditions are conducive to the mobilisation of people. 



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Rebels With a Cause

Students had taken to the streets protesting the frequent exam-paper leaks. While the centre of the protest was Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, other cities also saw young people stepping out demanding reforms in the education system



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Building A New Bihar By Turning Vision Into Action



SHRI NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister of India

SHRI SAMRAT CHOUDHARY
Chief Minister of Bihar



Guided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat and strengthened by the synergy of the double-engine sarkar, the Samrat government has used its first 100 days to accelerate governance reforms, improve public service delivery, attract investment and lay the foundation for Bihar's next phase of development through faster implementation and people-centric initiatives.

The first 100 days of a government often indicate the direction in which it intends to lead the state. In Bihar, the first hundred days of the Samrat Choudhary government have been marked by an emphasis on quick decision-making, administrative accountability and development-led governance. The government has sought to accelerate implementation across sectors ranging from industry, agriculture and education to tourism,

infrastructure, energy and digital governance during this period.

The government's approach reflects an effort to combine long-term planning with visible delivery, seeking to create an ecosystem where economic growth, employment generation and social development reinforce one another. The government's broader vision is anchored in four priorities: good governance, economic expansion, modern infrastructure and inclusive development.

Guided by Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat, the government has sought to translate the advantages of the double-engine government into visible improvements on the ground in its first 100 days, representing not merely a beginning but the outline of a larger development roadmap.

Sahyog Shivr: Governance at the Doorstep

No initiative illustrates this approach more clearly than Sahyog Shivr, which has emerged as the

government's flagship programme for citizen-centric governance. The objective is straightforward yet transformative: rather than requiring citizens to visit multiple government offices for different services, government departments come together under one roof to deliver services at the doorstep.

Held across Bihar under the Chief Minister's direct supervision, the camps have brought together departments such as Revenue and Land Reforms, Social Welfare, Health, Education, Agriculture, Energy and Urban Development, among others, on a single platform. During the first phase alone, more than six lakh applications were received from citizens seeking services ranging from caste, income and residential certificates to pension approvals, Ayushman Bharat cards, land-related services and other welfare benefits. Of these, around 5.5 lakh applications have already been disposed of, while the remaining cases are being processed through a time-bound monitoring system.

The recently organised Patna Sahyog Shivr further demonstrated the programme's scale and efficiency. Thousands of people accessed multiple government services at a single location, substantially reducing paperwork, procedural delays



and repeated visits to different offices. Importantly, the camps have encouraged departments to work in coordination, enabling many issues to be resolved immediately instead of being transferred from one office to another.

The initiative represents a significant shift in administrative culture. Every application is digitally tracked, departments remain accountable even after the camps conclude, and citizens can monitor the status of their requests more transparently than before. In effect, Sahyog Shivr has changed the relationship between the administration and the public by making governance more responsive, accessible and outcome-oriented. It has also become one of the clearest

examples of Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary's emphasis on governance that delivers measurable results.

Road to Industrial Development

Industrialisation has been one of the defining priorities of the Samrat Choudhary government during its first 100 days. The emphasis has been on creating an ecosystem in which policy reforms, infrastructure development and investor confidence work together to generate employment and accelerate economic growth. To ensure that projects move beyond announcements, the Chief Minister has personally monitored implementation through regular departmental reviews, making timely execution the hallmark of the government's industrial strategy.

One of the most significant reforms has been the introduction of a 30-day time-bound clearance mechanism under the Single Window Clearance System, providing investors with a predictable approval process. The State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB) has been strengthened as the nodal agency for coordinating clearances across departments through a transparent digital platform. At the same time, the government has decided to give preference to eligible Bihar-based



enterprises in government projects valued between ₹25 lakh and ₹50 crore, enabling local businesses to participate more actively in public projects while generating employment within the state.

To attract fresh investment, the government has taken Bihar's industrial outreach beyond the state. Investor interaction programmes organised in Patna and Bengaluru have showcased Bihar's growing potential before leading industrial houses, technology companies and entrepreneurs. These efforts have already resulted in investment proposals exceeding ₹1 lakh crore, covering sectors such as food processing, textiles, renewable energy, logistics, electronics, information technology and advanced manufacturing. Against its long-term target of creating one crore employment opportunities, the government has already facilitated more than 9.30 lakh jobs, including regular government appointments and contractual employment.

The industrial strategy is also focused on creating infrastructure that supports long-term growth. New industrial parks, logistics hubs, food parks and sector-specific industrial clusters are being developed across Bihar to strengthen manufacturing and agro-processing. Particular attention is being given to food processing so that Bihar's leadership in litchi, makhana, maize, fruits and vegetables translates into higher value addition, stronger supply chains and better returns for farmers. The government is also promoting Mega Food Park infrastructure and integrated food-processing facilities to encourage private investment and create employment in both rural and urban areas.

The focus on agro-based industries extends beyond



food processing. The government has initiated an action plan for the revival of nine closed sugar mills and the establishment of 25 new sugar mills, particularly in the Champaran region, with the twin objectives of boosting sugarcane cultivation and creating rural employment. Another landmark initiative is the Integrated Aqua Park coming up at Bhojpur over 32 acres at an estimated investment of ₹31.21 crore. Equipped with hatcheries, feed mills, quality-control laboratories, training centres and modern fisheries infrastructure, it is expected to

become a major hub for fisheries-based enterprise and value addition. These initiatives reflect a comprehensive industrial policy that aims to combine investment with employment, manufacturing with agriculture, and infrastructure with entrepreneurship.

AI: Positioning Bihar for the Digital Economy

Alongside conventional industrial growth, the Samrat Choudhary government has moved decisively to position Bihar within India's emerging knowledge economy. At the two-day Bihar AI Summit 2026, held in Patna on 23–24 May, the Chief Minister announced the development of a dedicated Artificial Intelligence Policy aimed at promoting the responsible use of AI in governance, agriculture, education, healthcare and public services. The summit brought together policymakers, researchers, technology companies, startups, academic institutions and students to discuss digital innovation, cybersecurity, AI applications and vernacular technologies.

The proposed AI Policy forms part of a broader technology roadmap that includes the Bihar AI Mission, the proposed Global Capability



Centre (GCC) Policy 2026 and the Semiconductor Policy 2026. To build long-term institutional capacity, the government has proposed establishing a University of Artificial Intelligence and Computer Science at Bhagalpur, while a Technology Park at Gaya is expected to promote innovation, research and collaboration between industry, startups and educational institutions. Bihar has further strengthened its technology outreach through the Bihar IT Industry Meet 2026 in Bengaluru and the proposed Bihar Tech Portal, which will serve as a common platform connecting government, investors, startups and technology enterprises. AI is also being integrated into governance through digital dashboards, data-driven monitoring and grievance tracking, including the monitoring of applications received through Sahyog Shivirs, making public service delivery faster, more transparent and more accountable. These initiatives signal Bihar's determination not merely to participate in India's digital transformation but to become an active contributor to it.

Agriculture: Strengthening Bihar's Rural Economy

Agriculture remains the backbone of Bihar's economy, and the

roadmap integrates agriculture with horticulture, fisheries, animal husbandry, irrigation, food processing and rural development to promote scientific farming, climate resilience and higher farm incomes.

Bihar's agricultural strengths provide a solid foundation for this transformation. The state has 93.6 lakh hectares of geographical area, with 50.45 lakh hectares under cultivation and a gross cropped area of 72.46 lakh hectares, resulting in a cropping intensity of 144 per cent. Bihar contributes nearly 71 per cent of India's litchi production and 85 per cent of its makhana production, while GI-tagged products such as Shahi Litchi, Mithila Makhana, Zardalu Mango, Katarni Rice and Magahi Paan are being promoted through branding, processing and exports. The Jananayak Karpoori



Thakur Kisan Samman Nidhi further strengthens farmer welfare by providing around 73 lakh PM-Kisan beneficiaries with an additional ₹3,000 annually, taking total assistance to ₹9,000 for each eligible farmer.

Tourism: Transforming Heritage into Economic Opportunity

Among the government's major development priorities, tourism has acquired a distinctly economic dimension. By investing in Bihar's unparalleled religious and cultural heritage, the Samrat Choudhary government seeks to generate employment, attract private investment and strengthen local economies while preserving places of faith.

The centrepiece of this vision is the redevelopment of Punaura Dham, the revered birthplace of Goddess Sita at Sitamarhi, through a project worth nearly ₹1,000 crore. Conceived as a world-class spiritual and cultural destination, it will be integrated with the proposed Sitapuram Greenfield Satellite Township, creating modern urban infrastructure around one of most sacred sites. Equally significant is the ₹680 crore Baba Hariharnath Temple Corridor at Sonpur, inspired by the successful redevelopment of major temple precincts elsewhere in the country. The project aims to improve pilgrim facilities while firmly placing the Saran region on Bihar's tourism map.

The government is also broadening Bihar's tourism offerings through improved connectivity and new visitor experiences. Helicopter tourism services, including Patna Darshan, have been introduced to improve access to key destinations. Cruise and ferry services on the Ganga, accompanied by cultural performances, are creating new



attractions for domestic and international visitors. At the same time, the continued development of the Buddhist, Jain, Sikh and Ramayana Circuits is reinforcing Bihar's position as one of India's foremost centres of spiritual tourism.

Tourism promotion is being complemented by wellness and civic initiatives. The government has allotted 15 acres of land at a token lease of Re 1 in Munger to the Isha Foundation for establishing a world-class Yoga, Meditation and Spiritual Wellness Centre, reinforcing Munger's global

identity as a centre for yoga. It has also signed an MoU with the Isha Foundation to modernise crematoriums, beginning with Patna and later extending the initiative to other urban centres through environmentally sustainable, citizen-friendly facilities. These projects seek to transform Bihar's heritage into a sustainable driver of investment, employment and regional development.

Modern Infrastructure for a Growing Bihar

The government's development

strategy extends well beyond individual sectors. A total of 12 greenfield satellite townships are being developed, supported by ₹1 lakh crore in HUDCO assistance for the greenfield townships, creating new centres of planned urban growth. Urban infrastructure is also being strengthened through the expansion of the Patna Metro Rail Project, including the inauguration of the Malahi Pakri Metro Station, while Detailed Project Reports are being prepared for metro systems in four other cities. Simultaneously, road connectivity is improving through the expansion of JP Ganga Path, the proposed Marine Drive between Munger and Bhagalpur, plans for four-lane connectivity to all district headquarters, and proposals for Road Over Bridges at 141 railway crossings.

The Transport Department is steering Bihar towards cleaner mobility through the Bihar Electric Vehicle Policy, which promotes public EV charging infrastructure, subsidies for electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, four-wheelers and commercial vehicles, and a broader ecosystem for EV manufacturing and maintenance. These initiatives complement the state's renewable energy programme while encouraging environmentally sustainable transport.

Public safety and healthcare have also remained central to the government's agenda. Under the Police Didi Programme, 1,500 scooters are being provided to women police personnel, while 3,200 motorcycles are strengthening policing across the state. The government has also approved the establishment of new medical colleges through the PPP model and the expansion of AIIMS Patna with 24 acres of additional land and around 200 additional beds, improving access to advanced healthcare services.

Education and Energy: Investing in the Future

Education has received one of the highest allocations in the state's history, with ₹60,204.60 crore provided in the 2026-27 Budget, including ₹8,012.34 crore for higher education. The government is establishing Model Schools in all 534 blocks with an allocation of ₹800 crore, while 211 new government degree colleges have become operational and 31 colleges are being upgraded as Centres of Excellence. The proposed second NIFT campus at Begusarai, the appointment of over 2.60 lakh teachers and the

recruitment of 45,198 additional teachers reflect sustained investment in Bihar's human capital.

The energy sector is undergoing a similar transformation. Under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, Bihar aims to install rooftop solar systems on 2.5 lakh households by November 2026 and 25 lakh households by November 2027. The Kutir Jyoti Solar Programme will provide free 1.1-kilowatt rooftop solar systems to 2.10 lakh BPL families at an estimated cost of ₹1,512 crore, while power projects worth ₹1,278 crore are strengthening the state's electricity





network. Bihar today has 2.22 crore electricity consumers, with peak demand touching around 9,000 MW, underlining the remarkable expansion of the power sector.

A New Convenience for Senior Citizens

The Samrat Choudhary government has taken another significant step towards improving ease of living for senior citizens by introducing the Home Registration Digital System to all citizens aged 80 and above. The doorstep property registration facility will now benefit thousands of elderly citizens, allowing them to complete registration formalities from the comfort of their homes through specially designated Mobile Registration Units. The government has also directed that people residing outside Bihar should be able to avail themselves of digital registration services through an online application system.

This initiative is part of a broader digital transformation of the Prohibition, Excise and Registration Department. Alongside paperless registration, online land verification and GIS-based site inspection, the government has digitised



registration deeds dating back to 1990 and made them available through a searchable online platform, enabling citizens to access historical registration records with ease. Registered documents will now be delivered digitally through WhatsApp and e-mail, while technology-enabled verification is expected to reduce disputes, improve transparency and make property transactions faster, safer and more citizen-friendly. These reforms mark another important step towards technology-driven governance and enhanced ease of living in Bihar.

A Foundation for the Future

The first 100 days of the Samrat Choudhary government have been marked by a clear emphasis on implementation, technology-enabled governance and inclusive development. From expanding industry, agriculture, education and tourism to strengthening healthcare, renewable energy and citizen-centric public services, the government has laid the foundation for Bihar's next phase of growth. Guided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat, these initiatives aim to build a more prosperous, connected and empowered Bihar.



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Prof Ajay Kapoor
Vice Chancellor
(Somaiya Vidyavihar University)

ज्ञानादेव तु कैवल्यम्

A Legacy That Continues to Evolve at Somaiya Vidyavihar University

At Somaiya Vidyavihar University, I see this purpose come alive through an ecosystem where disciplines intersect, research drives innovation, classrooms extend into communities, and students are encouraged to pursue knowledge wherever it leads. It is this environment that prepares our graduates not only for professions, but for a future in which the ability to connect ideas may prove as valuable as expertise itself.

At Somaiya Vidyavihar University, the boundaries between disciplines are deliberately porous. An engineering student may study philosophy or music, a management student may explore sustainability, and a student of the humanities may work alongside technologists, designers, entrepreneurs, and scientists. This freedom to cross disciplines reflects a larger belief: that the most meaningful ideas emerge when knowledge is allowed to move beyond conventional academic boundaries.

Guided by the motto, **ज्ञानादेव तु कैवल्यम्-Knowledge Alone Liberates**-the University has built an ecosystem where rigorous scholarship is complemented by research, entrepreneurship, creativity, and engagement with real-world challenges. The objective is not simply to impart existing knowledge, but to create new knowledge and equip students to become innovators, responsible leaders, and contributors to society.

This vision traces its origins to 1942, when **Shri Karamshibhai Jethabhai Somaiya** established the first school with the conviction that education could transform both individuals and society. That founding philosophy continues to guide the institution even as its expression has evolved. From a single school, the vision grew into Somaiya Vidyavihar and later Somaiya Vidyavihar University, where Engineering & Technology, Management, Basic & Applied Sciences, Civilisation Studies, Language & Literature, Library & Information Science, Humanities & Social Sciences, Commerce, Design, Sports, Dharma Studies, Music & Performing Arts, and the Arts now coexist within one academic ecosystem.

120+ Basket Courses Across Disciplines

Broadening perspectives across disciplines for more than 4,000 students.

Through its **120+ Basket Courses**, the University offers credit-bearing electives that enable students to explore subjects beyond their primary discipline while earning academic credit. To date, more than 4000 students have participated in these courses, choosing from offerings that span sports, literature, languages, nature, aesthetic arts, Indian knowledge systems, spiritual traditions, and more.



An engineering student studying Indian philosophy is not stepping outside the curriculum. A commerce student choosing swimming or yoga is not pursuing an extracurricular activity. A biology student learning through field-based environmental studies is earning academic credit while studying nature firsthand. Fully integrated into the curriculum, Basket Courses encourage students to discover new interests, connect ideas across disciplines, and develop a broader perspective on learning.

REACH, Orion Racing and Learning Beyond the Timetable

REACH Fellows, 20+ race cars, and 30+ successful national and international competitions reflect a culture of learning beyond the classroom.

Learning at Somaiya Vidyavihar University steps out of the classroom and sometimes begins in rural Maharashtra and Gujarat through the **Rural Engagement for Earth, Agriculture, and Cultural Heritage (REACH)** Fellowship. Many Fellows have lived and worked in villages, spending months understanding local realities before designing community-led solutions. They listen before they intervene, combining research with empathy to address challenges such as water stewardship and sustainable development. Education, in this context, becomes inseparable from responsibility.

Sometimes learning takes the form of engineering projects that span generations. **Orion Racing India**, one of the country's oldest Formula Student teams, has developed more than 20 race cars that have competed successfully at more than 30 national and international competitions. More than a Formula Student team, it is a continuing legacy where each batch inherits the work of those before it, designs new solutions, and leaves behind stronger foundations for the next.

Across another part of the campus, learning helps the students of Dharma Studies walk through historic Jain pilgrimage sites, studying inscriptions, architecture, and living traditions in the places where history unfolded. Though different in discipline, each experience reflects the same educational principle: understanding grows deeper when knowledge is experienced rather than merely taught.



From Measurement Sciences to Computational Science

10+ research centres are advancing discovery across science, technology, and computation.

Across the University, specialised research centres provide students and faculty with opportunities to investigate questions that extend beyond classrooms. **The Shimadzu-Somaiya Centre of Excellence in Analytical and Measurement Sciences** supports advanced scientific analysis through sophisticated instrumentation and collaborative research. Alongside it, the **Centre for Computational Studies and Simulations** enables interdisciplinary work across computational chemistry, biology, materials science, artificial intelligence, and environmental research using high-performance computing.

These centres do more than house equipment. They create environments where evidence, experimentation, and inquiry become part of everyday academic life, allowing students to understand that knowledge is not only inherited but also created.

Riidl, BioRiidl, Incubator of Ideas

Turning ideas into enterprises through 380+ entrepreneurs and INR 198 crore in investments.

Through **riidl** and **BioRiidl**, the University has supported over **380 entrepreneurs** and facilitated **INR 198 crore** in total investments, creating one of India's leading university-based innovation ecosystems.

Ideas emerging from classrooms and laboratories receive mentorship, incubation support, infrastructure, funding opportunities, and industry connections to evolve into enterprises. Students and researchers work alongside entrepreneurs, scientists, mentors, and investors in an ecosystem that encourages experimentation, collaboration, and innovation.

The University's innovation culture comes together during the **Somaiya Innovation, Sustainability and Impact Festival (SIIF)**, where research prototypes, startups, design projects, and conversations with industry leaders share the same platform, showcasing how research, entrepreneurship, and interdisciplinary collaboration translate ideas into real-world impact.

Afsana, Immerse and a Campus That Celebrates Every Passion

A university is ultimately defined not only by what students study but by the environment in which they grow. On the same campus where engineers build race cars and researchers pursue scientific discovery, storytellers gather at **Afsana**, artists exhibit through **Immerse**, and student-athletes compete at international events such as the **FISU World University Championship Squash**. Students of dharma studies undertake immersive study tours,



while sports, culture, research, entrepreneurship, and the arts coexist within everyday campus life. The advantage is not simply variety. It is proximity. Every opportunity exists within one shared academic community, making collaboration and exploration a natural part of the student experience.

Preparing Students for a World Without Boundaries

Looking back, I find it remarkable that a philosophy centred on the liberating power of knowledge continues to find new expression with every generation. The disciplines have changed, the technologies have advanced, and the questions facing society have become more complex. Yet the purpose of education remains the same: to form character, strengthen the mind and increase the intellect.

A Strategic Reckoning

Twenty-seven years after it was first conceived, P-75I—India's most expensive submarine deal—is finally within reach



COURTESY: BUNDESWEHR

State-of-the-art A German Navy Type-212A submarine cuts through the Baltic sea showcasing TKMS' advanced air-independent propulsion technology



Anish Kumar
IS STRATEGIC AFFAIRS
EDITOR, OUTLOOK

IN December 1971, a Pakistani submarine called *PNS Hangor* attacked *INS Khukri* off the Gujarat coast and sent the frigate to the bottom of the Arabian Sea with 18 officers and 176 sailors on board. It remains the only Indian warship lost in combat. Fifty-five years on, the name 'Hangor' is back in Indian naval conversation. This time, it is attached not to one ageing diesel boat but to a new class of Chinese-built, air-independent propulsion (AIP) submarines that

Pakistan is inducting at a pace India has not matched in decades.

This is the uncomfortable backdrop against which India is finally closing in on Project-75 India (P-75I), the six-submarine, AIP-equipped construction programme that has spent more years in negotiation than most of the boats it will build will spend at sea. Whether New Delhi grasps this moment or lets it slip, as it has before, will shape the underwater power balance of the Indian Ocean for a generation.

Pakistan's Undersea Leap

The Pakistan Navy commissioned *PNS Hangor*, the first of a new Hangor-class boat, on April 30, 2026, at a ceremony in Sanya, China, attended by Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari. The boat carries 533mm torpedo tubes and, crucially, an AIP system that lets it stay submerged for weeks by recharging its batteries without surfacing or snorkelling.

Three sister boats, *Shushuk*, *Mangro* and *Ghazi*, have already been launched at the Wuchang yard in Wuhan, with four more to be assembled in Karachi under a 2015 technology-transfer deal worth an estimated \$5 billion, taking the class to eight submarines by around 2028, a fleet that will push Pakistan's tally of AIP-equipped boats past India's own.

A fortnight after commissioning, *PNS Hangor* made an operational port call at Kota Kinabalu in Malaysia, alongside the corvette *PNS Taimur*, on its way back from the South China Sea. A submarine capable of an Indo-Pacific transit so soon after induction is not a coastal-defence platform, it is a statement of reach.

The Eastern Seaboard Question

The temptation in New Delhi is to file the Hangor class under "western seaboard problem" and move on, since the traditional theatre for India-Pakistan naval friction has always been the Arabian Sea. That temptation deserves to be resisted. Pakistan's Babur-3, a submarine-launched cruise missile with a declared range of around 450 km and a nuclear-capable payload, has been tested from underwater platforms since 2017 and is the weapon most likely to arm the Hangor fleet.

To strike India's eastern seaboard, say, a target near Visakhapatnam, a Hangor boat sailing from Karachi would need to cover a transit of well over 2,000 km, thread chokepoints around Sri Lanka and hold position undetected for weeks on a platform whose AIP endurance, however improved, still measures itself in weeks rather than months. Several defence

analysts have reasonably argued that a credible submarine-launched strike on India's east coast remains a distant prospect. But a submarine need not fire a missile to change India's calculations, it merely has to be capable of being there, and the Sabah port call proved the Pakistan Navy can sustain a Hangor-class boat far from home waters for weeks at a stretch.

That forces India's Eastern Naval Command, no less than its western counterpart, to plan for a boat that could loiter off the Andaman chain or the approaches to Vizag in a long crisis, stretching an anti-submarine network never built for a two-front undersea threat. Deterrence rests on capability an adversary might use, not only on capability it is certain to.

A Long Time in the Making

P-75I traces its lineage to the same 1999 Cabinet Committee on Security plan that produced the six Kalvari-class Scorpenes under the original Project-75, delivered between 2017 and 2025 with over 60 per cent imported content. P-75I was meant to be the second, more indigenous production line. A request for proposal went out only in July 2021, and after Russia, France's Naval Group and Spain's Navantia all fell away over technology-transfer terms or an unproven AIP system, Germany's Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (TKMS), paired with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDL), emerged as the sole bidder.

Cost negotiations concluded earlier this year, with the programme now valued in the region of Rs 70,000-90,000 crore, for six submarines built around an enlarged version of TKMS' Type 214 design. An intergovernmental agreement was signed during a visit to India in January by Germany's chancellor, Friedrich Merz.

Germany's defence minister, Boris Pistorius, has since indicated a contract signature within months, following his April meeting in Kiel with his Indian

THE PROJECT-75I PROGRAMME IS NOW VALUED IN THE REGION OF RS 70,000-90,000 CRORE.

counterpart, Rajnath Singh. What remains is a final technical sign-off on the depth of technology transfer on offer, before the Cabinet Committee on Security gives its approval.

