

# NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

(14.06.2024)

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## GROUP CALLS ON ISRAEL TO REFRAIN FROM FULL-SCALE RAFAH OFFENSIVE

# G7 Summit begins with \$50-bn loan deal for Ukraine using Russian assets

Kremlin calls decision criminal, says its response will be very painful for EU

REUTERS

BORGO EGNAZIA, JUNE 13

LEADERS OF the Group of Seven (G7) major democracies agreed an outline deal on Thursday to provide \$50 billion of loans for Ukraine using interest from Russian sovereign assets frozen after Moscow invaded its neighbour in 2022.

The political agreement was the centrepiece of the opening day in southern Italy of the annual summit of G7 leaders, attended for a second successive year by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiv.



(From left) European Council President Charles Michel, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canada PM Justin Trudeau, French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, US President Joe Biden, Japan PM Fumio Kishida, British PM Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at Borgo Egnazia, southern Italy, Thursday. AP

## G7 and its Relevance

### Overview

The **Group of Seven (G7)** is an intergovernmental organization consisting of seven of the world's largest advanced economies: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The European Union is also represented at G7 meetings. Established in the 1970s, the G7 provides a platform for member countries to discuss and coordinate economic policies, address global issues, and collaborate on a wide range of political and security matters.

### Relevance in Global Geopolitics

The G7 plays a significant role in global geopolitics due to its members' economic and political influence. Here are key aspects of its relevance:

#### 1. Economic Influence

- The G7 countries represent about 40% of global GDP and are major players in international trade, finance, and investment.

- They have significant influence over international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.
- 2. **Political Leadership**
  - The G7 acts as a forum for discussing and coordinating responses to global political challenges, including security threats, conflicts, and diplomatic issues.
  - It provides a platform for its members to exert collective influence on international policies and decisions.
- 3. **Addressing Global Issues**
  - The G7 addresses critical global challenges such as climate change, poverty, health pandemics, and technological advancements.
  - It sets the agenda for international discussions and often leads in mobilizing resources and formulating policies to tackle these issues.
- 4. **Coordination in Crisis Management**
  - The G7 has been pivotal in coordinating responses to global crises, such as the financial crisis of 2008, the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical tensions.

## Positive Impacts on India

1. **Economic Collaboration**
  - **Market Access:** G7 countries are significant trade partners for India. Collaborations can lead to better market access and trade agreements.
  - **Investment:** Increased foreign direct investment (FDI) from G7 countries can boost India's economic growth and infrastructure development.
  - **Technology Transfer:** Partnerships with G7 nations can facilitate technology transfer, enhancing India's industrial and technological capabilities.
2. **Political and Strategic Support**
  - **Global Leadership:** Support from G7 countries can bolster India's aspirations for a more significant role in global governance institutions like the United Nations Security Council.
  - **Diplomatic Backing:** G7 support can strengthen India's position in regional and international disputes.
3. **Tackling Global Challenges**
  - **Climate Change:** Collaborating with G7 countries on climate initiatives can help India address its environmental challenges and transition to sustainable energy sources.
  - **Health Initiatives:** Joint efforts in healthcare can improve India's healthcare infrastructure and preparedness for pandemics.

## Negative Impacts on India

1. **Economic Pressure**
  - **Trade Barriers:** Protectionist policies or trade disputes with G7 countries can adversely affect India's exports.
  - **Regulatory Standards:** High regulatory standards in G7 countries can pose challenges for Indian exporters, especially in sectors like pharmaceuticals and IT.
2. **Geopolitical Tensions**

- **Alignment with G7 Policies:** India's strategic autonomy might be challenged if it aligns too closely with G7 policies that conflict with its national interests or its relationships with other countries like Russia and China.
  - **Regional Conflicts:** G7 interventions in regional conflicts can complicate India's diplomatic relations and regional stability.
3. **Environmental and Social Policies**
- **Climate Commitments:** Pressure from G7 countries to meet stringent climate goals can strain India's economic development plans, especially if they require significant reductions in fossil fuel use.
  - **Human Rights Issues:** G7 emphasis on human rights can lead to international scrutiny and criticism of India's domestic policies and practices.