There is a legitimate frustration in noting that a programme conceived in 1998 is only now approaching a signature, with the first submarine not expected to enter service before the early 2030s. But frustration is a poor substitute for urgency, and urgency is precisely what the Hangor-class timeline now demands of Indian decision-makers. India currently operates with 19 submarines, including three nuclear-powered ones.

What Six Subs Could Buy India

If P-75I is signed without further slippage and its six boats join the fleet roughly on schedule, the payoff extends well beyond a bigger number on a naval order of battle. It restores AIP parity, or something close to it, with Pakistan at precisely the point the older Sindhughosh and Shishumar-class boats, several now pushing past 25-30 years of service, are due for retirement rather than another life-extension.

It also arrives at a moment when the value of that undersea deterrent has already been tested. Following the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack, the Navy surged nearly 40 warships and the *INS Vikrant* carrier battle group during Operation Sindoor, with submarines deployed covertly along the western seaboard credited, by the Navy's own account, with helping pin the Pakistan Navy inside Karachi harbour for the operation's duration.

A fleet that thin should not have to be stretched that far again.

There is a wider Indian Ocean dimension too. China's submarine fleet is expanding faster than any neighbour's, and its presence in the region, from access arrangements across the littoral to more frequent submarine sightings, has moved from theoretical worry to fact.

India cannot out-build China, but it can, if P-75I and its successor projects land on schedule, preserve the home-water advantages of geography, familiarity and layered anti-submarine coverage that still favour the Navy in the waters that matter most to it. With around 88 per cent of India's energy needs arriving by sea, that is the difference between secure sea lanes and a vulnerability an adversary could choose to exploit.

The Real Prize is Self-reliance

Buried inside the P-75I contract structure is arguably its most consequential feature. Under the "strategic partnership" model, indigenous content starts at 45 per cent on the first boat and is contracted to climb to 60 per cent by the sixth, with TKMS obliged to transfer genuine design and manufacturing know-how rather than merely supervise assembly, the failing that limited how much India actually absorbed from the original Scorpene programme.

That distinction matters because of something India's own naval planners appear to have only recently connected: there is 60-70 per cent commonality between the systems that power a conventional submarine and a nuclear one, in hydraulics, fire control, auxiliary power and hull materials among them. The industrial base built for the Arihant-class ballistic-missile boats and the P-75I programme are not, it turns out, separate worlds. Feeding one strengthens the other and both feed into Project-76, the dozen wholly Indian-designed conventional

THE FATE OF PROJECT-75 I WILL DECIDE WHO COMMANDS THE SILENCE BENEATH THE INDIAN OCEAN.

submarines the Navy's submarine design group hopes to start ordering around 2028.

Handled well, P-75I is less a one-off purchase than a bridge, the last generation of submarines India needs to import the recipe for before it can reliably write its own. Handled badly, as the Scorpene programme was in parts, it becomes another 20-year exercise in importing steel with an Indian flag painted on it.

The ripple effects of building six submarines in Mumbai extend well past MDL's own gates. Steel Authority of India, working from its Bokaro and Rourkela plants, has spent nearly two decades perfecting DMR-249A, the specialised, corrosion-resistant hull-grade steel developed jointly with the Defence Metallurgical Research Laboratory and already supplied in thousands of tonnes for frigates, corvettes and survey vessels. A programme the size of P-75I gives that capacity reason to expand rather than merely tick over.

Exide Industries has already begun supplying indigenously manufactured submarine batteries for the in-service Scorpene fleet, units engineered to withstand vibration, deep discharge cycles and the unforgiving thermal environment of a sealed hull, described by the industry itself as groundwork for P-75I rather than a one-off achievement. Bharat Electronics and a clutch of private defence-electronics firms stand to gain similarly on sonar suites, combat management systems and electronic-warfare equipment, all

named by naval planners as the next frontier for indigenisation.

Perhaps the least glamorous beneficiary is also the most important: the small and medium enterprises supplying forgings, cabling, precision components and sub-assemblies. MDL's own shipbuilding leadership has pointed to more than 200 such firms already contributing to its naval projects, a fraction of the roughly 16,000 MSMEs woven into India's wider defence-manufacturing base. A contract of P-75I's scale, sustained over a decade, is exactly the kind of long-horizon order book that lets smaller Indian manufacturers invest in capability rather than survive contract to contract.

The Hour is Late But Not Lost

None of this changes the arithmetic that ought to unsettle South Block. Pakistan will likely have eight AIP-equipped submarines at sea before India commissions its first P-75I boat. China's undersea fleet will keep growing regardless of what New Delhi decides this year. And a contract signature, whenever it finally comes, only starts a construction clock that runs the better part of a decade before the first hull touches water.

But the story of India's submarine arm has never really been about whether it can build. The Arihant-class boats prove it can, when the political will exists. But can that will be sustained long enough and applied broadly enough to turn one contract into a functioning industrial habit?

P-75I will not by itself close the gap that Pakistan and China have opened. Signed soon, built on schedule and treated as the first chapter of an indigenous submarine industry rather than its final act, it can still ensure that the next time a name like Hangor turns up in Indian naval history, it is the Indian Navy holding the advantage of silence, not the other way round. 



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Warring Factions

The Congress leadership has contained the crisis in the party's Punjab unit without addressing its underlying causes



PHOTOGRAPHS: IMAGO

Uneasy Peace Punjab Congress leaders Charanjit Singh Channi (left) and Amrinder Singh Raja Warring

ACROSS

several states, including Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Haryana, the

Congress has struggled to manage competing regional leaders after key organisational appointments. The Punjab Congress appears to be following the same pattern. The party had hoped that its two-day strategy meeting in New Delhi last week would finally rein in the factionalism in the state unit. The meeting was held after Punjab Congress in-charge Bhupesh Baghel submitted his assessment of the political situation to the central leadership.

Former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi, Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa, senior leader Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and other key figures from the state unit were invited for the discussions chaired by Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal and Baghel. According to sources, Channi openly challenged Warring's leadership during the meeting and threatened to resign as chairman of the party's campaign committee. He reportedly



Mohammad Ali
IS SENIOR ASSOCIATE
EDITOR WITH *OUTLOOK*

told Baghel that the Congress could not hope to defeat the Aam Aadmi Party in the 2027 Assembly election under Warring's leadership. Warring, in turn, reportedly offered to step down if his continuation as state president had become an obstacle to party unity.

Venugopal backed Warring, bringing the immediate confrontation to an end, but not the political crisis. He reminded everyone that

Warring had been appointed by the party high command and would continue in that role. The next Assembly election, he said, would be fought under Warring's organisational leadership. For the Congress leadership, the confrontation in Delhi was the culmination of months of growing dissatisfaction within the Punjab unit. According to many senior Congress leaders, the roots of the current conflict lie in the party's own internal consultation process. In June, the Congress high command appointed a panel comprising senior leaders Ajay Maken, Meenakshi Natarajan and Bhajan Lal Yadav to assess the political situation in Punjab ahead of the 2027 Assembly election. The panel consulted

district presidents, legislators, former legislators and other senior leaders before submitting its report to the central leadership. Over 80 per cent of those consulted reportedly favoured replacing Warring as Punjab Congress president before the election. "The demand for a leadership change did not come only from Channi's supporters," says a senior Punjab Congress leader. "Even leaders who were not aligned with Channi felt the party needed a new state president."

According to party sources, Maken's report concluded that the Congress had a realistic chance of returning to power in Punjab if it addressed concerns over the state leadership. The high command, however, reached a different conclusion. On July 1, the Congress announced that Warring would continue as Punjab Congress president, while Channi would head the party's campaign committee. "We respect the high command," says a senior Punjab Congress leader. "But what confuses many workers is that the party goes through an elaborate consultation process and seeks feedback from leaders on the ground, only to take a decision that appears to contradict the findings." According to him, that disconnect lies at the heart of the continuing unrest.

The leadership retained Warring to preserve organisational continuity, while elevating Channi as chairman of the campaign committee in an attempt to acknowledge his political stature. On paper, the arrangement divided responsibilities between organisation and campaigning. In practice, however, it created overlapping centres of authority. Questions over who will shape the campaign narrative, influence candidate selection and emerge as the party's principal face in the 2027 election remain unresolved. Those ambiguities continue to fuel the rivalry.

Why Rahul Gandhi Stayed With Warring

According to Congress leaders familiar with the discussions, Rahul and the party leadership concluded that replacing Warring barely two years before the Assembly election would create fresh instability in a state where the Congress is trying to project itself as the principal challenger to the AAP government.

Unlike Channi, whose appeal is rooted in his image as a mass leader, Warring is viewed by the central leadership as an organisational man who stayed back after the Congress' crushing defeat in the 2022 Assembly election and rebuilt the party machinery.

"Another factor that may have hurt Channi's standing with the central leadership is that after the Congress lost power in Punjab, he largely disappeared from the political scene for almost a year," says a senior Congress leader at the party headquarters. "Warring, on the other hand,



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"At Sister Nivedita University, our mission is to shape future-ready leaders who will transform society through knowledge, research, and entrepreneurship." Emphasises Satyam Roychowdhury.

The university's curriculum is designed around innovation, entrepreneurship, and emerging technologies. Aligned with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, SNU fosters a flexible, multidisciplinary learning environment that encourages students to explore diverse academic pathways beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries. By promoting interdisciplinary education, skill-based learning, research, and experiential pedagogy, the university enables students to combine knowledge from multiple domains, nurturing creativity, critical thinking, and holistic problem-solving abilities. This approach equips graduates with the adaptability and cross-functional expertise required to excel in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

By integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, machine learning, immersive technologies, virtual classrooms, and digital assessment tools into teaching and learning, SNU prepares students to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven world.

Research-orientated education remains a cornerstone of SNU's philosophy. Alongside academic excellence, SNU places strong emphasis on practical training, internships, industry collaborations, and entrepreneurship, enabling students to become innovators and job creators rather than merely job seekers. Every programme is carefully structured to meet contemporary industrial demands while maintaining strong academic rigour.

As it continues to expand its academic and research horizons, Sister Nivedita University stands proudly among the top universities of Eastern India, producing globally competent professionals equipped to lead the future.

stayed in Punjab and worked to rebuild the organisation.”

According to party insiders, the leadership was also influenced by caste arithmetic. Replacing Warring, a Jatt Sikh, with Channi, Punjab’s first Dalit chief minister, could have complicated the Congress’ social coalition at a time when the AAP is led by Bhagwant Mann, another top Jatt Sikh leader.

“The argument made before Rahul was that replacing Warring with Channi could consolidate sections of the Jatt Sikh vote behind Bhagwant Mann,” says a senior Congress leader. “The Congress cannot afford to weaken its support among a community that has historically dominated Punjab politics.”

Jatt Sikhs account for nearly a quarter of Punjab’s population and have traditionally exercised disproportionate political influence. Every major political party has sought to retain their support while expanding its appeal among Dalits, who constitute nearly one-third of the state’s population.

The Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP’s) recent organisational changes have only complicated the equation. The party recently appointed former Congressman Kewal Dhillon, a Jatt Sikh, as the president of its Punjab unit, replacing Sunil Jakhar, a Jat Hindu.

“The BJP has signalled that it wants to broaden its appeal among Sikhs,” says a Congress MP who supports Warring. “In that situation, replacing Warring with Channi would could have been interpreted as the Congress conceding the Jatt Sikh leadership space.” On July 1, the Congress announced that Warring would continue as president of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee, while Channi would serve as chairman of the party’s campaign committee. “Rahul Gandhi told Channi that he should lead the campaign and that if the Congress returned to power, he would be among the leading contenders for the chief minister’s post,” says a senior Congress leader. “But Channi was not prepared to accept that formula.”

Why the Congress Cannot Afford to Lose Channi

Channi is the most prominent Dalit face of the Congress party in Punjab. That explains why, despite repeated disagreements with the high command, the leadership has sought to accommodate him. A senior Congress leader in Delhi says that the leadership remains conscious of changing political currents among Punjab’s Dalit voters. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s meetings with Sant Niranjana Das of Dera Sachkhand Ballan during his visits to Punjab have heightened concerns within the Congress that its traditional Dalit support base could gradually shift towards rival parties. “The leadership does not want to sideline Channi because it understands his political importance,” says a senior leader. “Marginalising him entirely could accelerate that shift.” For the Congress, Channi remains one of the party’s most recognisable campaigners. “His appeal extends beyond Dalit voters,” says another senior Congress leader. “He also enjoys the confidence of influential Jatt Sikh leaders such as Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, Tript Rajinder

PUNJAB IS ONE OF THE FEW LARGE STATES WHERE THE CONGRESS BELIEVES IT HAS A REALISTIC CHANCE TO RETURN TO POWER.

Singh Bajwa and Rana Gurjeet Singh. That gives him political weight that cannot simply be ignored.”

According to party sources, the leadership has also assured Channi that he will play a central role in candidate selection for the Assembly election.

Baghel calls the developments in the state unit healthy internal competition rather than an organised revolt against the leadership. “There were minor disagreements, not factionalism,” says Warring, stressing that the Punjab Congress is united and working towards one objective: to bring the party back to power in the state.

Why Punjab Matters

Unlike several other states where the Congress has become electorally marginal, Punjab remains one of the few large states where the party believes it has a realistic opportunity to return to power. The Congress swept the 2017 Assembly election, winning 77 of the state’s 117 seats. Five years later, it suffered a stunning defeat, securing just 18 seats as the AAP stormed to power with 92. Despite that collapse, the Congress remains the principal opposition party in Punjab. Anti-incumbency against the AAP government makes many Congress leaders believe that the 2027 Assembly election offers an opportunity for a comeback. This optimism explains why the leadership is anxious to prevent an open split. Unlike the Amarinder Singh rebellion in 2021, which unfolded while the Congress was in power, the present conflict comes while the party is in the Opposition. There is no chief minister’s chair at stake. Instead, the contest is about who will lead the party’s revival.

Managing, Not Resolving the Crisis

Political commentator and author Rasheed Kidwai believes the Congress leadership has contained the crisis without addressing its underlying causes. “The high command has managed to avoid an immediate split,” says Kidwai. “But it has not resolved the fundamental disagreement over leadership.” According to Kidwai, the repeated interventions by the high command, its decision to retain Warring despite opposition within sections of the state unit and its simultaneous efforts to accommodate Channi indicate that the party is managing a delicate political balance. For now, that balancing act appears to have prevented an organisational rupture. Whether it can sustain the party through the next Assembly election is another question. 



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An Empty Chair is Not a Verdict

For years, in foreigners tribunals, mere absence was allowed to speak for guilt. The Supreme Court has now said, in as many words, that it cannot



On Guard Security personnel outside the office of the National Register of Citizens on the eve of the release of the register's final draft in Guwahati, Assam

ON July 13, 2026, in *Sabitri Dey v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court set aside 28 judgements of the Gauhati High Court in a single stroke. Each concerned a person declared to be a foreigner. In each, the declaration had been made *ex parte*, i.e., in the absence of the person concerned. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta held that these opinions could not stand, and sent the matters back to the foreigners tribunals to be decided afresh within six months. Its achievement is to strike down a practice that had hardened into routine in Assam: the treatment of a person's silence as proof of their foreignness.

To see why this matters, let us begin with the provision at the centre of it all. Section 9 of the Foreigners Act 1946 does something the law rarely does: it reverses the burden of proof. Ordinarily, the person who alleges a fact must prove it. Here, once a person is suspected of being a foreigner, the



Aditya Prasanna Bhattacharya
IS WITH THE VIDHI CENTRE
FOR LEGAL POLICY

onus falls on them to prove that they are not. It is an extraordinary burden, and the tribunals of Assam had come to treat it as something more extraordinary still: a burden that, if the accused failed to appear, discharged itself by default. The reference was made, the person did not come, and the declaration followed. The court has now held that this is improper. A reversed burden still operates according to a process, and that process must be fair.

The Burden and the Process

Section 9 simply tells us who must prove what. It says nothing about what the tribunal must do. That question is answered by the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964, which requires that a person be served with the "main grounds" of the allegation against them, be given a real chance to reply, and, crucially, that the tribunal record a reasoned opinion



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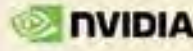
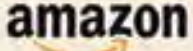
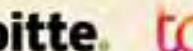
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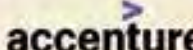
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containing a concise statement of facts and its conclusion. These duties do not disappear when the accused stays away. As the court puts it, the burden “operates within a legal process; it does not replace the legal process itself.”

The court had said as much before, in *Md. Rahim Ali @ Abdur Rahim v. State of Assam* in 2024, where it held that a “main ground” cannot be reduced to a bare suspicion that a person is a foreigner. It must disclose the essential basis of the allegation, so that the accused is not left to disprove a case they have never been shown. *Sabitri Dey* takes that principle and gives it teeth across an entire batch of cases. Even in an *ex parte* proceeding, the tribunal remains a quasi-judicial body. It must satisfy itself that notice was properly served, examine whether the main grounds were disclosed, weigh the material the state has actually produced, ask whether that material can support the conclusion that the person is a foreigner, and finally, it must give reasons. Non-appearance costs the accused the chance to lead evidence, but does not, by itself, convert the state’s allegation into proof. An empty chair is not a confession.

A Protection that does Not Ask for a Passport

The judgement’s foundation is the constitutional guarantee of fairness. The tribunals had operated as though a person whose citizenship was in doubt stood outside the Constitution’s protection. The court points to the text to show why that is wrong. Article 14 guarantees equality before the law to “any person”. Article 21 says that “no person” shall be deprived of life or liberty except by fair procedure. Neither says “citizen”. The protection of fair procedure is not a reward for proven citizenship. It is owed to everyone within the territory, including the person whose status is precisely what is being decided.

This is not a new doctrine. The court draws a straight line from *Maneka Gandhi*, which held that a procedure must be “fair, just and reasonable” and not “fanciful, oppressive or arbitrary”. But its application here is bracing. A determination that can end in detention, deportation, the splitting of a family, or statelessness is about as grave as civil consequences get. The graver the consequence, the more exacting the procedure must be. A proceeding that ends in such a declaration, the court says, cannot be sustained if it is “mechanical, one-sided, or devoid of application of mind”. This sentence is the heart of the ruling, and it deserves to travel far beyond Assam.

Where the Line is Drawn

What makes the judgement persuasive rather than merely generous is its refusal to overcorrect. The court is careful about what it has not done. It has not examined anyone’s claim to citizenship. Neither has it held that a tribunal may never proceed in a person’s absence. Where notice is genu-

SABITRI DEY RESTORES TO THE PERSON IN THE DOCK THE ELEMENTARY DIGNITY OF BEING ADJUDICATED RATHER THAN PROCESSED, EVEN IF THE PERSON MAY, IN THE END, LOSE.

inely served and the accused simply stays away, the tribunal may go on. It sorts the 28 cases into three groups: those who never appeared, those where the high court tried to appraise the evidence itself, and those who appeared and then defaulted, and treats them differently. For those who defaulted after entering the fray, the remand comes with a warning: it is one final opportunity, not an endorsement of their conduct and adjournment-seeking will not be indulged.

The state’s interest is also named plainly. The court accepts that the state has a legitimate and compelling interest in ensuring that those not entitled to citizenship do not acquire it by false claims or by gaming procedural delay. The reversed burden of Section 9 survives the judgement intact, and all that the court refuses to accept is that this interest can be served by shortcuts. A fair process is not to be seen as a concession to the accused, but the only thing that makes the eventual finding, whichever way it goes, worth anything.

The Clock and the Caution

If there is a limit to celebrate cautiously, it is that *Sabitri Dey* is a remand, not a redesign. The same tribunals, working under the same pressures that produced mechanical orders in the first place, will now hear these cases again. The six-month timeline is humane in intent, but a clock can cut both ways for a poor litigant assembling decades-old documents of ancestry and residence. The ruling corrects past errors case by case, but it does not rebuild the forum that made them. That larger repair, better-trained tribunals, a meaningful review of the standard and burden of proof of citizenship, is the work of the state and, eventually, the legislature.

But it would be ungenerous to ask a single judgement to do all of that. What *Sabitri Dey* does, it does very well. It reminds a statutory forum that had forgotten it that the reversal of a burden in the Act does not give the license to the forum to abolish the hearing. It restores to the person in the dock the elementary dignity of being adjudicated rather than processed, even if the person may, in the end, lose. For years, in these tribunals, mere absence was allowed to speak for guilt. The Supreme Court has now said, in as many words, that it cannot. This is a welcome development. 

(Views expressed are personal)

A Question of Fairness

Would any of us accept being declared a stranger to our own country by a proceeding we never attended?



On the Margins Evicted Miya Muslims at temporary shelters in Hasila Beel, Assam

IN 1997, a tribunal in Diphu, Karbi Anglong, declared Sabitri Dey and her family foreigners. Nobody from the family appeared before it. The Gauhati High Court affirmed the finding in 2020, adding that Sabitri Dey had come to the court too late. On July 13, 2026, the Supreme Court set aside both orders in *Sabitri Dey @ Swasthi Dey and Others v. Union of India and Others*. Her case was one among 28, all of them decided by Foreigners Tribunals (or the Illegal Migrants [Determination] Tribunals) in Assam without the person concerned actually being heard.

The Supreme Court held that even in an *ex parte* proceeding, the tribunal, being a quasi-judicial forum has a duty to check that notice was properly served, the grounds of accusation were disclosed and the state’s material can bear the conclusion drawn from it. All matters were sent back for fresh decision. In essence, the court held that “an



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HIGH COURT

ex parte proceeding may dispense with the participation of the absent party, but it does not dispense with objective consideration and meaningful adjudication by the Tribunal.”

The court identified a constitutional wrong and then chose a remedy that leaves the deepest features of the problem untouched. It fixed the method of deciding without deciding anything, it confined its relief to the litigants before it and it accepted the statutory burden of proof on the

individual based upon a rationale that it never tested. The gap between the principle announced and the relief granted is where the faultline lies.

Start with what the court got right. It said that Article 14 protects “any person” and Article 21 protects “no person”, and neither is limited to citizens. So a person facing a foreigner reference is entitled to fair procedure even if she ultimately fails to prove she is Indian. The court drew on *Louis De Raedt*

v. Union of India (1991) 3 SCC 554 and on *NHRC v. State of Arunachal Pradesh* (1996) 1 SCC 742 to say that constitutional protection operates while status may still be under inquiry.

The tribunal proceedings may cause detention, deportation, separation from family and community, and even the possibility of statelessness. The court therefore emphasised that the process by which such a declaration is made must satisfy the minimum requirements of fairness and must rest upon material capable of supporting the conclusion. The court reiterated that under Article 21, procedure must be “fair, just and reasonable” and cannot be “fanciful, oppressive or arbitrary” (*Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* [1978] 1 SCC 248). This proposition denies the state the convenience of treating the accused as already outside the Constitution and protects fair process.

The court, however, expressly declined to examine whether any of the litigants before it are, in fact, Indian. Every file goes back to the same tribunal that got it wrong. Consider what that means for Dey and others like her. She was declared a foreigner in 1997. She will now argue her citizenship for the first time in 2026 or 2027, 30 years on. Witnesses who could have spoken to her parentage are dead. Village records have decayed. The very documents the law expects her to produce, old electoral rolls and land records, are the ones least likely to survive three decades. The court gave her a fair process at the precise moment when a fair process is hardest to use. Is this essentially fairness in form over fairness in substance?

Compare *Md. Rahim Ali*, decided in 2024, which this judgement leans on. There, the court did not stop at correcting method. It examined the evidence and declared the man an Indian citizen. *Sabitri Dey* borrows *Rahim Ali*’s principles and declines its remedy.

Section 9 of the Foreigners Act 1946 puts the onus on the accused to prove she is not a foreigner. The court did address this fairly. It reasoned that facts of birth, parentage and lineage lie within a person’s own special knowledge, and that the burden and fair procedure are complementary rather than opposed. But the rationale is left untested against the facts of these very cases. A woman from rural Assam may know exactly who her grandfather was and have no paper that says so. The records that would prove it sit in state offices, in registries that flood, in rolls that were never digitised. A burden justified by knowledge is being discharged in a currency of documents. The court noticed the difficulty in passing, observing that such a person cannot be expected to discharge the burden unless the grounds are disclosed.

As for moral framing, the court describes the remand as “one final opportunity”, subject to “strict conditions”, and says expressly that it must not be read as approval of the appellants’ conduct in defaulting. The language of indulgence is unmistakable. Yet, the court has just held that the original orders were legally deficient because the tribunals failed

in their own duty. If the first proceeding was defective for reasons attributable to the forum, the second should not be framed as a favour. The court, perhaps inadvertently, relocates the fault from the institution to the individual.