## Conclusion

The G7 remains a powerful entity in global geopolitics, influencing economic policies, political decisions, and responses to global challenges. For India, engagement with the G7 offers opportunities for economic growth, technological advancement, and enhanced global standing. However, it also presents challenges that require careful navigation to protect India's national interests and maintain its strategic autonomy. Balancing collaboration with the G7 while addressing potential negative impacts is crucial for India's sustained development and geopolitical strategy.

# Tenures of NSA Doval, PM's Principal Secy Mishra extended



Ajit Doval and P K Mishra

# At Amazon warehouse, an oath: No toilet, water breaks till targets met

PAGE 1  
ANCHOR

AISWARYA RAJ  
GURGAON, JUNE 13

ON MAY 16, after their team's 30-minute tea break ended, a 24-year-old worker in one of Amazon India's five warehouses in Haryana's Manesar was asked to take an "oath" that they would not take toilet or water breaks until their targets are achieved. The target: unloading packages from six trucks, measuring 24 feet each. Over the past month, the "inbound team" at the warehouse

has taken the oath around eight times, particularly on hectic days when the workload is more, employees confirmed to *The Indian Express*. The "outbound team", which took the pledge once, is reminded of their targets daily. The outbound team takes care of articles meant to be shifted/shipped out of the warehouse, while the inbound team deals with articles received from other sources.

An Amazon India spokesperson, when asked about this, said, "We're investigating these claims, but to be clear, we'd never make these kinds of requests on our employees as part of standard business practice. If

we discovered an incident such as the one that's been alleged, we'd immediately put a stop to it and ensure the manager involved was re-trained on our expectations of team support, health, and safety. We'll continue to investigate."

The 24-year-old, who works five days a week, ten hours a day, and earns Rs 10,088 a month, said, "Even if we work without any breaks, including the lunch and tea breaks that are 30 minutes each, we can't unload more than four trucks a day."

"Just two days ago, we took a pledge that we would forgo water and washroom breaks to improve



The Amazon warehouse in Manesar near Gurgaon. Express

performance and attain the target," he claimed, adding that sensors even go as far as to check washrooms and other places to ensure workers are not spending unnecessary time there.

"The worst affected are women. The trucks are hot from being parked outside, and when they unload articles, they get exhausted quickly," he said.

Amazon has faced such allegations abroad too. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the US had in 2022 and 2023 issued citations against the company over unsafe working conditions, ergonomic hazards and failure to properly

report injuries at six warehouses, *The Guardian* reported.

In India, labour associations have alleged that rules under the Factories Act, 1948 are flouted at the five warehouses that operate in and around Manesar. As Haryana has amended its work hours to less than 10 hours a day, the company now has its employees working from 8.30 am to 6.30 pm. As per the Act, if a factory worker works for more than nine hours a day or over 48 hours a week, he is entitled to twice his ordinary wages. However, workers' rights groups claim this is not being fulfilled.

The Act also fixes intervals for

rest: "...no worker shall work for more than five hours before he has had an interval for rest of at least half an hour".

A woman working at the Manesar warehouse said there is no restroom on the premises. "If we are unwell, the only option is to go to the washroom or locker room. There is a sick room with a bed, but workers are asked to leave after 10 minutes," she claimed. Her department of customer returns, took the oath as well. "Say it after me, we will attain the target, we won't go to the washroom, we will not drink," she repeated the oath.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Gig Workers in India

### Overview

Gig workers are individuals who engage in short-term, flexible, or freelance work arrangements instead of traditional full-time employment. This type of work is facilitated by digital platforms that connect workers with clients or customers. The gig economy includes a wide range of jobs, from ride-sharing and food delivery to freelance writing and graphic design.

### Present Situation in India

The gig economy in India has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by technological advancements, changing work preferences, and the rise of digital platforms. According to a report by the Boston Consulting Group and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, the gig economy in India has the potential to service up to 90 million jobs and contribute an additional 1.25% to India's GDP.

### Key Sectors of Gig Work in India:

- 1. Transportation:** Ride-sharing services like Uber and Ola employ a large number of gig workers.
- 2. Delivery Services:** Food delivery platforms like Swiggy and Zomato, as well as e-commerce delivery services like Amazon and Flipkart, rely heavily on gig workers.
- 3. Freelancing:** Platforms like Upwork and Fiverr enable freelance professionals to offer services such as writing, graphic design, and software development.
- 4. Home Services:** Platforms like UrbanClap (now Urban Company) connect customers with gig workers offering services like home cleaning, plumbing, and beauty treatments.

### Positives of Gig Working Culture

- 1. Flexibility**
  - **Description:** Gig workers enjoy flexible work schedules, allowing them to choose when and where they work.
  - **Impact:** This flexibility is especially beneficial for those who need to balance work with other responsibilities, such as students or caregivers.

- **Example:** A freelancer can work on multiple projects for different clients at their convenience.
- 2. **Income Opportunities**
  - **Description:** Gig work provides additional income opportunities for individuals who may not have access to traditional employment.
  - **Impact:** It allows people to earn money based on their skills and availability, potentially leading to higher overall earnings.
  - **Example:** A person can drive for a ride-sharing service during weekends to supplement their income from a regular job.
- 3. **Skill Utilization and Development**
  - **Description:** Gig work allows individuals to utilize and develop specific skills, often leading to professional growth and increased expertise.
  - **Impact:** Workers can build portfolios, gain diverse experience, and enhance their marketability.
  - **Example:** A graphic designer can take on varied projects, improving their skills and gaining exposure to different industries.
- 4. **Entrepreneurial Opportunities**
  - **Description:** The gig economy fosters an entrepreneurial spirit, encouraging individuals to start their own ventures or freelance businesses.
  - **Impact:** This can lead to the creation of micro-enterprises and contribute to economic growth.
  - **Example:** A beautician can use a platform like UrbanClap to build a client base and eventually open their own salon.

## Negatives of Gig Working Culture

1. **Lack of Job Security**
  - **Description:** Gig workers often face uncertainty regarding their income and employment stability, as work is not guaranteed.
  - **Impact:** This can lead to financial instability and stress, especially in the absence of a steady income.
  - **Example:** A ride-sharing driver may experience fluctuations in demand, leading to inconsistent earnings.
2. **Absence of Benefits**
  - **Description:** Gig workers typically do not receive benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, or retirement plans.
  - **Impact:** This lack of social security can affect their long-term well-being and financial security.
  - **Example:** A food delivery rider does not get paid sick leave or health insurance, increasing their vulnerability.
3. **Limited Legal Protection**
  - **Description:** Gig workers often lack the legal protections and labor rights afforded to traditional employees.
  - **Impact:** This can result in exploitation, unfair treatment, and lack of recourse in disputes.

- **Example:** A freelancer may not have a formal contract, making it difficult to address non-payment issues with clients.
- 4. **Isolation and Lack of Support**
  - **Description:** Gig workers often work independently, which can lead to social isolation and lack of professional support.
  - **Impact:** This can affect mental health and limit opportunities for networking and professional development.
  - **Example:** A freelance writer working from home may miss out on the social interactions and support structures available in traditional workplaces.

## Policy and Regulatory Landscape in India

India's regulatory framework is gradually evolving to address the challenges faced by gig workers. Some key initiatives include:

1. **Code on Social Security, 2020**
  - **Description:** This code includes provisions for the welfare of gig and platform workers, aiming to extend social security benefits such as insurance and retirement plans.
  - **Impact:** It represents a significant step towards recognizing and addressing the needs of gig workers.
2. **State-Level Initiatives**
  - **Description:** Some Indian states are exploring measures to protect gig workers, such as establishing welfare boards and providing health insurance.
  - **Impact:** These initiatives can provide much-needed support and security to gig workers at the regional level.