The most consequential point to note is that the relief stops at 28. The judgement binds only these appellants. Assam has produced tens of thousands of foreigner declarations and a large share of them is *ex parte*. The court gave no direction that its reasoning be circulated to tribunals, no mechanism for identifying similarly placed people, no instruction to the Gauhati High Court. *Rahim Ali* at least asked for wide circulation. The principle here is stated in constitutional terms and delivered in retail quantities. Whether you benefit depends on whether you found a lawyer who could take you to Delhi.

Against all this, there is a serious defence underlying the court’s hesitation to go all the way. The court explained that Paragraph 3 of the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964 makes the tribunal the forum for factual inquiry and that a writ court should not become the first place where documents are appreciated. That is not evasion. It is fidelity to the statutory design. More importantly, these records are empty precisely because they were *ex parte*. The state never had to lead evidence and no document was ever tested.

Rahim Ali could be decided outright because it came up on a contested record. Deciding citizenship here on an untested file would mean conferring status without scrutiny, which is the mirror image of the wrong being corrected. The court also acknowledged, rightly, that the state has a legitimate and compelling interest in preventing citizenship from being secured by false claims or procedural delay. It also ordered that no coercive steps be taken until fresh opinions are rendered and asked tribunals to conclude within six months.

These answers, however, do not fully persuade. The six-month direction is precatory, an endeavour and a preference. Precatory timelines have a poor track record. The protection against coercive action is welcome but conditional on cooperation and it addresses detention rather than the civic limbo of being off the electoral roll. The institutional-competence argument explains why the court could not declare these people citizens. But it does not explain why relief was confined to the 28, why the reasoning was not directed to be applied generally, or why the language of last chances was used at all. Those choices were not compelled by the statutory scheme.

One detail should discourage anyone from reading this as a partisan matter. The 28 appellants include Sabitri Dey, Paritosh Chanda and Gauranga Debnath alongside Kokila Begum and Azizul Hoque. A machinery that decides in absentia does not check community or religion before it errs. The question is not who the system is aimed at. It is whether any of us would accept being declared a stranger to our country by a proceeding we never attended. 

(Views expressed are personal)





Dr Karthick Sridhar
Vice Chairman, ICARE

BUILDING INDIA'S FUTURE THROUGH UNIVERSITIES

As the global economy shifts from physical infrastructure to knowledge infrastructure, India's future competitiveness will depend on the strength of its universities

For decades, nations measured progress through visible infrastructure such as dams, highways, ports and airports, which symbolised economic growth. Today, the meaning of infrastructure is evolving. It is increasingly intellectual, driven by ideas, research, innovation and human potential.

Reimagining infrastructure in the Knowledge Economy

Modern universities are central to this transformation, producing knowledge, skilled talent and technological breakthroughs. History shows Silicon Valley did not emerge because California first built technology companies. It emerged because institutions like Stanford University and the University of California created an ecosystem where scientists, entrepreneurs, investors and policymakers could collaborate. Boston became one of the world's greatest innovation hubs because Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology transformed the city into a magnet for talent and research. Singapore's transition from a trading port to a global knowledge economy was supported by sustained investment in universities that now rank among the world's best. More recently, China's rise as a technological powerhouse has been fuelled by an ambitious effort to build globally competitive universities capable of producing cutting-edge research and

world-class talent.

India now stands at a similar moment in history. As the country aspires to become a developed nation by 2047, the conversation around infrastructure must expand beyond highways, industrial corridors and digital networks. India's place in the world: Classrooms, laboratories, libraries, research centres, and university campuses are shaping India's place in the world. in classrooms, laboratories, libraries, research centres and university campuses. The universities India builds today will determine the nation it becomes tomorrow.

The New Engines of National Power

For much of modern history, we measured national strength by economic output, industrial capacity, military power, and natural resources. While these remain important, the twenty-first century has introduced a new source of global influence: knowledge. Today, the nations that lead in innovation, research, and technology are those that invest in world-class universities. Institutions of higher education have become strategic assets, generating ideas, developing talent, and driving scientific breakthroughs that shape economies and global competitiveness.

Many transformative technologies, including artificial intelligence, biotechnology, renewable energy, and

semiconductor design, originated in university research laboratories. Companies such as Google and Moderna grew from academic research, demonstrating how universities serve as engines of innovation. Beyond research, they educate scientists, engineers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs who strengthen every sector of society.

Universities also enhance a nation's global influence through research partnerships, international collaboration, and the attraction of talented students from across the world. Prestigious institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge, MIT, Stanford, and the National University of Singapore contribute not only to academic excellence but also to the international reputation and soft power of their countries.

For India, this shift is especially significant. The countries that will lead the future will be those that create knowledge, pioneer new technologies, and nurture global talent—and universities will be at the heart of that transformation.

The Innovation Multiplier: Why One Great University Can Transform an Entire Nation

The true value of a university lies not in the size of its campus or the number of degrees it awards, but in its ability to create knowledge, inspire innovation, and drive long-term economic and social progress. Great universities are "innovation multipliers", where ideas

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developed in classrooms and laboratories evolve into technologies, businesses, and public solutions that benefit society. Their influence extends far beyond education, shaping industries, governments, and communities.

History shows that the world's most dynamic innovation ecosystems have grown around leading universities. Silicon Valley emerged from the research ecosystems of Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley, while the University of Cambridge helped transform Cambridge into a global centre for biotechnology and artificial intelligence. Singapore's sustained investment in world-class universities played a crucial role in its emergence as a globally competitive knowledge economy. In India, the Indian Institute of Science has significantly contributed to Bengaluru's rise as a technology hub, while Hyderabad's universities have strengthened the city's life sciences and innovation ecosystem. These examples demonstrate that investment in universities is not merely an educational expense but a long-term national strategy that generates economic growth, technological advancement, and social progress.

What We Measure Is What Universities Become

University rankings are often viewed as annual league tables that help students

choose institutions, but their influence extends far beyond admissions. Rankings shape institutional priorities, guide government funding, attract talented faculty and students, strengthen international collaborations, and enhance global reputation. More importantly, they influence what universities strive to achieve. Every ranking system reflects a philosophy of higher education. If research publications receive greater weight, universities prioritise research output. If employability is emphasised, they invest in industry partnerships and career development. Rankings therefore do not simply measure performance; they shape "institutional behaviour".

The role of universities, however, has expanded significantly in the twenty-first century. Beyond teaching and research, they are expected to address global challenges such as climate change, public health, food security, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and sustainable development. They also contribute to entrepreneurship, public policy, environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and social inclusion. Innovation should be understood not only through patents and start-ups but also through practical solutions that improve people's lives. Measuring universities only through publications, citations, and international visibility overlooks these wider contributions.

Building Universities, Building the Nation

A university's true impact is reflected not only in graduate salaries but also in the ethical leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists, educators, artists, and public servants it produces. The purpose of rankings should therefore be to encourage continuous improvement by recognising excellence in research, teaching, innovation, inclusion, and societal impact.

India's demographic advantage can become a lasting national strength only if its young population is equipped with knowledge, skills, creativity, and ethical leadership. Achieving this vision requires sustained investment, academic freedom, strong governance, global collaboration, and support for research that addresses national and global priorities. History reminds us that great civilisations were built on strong centres of learning, from Nalanda and Takshashila to the world's leading research universities today. By building world-class universities, India can accelerate national development while contributing to solutions for global challenges. The universities established and strengthened today will shape the ideas, technologies, leaders, and institutions that define India's future for generations to come.

Dr. Karthick Sridhar is a policy strategist and Chair of the Outlook-ICARE India Rankings, driving transformative change in higher education.

METHODOLOGY

Our ranking methodology evaluates Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) based on five core criteria: Academic and Research Excellence, Industry Interface and Placements, Infrastructure & Facilities, Governance & Admissions, and Diversity & Outreach. Each broad parameter is further broken down into sub-parameters and indicators, each carrying a specific weightage.

To ensure fairness and accuracy, we employ a multi-faceted data collection approach. We gather ranking data through comprehensive surveys involving various stakeholders, including students, faculty, and others associated with the HEIs. Additionally, we meticulously vet the data by cross-referencing it with evidence and reliable third-party sources.

In cases where direct data may be limited, we resort to trusted and authoritative sources like AISHE, NAAC, NIRF, etc., to supplement the information. This ensures that our ranking process maintains its integrity and impartiality.

The data we collect is normalised to standardise scores across different parameters. This normalisation enables a fair comparison of

institutions, regardless of their size or other factors that could influence raw scores. After normalisation, the scores for each measure are weighted appropriately, culminating in a final overall score on a scale of 1000.

We take great pride in our methodology, which results from extensive research and continuous refinement. We remain committed to improving our approach by actively seeking user feedback, engaging in discussions with academic leaders and higher education experts, conducting literature reviews, and analysing trends in our data. Moreover, we stay vigilant about incorporating new and relevant data while collaborating with vice-chancellors, deans, researchers, academicians, and prominent educationists to stay at the forefront of developments in the education landscape.

With this comprehensive and evolving approach, our ranking system aims to provide a reliable and up-to-date assessment of Higher Education Institutions, empowering stakeholders to make informed decisions and fostering continuous growth in the academic community. 

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Transformative leadership strengthening GIPE's legacy through innovation, research, and academic excellence.

The Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE), established in 1930 under the visionary ideals of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and the Servants of India Society, has been India's premier institution for economics, public policy, and social science research for nearly a century. As GIPE approaches its centenary, it continues to strengthen its legacy through academic innovation, research excellence, and global engagement under the visionary leadership of its Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Umakant Dash.

In an era driven by data, technology, and complex global challenges, economics has become one of the most influential disciplines shaping public policy, finance, business strategy, sustainability, and development. The demand for trained economists has grown significantly across governments, central banks, international organisations, financial institutions, consulting firms, research think tanks, and the corporate sector. An education in economics today equips students with analytical thinking, quantitative skills, policy insights, and evidence-based decision-making abilities that prepare them for leadership across diverse professional domains.

GIPE provides an ideal environment for aspiring economists by combining a distinguished academic heritage with a contemporary, research-driven curriculum. Students benefit from close interaction with accomplished faculty, exposure to real-world

policy issues, rigorous quantitative training, and opportunities to participate in research, internships, seminars, and policy dialogues. This unique ecosystem enables graduates to pursue successful careers in academia, civil services, research organisations, public policy, finance, international agencies, and industry, making GIPE one of India's most sought-after destinations for economics education.

At the heart of this transformation is the vision of Prof. Umakant Dash, an eminent economist whose expertise spans development economics, public finance, health economics, and applied econometrics. His leadership is guided by the belief that higher education must create knowledge that addresses societal challenges while preparing students to become responsible global citizens. Under his stewardship, GIPE has strengthened interdisciplinary learning, promoted international collaborations, integrated advanced analytical tools into teaching, and encouraged research that informs public policy and governance.

Reflecting this vision, GIPE has expanded its academic portfolio with specialised programmes in Financial Economics, Public Policy, Agribusiness Economics, International Business Economics and Finance, Population Studies and Health Economics, and the newly introduced MSc in Geopolitics and Geo-Economics. These programmes combine theoretical rigour with practical



Prof. Umakant Dash
Vice-Chancellor,
Gokhale Institute Of Politics & Economics.

application, ensuring that students graduate with the analytical capabilities and professional competencies required in an increasingly interconnected world.

Research remains the cornerstone of GIPE's institutional identity. Through collaborations with governments, public institutions, and international organisations, the institute continues to contribute evidence-based solutions in areas such as employment, public finance, sustainability, governance, and rural development. Alongside this research excellence, Prof. Dash has fostered an inclusive campus culture that values innovation, ethical leadership, critical inquiry, and lifelong learning.

As GIPE moves confidently towards its centenary, it stands as a leading knowledge institution where tradition meets innovation. Guided by the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor Prof. Umakant Dash, the institute is nurturing future economists, policymakers, and thought leaders who are equipped to address national priorities and global challenges, while reinforcing GIPE's enduring commitment to excellence in education, research, and nation-building.



Honing Next Gen Leaders

Presidency University, Bengaluru is shaping future-ready professionals for leadership roles, research capabilities, and lifelong learning through excellence and innovation

From the lush green manicured lawns to the row of trees and towering auditorium, to the easily accessible academic zones and buildings, Presidency University Bengaluru has been an oasis, a place where learning is an enjoyable experience. A student's 4–5-year journey on campus is shaped by a vibrant environment of ideas, open-minded faculty, stimulating discussions, and a culture of curiosity and excellence. Students pursue their passions across eleven schools: AI and Advanced Computing, Computer Science, Engineering, Information Science, Management, Law, Design, Commerce, Allied Health Sciences, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Media Studies. In the 50th year of the Presidency Group of Institutions and the decennial year of the university, the group promises nothing but perfection and excellence in education.

Presidency University is a private university established under the Presidency University Act, 2013 (Act No. 41 of 2013), enacted by the State Legislature and notified in the Official Gazette. Spread across a state-of-the-art 100-acre campus, the NAAC 'A'-accredited university is home to over 20,000 learners who collaborate across diverse disciplines. The university offers around 72 contemporary

undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, spanning more than 100 specialisations to prepare students for evolving academic and industrial landscapes.

Presidency University offers a distinctive learning experience through its close connection with Bengaluru—the Silicon Valley of India—and its vision of becoming an AI-driven university. Leading this transformation is the School of



Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Computing, supported by a Centre of Excellence established in collaboration with NVIDIA. More than a computer lab, it is a high-performance computing hub that empowers students and researchers to build advanced AI solutions, train complex models, and address real-world challenges through cutting-edge technology and innovative pedagogy.

Beyond technology, the university provides a holistic education through its strong programmes in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Design, Law, Media Studies, Commerce, and Management. A vibrant campus life, enriched by clubs, cultural events, sports, and student activities, fosters creativity, leadership, and personal growth. Complementing academics, the Career and Progression Centre equips students with industry-ready skills through boot camps, soft skills training, aptitude development, and career mentoring, preparing them to excel in a rapidly evolving global workforce.

Presidency University nurtures innovation and entrepreneurship through the Presidency Launchpad, a Section 8 on-campus Technology Business Incubator that transforms student ideas into commercially viable start-ups. Complementing this ecosystem are Makerspaces and Centres of Excellence, established in collaboration with industry leaders such as NVIDIA, Samsung, Tech Mahindra, and Capgemini, where students gain hands-on experience and industry mentorship.

With nearly 192 partnerships with leading international universities, Presidency University offers global learning opportunities through student and faculty exchanges, twinning programmes, semester-abroad initiatives, and collaborative research. This global outlook, combined with an industry-aligned curriculum, prepares students not just for careers but to become innovators and future-ready leaders.



Dr Nissar Ahmed
Chancellor, Presidency University, Bengaluru

“There is nothing more important to me as an educationist than to prioritize our students' learning experiences. Presidency provides opportunities that enable them to learn and grow to be curious; to be open to the world. The winds of freedom are what we need to equip our students to seep into, and this is possible only through quality education. Students travel miles to

come to the Presidency University campus, and this campus is a home to them. Competitive excellence is built only with ideas, innovation, questioning and curiosity, and that is what our faculty are coached to excel in so that students benefit from such interactions within the classrooms and outside.”

As a comprehensive destination for higher education, the university offers programmes from undergraduate studies to doctoral research. Its PhD programmes span a wide range of disciplines and are guided by accomplished faculty with strong research credentials. Available in both full-time (with fellowship) and part-time modes, they provide a robust platform for advanced research and academic excellence.

Says Dr Nissar Ahmed, the Chancellor of the University, “There is nothing more important to me as an educationist than ensuring that our students make the most of their learning journey with us. Presidency provides them opportunities and windows that enable them to learn, grow, be curious, and be open to the world. The winds of freedom are what we need to equip our students to seep into, and this is possible only through quality education. Students travel miles to come here to the campus, and this campus is a home to them. Competitive excellence is built only with ideas, innovation, questioning and curiosity, and that is what our faculty are coached to excel in so that students are benefitted from such interactions within the classrooms and outside.”

Over the last decade, since the commencement of academic operations, Presidency University has

received many awards and recognitions, ranking high amongst its peers in the various third-party unbiased surveys. The process of ranking today has become selective, and there is no easy answer to all questions and parameters set by the ranking agencies. While these parameters are an easy guide for the institution, they also fuel and enable institutions to revisit their impact areas. Academic governance and academic accountability are a priority for Presidency and are integral to the functioning of the university. The rankings gained are indices to the performance, and Presidency is proud that we have achieved the top band of rankings in all the national rankings of the country. The IQAC of Presidency University has been playing a pivotal role in this aspect, and thanks to the quality checks and balances in place, all its schools – Engineering, Management, Law, Design, and Media – have been listed amongst the top institutions of the country. Quoting Dr Nissar, the Chancellor of the University, “Rankings clearly indicate that benchmarking is critical, and benchmarking is to be done not locally or regionally but with the best in the country and globally, and that will enable any institution to find a niche for itself in the global scenario.”

TOP 75 STATE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	387.45	196.33	128.03	127.08	89.12	928.01
2	CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	377.65	185.63	143.85	136.61	82.28	926.02
3	SAVITRIBAI PHULE PUNE UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra	384.71	191.02	120.68	136.68	86.28	919.37
4	BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY, COIMBATORE	Tamil Nadu	365.56	193.97	139.15	126.75	88.3	913.73
5	VISVESVARAYA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (VTU), BELAGAVI	Karnataka	385.58	191.7	113.34	128.88	89.47	908.97
6	ANNA UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	385.48	186.43	139.96	118.61	76.55	907.03
7	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR	Tamil Nadu	387.71	168.65	135.99	136.32	77.72	906.39
8	MYSORE UNIVERSITY, MYSORE	Karnataka	387.25	169.35	136.81	117.23	93.65	904.29
9	ANDHRA UNIVERSITY, VISAKHAPATNAM	Andhra Pradesh	386.05	188.04	131.91	124.7	71.42	902.12
10	GUJARAT UNIVERSITY, AHMEDABAD	Gujarat	395.45	180.73	117.11	118.78	88.92	900.99
11	UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	386.46	175.8	140.66	130.64	65.89	899.45
12	KERALA UNIVERSITY, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM	Kerala	381.09	182.34	116.54	133.65	74.35	887.97
13	OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	Telangana	377.22	183.74	128.91	117.49	77.49	884.85
14	ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY, KARAIKUDI	Tamil Nadu	380.42	187.2	123.85	110.88	81.66	884.01
15	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, COCHIN	Kerala	356.35	185.56	123.23	146.58	71.39	883.11
16	GAUHATI UNIVERSITY, GUWAHATI	Assam	367.25	172.07	138.83	113.12	91.75	883.02
17	UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR, SRINAGAR	Jammu and Kashmir	366.98	174.24	121.52	136.83	81.58	881.15
18	GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR	Punjab	389.15	189.47	102.68	130.2	64.99	876.49
19	SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY, TIRUPATI	Andhra Pradesh	370.08	183.73	114.14	121.2	86.09	875.24
20	BHARATHIDASAN UNIVERSITY, TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	Tamil Nadu	373.31	194.65	119.69	108.5	79.04	875.19
21	UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, CALICUT	Kerala	354.93	183.44	115.77	123.29	95.18	872.61
22	MADURAI KAMRAJ UNIVERSITY, MADURAI	Tamil Nadu	381.39	158.93	147.44	110.36	74.48	872.6
23	UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU, JAMMU TAWI	Jammu and Kashmir	371.86	171.44	104.55	133.42	85.71	866.98
24	BANGALORE UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU	Karnataka	354.74	180.11	137.75	103.34	90.46	866.4
25	GURU GOBIND SINGH INDRAPRASTHA UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI	Delhi	386.02	171.43	113.32	107.79	84.79	863.35
26	MUMBAI UNIVERSITY, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	366.77	188.78	111.54	130.11	66.07	863.27
27	PERIYAR UNIVERSITY, SALEM	Tamil Nadu	362.55	166.66	123.57	133.05	77.27	863.1
28	DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY, AURANGABAD	Maharashtra	374.46	162.52	139.21	103.46	82.19	861.84
29	MAHARSHI DAYANAND UNIVERSITY, ROHTAK	Haryana	368.96	171.55	118.32	111.57	89.55	859.95
30	KUVEMPUR UNIVERSITY, SHIMOGA	Karnataka	358.01	192.97	109.49	110.04	89.14	859.65
31	THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN, BARDHAMAN	West Bengal	381.28	161.56	128.63	113.13	73.19	857.79
32	UTKAL UNIVERSITY, BHUBANESWAR	Odisha	397.07	161.71	110.25	110.89	77.64	857.56
33	GURU JAMBHESHWAR UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, HISAR	Haryana	358.34	174.32	136.7	118.79	69.23	857.38
34	MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY OF BARODA, VADODARA	Gujarat	354.74	181.64	125.16	112.88	81.02	855.44
35	GOA UNIVERSITY, GOA	Goa	371.98	172.8	106.73	123.14	80.28	854.93

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- Cyber Security & Cloud Technology

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- M.Sc. Cyber Security

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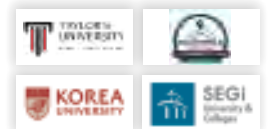
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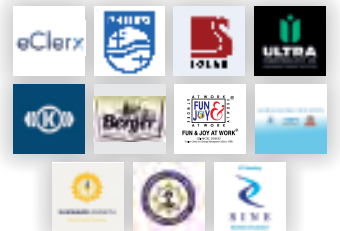
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TOP 75 STATE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
36	MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY, KOTTAYAM	Kerala	391.59	157.82	113.4	100.12	89.45	852.38
37	DEVI AHILYA VISHWAVIDYALAYA, INDORE	Madhya Pradesh	376.93	164.83	122.6	113.07	71.31	848.74
38	DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY, DIBRUGARH	Assam	351.19	194.24	113.98	115.5	71.6	846.51
39	KALYANI UNIVERSITY, KALYANI	West Bengal	351.21	178.58	128.41	112.3	74.81	845.31
40	SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY, KOLHAPUR	Maharashtra	377.75	156.98	126.71	109.56	74.21	845.21
41	SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI UNIVERSITY, KATRA	Jammu and Kashmir	362.51	179.99	108.42	117.38	76.11	844.41
42	YOGI VEMANA UNIVERSITY, KADAPA	Andhra Pradesh	366.01	184.66	117.6	96.89	76.96	842.12
43	ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY, GUNTUR	Andhra Pradesh	366.11	172.96	116.94	104.54	78.43	838.98
44	MANGALORE UNIVERSITY, MANGALAGANGOTRI	Karnataka	359.48	185.54	121.12	103.19	68.93	838.26
45	MOHANLAL SUKHADIA UNIVERSITY, UDAIPUR	Rajasthan	353.47	179.92	105.61	112.08	84.75	835.83
46	NORTH MAHARASHTRA UNIVERSITY, UMAVINAGAR	Maharashtra	353.87	173.13	109.78	126.72	69.87	833.37
47	PANJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA	Punjab	359.39	168.72	122.24	108.07	72.38	830.8
48	RAYALASEEMA UNIVERSITY, KURNOOL	Andhra Pradesh	361.71	177.52	103.21	120.29	67.08	829.81
49	SREE SANKARACHARYA UNIVERSITY OF SANSKRIT, KALADY	Kerala	363.3	158.63	133.07	106.65	67.9	829.55
50	SRI KRISHNADEVARAYA UNIVERSITY, ANANTAPUR	Andhra Pradesh	357.7	160.36	118.39	120.81	70.13	827.39
51	SRI PADMAVATHI MAHILA VISVA VIDYALAYAM, TIRUPATHI	Andhra Pradesh	356.26	162.27	116.81	119.19	67.94	822.47
52	THE RASHTRASANT TUKADOJI MAHARAJ NAGPUR UNIVERSITY, NAGPUR	Maharashtra	354.26	161.5	117.32	119.28	66.29	818.65
53	TUMKUR UNIVERSITY, TUMKUR	Karnataka	356.1	159.71	115.35	121.17	66.18	818.51
54	UNIVERSITY OF LUCKNOW, LUCKNOW	Uttar Pradesh	351.67	160.6	116.14	120.38	64.58	813.37
55	VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY, MIDNAPORE	West Bengal	352.87	158.19	114.29	119.89	63.28	808.52
56	J.C. BOSE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, FARIDABAD	Haryana	351.88	155.73	112.97	119.15	64.92	804.65
57	KURUKSHETRA UNIVERSITY, KURUKSHETRA	Haryana	351.81	155.23	111.32	120.36	63.38	802.1
58	SAMBALPUR UNIVERSITY, SAMBALPUR	Odisha	350.35	156.49	113	118.99	59.75	798.58
59	PUNJAB AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, LUDHIANA	Punjab	349.56	155.36	111.58	119.42	61.7	797.62
60	G. B. PANT UNIVERSTIY OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY, PANTNAGAR	Uttarakhand	348.94	156.01	110.06	121.23	61.23	797.47
61	MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY, TIRUNELVELI	Tamil Nadu	350.18	154.43	110.14	119.13	61.85	795.73
62	UNIVERSITY OF KERALA, TRIVANDRUM	Kerala	347.77	154.31	112.71	119.31	61.37	795.47
63	VEER SURENDRA SAI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, BURLA	Odisha	347.57	154.5	109.01	120.39	63.49	794.96
64	HIMACHAL PRADESH UNIVERSITY, SHIMLA	Himachal Pradesh	347.91	151.83	107.88	119.65	61.61	788.88
65	TAMIL NADU AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, COIMBATORE	Tamil Nadu	346.89	150.53	109.05	117.63	59.02	783.12
66	UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, DHARWAD	Karnataka	344.99	151.59	107.64	118.53	58.88	781.63
67	TAMIL NADU VETERINARY & ANIMAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	345.39	149.65	107.75	120.1	57.85	780.74
68	KARNATAKA UNIVERSITY, DHARWAD	Karnataka	346.3	147.61	105.79	120.84	55.37	775.91



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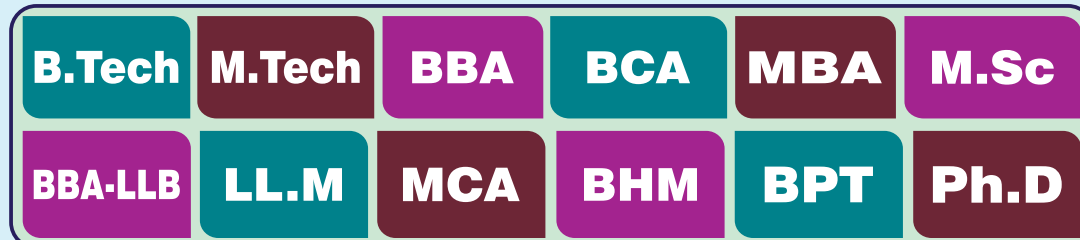
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RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
69	SARDAR PATEL UNIVERSITY, VALLABH VIDYANAGAR, ANAND	Gujarat	344.4	147.87	105.08	121.07	56.85	775.27
70	ANAND AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, ANAND	Gujarat	344.33	145.22	106.11	121.77	54.74	772.17
71	PROFESSOR JAYASHANKAR TELANGANA STATE AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	Telangana	345.63	142.99	104.3	122.19	56.23	771.34
72	ACHARYA N G RANGA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, GUNTUR	Andhra Pradesh	345.22	142.57	102.89	123.42	56.2	770.3
73	CHAUDHARY SARWAN KUMAR HIMACHAL PARDESH KRISHI VISHVAVIDYALAYA, KANGRA	Himachal Pradesh	346.22	140.85	100.35	120.9	57.79	766.11
74	DR. Y. S. PARMAR UNIVERSITY OF HORTICULTURE AND FORESTRY, SOLAN	Himachal Pradesh	345.97	137.89	100.7	117.92	59.09	761.57
75	GONDWANA UNIVERSITY, GADCHIROLI	Maharashtra	345.95	136.32	102.22	117.12	58.23	759.84



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RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	AMITY UNIVERSITY, NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh	386.29	197.88	129.24	126.52	90.65	930.58
2	CHANDIGARH UNIVERSITY, MOHALI	Punjab	378.69	186.46	142.76	136.51	80.73	925.15
3	GLA UNIVERSITY, MATHURA	Uttar Pradesh	367.25	194.56	138.03	128.59	88.72	917.15
4	AMITY UNIVERSITY, GURUGRAM	Haryana	383.82	188.93	122.28	135.41	85.16	915.6
5	SRM UNIVERSITY-AP, AMARAVATI	Andhra Pradesh	387.18	184.88	139.15	117.09	75.78	904.08
6	MANIPAL UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR	Rajasthan	383.7	191.55	111.32	128.61	88.04	903.22
7	PANDIT DEENDAYAL ENERGY UNIVERSITY, GANDHINAGAR	Gujarat	387.18	169.82	134.25	135.22	76.64	903.11
8	WOXSEN UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	Telangana	395.08	182.07	118.38	116.13	89.75	901.41
9	CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT, BHUBANESWAR	Odisha	384.29	170.08	133.98	118.74	91.56	898.65
10	GANPAT UNIVERSITY, MEHSANA	Gujarat	384.29	185.53	129.56	126.03	71.9	897.31
11	AMITY UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR	Rajasthan	385.87	175.52	138.4	129.81	63.11	892.71
12	ST JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	382.25	183.16	116.52	134.2	75.21	891.34
13	DAYANANDA SAGAR UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	374.29	183	130.1	118.11	78.14	883.64
14	PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	355.81	185.95	122.04	143.72	71.83	879.35
15	AMITY UNIVERSITY, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	380.02	185.74	125.28	108.77	79.19	879
16	JSS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY, MYSURU	Karnataka	366.95	173.27	136.43	112.73	88.8	878.18
17	SOMAIYA VIDYAVIHAR UNIVERSITY, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	369.16	183.19	114.24	122.66	86.57	875.82
18	AMITY UNIVERSITY, GWALIOR	Madhya Pradesh	354.14	184.94	117.34	124.72	92.71	873.85
19	LNCT UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL	Madhya Pradesh	364.2	174.03	121.42	134.23	79.65	873.53
20	JIS UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	387.69	188.54	99.99	128.24	65.76	870.22
21	CMR UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	374.44	192.4	117.87	106.09	79.04	869.84
22	GODAVARI GLOBAL UNIVERSITY, RAJAHMUNDRY	Andhra Pradesh	381.95	160.23	146.93	107.55	72.74	869.4
23	JAYPEE UNIVERSITY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, SOLAN	Himachal Pradesh	373.17	170.02	106.23	133.86	85.18	868.46
24	ANNAMACHARYA UNIVERSITY, RAJAMPET	Andhra Pradesh	362.54	166.77	124	130.88	77.64	861.83
25	UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT (UEM), KOLKATA	West Bengal	354.58	180.76	138.23	100.54	87.6	861.71
26	ORIENTAL UNIVERSITY, INDORE	Madhya Pradesh	368.85	172.57	119.03	110.07	90.72	861.24
27	AMITY UNIVERSITY, RAIPUR	Chhattisgarh	364.03	188.76	110.93	130.33	67.05	861.1
28	DR. C.V. RAMAN UNIVERSITY, BILASPUR	Chhattisgarh	387.33	168.66	111.41	105.24	85.2	857.84
29	VIVEKANANDA GLOBAL UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR	Rajasthan	394.33	161.97	111.45	110.43	79.64	857.82
30	AVINASHILINGAM INSTITUTE FOR HOME SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION FOR WOMEN, COIMBATORE	Tamil Nadu	375.74	160.83	136.78	101.01	82.43	856.79
31	ADAMAS UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	357.08	174.49	137.96	119.71	67.09	856.33
32	ICFAI UNIVERSITY, DEHRADUN	Uttarakhand	357.5	191.48	109.22	111.17	86.5	855.87
33	UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT (UEM) JAIPUR	Rajasthan	352.07	183.28	124.93	114.33	80.01	854.62
34	DY PATIL INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, AKURDI, PUNE	Maharashtra	378.82	162.84	127.44	110.43	74.57	854.1



Ravi Singhania
Managing Partner, Singhania & Partners LLP
Chairman, Singhania University

Driving Change Through Education and Social Impact

Mr. Ravi Singhania, ET Legal Award winner for “Managing Partner of the Year” and Chairman of Singhania University, is a distinguished legal professional and education leader dedicated to transforming society through education, healthcare, sports and community development.

Visionary leadership plays a vital role in creating opportunities for social and economic progress. Mr. Ravi Singhania, Managing Partner of Singhania & Partners and Chairman of Singhania University, has been instrumental in advancing education and supporting initiatives that contribute to the overall development of society. Through institution-building and community-focused efforts, he continues to create a meaningful impact across the Shekhawati region and beyond.

Under his leadership, Singhania University has emerged as a center of academic excellence, focusing on innovation, industry-oriented learning and holistic student development. The University offers diverse academic programs supported by modern infrastructure and a student-centric approach. Emphasis on skill development, research and professional education has helped prepare students for the evolving demands of the global workforce while strengthening the higher education ecosystem in Rajasthan.

Recognizing that development extends beyond education, Mr. Singhania has also supported initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access. Through Singhania Hospital, quality medical

services have been made available to surrounding communities. Equipped with advanced facilities such as MRI, CT scan, Ventilators, C-Arm, Ultrasound and Dialysis services, the hospital contributes significantly to strengthening regional healthcare infrastructure and improving access to modern medical care.

Mr. Singhania's commitment to education begins at the school level as well. Through Singhania School, a CBSE-affiliated institution established in 2004 at Pachari Bari, Rajasthan, efforts have been made to provide quality education in an environment that promotes academic excellence, value-based learning and the overall development of students.

Community welfare remains an important aspect of his vision. Solar power systems have been donated to government educational institutions in Pachari Bari and Pachari Chhoti, promoting clean energy and environmentally responsible learning environments. Initiatives such as blood donation camps, blanket distribution drives, tree plantation campaigns, open gym facilities and women's self-defence workshops reflect a sustained commitment to community well-being, environmental conservation and social empowerment.

Under Mr. Singhania's guidance,

Singhania University has also achieved several notable milestones. The University has received prestigious recognitions, including the Education Excellence Award and the Excellence in Higher Education Award. It has strengthened its national presence through participation in major educational and sports platforms, including the Global Sports Education Convention. The University has also introduced innovative career-oriented programs and earned significant rankings, including recognition as Rajasthan's leading emerging private university and one of India's top law institutions.

Under the able guidance of Mr. Ravi Singhania, the University is further strengthening its commitment to sports development by promoting inclusivity and empowering para-athletes through hosting the upcoming 3rd Asian Para Throwball Championship - 2027 on its campus.

Through his unwavering focus on education, healthcare, sports, skill development and social responsibility, Mr. Ravi Singhania continues to inspire positive change. His efforts are helping build a future where opportunities, knowledge and empowerment reach every section of society.

TOP 50 STATE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
35	ARKA JAIN UNIVERSITY, JAMSHEDPUR	Jharkhand	373.65	170.7	106.17	124.33	78.97	853.82
36	ICFAI UNIVERSITY, AGARTALA	Tripura	393.46	156.18	112.88	101.21	89.84	853.57
37	SISTER NIVEDITA UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	376.46	162.27	121.94	114.23	70.6	845.5
38	RABINDRANATH TAGORE UNIVERSITY, RAISEN	Madhya Pradesh	363.87	184.05	119.31	98.72	77.29	843.24
39	REVA UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU	Karnataka	378.61	153.99	127.89	108.71	73.28	842.48
40	SAGE UNIVERSITY, INDORE	Madhya Pradesh	348.41	180.24	128.54	111.55	72.5	841.24
41	RAMA UNIVERSITY, KANPUR	Uttar Pradesh	360.16	180.53	109.51	117.43	73.16	840.79
42	MODY UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, SIKAR	Rajasthan	367.59	172.08	118.92	105.28	76.91	840.78
43	AISECT UNIVERSITY, HAZARIBAGH	Jharkhand	350.26	192.62	113.38	113.08	69.88	839.22
44	SIKKIM PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, GANGTOK	Sikkim	352.79	181.09	105.42	111.95	83.22	834.47
45	CGC UNIVERSITY, MOHALI	Punjab	357.24	182.55	122.78	101.84	69.62	834.03
46	TULAS UNIVERSITY, DEHRADUN	Uttarakhand	353.34	171.4	109.7	125.52	70.61	830.57
47	IIHMR UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR	Rajasthan	361.96	175.29	103.92	121.62	64.12	826.91
48	PIMPRI CHINCHWAD UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra	360.94	159.25	130.52	104.27	67.35	822.33
49	RAI UNIVERSITY, AHMEDABAD	Gujarat	356.53	158.42	116.52	119.78	70.97	822.22
50	BRAINWARE UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	357.9	165.96	121.11	105.16	69.66	819.79

TOP 10

STATE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES WITH POTENTIAL FOR EXCELLENCE

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE
1	RV UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka
1	AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM, DELHI-NCR	Haryana
2	SRINATH UNIVERSITY, JAMSHEDPUR	Jharkhand
3	VASIREDDY VENKATADRI INTERNATIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY/ VVITU/ VVIT UNIVERSITY, GUNTUR	Andhra Pradesh
4	ATRIA UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU	Karnataka
4	PRESTIGE UNIVERSITY, INDORE	Madhya Pradesh
5	ATHARVA UNIVERSITY, MUMBAI	Maharashtra
5	INDIRA UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra
6	SINGHANIA UNIVERSITY, JHUNJHUNU	Rajasthan
7	DNYAAN PRASAD GLOBAL UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra
8	SCOPE GLOBAL SKILLS UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL	Madhya Pradesh
9	RAMDEOBABA UNIVERSITY, NAGPUR	Maharashtra
10	CHRIST UNIVERSITY, DELHI NCR	Delhi NCR



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TOP 10 MULTI-FACULTY PRIVATE STATE UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	AMITY UNIVERSITY, NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh	391.49	194.72	138.46	136.29	78.5	939.46
2	CHANDIGARH UNIVERSITY, MOHALI	Punjab	391	192.36	138.13	135.11	81.61	938.21
3	GLA UNIVERSITY, MATHURA	Uttar Pradesh	387.78	192.24	137.52	135.34	77.26	930.14
4	SRM UNIVERSITY-AP, AMARAVATI	Andhra Pradesh	388.44	192.12	139.2	130.83	78.23	928.82
5	MANIPAL UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR	Rajasthan	385.5	192.95	138.36	132.14	77.93	926.88
6	PANDIT DEENDAYAL ENERGY UNIVERSITY, GANDHINAGAR	Gujarat	388.31	193.47	138.56	131.08	74.85	926.27
7	GANPAT UNIVERSITY, MEHSANA	Gujarat	386.44	192.73	135.21	134.02	75.8	924.2
8	PARUL UNIVERSITY, VADODARA	Gujarat	385.43	191.26	135.39	130.78	75.32	918.18
9	JAYPEE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh	384.2	192.49	133.21	129.51	77.23	916.64
10	LNCT UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL	Madhya Pradesh	382.83	190.77	136.54	129.78	76.55	916.47

Definition: Private universities established by state legislation offering a broad range of conventional faculties - such as engineering, management, hospitality, law, and pharmacy - with a focus on scale, infrastructure, and high-volume operations.

TOP 20 CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI	Delhi	394.04	171.41	133.86	135.86	80.44	915.61
2	BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY, VARANASI	Uttar Pradesh	396.37	172.2	134.68	136.98	74.53	914.76
3	UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, DELHI	Delhi	381.67	168.18	144.09	143.8	76.7	914.44
4	UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD, HYDERABAD	Telangana	388.97	176.97	127.24	121.01	76.44	890.63
5	TEZPUR UNIVERSITY, TEZPUR	Assam	388.76	169.35	135.24	115.83	66.34	875.52
6	NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY, SHILLONG	Meghalaya	368.81	156.1	128.7	138.65	81.41	873.67
7	VISVA BHARATI UNIVERSITY, SANTINIKETAN	West Bengal	377.18	173.71	132.73	123.02	66.71	873.35
8	BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW	Uttar Pradesh	380.97	179.6	100.97	121.81	88.52	871.87
9	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF PUNJAB, BATHINDA	Punjab	366.86	172.2	123.96	124.46	83.58	871.06
10	ASSAM UNIVERSITY, SILCHAR	Assam	354.36	186.79	130.68	107.88	76.68	856.39
11	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF KERALA, KASARAGOD	Kerala	343.34	162.91	131.78	137.96	78.28	854.27
12	MANIPUR UNIVERSITY, IMPHAL	Manipur	362.3	155.76	110	133.71	91.79	853.56
13	MIZORAM UNIVERSITY, AIZAWL	Mizoram	377.15	174.59	103.23	112.96	84.3	852.23
14	SIKKIM UNIVERSITY, GANGTOK	Sikkim	375.04	164.02	119.18	107.92	78.19	844.35
15	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN, BANDAR SINDRI	Rajasthan	355.14	157.54	131.21	116.17	82	842.06
16	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TAMIL NADU, TIRUVARUR	Tamil Nadu	382.01	152.22	95.69	141.78	67.86	839.56
17	DR. HARISINGH GOUR UNIVERSITY, SAGAR	Madhya Pradesh	371.22	162.67	110.52	114.64	76.38	835.43
18	RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY, ITANAGAR	Arunachal Pradesh	351.79	162.35	122.71	109.49	80.02	826.36
19	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF HARYANA, Mahendergarh	Haryana	356.97	178.87	105.57	106.94	77.31	825.66
20	ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	Telangana	360.14	171.19	100.01	111.75	82.01	825.1



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(Alumni ECE-2017)
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Hop Electric Mobility
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Archit Chauhan
(Alumni CSE-2018)
Co-Founder
Crib
(2024)



Ria Rustagi
(Alumni ECE 2015)
Co-Founder and CEO
Neuphony
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Shubham Sharma
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& CEO,
Uniphore, USA
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(2003-2007)



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Co-Founder,
Love In Store
B.Tech-ECE
(2007-2011)



Mayank Talwar
Co-Founder,
Enfold.ai
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Vivek Gupta
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TOP 25 MULTI-DISCIPLINARY DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY KATTANKULATHUR, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	388.57	184.09	137.77	133.62	78.98	923.03
2	MANIPAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, MANIPAL	Karnataka	389.81	195.09	116.66	140	80.9	922.46
3	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL, PUNE	Maharashtra	391.74	189.4	134.8	131.98	74.03	921.95
4	JSS ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, MYSURU	Karnataka	399	184.01	119.59	136.16	72.74	911.5
5	KALINGA INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY, BHUBANESWAR (KIIT, BBSR)	Odisha	396	177.29	130.74	102.5	94.13	900.66
6	SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	363.07	194.37	136.86	124.97	78.9	898.17
7	SRI RAMACHANDRA INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	375.5	178.2	127.34	140.3	76.16	897.5
8	YENEPOYA UNIVERSITY, MANGALORE	Karnataka	397.29	184.24	123.54	107.27	84.94	897.28
9	BHARATI VIDYAPEETH UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra	383.74	165.75	136.59	123.98	85.8	895.86
10	BLDE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), VIJAYAPURA	Karnataka	370.86	185.7	113.63	138.17	85.3	893.66
11	SRI SIDDHARTHA ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TUMAKURU	Karnataka	375.62	171.11	135.12	120.78	87.2	889.83
12	KLE ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), BELAGAVI	Karnataka	367.63	154.74	133.43	147.73	84.98	888.51
13	MANAV RACHNA INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH & STUDIES, FARIDABAD	Haryana	374.05	164.71	126.5	136.7	82.73	884.69
14	JAYPEE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh	351.98	180.9	113.99	141.8	93.55	882.22
15	D. Y. PATIL UNIVERSITY, NAVI MUMBAI	Maharashtra	359.38	176.13	133.32	141.51	70.87	881.21
16	SVKM'S NARSEE MONJEE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	391.43	166.73	110.39	124.72	87.59	880.86
17	SHOBHIT UNIVERSITY, MEERUT	Uttar Pradesh	373.81	164.4	139.7	112.35	89.78	880.04
18	D. Y. PATIL EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY, KOLHAPUR	Maharashtra	360.92	151.25	143.88	140.16	80.34	876.55
19	SRI BALAJI VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), PILLAIYARKUPPAM	Puducherry	368.23	174.69	139.29	113.54	80.2	875.95
20	KARPAGAM ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, COIMBATORE	Tamil Nadu	356.85	176.27	120.04	128.52	90.07	871.75
21	DHARMSINH DESAI UNIVERSITY, NADIAD	Gujarat	379.23	167.68	125.31	112.63	84.65	869.5
22	SUMANDEEP VIDYAPEETH, VADODARA	Gujarat	387.24	156.37	139.46	106.26	77.48	866.81
23	MALLA REDDY VISHWAVIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), HYDERABAD	Telangana	370.35	169.15	108	126.49	91.33	865.32
24	PERIYAR MANIAMMAI INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, THANJAVUR	Tamil Nadu	375.15	164.68	106.96	135.88	80.06	862.73
25	ST PETERS INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	374.57	191.22	101.21	113.21	74.65	854.86

TOP 5 PUBLIC DEEMED UNIVERSITY

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE (IISc), BANGALORE	Karnataka	394.74	196.43	138.12	136.48	90.9	956.67
2	GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AND ECONOMICS (GIPE), PUNE	Maharashtra	361.25	176.83	106.49	122.28	64.76	831.61
3	INDIAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (IARI), NEW DELHI	Delhi	361.78	161.84	132.64	103.32	67.43	827.01
4	LAKSHMIBAI NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION (LNPIE), GWALIOR	Madhya Pradesh	359.06	156.82	118.44	120.82	70.72	825.86
5	CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF HIGHER TIBETAN STUDIES (CIHTS), VARANASI	Uttar Pradesh	357.25	165.51	123.35	104.63	71.35	822.09



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TOP 15 DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITIES OF NATIONAL EMINENCE

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY KATTANKULATHUR, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	393.11	194.21	140.95	134.96	78.27	941.5
2	MANIPAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, MANIPAL	Karnataka	389.26	192.01	138.72	134.81	78.56	933.36
3	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL, PUNE	Maharashtra	388.45	193.46	134.75	134.65	80.09	931.4
4	JSS ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, MYSURU	Karnataka	391.47	190.38	134.46	136.2	77.7	930.21
5	KALINGA INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY (KIIT), BHUBANESWAR	Odisha	385.97	189.34	138.02	135.81	77.11	926.25
6	SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	387.25	190.21	134.59	136.08	76.61	924.74
7	SRI RAMACHANDRA INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	388.26	190.16	138.62	130.54	76.1	923.68
8	YENEPOYA UNIVERSITY, MANGALORE	Karnataka	386.59	192.93	136.58	128.85	74.93	919.88
9	BHARATI VIDYAPEETH UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra	385.76	187.09	133.16	132.33	75.69	914.03
10	BLDE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), VIJAYAPURA	Karnataka	383.03	189.16	133.57	130.74	72.29	908.79
11	CHRIST UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	385.12	188.65	133.88	130.02	73.44	911.11
12	KLE ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), BELAGAVI	Karnataka	384.16	188.76	134.75	129.53	74.57	911.77
13	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, RANCHI	Jharkhand	384.19	186.99	132.02	131.24	74.61	909.05
14	D. Y. PATIL UNIVERSITY, NAVI MUMBAI	Maharashtra	383.62	184.57	133.83	127.81	72.29	902.12
15	JAYPEE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh	385.49	182.52	131.56	124.58	69.87	894.02

Definition: Autonomous institutions granted "Deemed-to-be University" status by the UGC under Section 3, recognized nationally for high academic and research standards; typically offering specialized or multi-domain programs with curricular independence.

TOP 10 PRACTICE-INTEGRATED MULTI-DISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL, PUNE	Maharashtra	392.52	194.04	140.45	135.29	78.07	940.37
2	CHITKARA UNIVERSITY, RAJPURA	Punjab	391.7	192.8	136.92	136.48	79.39	937.29
3	WOXSEN UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	Telangana	389.12	195.45	140.89	131.45	77.89	934.8
4	UNIVERSITY OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY STUDIES, DEHRADUN	Uttarakhand	390.22	194.82	139.89	131.14	78.02	934.09
5	CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT, BHUBANESWAR	Odisha	390.05	193.97	138.05	130.79	76.6	929.46
6	GD GOENKA UNIVERSITY, GURUGRAM	Haryana	391.06	190.81	137.82	131.1	73.03	923.82
7	PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	388.7	190.99	140.57	127.76	73.05	921.07
8	MGM UNIVERSITY, AURANGABAD	Maharashtra	387.82	188.47	137.86	127.85	72.27	914.27
9	DAYANANDA SAGAR UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	389.07	185	134.38	128.43	71.65	908.53
10	CMR UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	384.54	188.25	133.95	125.67	71.22	903.63

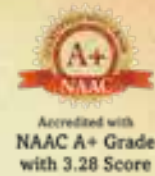
Definition: Institutions offering multiple professional domains (e.g. engineering, design, law, business, health sciences) through dedicated schools, emphasizing real-world application, experiential learning, and structured multi-domain exposure.