## Conclusion

The gig economy in India presents both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, it offers flexibility, additional income opportunities, skill development, and entrepreneurial possibilities. However, it also poses significant challenges, including lack of job security, absence of benefits, limited legal protection, and social isolation.

Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that promotes the growth of the gig economy while ensuring fair treatment and social security for gig workers. Policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders must work together to create an inclusive and supportive environment that maximizes the benefits of gig work while mitigating its drawbacks.

## 3 new criminal laws come into force from July 1, Delhi's judges and lawyers gear up for changes

### Khandu sworn in as Arunachal CM for third consecutive term

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ITANAGAR, JUNE 13

BJP LEADER Pema Khandu Thursday took oath as Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister for the third consecutive term.

Khandu, who was reelected unopposed from the Mukto constituency in the border district of Tawang, was sworn in by Governor KT Parnaik in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP chief JP Nadda, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, among others.

Eleven other MLAs were also sworn in as ministers. Among them were Deputy CM Chowna Mein, former Assembly speaker PD Sona, BJP state chief Biyuram Wahge and Dasanglu Pul, the widow of former chief minister Kalikho Pul.



Arunachal Pradesh Governor KT Parnaik administers oath of office to CM-designate Pema Khandu in Itanagar on Thursday. Union ministers Amit Shah and JP Nadda were also present at the ceremony. *PTI*

lone woman minister, the new council has eight fresh faces.

Others inducted into the cabinet include Palin MLA Balo Raja, Kanubari's Gabriel Denwang Wangsu, Panging legislator Ojing

and Nyato Dukam, who won the Taliha seat unopposed.

Three sitting ministers in the previous government in Arunachal Pradesh failed to secure cabinet berths in the new

### CCPA imposes ₹3 lakh penalty on edtech firm for 'false' ads

#### About Central Consumer Protection Authority

- As provided in the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has been established w.e.f. 24th July, 2020.
- Objective: To promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class.
- Composition:
  - It will have a Chief Commissioner as head, and only two other commissioners as members — one of whom will deal with matters relating to goods while the other will look into cases relating to services.
- It will be empowered:
  - To conduct investigations into violation of consumer rights and institute complaints / prosecution,
  - Order recall of unsafe goods and services,
  - Order discontinuation of unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements,



- Impose penalties on manufacturers/endorsers/publishers of misleading advertisements.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.

## SC stays 'Hamare Baarah' release, pulls up CBFC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 13

THE SUPREME Court on Thursday stayed the June 14 release of Annu Kapoor's movie Hamare Baarah after taking note of allegations that the film is derogatory to the Islamic faith and married Muslim women.

Shakil said the HC vacated the stay on the release of the movie by an "unreasoned order".

"The high court could not have directed the CBFC to constitute a committee because the CBFC was a party interested in the litigation," she said.

All objections, including the direction to the CBFC to select the committee, have been left open

### About:

- **Type of body:** CBFC is a statutory body which Works in accordance with the provisions of the Cinematograph Act, 1952, and Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 1983.
- **Mandate:** It is the censorship and classification body to regulate the public exhibition of films to ensure healthy entertainment and education to the public.
- **Parent body:** Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- **Established in:** 1951.
- **Headquarters:** Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- **Governance:** The Board consists of a Chairperson and 25 other non-official members (all of whom are appointed by Government of India). Prasoon Joshi is the present chairperson.

## Gujarat HC stays release of ‘Maharaj’; issues notice to Netflix, Yash Raj Films

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
AHMEDABAD, JUNE 13

A DAY before the movie was set to release, the Gujarat High Court on Thursday temporarily restrained Yash Raj Films and Netflix from releasing *Maharaj*. The action came following a petition by several followers of Vaishnavite Pustimargi sect who identify themselves as devotees of Lord Krishna. The court has also issued notices to Yash Raj Films and the OTT platform.

Bollywood actor Aamir Khan's son Junaid Khan is making his debut in the movie.