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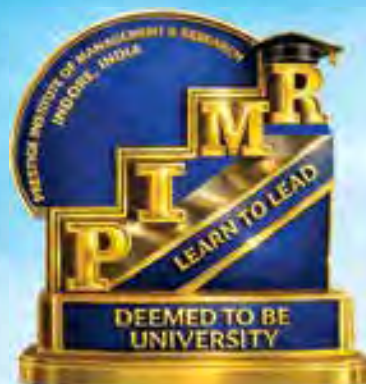
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TOP 10 LIBERAL & TRANS-DISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	O.P. JINDAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY, SONIPAT	Haryana	388.71	194.98	138.42	138.76	83.87	944.74
2	SHIV NADAR INSTITUTION OF EMINENCE, GREATER NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh	390.64	195.24	139.38	134.48	82.38	942.12
3	AHMEDABAD UNIVERSITY, AHMEDABAD	Gujarat	392.26	191.62	140.88	136.29	80.22	941.27
4	ASHOKA UNIVERSITY, SONIPAT	Haryana	385.55	196.22	136.29	138.14	81.58	937.78
5	FLAME UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra	388.86	192.77	137.86	134.33	83.81	937.63
6	KREA UNIVERSITY, SRI CITY	Andhra Pradesh	388.37	195.96	136.47	136.44	79.71	936.95
7	PLAKSHA UNIVERSITY, MOHALI	Punjab	384.66	195.36	135.05	137.5	82.14	934.71
8	BENNETT UNIVERSITY, GREATER NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh	388.58	193.49	132.45	133.21	80.12	927.85
9	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra	385.46	192.66	133.32	135.51	79.26	926.21
10	SRM UNIVERSITY-AP, AMARAVATI	Andhra Pradesh	388.66	191.19	131.36	131.78	82.23	925.22

Definition: Universities designed around flexible curricula, liberal arts and sciences, policy and data integration, and cross-domain or trans-disciplinary learning - aligned with NEP-2020 ideals of interwoven education, flexible majors/minors, and critical thinking.

TOP 15 GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MADRAS, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	391.33	193.94	136.44	132.74	82.12	936.57
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, BENGALURU	Karnataka	391.97	192.79	136.52	134.3	79.6	935.18
3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, BOMBAY	Maharashtra	389.98	191.98	140.07	132.81	79.26	934.1
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, DELHI	Delhi	390.24	191.43	140.81	131.05	75.31	928.84
5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR	Uttar Pradesh	391.27	192.92	137.25	132.78	74.34	928.56
6	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, KHARAGPUR	West Bengal	388.99	191.28	140.42	128.29	75.47	924.45
7	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, ROORKEE	Uttarakhand	391.68	187.69	135.58	127.94	74.56	917.45
8	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, GUWAHATI	Assam	388.22	187.74	135.69	128.1	70.08	909.83
9	VISVESVARAYA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (VTU), BELAGAVI	Karnataka	386.45	189.32	136.9	127.6	69.12	909.39
10	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY HYDERABAD	Telangana	383.57	188.47	135.92	126.78	70.3	905.04
11	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROPAR	Punjab	344.62	161.5	130.23	139.08	77.63	853.06
12	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, GANDHINAGAR	Gujarat	377.62	175.67	102.94	109.64	84.48	850.35
13	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION & RESEARCH, KOLKATA	West Bengal	350.83	185.76	130.11	103.53	75.78	846.01
14	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, MANDI	Himachal Pradesh	380.23	151.4	98.36	140.86	70.32	841.17
15	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE EDUCATION & RESEARCH, MOHALI	Punjab	374.19	164.03	117.4	106.82	78.44	840.88



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TOP 15 PRIVATE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY KATTANKULATHUR, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	387.95	194.34	135.3	135	80.52	933.11
2	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE, PILANI	Rajasthan	392.15	192.58	114.87	141.25	85.21	926.06
3	DAYANANDA SAGAR UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	392.62	180.93	137.42	133.86	81.1	925.93
4	JSS SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY, MYSURU	Karnataka	398.34	189.05	118.84	139.86	75.4	921.49
5	VIT-AP UNIVERSITY, AMARAVATI	Andhra Pradesh	377.48	182.01	128.68	142.49	73.41	904.07
6	JAYPEE UNIVERSITY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, SOLAN	Himachal Pradesh	392.15	182.27	129.4	105.54	93.72	903.08
7	UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT (UEM), KOLKATA	West Bengal	396.06	184.75	122.65	111.67	84.41	899.54
8	JIS UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	385.19	162.84	138.87	124.59	85.67	897.16
9	DHIRUBHAI AMBANI UNIVERSITY, GANDHINAGAR	Gujarat	374.02	186.93	110.99	138.72	85.6	896.26
10	MANAV RACHNA UNIVERSITY, FARIDABAD	Haryana	367.77	157.22	134.45	149.38	86.44	895.26
11	VIVEKANANDA GLOBAL UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR	Rajasthan	375.73	171.5	131.72	123.9	90.27	893.12
12	VIGNAN'S FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH, GUNTUR	Andhra Pradesh	363.54	193.55	135.52	123.76	75.8	892.17
13	UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT (UEM), JAIPUR	Rajasthan	371.02	168.54	124.44	137.76	86.67	888.43
14	ALLIANCE UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	373.87	165.48	142.43	110.41	92.25	884.44
15	REVA UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE	Karnataka	351.72	179.47	116.73	140.9	93.54	882.36

TOP 5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH POTENTIAL FOR EXCELLENCE

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE
1	MALLA REDDY UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	Telangana
2	VASIREDDY VENKATADRI INTERNATIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY/ VVITU/ VVIT UNIVERSITY, GUNTUR	Andhra Pradesh
3	NOIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh
4	NORTHCAP UNIVERSITY (NCU), GURUGRAM	Haryana
5	OM STERLING GLOBAL UNIVERSITY, HISAR	Haryana



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- B.Tech. - Semiconductor Engineering (SCE)
- B.Sc. - Economics (Hons.)
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- Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA)
- B.B.A. (Hons.)
- B.Tech Mechanical Engineering (AIML)
- M.A. - Journalism & Mass Communication
- M.B.A. - Digital Business
- M.B.A. - Executive
- M.Sc. - Medical Biotechnology
- M.Sc. - Medicinal Chemistry
- M.Sc. - Computational Mathematics
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- M.C.A.
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TOP 15 GOVERNMENT MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES

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			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, NEW DELHI	Delhi	394.91	191.95	136.97	135.66	82.09	941.58
2	BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY, VARANASI	Uttar Pradesh	390.21	194.67	138	135.59	76	934.47
3	JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POST GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH, PUDUCHERRY	Pondicherry	390.88	191.64	136.92	133.99	78.46	931.89
4	KING GEORGE'S MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW	Uttar Pradesh	392.99	190.52	136.75	133.17	77.32	930.75
5	UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, DELHI UNIVERISTY, DELHI	Delhi	389.08	191.4	140.13	133.1	74.47	928.18
6	ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, ALIGARH	Uttar Pradesh	391.34	190.69	139.62	129.08	72.66	923.39
7	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCE VIJAYPUR, JAMMU	Jammu and Kashmir	392.24	188.63	138.94	128.26	73.95	922.02
8	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES BHUBANESWAR, KHORDHA	Odisha	388.79	186.34	137.24	130.13	74.59	917.09
9	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, RAIPUR	Chhattisgarh	389.59	185.87	135.47	128.82	71.25	911
10	POST GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, CHANDIGARH	Chandigarh	387.88	187.96	132.52	130.36	70.41	909.13
11	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH & NEURO SCIENCES, BANGALORE	Karnataka	343.77	162.18	132.11	136.43	78.39	852.88
12	SANJAY GANDHI POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, LUCKNOW	Uttar Pradesh	378.65	173.23	106.46	108.58	83.78	850.7
13	SREE CHITRA TIRUNAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM	Kerala	351.75	187.53	128.58	103.69	76.15	847.7
14	INSTITUTE OF LIVER AND BILIARY SCIENCES, NEW DELHI	Delhi	372.24	165.64	118.89	107.71	77.15	841.63
15	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR	Tamil Nadu	381.66	149.04	94.94	140.91	71.31	837.86




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TOP 15 PRIVATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES

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			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	SRI RAMACHANDRA MEDICAL COLLEGE AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	385.06	188.42	131.72	115.59	85.69	906.48
2	SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY KATTANKULATHUR, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	393.17	174.3	140.78	110.14	85.57	903.96
3	KLE ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, BELAGAVI	Karnataka	378.76	180.68	125.44	123.67	94.84	903.39
4	BLDE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), VIJAYAPURA	Karnataka	383.09	161.15	123.4	136.58	93.94	898.16
5	SRI SIDDHARTHA ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TUMAKURU	Karnataka	378.84	170.77	133.94	120.75	89.98	894.28
6	ERA UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW	Uttar Pradesh	379.23	183.58	115.89	106.04	100.88	885.62
7	SANTOSH UNIVERSITY, GHAZIABAD	Uttar Pradesh	368.63	177.97	135.67	117.95	84.43	884.65
8	SRI BALAJI VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), PILLAIYARKUPPAM	Puducherry	348.21	183.83	118	150.63	83.75	884.42
9	MALLA REDDY VISHWAVIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), HYDERABAD	Telangana	374.86	164.91	139.29	113.57	87.75	880.38
10	DR. D. Y. PATIL VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), PUNE	Maharashtra	387.11	175.42	108.81	122.6	85.56	879.5
11	ADICHUNCHANAGIRI UNIVERSITY, MANDYA	Karnataka	364.91	175.55	142.83	107.31	87.05	877.65
12	LNCT UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL	Madhya Pradesh	379.83	186.68	103.89	132.05	73.14	875.59
13	JIS INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCE AND RESEARCH, JIS UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	350.97	191.51	129.16	110.82	89.82	872.28
14	RAMA UNIVERSITY, KANPUR	Uttar Pradesh	355.58	180.88	116.79	140.9	61.32	855.47
15	CHETTINAD HOSPITAL AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE, KELAMBAKKAM	Tamil Nadu	351.84	187.21	97.45	133.21	79.72	849.43

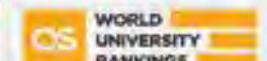




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TOP 25 MUSIC INSTITUTIONS

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			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	THE TAMIL NADU DR. J JAYALATHAA MUSIC AND FINE ARTS UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	391.91	196.09	139.17	134.63	79.88	941.68
2	FACULTY OF PERFORMING ARTS, BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY (BHU), VARANASI	Uttar Pradesh	393.14	193.2	136.18	134.44	81.72	938.68
3	KM MUSIC CONSERVATORY, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	390.48	193.63	139.16	132.99	78.12	934.38
4	INDIRA KALA SANGEET VISHWAVIDYALAYA, KHAIRAGARH	Chhattisgarh	394.48	196.06	136.19	131.2	76.08	934.01
5	FACULTY OF MUSIC AND FINE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, DELHI	Delhi	391.54	190.99	140.76	130.23	74.76	928.28
6	DEPARTMENT OF VOCAL MUSIC AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, RABINDRA BHARATI UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA	West Bengal	391.75	189.49	140.27	129.26	72.43	923.2
7	KARNATAKA STATE DR. GANGUBHAI HANGAL MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS UNIVERSITY, MYSURU	Karnataka	390.79	190.99	138.68	129.84	72.79	923.09
8	SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI, NEW DELHI	Delhi	386.72	184.79	138.3	131.37	70.74	911.92
9	SWATHI THIRUNAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM	Kerala	384.89	189	133.9	128.31	74.09	910.19
10	SWARNABHOOMI ACADEMY OF MUSIC, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	387.25	186.07	131.54	127.31	69.12	901.29
11	SHANKAR MAHADEVAN ACADEMY, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	375.7	191.36	119.26	106.85	80.2	873.37
12	TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT MUSIC COLLEGE, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	376.14	169.38	107.23	133.77	85.13	871.65
13	THE TRUE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	381.04	160.7	146.7	108.18	73.48	870.1
14	SCHOOL OF MUSIC, WHISTLING WOODS INTERNATIONAL, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	356.83	180.68	140.68	101.97	86	866.16
15	CALCUTTA SCHOOL OF MUSIC, KOLKATA	West Bengal	362.11	165.23	125.42	130.42	76	859.18
16	RAJA MANSINGH TOMAR MUSIC & ARTS UNIVERSITY, GWALIOR	Madhya Pradesh	381.73	173.42	107.38	109.79	81.85	854.17
17	EASTERN FARE MUSIC FOUNDATION, BANGALORE	Karnataka	343.28	163.54	130.31	138.13	77.28	852.54
18	DELHI SCHOOL OF MUSIC, NEW DELHI	Delhi	350.29	186.02	127.81	108.13	78.71	850.96
19	BANGALORE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, BANGALORE	Karnataka	380.64	151.21	96.94	141.35	69.13	839.27
20	GLOBAL MUSIC INSTITUTE, NOIDA	Uttar Pradesh	371.98	165.83	118.4	104.84	77.7	838.75
21	MUSICIANS INSTITUTE, BANGALORE	Karnataka	370.03	162.43	113.75	113.89	76	836.1
22	NATHANIEL SCHOOL OF MUSIC, BANGALORE	Karnataka	352.09	154.97	129.8	118.54	78.98	834.38
23	SURESH WADKAR'S AJIVASAN MUSIC ACADEMY, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	349.36	164.21	127.21	111.38	80.38	832.54
24	TANSEN SANGEET MAHAVIDYALAYA, DELHI	Delhi	358.12	175.52	105.67	107.5	78.31	825.12
25	FURTADOS SCHOOL OF MUSIC, MUMBAI	Maharashtra	359.28	167.09	103.21	109.24	83.35	822.17



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TOP 15 SKILL UNIVERSITIES

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			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT, BHUBANESWAR	Odisha	391.91	196.09	139.17	134.63	79.88	941.68
2	SYMBIOSIS SKILLS AND PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNE	Maharashtra	393.14	193.2	136.18	134.44	81.72	938.68
3	SHRI VISHWAKARMA SKILL UNIVERSITY, DUDHOLA	Haryana	390.17	194.82	137.84	135.79	80.04	938.66
4	CENTRE FOR BIOPOLYMER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, COCHIN - A UNIT OF CIPET	Kerala	390.48	193.63	139.16	132.99	78.12	934.38
5	DELHI SKILL AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP UNIVERSITY, DELHI	Delhi	388.57	193.42	141.96	133.01	77.16	934.12
6	SCOPE GLOBAL SKILLS UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL	Madhya Pradesh	394.48	196.06	136.19	131.2	76.08	934.01
7	ASSAM SKILL UNIVERSITY, MANGALDOI	Assam	388.53	192.17	137.62	134.39	81.12	933.83
8	BHARTIYA SKILL DEVELOPMENT UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR	Rajasthan	391.16	194.28	137.79	133.17	77.3	933.7
9	KAUSHALYA - THE SKILL UNIVERSITY, AHMEDABAD	Gujarat	391.1	193.24	137.47	133.21	77.29	932.31
10	TEAMLEASE SKILLS UNIVERSITY, VADODARA	Gujarat	390.7	188.7	138.23	128.74	73.47	919.84
11	LAMRIN TECH SKILLS UNIVERSITY, RUPNAGAR	Punjab	390.9	190.68	137.14	126.38	71.04	916.14
12	SEACOM SKILLS UNIVERSITY, BOLPUR	West Bengal	387.44	189.18	137.91	128.09	72.85	915.47
13	GURUKUL KANGRI SKILLS UNIVERSITY, HARIDWAR	Uttarakhand	386.18	186.3	137.82	127.94	70.07	908.31
14	ANDHRA PRADESH SKILLS UNIVERSITY, TIRUPATI	Andhra Pradesh	383.33	187.04	135.76	127.77	71.94	905.84
15	RAJASTHAN ILD SKILLS UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR	Rajasthan	342.55	164.54	130.83	136.37	78.43	852.72

TOP 10 VETERINARY UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	INDIAN VETERINARY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (IVRI), BAREILLY	Uttar Pradesh	393.49	192.85	140.84	133.15	79.76	940.09
2	TAMIL NADU VETERINARY & ANIMAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY (TANUVAS), CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	392.23	194.39	139.81	131.97	78.52	936.92
3	GURU ANGAD DEV VETERINARY & ANIMAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY (GADVASU), LUDHIANA	Punjab	392.71	192.72	136.25	133.01	76.99	931.68
4	MANIPAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION (MAHE), MANIPAL	Karnataka	388.81	190.82	140.56	130.99	77.37	928.55
5	CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT, BHUBANESWAR	Odisha	389.91	193.33	139.12	130.07	75.71	928.14
6	LALA LAJPAT RAI UNIVERSITY OF VETERINARY & ANIMAL SCIENCES, HISAR	Haryana	393.43	190.94	138.9	131.61	73.17	928.05
7	WEST BENGAL UNIVERSITY OF ANIMAL & FISHERY SCIENCES, KOLKATA	West Bengal	390.44	187.57	137.57	131.11	72.26	918.95
8	KARNATAKA VETERINARY, ANIMAL & FISHERIES SCIENCES UNIVERSITY, BIDAR	Karnataka	388.75	185.06	136.64	130.4	70.45	911.3
9	KERALA VETERINARY & ANIMAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY, WAYANAD	Kerala	384.93	186.38	133.93	127.2	74.08	906.52
10	MAHARASHTRA ANIMAL & FISHERIES SCIENCES UNIVERSITY, NAGPUR	Maharashtra	383.26	187.01	132.07	127.1	72.6	902.04



Colleges Must Become Centers of Practical Education

Practical education and industry-ready skills are essential for students to succeed in tomorrow's workforce.

In today's changing times, students must acquire skills alongside education to remain competitive. With Artificial Intelligence (AI) entering every field, the future job market will demand continuous learning and adaptability. By 2030, many existing jobs may disappear or transform, making skill-based education essential.

Practical Education is Key

Theory alone no longer excites students. Practical learning engages them and builds creativity, critical thinking, and social responsibility. To address this, Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) has introduced Innovation and Design Thinking (IDT) from the first semester, preparing students not just for jobs but also for responsible citizenship.

Internships Made Mandatory

Internships are vital for industry readiness, yet some students misuse them by submitting fake certificates. VTU has launched an



"As technology changes, we too must upskill accordingly. The jobs that exist today may not exist tomorrow. If we want to remain in the job market, skill-based education is essential. Engineering colleges must also prepare students in ways that meet the requirements of the job market."

Prof. S. Vidyashankar
Vice-Chancellor, VTU

HIGHLIGHTS

- Continuous learning is essential
- Skills must match industry demand
- Practical education should be prioritized
- Innovation and creativity are vital

online portal making internships compulsory. Currently, 83,000 students are engaged in internships, many leading directly to job offers.

Communication Skills Matter

Technical knowledge alone is not enough. Communication skills are crucial to explain ideas and products effectively. VTU emphasizes training students to combine technical expertise with strong communication abilities.

Curriculum Reform

Curriculum must align with industry needs. Outdated content wastes time and reduces employability. VTU is integrating emerging technologies such as AI, Data Science, Cybersecurity, Renewable Energy, Electric Vehicles, and Drone Technology into its programs.

Placement Readiness

Good placements require preparation. Students must acquire communication skills and short-term skill training before entering interviews. For example, when Infosys recruited 1,000 women candidates, only 300 qualified due to lack of readiness.

Essential Skills for Final-Year Students

By the final semester, students must focus on innovation and industry-relevant skills. Enrolling in specialized courses, including online programs, ensures they are prepared for the global job market.

TOP 10 FISHERIES UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2026	UNIVERSITY NAME	STATE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INDUSTRY INTERFACE & PLACEMENT	INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES	GOVERNANCE & EXTENSION	DIVERSITY & OUTREACH	TOTAL SCORE
			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF FISHERIES EDUCATION (CIFE), MUMBAI	Maharashtra	394.95	193.59	139.56	134.8	82.3	945.2
2	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, CHIDAMBARAM	Tamil Nadu	392.98	191.91	139.5	133.25	76.93	934.57
3	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (CUSAT), KOCHI	Kerala	391.01	194.48	140.7	130.73	75.67	932.59
4	KERALA UNIVERSITY, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM	Kerala	390.22	193.92	139.49	131.75	76.58	931.96
5	TAMIL NADU DR. J. JAYALATHA FISHERIES UNIVERSITY, NAGAPATTINAM	Tamil Nadu	393.45	190.03	140.17	131.39	76.23	931.27
6	ANDHRA UNIVERSITY, VISAKHAPATNAM	Andhra Pradesh	391.2	191.42	140.58	127.9	73.98	925.08
7	WEST BENGAL UNIVERSITY OF ANIMAL & FISHERY SCIENCES, KOLKATA	West Bengal	391.27	190.67	136.62	128.93	73.82	921.31
8	CENTRAL AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY - COLLEGE OF FISHERIES, IMPHAL	Manipur	386.74	190.53	136.59	130.45	72.97	917.28
9	KARNATAKA VETERINARY, ANIMAL & FISHERIES SCIENCES UNIVERSITY, BIDAR	Karnataka	389.85	185.1	137.52	126.94	73.51	912.92
10	CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT (CUTM), BHUBANESWAR	Odisha	384.01	184.13	134.48	125.53	70.26	898.41



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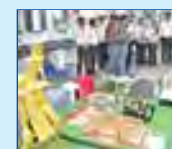
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			400	200	150	150	100	1000
1	GUJARAT MARITIME UNIVERSITY, GANDHINAGAR	Gujarat	390.11	195.37	138.96	131.82	79.8	936.06
2	INDIAN MARITIME UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	390.34	195.58	138.24	130.77	77.49	932.42
3	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KOCHI	Kerala	392.12	193.75	141.26	125.94	77.54	930.61
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MADRAS, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	387.46	193.63	141.8	126.55	79.45	928.89
5	AMET UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	388.29	195.82	139.44	126.55	78.06	928.16
6	CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT, BHUBANESWAR	Odisha	392.78	189.87	140.32	125.27	76.09	924.33
7	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, CHIDAMBARAM	Tamil Nadu	390.69	190.43	136.28	125.41	74.71	917.52
8	ANDHRA UNIVERSITY, VISAKHAPATNAM	Andhra Pradesh	390.2	189.97	136.55	124.27	71.35	912.34
9	KERALA UNIVERSITY OF FISHERIES AND OCEAN STUDIES, COCHIN	Kerala	391.47	190.03	138.65	120.38	71.46	911.99
10	VELS INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCED STUDIES, CHENNAI	Tamil Nadu	388.01	189.38	135.49	121.55	72.74	907.17



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‘Any Relationship with Pakistan Must Stand on the Truth of History’



AP

Sheikh Hasina was the prime minister of Bangladesh till August 2024, when a student-led uprising over civil service quota reforms and wider anti-government protests forced her to flee Dhaka. She has been in a self-imposed exile in India since then. Edited excerpts from an interview with Saurabh Sharma.

How do you assess the political situation in Bangladesh today?

Bangladesh is passing through a grave political crisis. This is not simply about one government replacing another. It is about the character of the state itself. It is about democracy, the rule of law and the spirit of the Liberation War. When we were in government, we built Bangladesh as

a secular, democratic, development-focused and secure country. Today, that Bangladesh is being replaced by fear, mob violence, revenge politics, attacks on minorities, economic instability and rising extremism. A Bangladesh that was moving steadily towards prosperity, confidence and global respect has now been dragged into an atmosphere of fear, uncertainty and darkness. This is not an accident. It is the consequence of the destructive politics of Muhammad Yunus, the former chief adviser of Bangladesh, and Tarique Rahman, the prime minister.

Rahman chose China for his first major bilateral visit rather than India.

Every government has the right to set its diplomatic priorities. But in a normal state, those priorities are guided by history, geography, national interest and the welfare of the people. Bangladesh's foreign policy should never have sent the wrong message to its neighbours, especially India, our historic friend. The relationship between Bangladesh and India is not only between two governments, it was shaped by the Liberation War, a debt of blood, geography, security and the living bond between our people. Bangladesh should maintain balanced relations with all friendly countries. We should work with China, Japan, the US, Europe and others. But balance does not mean forgetting history. It does not mean creating

uncertainty with a proven friend.

Bangladesh's engagement with China appears to be expanding across infrastructure, investment and strategic cooperation. Do you believe Dhaka is maintaining a balanced foreign policy?

Our guiding principle has always been clear: friendship with all, malice toward none. There is nothing wrong with foreign partners taking part in development. But the real questions are simple: are decisions being made transparently? Are people's interests being protected? Is Bangladesh in control of its decisions? Bangladesh needs development, but political dependence cannot be called true development.

How do you view the evolving relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan on trade and defence?

Bangladesh was born after an intense struggle against Pakistan. The people of Bangladesh have not forgotten the genocide, rape, arson and destruction carried out by the Pakistani military and their local collaborators. So, any relationship with Pakistan must stand on the truth of history. But what we are seeing today is not just normal diplomacy. In the name of diplomatic warmth, there is an effort to weaken the spirit of the Liberation War, rehabilitate pro-Pakistan forces, increase Pakistan's influence in the military and administrative spaces and push young people towards Pakistani institutions. That carries a deep political message. Those who want to take Bangladesh back under Pakistan's shadow are playing a dangerous game.

Do you believe the gains that India and Bangladesh made during your tenure on

INDIA HAS TREATED ME WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT, HONOUR AND DIGNITY. I AM GRATEFUL TO THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA. INDIA STOOD BESIDE US IN A DIFFICULT TIME, JUST AS IT STOOD BESIDE US IN 1971.

security, connectivity and counterterrorism are at risk now?

There are forces in Bangladesh that have used India as a political weapon. Anti-India politics has always been one of their favourite tools. They use it not for national interest, but for narrow political gains. Our government signed many agreements—The Ganges Water Treaty, Land Boundary Agreement, maritime boundary settlement, regional transit and connectivity, power and energy cooperation, refugee repatriation and counterterrorism cooperation were not accidental achievements. But during the 18 months of the interim regime and under the current government, they have not been able to show even one such agreement. The people now understand this propaganda.

If extremism rises in Bangladesh, if minorities live in fear, if anti-India politics receives state patronage, then all these achievements will come under pressure. Delhi and Dhaka must look beyond short-term diplomatic convenience. They must think about long-term stability, democracy, security and public trust.

The current government in Bangladesh has reportedly discouraged domestic media from airing your speeches or interviews.

It is not only my voice that is being blocked. It is not only the Awami League that is being silenced. In

Bangladesh today, anyone who speaks for the Liberation War, secular politics or progressive values is being pushed out of public life. Freedom of expression has been sent into exile. A rule of terror has taken its place. Teachers, journalists, intellectuals, artists and actresses are being jailed through false cases or attacked by extremist mobs in their workplaces.

You have repeatedly expressed your desire to return to Bangladesh. Under what circumstances do you believe that return is possible?

I have already said that I will return this year. I want to return because Bangladesh is not well and its people are suffering. The illegal interim government that seized power through an unconstitutional design and the current Bangladesh Nationalist Party [BNP] government, formed through a staged election, are pushing the country towards destruction. There is no rule of law. There is no freedom of expression. There is no real space for democratic rights. A culture of fear has been imposed on the people. At a time like this, I cannot stay away from my country. The people want me to return. They believe I can help rescue them from this painful situation. Standing beside them is my responsibility.

How will your party rebuild itself?

Every great political party passes through moments of testing. The Awami League is now going through such a moment, a process of natural purification. Those who came to this party for its ideals are standing even more firmly beside it in this difficult time. Those people who came only for personal benefit, privilege or power are exposing themselves by changing sides or falling silent. This has not weakened the Awami League. It has cleansed it.

I have always encouraged young leadership. Many young leaders are now holding the Awami League flag with courage, despite repression, torture and pressure from the state machinery. They are our future. When a democratic environment returns, the party will be reorganised through a new council. Talented, patriotic young people who believe in the spirit of the Liberation War will be brought into leadership. That plan has already been made.

You are currently staying in New Delhi. How has India treated you during this difficult period? India has treated me with the utmost respect, honour and dignity. I stay in touch with my family, party leaders, workers and well-wishers. I am grateful to the people and the Government of India. India stood beside us in a difficult time, just as it stood beside us in 1971. Living in India reminds me even more deeply of that history. Whenever Bangladesh has faced danger, the bond between the people of India and Bangladesh has shown itself to be more than diplomacy. It is human. It is historical.

Have you remained in touch with Indian leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi or National Security Adviser Ajit Doval? How would you describe India’s approach towards

I WILL RETURN TO BANGLADESH THIS YEAR. I WANT TO RETURN BECAUSE THE COUNTRY IS NOT WELL AND ITS PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING. THE BNP GOVERNMENT IS PUSHING THE COUNTRY TOWARDS DESTRUCTION.

developments in Bangladesh? Not every diplomatic or personal contact can be discussed publicly. India is Bangladesh’s important neighbour and historic friend. Indian policymakers are surely watching Bangladesh’s situation very closely. I do not want to turn personal communication into headlines. But I believe Indian policymakers understand the connection between Bangladesh’s stability, India’s security and the wider regional interest.

Is there anything you would have done differently during your final years in office? During our time, criticism was everywhere: newspapers, television, online platforms, talk shows and social media. People criticised me, my government and my party every day. I listened to criticism. Where correction was needed, I corrected. No one was declared an enemy of the state simply for criticising the government.

What kind of Bangladesh-India relationship do you believe is essential for regional stability? A stable and friendly India-Bangladesh relationship is essential for the welfare of both countries for regional security. The trust we built with India rests on border security, counterterrorism cooperation, electricity, energy, connectivity, maritime boundary settlement, land boundary settlement and people-to-people relations. That is the kind of

relationship neighbours need.

Do you believe external powers played any role—directly or indirectly—in the political developments that led to your departure from office, or was it primarily a domestic political crisis? What happened in Bangladesh cannot be explained as only a domestic political crisis. It also cannot be described honestly as a spontaneous student movement. Anti-Bangladesh vested groups, extremist networks, organised elements of the BNP Jamaat alliance and opportunist circles were active from the beginning. At the same time, propaganda warfare, financing, international pressure and geopolitical interests cannot be ignored.

Yunus spoke at a Clinton Foundation programme in the US and described the movement as the result of a ‘meticulously designed’ process, guided by a ‘mastermind’. His own words reveal the character of what happened. If a movement is meticulously designed and guided by masterminds, then it is no longer a spontaneous student protest. It becomes a planned political operation. The quota movement of 2024 was used only as a cover. So, my answer is clear. Domestic conspirators were active, but they were supported by propaganda, financing, pressure and geopolitical calculations. This was a carefully prepared process of destabilisation. 



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Theatrical Protest A symbolic funeral pyre protest staged by villagers in the Ken-Betwa Basin

Cost of Linking

An unpublished study warns India's first inter-basin river transfer may deserve a fresh scientific review as climate change threatens to alter rainfall patterns



Deshdeep Saxena

IS A BHOPAL-BASED SENIOR INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST COVERING POLITICS, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND PUBLIC POLICY

AS bulldozers move deeper into the forests of the Panna landscape and villages brace for displacement, a different debate is quietly unfolding inside India's water establishment.

Four decades after the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project was conceived, new hydrological evidence suggests that the assumptions underpinning India's first inter-basin river transfer may deserve a fresh scientific review.

An unpublished basin reassessment reviewed by *Outlook*, drawing upon Central Water Commission (CWC) basin reassessment studies, India-Water Resources Information System datasets, hydrological modelling and Madhya Pradesh's Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, projects increasing flow variability and growing dry-season stress across the Ken, Betwa and Son basins. While the assessment does not predict an overall decline in Madhya Pradesh's water availability, it warns that dependable lean-season flows in these

basins are likely to become less reliable as climate change alters rainfall patterns and runoff behaviour.

The assessment appears to have entered official policy discussions. Rajesh Rajora, who until last week, was additional chief secretary, water resources, Madhya Pradesh, told a Hindi daily: "We are alert. Based on the CWC's basin reassessment study, we are working on an action plan for the conservation of river catchment areas." He was transferred to another department as part of a bureaucratic reshuffle on July 24.

For scientists, the question is no longer simply whether the Ken receives enough rainfall. It is whether a river long classified as "surplus" can continue to be treated as such if its flows become increasingly seasonal and less dependable.

Climate Threat

The Ken-Betwa River Linking Project is the first project to enter implementation under India's National Perspective Plan

for interlinking rivers, conceived in 1980 to transfer water from so-called surplus basins to water-deficit regions. The Rs 45,000-crore project proposes to transfer water from the Ken River in Madhya Pradesh to the Betwa basin across Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh through the Daudhan Dam and a 221-km canal. Successive governments have described it as a lifeline for drought-prone Bundelkhand, promising irrigation, water and hydropower.

If the hydrological assumptions underlying this flagship project require reassessment, it will have an impact on how India plans long-lived water infrastructure in a changing climate.

The assessment study reviewed by *Outlook* mentions that the emerging water challenge in Madhya Pradesh is not one of overall water scarcity, but of increasing runoff concentration and seasonal imbalance. The document projects more intense monsoon rainfall, larger flood peaks and greater inter-annual variability across the state's river basins. Western basins such as the Narmada, Tapi and Godavari are expected to benefit from increased runoff and groundwater recharge. The outlook for the Ken, Betwa and Son basins is markedly different. Among all the state's major basins, the Ken is identified as the most vulnerable, with declining dependable flows and increasing seasonal water stress.

Yet the document occupies an unusual position within the bureaucracy. When *Outlook* contacted the Madhya Pradesh Water Resources Department, officials declined to acknowledge the assessment. A retired chief engineer, who now works as a consultant to the department, said the study had long been known within both the state Water Resources Department and the Department of River Development in the Union ministry of Jal Shakti, but added: "I don't know its origin."

The differing responses leave unanswered questions about the assessment's provenance and official

THE HUMAN CONSEQUENCES OF THE KEN-BETWA PROJECT ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY VISIBLE.

status. They do not, however, diminish the significance of the hydrological concerns it raises or the fact that a senior serving official has publicly referred to a "CWC basin reassessment study" while outlining the state's catchment conservation strategy.

For hydrologists, dependable flow—not annual rainfall—is the critical parameter for assessing whether water can safely be transferred from one basin to another. This is not the first time the project's hydrological foundations have been questioned. "Our analysis of the feasibility report in 2005 suggested that the assessment involved significant methodological issues. The Forest Advisory Committee, the National Board for Wildlife sub-committees and the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee all sought an independent review of the project's justification. That was never undertaken," says Himanshu Thakkar, coordinator of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People. He believes the new assessment reinforces the need to revisit those assumptions.

One of the sharpest challenges to the project's hydrological premise came before the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee (CEC). Conservationist Debi Goenka, founder of Conservation Action Trust, recalls asking officials a question he says went unanswered. "I told the CEC to first address the question of water availability. All the irrigation engineers were present and I asked them how much surplus water was actually available for transfer, particularly during drought years or deficient monsoons. For them, it was like a surprise," says Goenka.

Ecological Impact

The hydrological debate unfolds against one of India's most sensitive ecological landscapes—the Panna Biosphere Reserve, designated by Unesco's Man and the Biosphere Programme in 2020. It includes Panna Tiger Reserve and parts of Gangau Wildlife Sanctuary, renowned for successfully reviving its tiger population.

Shaped by the Ken River, the ecosystem features a diverse mix of plateaus, gorges, dry deciduous forests and marshy vegetation. It is a critical tiger habitat. The Daudhan Dam will submerge forests in a landscape that supports more than 100 tigers.

Scientists say these forests also function as natural hydrological infrastructure, slowing monsoon runoff, replenishing groundwater and sustaining environmental flows through the dry season. Large-scale deforestation, they warn, could alter these processes. "In the cacophony of arguments and counter-arguments, the likely impact of the felling of two million trees has gone unnoticed," says a senior official.

Meanwhile, the human consequences of the project are becoming increasingly visible. Villagers have spent years protesting against displacement, alleging inadequate compensation and questioning rehabilitation plans. As construction advances, opposition continues.

Whether the latest hydrological assessment ultimately changes the course of the Ken-Betwa project remains uncertain. Construction has begun, thousands of trees have already been felled and villages are preparing for relocation. Yet the scientific question that has resurfaced is unlikely to disappear. If climate change is altering the behaviour of rivers once classified as "surplus", India's first river-linking project may become a test of whether water infrastructure planned in the 20th twentieth century can keep pace with the hydrological realities of the 21st.



Reclaiming Sambhal's Sacred Legacy

Rooted in scripture, history and living belief, Sambhal's revival reflects a wider effort to reconnect India's future with its civilisational past.

By Pankaj Saxena

The quest to rebuild the Harihar temple at Sambhal is a sign of Bharata rising. When a civilisation rises again, it reclaims its kshetras and its narratives. Sambhal is not simply another Hindu temple destroyed by invaders. It is one of the most important elements of the sacred geography of Bharatavarsha – the

node around which the history of Hindu civilisation revolves. Sambhal is vital to regaining our sense of history, but it is equally important for capturing the imagination of a glorious future.

India is a living and ancient civilisation. Continuity is its most palpable feature, and Sambhal is a symbol of that continuity. It has a long history and an equally long existence in the Hindu imagination. The Matsya Purana tells us that the city was established by King Yayati, which makes it contemporaneous with the Mahabharata. The city and the temple find continuous mention throughout India's history. ASI records documented

by archaeologist A. C. L. Carlleyle in 1879 note that Sambhal bore different names across the yugas: Sambhaleshwar in the Satya Yuga, Mahadgiri in the Treta, Pingala in the Dwapara and Sambhalgram in the Mauryan era.

The city is known for its Harihar temple, mentioned in the Shrimad Bhagavata Purana as well as in the Skanda and Matsya Puranas. It is especially important to Hindu consciousness because this temple is believed to be where Shri Kalki, the tenth avatar of Shri Vishnu, will appear. Hindu history is not linear but cyclical. These cycles of history hinge on specific nodes in time and place. The temple at Sambhal and the

appearance of the Kalki avatara there together constitute such a pivot. Sambhal is therefore not merely a sacred place; it occupies a central position in the consciousness of Hindu civilisation because of its significance in Hindu cosmology.

Padma Shri Dr Meenakshi Jain, one of India's foremost contemporary historians, stresses that Sambhal's central importance to Hindus was not overlooked by Islamic invaders either. This is why Sambhal was attacked by almost all of them, including Mohammed Ghori, Qutubuddin Aibak, Feroz Shah Tughlaq, Sikandar Lodhi and Sultan Balban. The Hindu population of Sambhal endured multiple massacres at the hands of these invaders but never abandoned the city. It has remained a site of civilisational contestation for a very long time. Just as Hindus were determined to retain Sambhal and the Harihar temple, Islamic invaders were intent on erasing its Hindu identity. The invaders would not only destroy a temple but also build a mosque on its foundations, making it difficult for Hindus to reclaim their sacred site even after Islamic power waned.

The date of construction of the present Shahi Jami Masjid, which is under ASI scrutiny, remains uncertain, but it is clear that it was built on the foundations of an ancient temple. This has been recorded repeatedly in historical accounts. Thomas and William Daniell confirmed this in a survey for the East India Company in 1770. In 1874, Alexander Cunningham reiterated that the mosque in Sambhal had been built on the foundations of a Hindu temple.

Sambhal has also been important in Buddhist lore. It is among the contenders for the sacred site

of Shambhala. Commentator Saurabh Ojha recounts how, in the fourteenth century, the Chinese Mongol emperor sent an ambassador to the court of Muhammad bin Tughlaq with a request that the temple in Sambhal be rebuilt. This suggests that the temple had been destroyed by then and that the site had become contested between Hindus and Buddhists on one side and Islamic invaders on the other.

Great Hindu emperors, conscious of their role in protecting Sanātana Dharma, rebuilt and renovated the temple throughout its history. Prithviraj Chauhan rebuilt it in the thirteenth century, which shows that the cycle of destruction by Islamic invaders and rebuilding by Hindus had already begun by then. Ahilyabai Holkar built another Kalki temple near the Shahi Jami Masjid in the eighteenth century. The struggle continued during British rule, when Hindus petitioned the Moradabad Civil Court to reclaim the site occupied by the Shahi Jami Masjid, but lost the case. Disputes continued after Independence, and in 1976 many Hindus were killed in a riot in Sambhal.

For those seeking the restoration of Sambhal's Hindu heritage, the political changes at the Centre in 2014 and in Uttar Pradesh in 2017 marked a decisive moment. The formation of governments led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath created an opportunity to renew efforts to reclaim and revive the city's sacred legacy.

In February 2024, Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone of Shri Kalki Dham in Sambhal and described it as a symbol of Hindu renaissance. He

also observed that reverence for Shri Kalki shows how Hindu society looks to the future, since Kalki is associated with an age yet to come. This reflects a language of civilisational awareness – a nation learning anew to honour the continuity of its heritage.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has translated that civilisational awareness into concrete action on the ground. He has sanctioned an investment of Rs 400 crore to transform Sambhal along the lines of Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya. A key attraction will be the 52-kilometre, 24-kosi parikrama route. Several major tirthas, including Bhuvaneshwar, Surya Kund and Chandreshwar, are to be rebuilt, while the tourism infrastructure around them is to be redeveloped. Dedicated officers, including former Sambhal District Magistrate Dr Rajendra Pensiya, have worked tirelessly to turn this vision into reality. These efforts have also been supported by independent lawyers such as Vishnu Shankar Jain, who have sought the reclamation of the Harihar temple in Sambhal.

Sambhal represents both India's civilisational continuity and the struggle for its revival. It is not merely a memory of the past but also a vision of the future. Civilisations that remember their past and build their future upon it are the ones that endure. The present government's attempt to restore Sambhal's lost glory is a step in that direction.

*(Pankaj Saxena is the author of the bestselling books **Svayambodha** and **Shatrubodha**. He writes on Hindu temples, arts, literature, history and culture, and has visited and documented more than 1,600 Hindu temples. He is the founder of Bodha, a think tank and research group.)*

IMAGO

Himalayan Burden

Popular tourist destinations in Himachal Pradesh, year after year, are crumbling under the weight of crores of incoming tourists during peak season

Jam Packed Traffic jams are common on roads leading to popular tourist spots in Himachal Pradesh

ABOUT a decade ago, Sheetal Sharma, a deputy registrar at the National Green Tribunal (NGT), visited Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh, situated at 13,058 feet. Upon returning to Delhi, she submitted a 76-page report to the NGT, highlighting how massive environmental violations and unregulated tourism had reduced the ecologically sensitive destination into a polluted and overcrowded spot, strewn with garbage and animal waste. The report mentioned that there were 5,000 vehicles at the pass, much beyond the carrying capacity, and that vehicular emissions were leading to the “blackening of snow”.



Ashwani Sharma

IS A JOURNALIST WITH OVER 30 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN REPORTING AND ANALYSIS. HE IS BASED OUT OF SHIMLA

The NGT intervened and restricted the number of vehicles, allowing only 1,200 tourist vehicles per day—800 petrol and 400 diesel. The cap on the number of tourists exists even today. Rohtang Pass, which is open to tourists from May to November, thus became a textbook

example of how tourism can be balanced with environmental conservation in fragile mountain ecosystems.

Ten years down the line, the NGT and Himachal Pradesh are making headlines again. Recently, the tribunal expressed serious concern over solid and liquid waste management in the state. In a report submitted to the NGT, the government acknowledged that “littered waste continues to remain uncleared daily at several locations, including hill slopes, tourist destinations, vending zones and garbage hotspots”. One of the reasons attributed to garbage mismanagement is increased tourism activity in the state in recent years.

While there is a cap on the number of tourists visiting Rohtang Pass, the other popular destinations in the state are crumbling under the weight of incoming tourists. While videos of cars lined up for kilometres along the roads leading to Shimla, Manali, Dalhousie, Dharamshala or McLeod Ganj go viral every summer, people casually drive up to these destinations on long weekends as well.

Many spots have been out of bounds in winters, but erratic snowfall owing to climate change has changed the tourism pattern as well. The state can manage tourists if they arrive throughout the year; what has become unmanageable is the peak season madness.

“Our infrastructure is not fully equipped to meet the sheer volume of visitors arriving in the state. During peak season, issues like limited drinking water, overflowing sewer lines, waste management, choked roads and struggles for parking emerge,” says Ashok Thakur, a retired IAS officer who hails from Lahaul-Spiti and also served as principal secretary (tourism).

The Himachal Pradesh administration is dealing with a Catch-22 situation—while bumper tourism brings bumper revenue but it also brings along familiar chaos, resulting in infrastructural collapse and environmental damage.

Tourism is Crucial

The Himachal Pradesh government regards the tourism sector as a vital pillar of the state’s economy, constituting 7.8 per cent of the state’s gross domestic product (GDP). It also generates massive employment—both direct and indirect; estimated up to 15 per cent of the state’s total employment—supporting livelihoods and playing a catalytic role in infrastructure development.

While tourism is essential, the numbers present a scary picture. The state government’s annual Economic Survey report, tabled in the state assembly this year, says tourist arrivals have rebounded post-pandemic, with domestic tourists rising from 32.13 lakh in 2020 to 3.12

crore in 2025, which is far more than the state’s population of 75-76 lakh.

While nearly 15 lakh tourist vehicles arrived in Shimla in May-June, with almost 20,000 to 30,000 tourists checking in daily, the scale of tourist arrivals in Manali was equally unsustainable. Police data show about 66,600 vehicles from outside Himachal arrived in May alone—around 60 per cent more than the same month last year—more than 3,000 tourist vehicles were documented entering Manali every day during the peak summer season.

Manali, in fact, has been hosting record-breaking tourists ever since the Atal Tunnel—the world’s longest single-tube traffic tunnel at a height of above 10,000 feet, which connects Manali to Lahaul-Spiti Valley—was opened to tourists in 2020. The daily vehicular traffic at the Atal Tunnel exceeded its 4,500-vehicle designed capacity up to 11,000 vehicles per day. The Border Roads Organisation officials recall that tourist vehicles crossing the tunnel in May 2026 exceeded the 45,760-mark in just one week. Because of relatively easy accessibility, very remote locations in the Spiti Valley, like Keylong and Sissu village, are seeing an uptick in tourism.

“Online travel agencies and government-backed portals offer attractive packages. This compels the bulk of hoteliers, barring professional chains, to sell their rooms at throwaway prices because they have a limited business period. High-value tourism has got overshadowed by high-volume,” says Chander Mohan Parsheera, professor at the Institute of Vocational Studies (Tourism) in Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla. Adding that there are now more hotels than deodar trees in Manali, Parsheera says places like Palampur, known for its pleasant climate, the Dhauladhar range and sprawling tea gardens, are emerging as sought-after destinations for tourists visiting Shimla or Manali.

While tourists are a boon for the hotel industry, crumbling infrastructure and

environmental degradation emerge as collateral damage. The Economic Survey report mentions that “to protect the state’s fragile ecosystem, it is essential to ensure this growth is sustainable in the long-term”.

Possible Solutions

Because ageing infrastructure is failing to cope with the influx of tourists, the administration is investing in the construction of highways and widening of roads. Tikender Panwar, former Shimla deputy mayor and the member of a high-level committee set up by the Centre government in 2023 to evaluate the carrying capacity of 13 Himalayan states believes being an ecologically sensitive state facing multiple challenges due to climate-induced disasters, the need is to strike a balance.

“We can’t go on expanding the national highways, which involves massive cutting of the fragile mountains. This results in destabilisation of hills and illegal dumping of debris/muck that creates massive havoc during monsoon rains and flash floods. The mindless building of infrastructure also means felling of forests and displacements,” he points out, reminding about a recent Supreme Court warning in a case relating to a controversial tourism resort project at Taradevi Hills, near Shimla.

On July 28 last year, the apex court observed: “If things proceed the way they are, then the day is not far when the entire state of HP may vanish in thin air.”