The movie is based on the

Maharaj Libel Case 1862 rendered by British judges in the colonial era. The petitioners have raised objections on the ground that excerpts of the movie contain “scandalous and defamatory language, which affects the Pustimargi sect as a whole” and that the release of the movie “is likely to incite feelings of hatred and violence against the Pustimargi sect, which would be in breach of code of ethics under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

The 1862 case judgment relates to a libel case brought forth by religious leader Jadunathji

against social reformer Karsandas Mulji who was also an editor of a weekly newspaper after an article was published that Jadunathji had alleged sexual liaisons with female followers and that men were expected to show their devotion by offering their wives for sex. Mulji had won the case.

The petitioners submitted that a representation was submitted in April to Yash Raj Films and Netflix by another body but the producer and the OTT platform did not agree to a request for a private screening or issue a clarification.

The matter has been kept for hearing on June 18.

## Rajasthan writes to food regulator after samples of spice brands found unsafe

**HAMZA KHAN**  
JAIPUR, JUNE 13

AFTER SOME samples of popular spice brands failed tests in Rajasthan, the state government has written to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) requesting direction in the matter as well as to governments of Gujarat and Haryana for action against the erring brands as they house the manufacturing units.

### About Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

- It is an **autonomous body** established under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, Government of India.
- The FSSAI has been established **under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**, which is a **consolidating statute related to food safety and regulation in India**.

- **Vision:** Build a new India by enabling citizens to **have safe and nutritious food, prevent diseases,** and lead a healthy and happy life.
- **Mission:** Set **globally benchmarked standards for food,** encourage and ensure that food businesses adhere to these standards, **adopt good manufacturing and hygiene practices,** and ultimately **enable citizens to access safe and right food.**

## Functions of FSSAI

- FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the **regulation and supervision of food safety.**
- It **lays down standards and guidelines** in relation to **articles of food,** and **provides for licensing, registration, and accreditation for food business operators.**
- **Anyone selling or importing food** in India **needs a food licence issued by FSSAI.**
- FSSAI also **directly monitors compliance of food regulations,** especially in the area of **food imports to India.**
- FSSAI officers **carry out food import controls** and ensure that the contain no harmful ingredients. To do this, they send selected test products from the import to accredited laboratories for inspection.
- The FSSAI is also **responsible for the accreditation of food testing laboratories** throughout India.
- The FSSAI is **responsible for the Food Certification in India.**
- It is **mandated to specify systems for enforcing its standards,** for accreditation of certification systems, and for certification of food safety management systems for food businesses.

## What is the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006?

It is an Act to consolidate the laws relating to food and to establish the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import, to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

## Rocket boys: Cricket buddies from Chennai built rocket with 3D-printed engine

ANONNA DUTT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 13

AT A party in Chennai one evening nearly a decade ago, a discussion between Moin SPM and Srinath Ravichandran shifted to a shared passion — rockets. “Won’t it be cool to build one?” Moin recalls telling his friend excitedly.

That audacious question turned into reality in 2024 when their company, Agnikul Cosmos, launched its first sub-orbital test vehicle powered by the world’s first single-piece 3D-printed rocket engine. At 7:15 am on May 30, AgniBaan 50rTeD (Sub-Orbital Technology Demonstrator) lifted off from a private launchpad the company had set up in Sriharikota (while the rocket lifts-off in a sub-orbital launch, it does not reach the height where it can successfully insert a satellite in an orbit).

Engine parts are typically manufactured separately and assembled. However, 3D printing is likely to lower both launch costs and vehicle assembly time. With 3D printed engines, Moin said, putting together the launch vehicle will likely take only a couple of weeks.