Is capping the number of tourists a solution? Terming it an impractical suggestion, Sushil Kumar Singla, secretary (environment, science, and technology), says: “The tourism industry survives on a handful of peak-season days when there is a surge in visitors.” Talking about one of the possible solutions to help cut down vehicular pollution, Singla says the government is drafting an electric-vehicle policy, which is expected to be placed before the state Cabinet for approval soon.

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Gautam Bhattacharyya
IS A FORMER SPORTS EDITOR
OF GULF NEWS, DUBAI

CIRCA 1992, Sikkim Governor's Gold Cup. All roads were leading to the picturesque Paljor Stadium where Mohun Bagan, the Kolkata giants, were locking horns with Sikkim Blues—a representative team of young trainees culled from local academies of the state.

It used to be an annual assignment those days which reporters from the City of Joy would look forward to, more in anticipation of an all-expenses paid trip to the hills and the thin crust momos rather than the quality of football. That afternoon, something special was in store which would change the course of Indian football for the next two decades.

A 16-year-old, Bhaichung Bhutia, wreaked havoc on the decorated Mohun Bagan defence outwitting the legendary Monoranjan Bhattacharya time and again with lightning speed, feints and close control on a coarse ground levelled with sand. The maroon and green outfit managed to win the day, but a star was born as Bhutia made his move to East Bengal the very next season and thus started the journey of the 'Sikkimese Sniper', as he was famously called.

Few would argue that Bhutia, the talismanic former India captain before the arrival of Sunil Chhetri, was the region's biggest export to the mainstream Indian football in modern times. History, of course, reminds you of the folklore of T. Ao (Talimeren Ao) of Nagaland who went on to become the first captain of the Indian national team after Independence in the 1948 Olympics. Blessed with a DNA which produces natural athletes from that part of the country, Ao has been a mythical figure who studied medicine at R. G. Kar

Medical College and played for Mohun Bagan for nine years.

Fast forward to 2026 and the winds of change in Indian football are palpable. The collective of Northeast—comprising the Seven Sisters: Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and 'brother' Sikkim—is rightfully known as the talent factory of the country, as the figures speak for themselves. It's no secret that while Manipur is the primary powerhouse, Meghalaya and Mizoram are the other two frontliners as the numbers speak for themselves across men and women's national teams of all age groups, the elite Indian Super League (ISL) and the Indian Women's League (IWL). Any number of youngsters from these states populate a number of state leagues in southern India as well as the junior academies of the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

"The phenomenon has happened organically and the numbers speak for themselves," remarks Tetea Hmar, president of the Mizoram Football Association and the state's minister of sports and youth affairs. The 48-year-old may not have been a professional footballer, but he is credited with a vision which saw him launch a Mizo Premier League, a pioneering effort in the hills back in 2012 with eight teams—an effort which has produced a number of star boys in the Indian team like Lallianzuala Chhangte and Lalengmawia Ralte (nicknamed Apuia).

"One thing I realised early on is that in order for the state to prosper, we needed a league of our own as it would stop the exodus of young talents," says Hmar. We took on Zonet, a local TV channel, as commercial partners and started with an eight-team league which can now sustain itself." Taking a leaf from them, Meghalaya started its own version in Shillong; Sikkim and Nagaland followed, but have been grappling with sponsorship issues.

According to conservative estimates, around 20-40 per cent of players in

men's national teams across age groups today are from the Northeast—while it goes up to between 30 per cent and 35 per cent in the case of women. The Blue Tigresses squad for the Asian Football Confederation in Australia in March this year, incidentally, had 10 players from Manipur alone with Sweetie Devi Ngangbam captaining the side.

The region's outsized contribution also reflects in the fact that over 30 per cent of domestic players in the ISL hail from there—with Manipur and Mizoram once having a lion's share of the pie. While the breakdown for Manipur is not available, statistics available with the Mizoram federation says that there were 43 players from the state in last ISL and 62 of them in last I-League, the first-ever form of national league. There are two Mizoram teams in I-League at the moment: Aizawl FC and Chanmari FC while Shillong Lajong FC of Meghalaya was one of the earliest representatives of the region in the league.

Manipur, on the other hand, boasts of around 50-plus players from the football crazy state in the ISL with several prominent names like Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Bipin Singh Thounaojam (both reigning champions East Bengal), Mohammad Yasir (FC Goa), Suresh Singh Wangjam, Chinglensana Singh Konsham (both Bengaluru FC) or Nongdamba Singh Naorem (SC Delhi). A journey back in time throws up names like former India captain Renedy Singh, Gouramangi Singh, Surkumar Singh Irungbam, Kiran Khongsai—the list is endless.

The shift in the assembly line of talent from states like Bengal, Goa, Kerala or Punjab—which started since the onset of the new millennium—is too conspicuous now. Any student of the history of Indian football will acknowledge the influence of regional icons like Surajit Sengupta, Subhash Bhowmick and Subrata Bhattacharya in building up its reputation as the football city as the same logic worked as the magnetic factor

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for other premier football states.

However, the eyes of the movers and shakers of Indian football began tracking towards the Northeast from late the 1990s itself. There is a familiar story of how a talent-hunt team of the State Bank of India (SBI), comprising Sengupta and the legendary goalkeeper Bhaskar Ganguly, first set their eyes on a young Bhutia during a trip to Sikkim. The emergence of the Tata Football Academy (TFA) in Jamshedpur since the late 1980s also had a defining role in unearthing serious talent from Manipur—with Renedy and Gouramangi going on to establish themselves at the turn of the millennium.

While the TFA, the first full-fledged football academy of the country, is hailed for playing its part in hoisting Manipur in the football map, Gouramangi believes that Manipur had often produced quality talents in 1980s and 1990s, but they didn't have enough exposure. "Manipur as well as the rest of the Northeast had been quite isolated from the rest of the country even till the early 1990s. There were hardly any direct flights to Kolkata and the idea of parents sending their children to seek room for development was unheard of. This led to someone like a Balin Singh, an exceptional talent, never moving out of his comfort zone," says the former international defender.

Gouramangi, the owner of 72 international caps and the current head coach of ISL club FC Goa, feels that the growth of the region as a football hub happened organically over the past three decades, rather than due to isolated efforts of any academy or individuals. "When the Northeast opened up for tourism and business investments, people started realising the potential of the region as a football hub. The sport had been always a way of life in Manipur—thanks to the vast empty spaces and the fact that the beautiful game is easy to play," remarks the 40-year-old.

A key factor behind the popularity of the sport in Manipur is that there has

AROUND 20-40 PER CENT OF PLAYERS IN MEN'S NATIONAL TEAMS ACROSS AGE GROUPS TODAY ARE FROM THE NORTHEAST.

virtually been no parental restriction about girls taking up the sport. The superior physique, natural athleticism and reserves of stamina made their state team an unbeatable unit in the context of national championships as Manipur won the Rajmata Jijabai Trophy—the women's equivalent of Santosh Trophy—a record 24 times out of 30 editions. The likes of Ngangom Bala Devi and Bembem Devi Oinam who were famously called Durga in their football loving fraternity, Ashalata Devi, Sweetie, Panthoi Chanu Elangbam and Grace Dangmei have been indispensable members of the Indian side over the years. However, Bala Devi a talismanic figure who was the first Indian women footballer to reach the landmark of 50 international goals is piqued at the disparity between the pay cheques between them and their men counterparts.

"The job is much tougher for women footballers to make a career in India. In Manipur, the ones who do well can hope to land a job with the state police—a government job—but not much has really changed even with the introduction of the IWL three years ago," says Bala Devi, who had won a professional contract with Rangers FC in 2020. What is it that sets the Manipuri girls a class apart? The former India captain feels their dedication makes for a lot of difference, while the "presence of other sporting idols like Mary Kom and Mirabai Chanu always act as an inspiration for the girls."

The AIFF, located nearly 2,500 km away in Dwarka in the capital, is quick to give a thumbs up to the football revolution in that part of the country. They have, in recent times, allotted a few high-profile events

in the Northeast like a tri-nation tournament in Manipur in early 2023 before ethnic violence set their football back by at least a year, while the 2024 Santosh Trophy was held in Yupia near Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.

M. Satyanarayan, the acting secretary general of the AIFF, is candid in admitting that he is in awe at the deluge of talent from Northeastern states since he became a part of the umbrella body. Sharing an anecdote of his tenure as the secretary of the Karnataka Football Association, before he joined the national body, the official recalled: "We were hosting a final of the Karnataka Youth Premier League when I noticed that 21 out of the 22 boys from rival teams were from the Northeast. This happens because the children leave home at a very early age and try and make a living out of playing football—something which shows their tremendous hunger."

Citing another example of their all-consuming interest, Satyanarayan says that in the two grassroots academies the federation has launched in collaboration with FIFA in Bhubaneswar and Hyderabad, the boom of boys from the hills is unmistakable. "Parents are willing to send young children, sometimes between nine and 12 years of age and from remote areas, at our academies by rustling up the initial investment of Rs 2-4 lakh. Our academies are residential and we also arrange for their schooling. However, I can tell you from experience that not many parents from the metropolis would be courageous enough to do it," he adds. That must give us hope for Indian football. 

(Views expressed are personal)



Paving The Way For Agri-Tourism in India

Transforming rural landscapes, farms and tribal heritage into sustainable livelihood opportunities

Agri-tourism is emerging as a powerful tool for diversifying rural livelihoods in India. With over six lakh villages rich in agriculture, crafts, traditions, and natural beauty, rural India offers authentic experiences that increasingly appeal to modern travellers. By connecting visitors with farm life, local culture, and nature-based experiences, agri-tourism creates supplementary income opportunities for farming and tribal communities while promoting sustainable and responsible travel.

India's tourism landscape has shifted significantly in recent years, with travellers seeking immersive and offbeat experiences. Agri-tourism responds to this demand by combining food, farming, culture, and nature into a single offering. For rural households, it reduces dependence on seasonal agriculture and creates new opportunities for women and youth.

Recognising this potential, the Government of India has promoted rural and agri-tourism through initiatives such as Swadesh Darshan

2.0, support for tourism-linked MSMEs, and tribal tourism schemes. Several states, including Maharashtra, Assam, Kerala, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh, have also introduced policies encouraging rural tourism and community-led homestays.

NABARD has adopted an integrated approach to agri-tourism that extends beyond finance. Its model combines grant assistance, infrastructure creation, credit facilitation, institutional development, and capacity building. Under the TRIBES (Tribal Resilience Initiative for Building Environmentally Sustainable Livelihoods) programme, NABARD promotes community-owned tourism enterprises that ensure economic



benefits remain within villages.

A key focus is creating visitor-ready infrastructure, including homestays, campsites, visitor centres, dining spaces, cultural centres, and tourism signage. These assets are managed by local institutions such as Self-Help Groups, cooperatives, and producer organisations, ensuring equitable benefit sharing while preserving local character.

NABARD also facilitates access to formal credit by supporting tourism-linked MSMEs through refinance assistance, helping banks extend loans to homestay owners, women entrepreneurs, and community groups. Convergence with schemes such as PMEGP and CSR funding further strengthens enterprise viability.

A notable example is the TRIBES-supported Rural Tourism Project in Balipara, Assam, covering 200 tribal families from Garo, Nyishi, and Mising communities. The project has developed homestays, campsites, visitor facilities, and cultural experiences centred around adventure tourism, local traditions, and farming activities. Community members have been trained as guides, boatmen, and tourism facilitators, while partnerships with hospitality and tourism stakeholders have improved visibility.

The results have been encouraging. Participating families generated over ₹10 lakh in a single tourist season, while women and youth found new livelihood opportunities through hospitality, crafts, guiding, and event management. A cooperative society now manages operations, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Agri-tourism represents far more than a tourism product. By combining livelihood diversification, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship, it offers a scalable model for inclusive rural development. NABARD's initiatives demonstrate how communities can transform their farms, forests, and traditions into sustainable economic opportunities while preserving the essence of rural India.

From Capital Gains to Cash Flow

India's maturing real estate market is shifting from speculative profits to steady income, redefining how developers build, investors invest and assets are valued.



Long-term value now depends as much on occupancy, tenant quality and stable cash flows as on resale potential.



TOP STOREY
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The rules of real estate investing are being rewritten. For years, success was measured by how much a property's value appreciated. Today, investors are increasingly asking a different question: How much income can the asset generate while it is owned? As India's real estate market matures, growing institutional participation, the rise of REITs and evolving buyer expectations are shifting the focus from speculative gains to recurring rental income and operational performance.

According to Prasun Kumar, CMO,

Magicbricks, the traditional 'buy, inflate and sell' model is giving way to an income-driven approach where net operating income (NOI), rather than exit multiples, increasingly determines success. Institutional investors are now evaluating assets on cash-flow stability, tenant quality and lease structures instead of relying solely on capital appreciation.

This shift is compelling developers to rethink their business models. Shekhar Patel, MD, Ganesh Housing Limited, believes that the industry is moving from a transactional mindset to an ownership mindset, where long-term value is created through thoughtful planning, sustainable design, strong tenant ecosystems and professional asset management. "The next phase of

"The next phase of growth will belong to developments that create enduring economic value for businesses, investors and communities."

SHEKHAR PATEL
MD, Ganesh Housing Ltd.

growth will belong to developments that create enduring economic value for businesses, investors and communities," he adds.

Rental income has consequently become a critical investment parameter. Mahesh Agarwal, MD, Purti Realty, is of the view that while prime residential markets continue to

appreciate, investors are increasingly evaluating assets based on rental yields, occupancy levels and asset quality. In Mumbai's premium micro-markets, Ram Raheja, MD, S Raheja, says that buyers are now asking not only what a home will eventually sell for, but also what it can consistently deliver throughout ownership.

Investor priorities are also evolving in residential real estate. Bharat Kumar Kandukuri, director, Sumadhura Group, says buyers increasingly value connectivity, proximity to employment hubs, sustainability, lifestyle amenities and quality design because these directly influence tenant demand and rental performance. Rishabh Periwal, sr. vice president, Pioneer Urban Land and Infrastructure, adds that occupancy, tenant quality and predictable cash flows are becoming as important as resale potential in determining long-term value.

Emerging segments such as co-living, student housing and purpose-

"Buyers are now asking not only what a home will sell for, but also what it can deliver throughout ownership."

RAM RAHEJA
MD, S Raheja

built rental housing are reinforcing this transition. Parth Soni, co-founder & COO, Union Living, says that professionally managed rental housing can generate significantly stronger returns than conventional residential rentals, while Darshan Govindaraju, executive director, Vaishnavi Group, believes that the growing interest in second homes and rental assets reflects the evolution of Indian real estate from a consumption-led market into a dependable income-generating asset class.

Commercial real estate has already embraced this model. Suresh Garg, CMD, Nirala, says, "Grade A offices and leased commercial assets command premium valuations because of income certainty." Sudarshan Lodha, CEO & co-founder, Strata, adds that investors now scrutinise tenant quality, lease tenure, vacancy risks and operating performance, observing that the quality of income has become more important than the quantity.

The implications are significant. Long-term asset valuations will increasingly be driven by rental income, occupancy, governance and operational efficiency rather than speculation. As the market matures, developers and investors alike will be rewarded for prioritising sustainable cash flows, tenant resilience and consistent performance over short-term price gains.

ON THE SPOT

Meraki Redefines Luxury Weekend Living Near Kolkata

MAHESH AGARWAL, Managing Director, Purti Realty, shares with Kausar Firdausi the vision of creating an exclusive retreat centred on nature, wellness and luxury.

Why are getaway homes becoming a necessity in today's fast-paced urban life?

As India's housing market shifts from price-driven decisions to aspiration-led living, buyers are increasingly seeking homes that offer lifestyle, wellness and exclusivity. Urban congestion, relentless work schedules and digital overload have made the

need to disconnect and reconnect with nature more important than ever. Weekend homes have emerged as ideal retreats for rest, rejuvenation and quality family time without travelling far. Reflecting this trend, Meraki by Purti Realty offers a bespoke blend of luxury, tranquillity and exclusivity, making it one of the premium weekend home destinations near Kolkata.



What makes Meraki's location ideal for a weekend home?

Meraki is strategically located on the Durgapur Expressway amid expansive open spaces and a serene natural environment, offering the perfect balance of accessibility and tranquillity. Just about an hour from Kolkata, it provides an ideal escape from the city's fast-paced life. With the expansion of the highway and a proposed flyover between Vidyasagar Bridge and Kona More also between Airport and Dankuni, the travel time is expected to reduce even further.

What was the concept behind Meraki?

Meraki was conceived as a luxury getaway home where residents can enjoy the comforts of a private villa

with the experience of a premium resort. Built on the belief that modern luxury is defined by space, wellness and meaningful experiences, it blends lush greenery, a serene lake, wellness zones, leisure amenities and thoughtfully designed villas into one cohesive retreat. More than just a second home, Meraki offers a peaceful weekend escape where residents can unwind, reconnect with nature and family, and return refreshed — all within easy reach of Kolkata.

What does Meraki offer?

Spread across 45 acres with an approximately 7-acre lake, Meraki comprises just 62 ultra-exclusive villas on spacious 11-22 katha plots, ensuring privacy and low-density living. Each villa features a private

plunge pool and nature-inspired design. The development also offers wellness and recreational amenities, including yoga decks, sports facilities, children's play areas, an amphitheatre, bird-watching zones and expansive green spaces, creating a holistic lifestyle experience.

Is there a resort planned within the Meraki premises?

Yes. As part of the Meraki Samsara master plan, Purti Realty is developing a premium resort to be operated by Marriott Resorts, creating a unique residential-hospitality ecosystem. The resort will give residents access to world-class hospitality, wellness and dining experiences.

IN SPOTLIGHT

Gulshan Group Launches ₹1,000-Cr. Premium Housing Project in Wave City

Gulshan Group has launched Gulshan Empire, a premium residential project in Wave City, backed by an investment of around ₹1,000 crore and an estimated sales potential of over ₹1,200 crore. Spread across 5.5 acres, the single-phase development will feature 500 homes, targeting end users seeking premium quality at a more accessible price point.

Director Deepak Kapoor said that the project reflects rising demand for thoughtfully designed homes offering quality, value and long-term appreciation, while reaffirming the company's confidence in Wave City as a fast-emerging residential destination.

The first phase spans around 9 lakh sq.ft., offering 3 BHK residences from ₹2.20 crore and 4 BHK homes from ₹3 crore. Director Yukti Nagpal stated that Gulshan Empire combines low-density planning, expansive green spaces and modern amenities to meet evolving homebuyer aspirations.

Smartworks Adds 1,100+ LTTS Seats in Pune

Smartworks Coworking Spaces Limited, one of India's largest managed office platforms, has expanded its partnership with L&T Technology Services (LTTS) by adding over 1,100 seats in Pune.

The expansion takes LTTS's managed office footprint with Smartworks to more than 2,750 seats across multiple cities. The combined expected rental revenue from these locations is estimated at around INR 115 crore, including approximately INR 55 crore from the Pune facility over a 60-month tenure.

Commenting on the development, Neetish Sarda, founder and MD, Smartworks, said enterprise clients increasingly value flexible, scalable workplaces delivered with speed and operational excellence. Enterprise clients account for nearly 90% of Smartworks' revenue, with occupiers of over 1,000 seats contributing about 37% of total rental revenue.

'The Manosphere Aims to Get Under Your Skin'

Meena Kandasamy is a poet, writer, translator, anti-caste activist and academic. Her writing has addressed state and structural violence and people's militant resistance against caste, gender and ethnic oppressions. She is the author of three poetry collections as well as the novels The Gypsy Goddess (2014), the Women's Prize short-listed When I Hit You (2017) and Exquisite Cadavers (2019). Her new novel, Fieldwork as a Sex Object (2026), revolves around a young Indian woman in London whose life is upended after her image is circulated in a deep-fake porno online. Kandasamy speaks to Vineetha Mokkil about her reasons for writing, the contours of digital violence and online misogyny. Edited excerpts:

What compelled you to write your novel *Fieldwork as a Sex Object*?
Where do I begin! I started writing this in the summer of 2020 during the Covid lockdown. I was living in London, but reading about the Pollachi case at that time, where a gang of men used blackmail videos to abuse, rape and silence women. Then there was the spate of deepfakes of celebrities and women politicians. I also discovered how quickly an intimate selfie from a woman could turn into revenge porn the minute her relationship with the sender changed. It was chilling! I knew I had to write this book. The other compelling reason came to me one day when I was being dragged and attacked on Twitter and I was crying in front of my screen—and thinking to myself—all this feels so urgent, so immediate, so

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powerful now—but one day this will be a graveyard, no? Broken links, unused accounts. Just flipping the script and thinking of the now as history made me realise that as a novelist it would be fascinating to capture it.

Did you do extensive research before starting work on the book?

I read everything I could about the rise of the far-right and the use of social media. If I were not writing a novel, I could have most certainly written a review article on the literature on this topic. And then again, all the time I spent doom-scrolling, being chronically online and addicted to the internet were justified in the name of research. For a while, my own day job was in social media and I realised how things work: algorithms, virality, pile-ons, etc. It is a cartel. I spoke to friends who work as hackers. Also, I closely followed far-right religious-extremist accounts in India for a long time to see how they named their operations, how they decided who their victims were. In order for my books to manage to be wildly different, I try my best to live a new life every few years.

The digital world seems to be mirroring the real world's misogyny. Yes. It is almost as if only the tools/ the interface/ the medium changed—but the hatred remains the same. In the real world, absolute anonymity is rare unless someone was a hired killer imported from faraway or a serial-killer psychopath. Because this anonymity does not exist, and because actions mostly have consequences, there is a barrier to how much hate can actually do. The nature of the digital world is that your anonymity is absolute. People can hate without any consequence and hide behind alt IDs.

In your novel, when Amrita's (Amy's) life is upended by a fake video, her friend Nirmala—a Dalit woman—offers her practical tips and emotional support. Was it an easy task for you to



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write about their friendship?

As a society, we are told from the beginning that women operate on the basis of petty jealousy, silent rivalry and an intolerance for each other. It is a divide and rule that is inculcated in us and we are conditioned to accept it as the new normal. I refuse to buy that myth, especially because what I have seen so far in my life is that women who would be positioned as competitors or rivals are the ones who have had my back, been my core emotional support and pulled me out of many of the sadnesses that life has thrown at me. It is complex enough navigating the problems thrown up by different social locations in real life—and I felt we had to capture that in literature.

One of the ways in which I'm coming to this is from the classical Tamil tradition where the girlfriend is the confidante, and where even love is an act/a performance/an event that exists and is vindicated through the approval, advice or strategy by the woman's best friend. So, the template for female friendships exist. I'm referencing Tamil culture here, but this must be universal. We need to ask why we have moved so far away.

Amy is bullied by the Indian manosphere: for being vocal, for being an upper-caste woman whose

morality is under scrutiny.

Being politically outspoken online has all these costs when you are a woman in the digital public sphere. The Indian manosphere is not independent actors or frustrated incels alone; most of these vicious attacks are coordinated, they are synchronised to feed the algorithms, and effectively just silence you. The attacks are also very well-tailored: Dalit/Shudra women, Adivasi women and marginalised women are attacked for parameters of beauty, class and as lacking in intelligence, in addition to being slut-shamed. They are exposed to a kind of extreme hell. Upper-caste women are seen as traitors who refuse embedding in patriarchy's project, so they are subjected to character-assassination. I think their aim is to get under your skin.

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) is impacting our critical thinking skills and reading habits, even our humanity.

AI writing seems to leap off the page because it is formula-generated. By now, all of us know the tell and the tics and can have our initial suspicion about whether something is AI-written. I think reading pretty much has gone out of the window—you see this with students who are gloriously happy just engaging with summaries. On the one hand is the huge environmental costs. On the other hand, I definitely think there will be a pushback, at least in the creative industries.

What role do you see writers playing in an increasingly divided world?

Our task on hand has to go beyond reportage and bearing witness. Writers can offer ideological clarity in times like these. I think writers can provide coherence to the multiple disparate struggles we are witnessing. And collective understanding will always advance us towards progress, a better state of things. 

Powering The New India: Why Storage Is The Next Industrial Frontier

Shashank Sharma, Founder - Chairman & CEO, Sunsire Energy



India's long-deferred manufacturing breakout is no longer a projection; it is a visible, high-speed reality. From steel output on track to hit 300 million tonnes by 2031 to electronics exports that have grown eightfold in a decade, the nation is fundamentally rewiring its economic DNA.

At Sunsire Energy, we are seeing this shift firsthand. India is moving beyond traditional assembly, "pharmacy of the world", to a global hub for semiconductors and electric mobility. GCCs, data centres and artificial intelligence are becoming the new engines of economic growth. This transformation is projected to push manufacturing's share of India's GDP to 25% by 2047.

However, this industrial rise faces a quiet but existential challenge: the nature of the power that fuels it.

The Digital Factory Demand

The newest entrant to our economy, the data centre, is the factory of the digital age. Operating 24/7, these massive electricity sinks are projected to grow from 1.5 GW today to nearly 10 GW by 2030, demanding uninterrupted, precision power.

While solar energy is scaling at a record pace, clean power remains variable. The defining tension of

our energy transition is not just deploying more renewables; it is making that energy reliably available in sync with industrial demand.

The Storage Solution

This is where Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) become the most consequential infrastructure India must build. Storage makes renewable energy dispatchable by storing surplus solar and supplying it when demand peaks.

India's BESS sector is approaching an inflection point, with cumulative installed capacity close to 5 GWh. The Government is implementing two Viability Gap Funding (VGF) schemes to support approximately 43 GWh of storage. According to the Central Electricity Authority's National Electricity Plan (2023), India will require 208 GWh of BESS by 2030 to integrate rising renewable capacity.

Yet, storage economics remain a classic "chicken-and-egg" challenge. Despite the Government's ₹18,100-crore ACC PLI scheme for 50 GWh of manufacturing, commercial-scale domestic cell production remains limited, leaving India dependent on imported battery cells, particularly from China.

A Strategy for Technology Ownership

To close this gap, we must treat storage with the urgency we applied to solar.

First, India must build a globally competitive battery manufacturing ecosystem with stronger domestic content and local value addition.

Second, we must evolve our market design. In mature markets such as the United Kingdom, storage projects earn revenues from multiple services, including frequency regulation and capacity payments. India's regulatory frameworks must evolve just as quickly as deployment.

Finally, India has a strategic opportunity to invest in emerging alternatives such as sodium-ion batteries, where the global technology landscape is still taking shape. Investing now can help India move from being a technology buyer to a technology leader.

The factories of the future are already being built. Whether they are powered by the right kind of energy remains an open question. By prioritising storage economics and domestic innovation, India can build an industrial economy that competes on cost, carbon and reliability simultaneously.



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The AI Pivot

A two-day conference highlighted how artificial intelligence can transform everything from public health care and agriculture to cyber security and the judicial process



Eminent guests at the National Conference on e-Governance held in Jaipur

THE national conference on e-governance 2026 put AI at the core of India’s digital transformation. Experts, innovators, entrepreneurs, policymakers, scientists and students from across the country joined the conference held in Jaipur on July 1 and 2 to participate in a discussion focused on a single overarching theme: ‘Viksit Bharat @2047: AI-Enabled, Data-Driven, Secure Governance.’ Organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in conjunction with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Department of Information Technology and Communication



(DoITC), the annual e-governance meet offered a crucial national platform for showcasing how AI can transform everything from public health care and agriculture to cyber security and the judicial process. The conference witnessed a huge turnout with 28 states, nine Union Territories, 21 Union ministries, over

200 speakers and hundreds of delegates in attendance, in addition to over 42 technology exhibitors. National Conference on e-Governance (NCeG) 2026 emerged as one of India’s largest events dedicated to digital governance and AI-led public administration. **AI Takes Centre Stage** Clearly marking a pivot in India’s digital governance roadmap, the NCeG 2026 deliberations indicated a move away from simply digitising existing government services towards building truly intelligent, predictive and citizen-centric governance systems. Inaugurating the conference, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal



Sharma highlighted the state’s ongoing journey toward AI-led governance by citing its Rajasthan AI/ML Policy 2026, aimed at integrating AI across governance, health, education, agriculture and industry. “Technology should not only be a means of convenience, but should also be a medium for social engagement, social cooperation and well-being. We have to ensure that the benefits of digital governance reach the last person in society,” Sharma said. He also pointed to the state’s rapidly expanding innovation landscape, with start-up numbers more than doubling from 4,000 to over 8,500 in just two years and investments in start-ups seeing a four-fold increase. Highlighting the urgent need for a shift in administrative paradigms, Rajyavardhan Rathore, the state’s minister for industry and commerce, youth affairs and ports, asserted that governments must adopt the “tools of tomorrow”. Drawing on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s governance philosophy, Rathore said the ‘e’ in governance stands for efficiency, effectiveness, empowerment, ease and equity, adding that governments should focus on being prepared for tomorrow rather than relying on the tools of the past. Comparing core infrastructure



Winners of Pitch-a-Thorn (above) and a session in progress

such as roads and power grids, he said platforms such as Aadhaar, JAM and UPI have started becoming core infrastructure due to their rising significance in governance. “Digital infrastructure has become so prominent that a failure of these systems, such as UPI, could lead to major disruption in services and the way we govern,” Rathore said. Calling AI the next phase of governance evolution, he said governments ought to “serve faster, serve farther and serve smarter”, while always ensuring technology remains accountable to human oversight. In his keynote address, S Krishnan, secretary, MeitY, emphasised the need for treating AI not as a novel technology but as a transversal layer of all governmental operations. “AI as a

horizontal technology needs to be part of everything else that we do,” Krishnan remarked, pointing out how the lines between digital governance and AI are fast blurring. Krishna also called for the idea of multilingual AI and said that the need of the hour is to bring about governance in the language of the people, not merely in official languages. **AI in Real Life** At the valedictory session, Union Minister of State (independent charge) for Science and Technology and Minister of State in the Department of Atomic Energy Dr Jitendra Singh identified AI as a crucial governance enabler and stressed the need to use AI intelligently and responsibly. Singh said governments should shift the debate from whether AI should be adopted to how it can be effectively harnessed to improve public administration. “It is no longer a choice. It is an essential commodity now. The challenge now is how best to use it. The question actually is not on artificial intelligence. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, ‘How intelligent am I to use artificial intelligence?’” He further lauded the effectiveness of AI-enabled grievance redressal systems such as Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System and advocated a hybrid model of governance in which AI boosts efficiency and effectiveness, complemented by the indispensable human element of empathy and citizen satisfaction. Highlighting governance reforms over the past decade, Singh cited measures such as self-attestation of documents, the abolition of interviews for certain government jobs, pension reforms and simplification of administrative procedures as examples of technology-enabled governance designed to build trust and reduce bureaucratic hurdles. The Outlook Group, in collaboration with the DoITC, organised a flagship event alongside the NCeG 2026: the



Pitch-a-Thorn—an initiative aimed at identifying the next generation of AI entrepreneurs in Rajasthan.

The programme brought together students, researchers, start-ups, MSMEs and working professionals under one platform. The dedicated sessions focused on exploring AI’s application in agritech, textile manufacturing, intelligent machines, automation and supply chain optimisation, highlighting how AI can enable precise agricultural methods, enhance industrial productivity and support businesses in their data-driven decision-making.

The majority of the participating teams presented not only innovative AI solutions but also well-defined revenue models, market-entry strategies, scalability plans and potential commercial partnerships. The event proved to be a testament to India’s thriving start-up ecosystem, blending technological innovation with robust entrepreneurial execution.

India’s ambition to build inclusive and trustworthy AI for governance will depend on overcoming structural constraints around data, computing

infrastructure, indigenous foundation models and skilled talent, Kavita Bhatia, a scientist with MeitY, said.

Speaking during the “AI Governance for All” panel at the 29th National Conference on e-Governance, Bhatia outlined the country’s AI roadmap while highlighting the challenges that must be addressed to ensure AI benefits citizens at scale.

“Building trustworthy and scalable AI for governance requires addressing structural resource constraints while maintaining integrity and fairness in how AI systems learn and make decisions,” she said.

Bhatia identified four critical resource constraints that continue to limit AI adoption in governance: access to quality datasets, affordable computing infrastructure, indigenous AI foundation models and skilled AI professionals within government departments.

And the Winners Are...

The first prize was bagged by Mahawanti Solutions’ Sunil Choudhary for an AI-powered accessibility platform,

which makes it easier for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and those requiring assistive technologies to access a wide range of digital services.

The platform integrates services such as food and grocery ordering, ride booking, travel reservations and digital assistance into a single accessible interface. Leveraging AI, it adapts digital experiences to users’ accessibility requirements through simplified navigation, voice-enabled interactions and screen-reader-friendly workflows, with the broader goal of enabling independent access to digital services.

The second prize was awarded to Daksh Pareek for an education-technology platform utilising holographic technology to create immersive classroom experiences and facilitate conceptual understanding. The solution aims to make teaching more interactive by enabling students to visualise complex concepts through three-dimensional content.

Rounak Chindalia was awarded the third prize for an AI-powered commerce platform that empowers entrepreneurs to create online stores using natural language inputs and automates catalogue management, product imagery and sales analysis.

The platform also assists in automating digital commerce workflows, reducing the need for technical expertise.

Organisers said the Pitch-a-Thon was designed to identify scalable AI solutions capable of addressing challenges across accessibility, education, digital commerce and public service delivery.

The flagship Pitch-a-Thon was organised by the Outlook Group in partnership with the DoITC.

The competition highlighted the growing maturity of Rajasthan’s AI start-up ecosystem, with participants presenting not only working technology solutions but also well-defined business models, revenue strategies and plans for scaling their innovations beyond the state.

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Concluding the conference, discussions were steered towards concrete action, including proposals for initiating district-level pilot projects focused on AI-enabled decision-making, secure data sharing and interoperable governance solutions.

“The question is not that can govern-

ance be improved with information technology. The question is how can we bring governance improvement through technology,” speakers noted during the closing session, stressing that citizens must remain at the centre of every digital governance initiative.

As part of the implementation

strategy, officials proposed launching district-level pilot projects to improve coordination among government departments through secure data sharing while maintaining privacy safeguards.

The idea is to create interoperable governance systems that enable faster and more informed decision-making before expanding successful models across Rajasthan.

The conference also encouraged states to adopt and replicate proven governance innovations showcased during the event, with participants expressing confidence that collaboration between governments would accelerate the adoption of AI-enabled public services across the country.

The conference concluded with the presentation of the National e-Governance Awards 2026. Winners included agricultural, and health and family welfare ministries, Mahakaleshwar Temple Trust and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. 



Engineering Excellence Amidst Himalayas

Established in 2002 under Act No. 14 of 2002 of the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Jaypee University of Information Technology (JUIT), Wagnaghat, Solan, is the first State Private University in Himachal Pradesh. The University was established through an Extraordinary Gazette Notification of the Government of Himachal Pradesh dated 23 May 2002 and is recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956. The Hon'ble Governor of Himachal Pradesh serves as the Chancellor of the University. Situated amidst the scenic Shivalik Hills in Solan district, JUIT offers a serene, pollution-free campus with state-of-the-art laboratories, modern infrastructure, residential facilities, and excellent connectivity to Chandigarh and Shimla.

Established as a Centre of Excellence in Information Technology through an agreement with the Government of Himachal Pradesh, JUIT commenced academic operations in July 2002 and has grown into a multidisciplinary institution offering undergraduate, postgraduate, dual-degree, and doctoral programmes. The University is accredited with an 'A+' Grade by NAAC. JUIT has consistently earned recognition as one of India's leading technical institutions in national rankings, including the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).

The University is home to 111 highly qualified faculty members, with over 83% holding Ph.D. degrees from reputed institutions in India and abroad. Its vibrant research ecosystem includes 151 doctoral research scholars, industry collaborations, and an innovation-driven culture. Recognised in the Times Higher Education and QS World Rankings, JUIT continues to uphold academic excellence by integrating quality education, impactful research, entrepreneurship, and industry-oriented learning.



Engineering the Future of Learning

Jaypee Institute of Information Technology (JIIT) Noida, is “Deemed to be University” under section 3 of UGC Act 1956 by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). JIIT is a NAAC accredited and AICTE approved institute. It is a multidisciplinary University and is a Centre-of-Excellence for education, training, research, innovations and IPR.

The Institute presently offers Undergraduate, Postgraduate and PhD programs. Over the years, JIIT has established a strong academic reputation, reflected in the success of its graduates who have pursued higher studies at leading institutions worldwide such as Stanford University, University of Oxford, Carnegie Mellon University, Cornell University, and the National University of Singapore (NUS). At the national level, students have gained admission to premier institutions including the IITs, IIM, and IISc.

JIIT maintains a robust, research-oriented academic environment that encourages innovation, inquiry, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The Institute has secured 156 funded research projects from various government agencies, with total funding exceeding ₹32.6 crores.

Recognizing the critical role of innovation in education and research, JIIT has declared the period from 2021 to 2030 as the “Decade of Innovation.”. The University also houses a high-performance computing facility known as Ramanujan Universe.

JIIT focuses on grooming students to meet evolving industry requirements. Over 200 reputed organizations have visited the campus for recruitment, including global leaders such as LinkedIn, Microsoft, Amazon, among many others.

For the 2026 graduating batch, more than 93% of students have already been placed, the highest package offered stands at ₹94.25 LPA by LinkedIn.



Dr. Siddharth Chaturvedi,
Chancellor, Scope
Global Skills
University (SGSU)

Leading the Skills and AI Revolution

India is witnessing a transformative shift driven by Artificial Intelligence, digital technologies, automation, and Industry 4.0. In this rapidly evolving landscape, employability is no longer determined by degrees alone but by skills, adaptability, and technological competence. Recognising this shift, Scope Global Skills University (SGSU)—Central India's first dedicated Skills University—is redefining higher education through an industry-integrated, technology-enabled, and future-ready learning ecosystem.

At SGSU, Artificial Intelligence is not viewed merely as an academic subject but as a transformative force shaping every sector, from healthcare and banking to manufacturing, agriculture, and governance.

To prepare students for emerging careers, SGSU offers industry-aligned programmes in collaboration with leading global organisations. Key programmes include B.Tech in Computer Science with AI & Machine Learning and Data Science with IBM, B.Tech in AI & Machine Learning with NxtWave, Google-powered B.Tech, MCA, M.Sc., and BCA-IT programmes, and AI, Cyber Security, and Data Science programmes with Geeks of Gurukul. Learning at SGSU extends well beyond classrooms. The University's strong industry ecosystem includes partnerships with Hyundai, Hero MotoCorp, Bosch, HCLTech, Reliance Animation Academy and many other leading organisations, ensuring students receive industry-relevant education.

SGSU is also driving AI literacy beyond its campus.

Through the AISECT AI Literacy Mission, the University is contributing to the goal of training one crore youth in AI and digital technologies.

At SGSU, we believe Artificial Intelligence should augment human potential, not replace it.

By integrating skills, technology, and industry into every aspect of education, SGSU is nurturing professionals who are not only job-ready but also equipped to lead India's innovation-driven future.

Ganpat University

Breaking Barriers & Building Futures

Ganpat University (GUNI) is a philanthropic, not-for-profit institution founded on the philosophy of Vidyaya Samajotkarsha—social upliftment through education. Its guiding ethos, "Student First, Character Must", and its graduation attributes - critical competence in the core domain, employability, innovation, enterprise, community engagement and cultural competence - shape every programme. Beyond the campus, village adoption, rural healthcare initiatives and skill development efforts have empowered thousands, reaffirming education as a vehicle for inclusive growth.

Spanning engineering, management, pharmacy, computer applications, sciences, healthcare, architecture, design and agriculture, GUNI's national-level Centres of Excellence function as living laboratories: the National Additive Manufacturing Centre-West, GUNI-Bosch Rexroth Automation Centre, Japan-India Institute of Manufacturing, and centres for Quantum Technologies, Semiconductors, Electronics, Next-Generation Networks and Aerospace. Programmes in AI, Data Science and Smart Manufacturing, alongside Maritime studies and India's first Deep Sea Diving Institute, open new frontiers.

Partnerships with Tata Motors, Suzuki, IBM, SAS, Bosch Rexroth, TCS and NASSCOM convert academic rigour into industry readiness, while collaborations with Cal Poly Pomona, Michigan State, Torrens, Edith Cowan and the University of Dubai extend GUNI's global footprint. GUNI's newest distinction is its debut in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2026, placing in the 601–800 band among 1,603 institutions worldwide, with SDG 4 (Quality Education) ranked 101–200. This achievement complements the University's NAAC 'A' Grade, QS I-GAUGE Diamond Rating 2025, GSIRF 5-Star rating, and Centre of Excellence recognition from the Government of Gujarat.

GUNI offers a blueprint for what Indian higher education can become.



Dr. S.N.V.L. Narasimha Raju
President: Children's Education Society®
Chairman: The Oxford Educational Institutions

Transforming education through vision

What began in 1974 as a modest kindergarten with just two teachers and 24 students, founded by visionary educationist and school teacher Vidyashri S. Narasa Raju Garu, has grown into one of southern India's largest multidisciplinary educational groups.

Established under the Children's Education Society, The Oxford Educational Institutions (TOEI) today caters to nearly 25,000 students across five campuses, offering programmes from pre-primary education to doctoral studies. The institution was built on the belief that quality education should be accessible to all. Under the leadership of its Chairman, Dr. S.N.V.L. Narasimha Raju, TOEI has expanded its academic footprint while strengthening its focus on research, innovation and healthcare. The institution offers over 85 programmes across Medicine, Dentistry, Engineering, Management, Pharmacy, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Law, Life Sciences, Arts, Commerce, Hospitality, Education, Polytechnic and PUC streams, besides CBSE, ICSE and State Board schools. Its institutions are recognised by statutory bodies and accredited by agencies including NAAC, NBA, NABH, NABL and QS I-GAUGE.

Among its flagship institutions is The Oxford Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre at Attibele on the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border, providing the MBBS programme, 21 postgraduate with super-speciality training and allied health science courses. The teaching hospital provides specialised healthcare services and conducts free medical camps in rural areas.

The institution has also established The Oxford PULSE, a modern skills and simulation centre for hands-on clinical training using advanced technologies.

Over five decades, TOEI has evolved into an integrated education and healthcare ecosystem, preparing students for global professional standards.



Centurion University Earns Global Top 200 Recognition for Sustainability Impact

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When education is driven by purpose, its impact extends far beyond campus walls. Centurion University has firmly established this philosophy on the world stage, securing a spot in the 101–200 global band and ranking No. 4 in India overall in the *Times Higher Education (THE) Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026*.

This recognition honors Centurion's extraordinary performance across the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the national stage, the university secured Top 10 ranks in 13 of the 15 submitted SDGs, standing 2nd in India for Climate Action (SDG 13) and 3rd for Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure (SDG 9), Sustainable Cities (SDG 11), Life Below Water (SDG 14), Life on Land (SDG 15), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

Internationally, Centurion's targeted initiatives shine brightly:

- **Top 30 Globally:** Affordable & Clean Energy (26th, SDG 7) Climate Action (27th, SDG 13)
- **Top 50 Globally:** No Poverty (43rd, SDG 1) | Zero Hunger (44th, SDG 2)
- **Top 100 Globally:** Life Below Water (51st, SDG 14) | Life on Land (65th, SDG 15)

Beyond rankings, this milestone highlights a groundbreaking educational model that integrates academic excellence with hands-on livelihood creation and community empowerment.

By equipping students with future-ready skills, fostering real-world research, and pioneering grassroots innovations, Centurion University is proving that higher education can actively shape a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable world.

Diary



Anjana Basu is a Kolkata-based advertising consultant and author. Her recent works include *The House the Press Built* and *Translating for Rituparno*

Did Tagore or Didn't Tagore?

We were on our way up a steady incline that wound its green way around a cliff to Tiger Top. It sounded like the route to an exclusive boutique resort but Tiger Top was what the Ramgarh locals called Tagore Top since they couldn't get their tongue around the 'Tagore'. Rabindranath Tagore had moved to a bungalow there in 1914 because his daughter Renuka was suffering from tuberculosis and he thought the hill air would do wonders for her lungs.

The 'we' consisted of a Kashmiri geographer, Vaibhav; and Vijay, an old friend of mine whom I had caught up with after years. It was on the final day of a reunion-cum-birthday celebration in Ramgarh she and I had decided that, as the great granddaughter of Tagore's first publisher, it was my duty to make the walk up the cliff. The bungalow was derelict and inhabited by leopards and the occasional bear who presumably took in the ghostly harmonies of Tagore's *Gitanjali* that wafted around the walls. More to the point, Tagore was reputed to have planted a ginkgo biloba tree on the slope so even if we couldn't reach the bungalow, chances of reaching the tree were more promising.

Tagore Top was on the top of the hill; a four-kilometre hike upwards, growing gradually steeper. It had been raining and the path was mossy and slippery so risking it was inadvisable unless we were real Tagore fanatics. On the other hand, it was two kilometres to the tree. "It's gently sloping," Vaibhav, who knew the region, promised. I had my doubts about what people called gentle slopes in these hills but decided that one had to make the attempt for the sake of literary history.

The car went up the road as far as it could and dropped us off at the start of the green trail. Vaibhav had thoughtfully brought a bamboo staff in case it was needed. Since my friend had her stick, I took charge of the staff and cautiously pushed past an uprooted tree trunk and shuffled through the leaves. The trail wound around the hill. Vaibhav had brought a bell with him which he occasionally tinkled to warn any interested bears that people were coming.

Butterflies flitted past us. "That's a Cabbage

White," he pointed out. "There's a poem about a Cabbage White," I said, trying to take my mind off the drop to my left.

It wasn't that the path was narrow; it was wide enough to walk on. My friend moved ahead, musing all the while on her exploits at the Madhuban Ashram in Talla Ramgarh which she managed despite stiff joints. I channelled my inner mountain goat, clutched the staff and trudged forward, listening to Vaibhav's anecdotes about the white starry flowers of daisy fleabane and the fact that Sanskrit had no names for butterflies barring the ubiquitous *prajapati*.

The Flourishing Tree

Rather more easily than I had imagined, we reached the bust of Tagore that faced the biloba tree. The children from nearby schools came here on May 8 to sing to the bust and listen to speeches tailored to the Bard's birthday. The bust itself had seen better days—the nose was chipped and there were dark dust rings around the eyes. The tree, on the other hand, was flourishing. After a burst of Rabindra Sangeet from my friend and Vaibhav to set the mood, selfies were dutifully clicked and promptly sent to various WhatsApp groups.

My cousins, who had no idea where the biloba was, indignantly texted that the tree was probably a colonial import with no Rabindric links and would I just tell them where I was instead of playing guessing games? There was no point arguing that all of Ramgarh was convinced that Tagore had planted the tree with his own hands and meditated under a nearby oak while waiting for the biloba to grow.

So, did Tagore plant the tree or not? The usual suspects are quiet on the issue but circumstantial evidence suggests that a poet who loved travelling to the Far East and planting trees would most probably not have resisted the temptation. Vaibhav plucked some of the leaves with their small fans for souvenirs in case the selfies weren't evidence enough. Tree pilgrimage over, we returned triumphantly to where we had started, with Cabbage Whites looping the loop in our tracks.



The Bard at the Height
Rabindranath Tagore's bust at Ramgarh's Tiger Top



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- 45 Ramalingaswami / Ramanujan Fellows at Amity - Top scientists funded by the Govt. to return to India from leading universities abroad

BRILLIANT STUDENTS

- Over 9,000 students studying at Amity have secured 90%+ in Class XII Boards
- Students awarded prestigious Scholarships / Fellowships and Grants like Khorana Fellowship, Marie Curie Fellowship, as well as by Gates Foundation, DST, ICMR...

HI-END RESEARCH

- Scopus H-Index (211) - A reflection of the quality of hi-end research at Amity
- 500+ patents granted to faculty and many commercialized
- AI supercomputing facilities – One of the most advanced at a university, with leading AI scientists

FLEXIBLE & FUTURE FOCUSED CURRICULUM

- AI Integrated across all degree programmes - One of the first universities to introduce courses in AI and its application in relevant domain in every programme
- Amity Boundless - Flexible UG curriculum that enables students to choose minors, second major & unrestricted electives across 90 disciplines in alignment with their career goals

TOP PLACEMENTS

- Dedicated Corporate Resource Centre helps students be job ready through placement support including internships, mock interviews, technical evaluation, live projects, CXO lectures...
- Amityans are working in leadership positions in top organisations like McKinsey, Deloitte, Goldman Sachs, KPMG, Google, Unilever, Amazon, EY, Microsoft...



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