Though the friends, who grew up playing cricket together in Chennai, founded Agnikul in 2017, their paths took a while to converge since Moin, 34, and Ravichandran, 39, specialised in different streams. While Moin did aerospace engineering from Anna University in Chennai and an MBA in the field from the University of Newcastle, Ravichandran studied electrical engineering from College of Engineering in Chennai, followed by a certificate course in aeronautical engineering from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and a master’s degree in the same field from the



Srinath Ravichandran and Moin SPM founded Agnikul Cosmos in 2017. Agnikul Cosmos

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Even the career paths they chose early on were quite different: Moin and his cousins set up a company that manufactured and sold fragrances and aromatic compounds, Ravichandran started

working on Wall Street in New York, before shifting to Los Angeles. Speaking to *The Indian Express* via a video call from Chennai, Moin said, “The fragrance company was doing well. In fact, we were even exporting

them, but I was starting to wonder what I was doing there. Ravichandran was feeling the same in the United States. Both of us felt the need to do something else.” The childhood friends then decided to set up a company, reach out to experts in the field and do something that had never been done before. “We knew 3D printing had been used to make smaller rocket parts. So why not the whole engine, we thought. Since it wasn’t possible to 3D print conventional designs, which are not compatible with 3D printers, the entire engine had to be redesigned,” Moin said.

Despite the audacity of their idea, Moin and Ravichandran still had to find someone who would help them “print” rocket engines and launch projectiles into space. “We needed people with experience in building rockets from scratch, and funds. Unlike Elon Musk (an investor in space company SpaceX, automotive com-

pany Tesla and social media platform X), we did not have millions to put into our company. Initially, the company was funded by us. Then, we met Prof Satya Chakravarthy (head of National Centre for Combustion Research and Development at Indian Institute of Technology-Madras). When he heard our pitch, his first question was: ‘Why haven’t you done it yet?’. He put us in touch with R V Perumal (the retired GSLV project director), who has seen the development of ISRO’s GSLV (geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle) from the start,” added the Agnikul co-founder.

Prof Chakravarthy and Perumal ended up becoming founding advisors in their company, which finally incorporated in 2017. “Since no launch vehicle companies were being set up, the process took a while. Although we did not know whether the government would liberalise the di-

rection in which that major spacefaring countries had gone in. That alone made us hopeful. With India being a spacefaring nation for years and demonstrating reliable launches over and over again, there is a level of confidence in Indian start-ups at the global stage now. And we are riding on their successes,” said Moin. While Agnikul’s engine design is patented technology — “and not many details can be revealed” — Moin said there were certain parameters they had to keep in mind while designing the rocket, including the powder residue left behind due to 3D printing. “It was important to develop the ability to remove the powder residue to ensure there was no clogging inside the engine,” he said.

A bigger challenge was the build volume — the maximum size of a component that a 3D printer could make — off commercially available printers. “At

that time, the maximum build volume of 3D printers was 400 mm x 400 mm x 400 mm. Today, there are printers with a build volume of 1 metre, making it possible to print larger rocket engines,” said Moin.

Agnikul currently has one 3D printer, but is looking to scale up keeping in mind the large market for small satellite launch vehicles. The bigger printers, it hopes, will also allow it to print the “nozzle skirt”, which is currently added after engine manufacturing, along with the engine.

The company aims to conduct its first orbital launch and carry satellites to an orbit around the Earth by the end of the financial year. “We plan to begin commercial launches within nine to 12 months, and scale up to about 50 launches in a year,” said Moin.

He added that launches will take place from its existing launchpad in Sriharikota spaceport.

# Kerala govt. honours Malayalam actors who shone at Cannes

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has felicitated Malayalam movie artistes for their achievements at the recent Cannes film festival.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan honoured actors Kani Kusruti, Divya Prabha, Hridhu Haroon, and Azees Nedumangad who were part of the cast of *All We Imagine as Light* that won the Grand Prix award at Cannes. The film, directed by Payal Kapadia, won the second biggest award after the Palme d'Or at the international festival.

The Chief Minister also congratulated other artistes who gave a boost to Indian cinema at Cannes,



**Felicitating ceremony:** Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan with the actors of the film *All We Imagine as Light* in Thiruvananthapuram.

and expressed hope that they reached greater heights in their artistic journey. Minister for Culture Saji Cherian presided.

Kerala State Film Deve-

lopment Corporation chairman Shaji N. Karun whose *Swaham* was part of Cannes competition 30 years ago was present on the occasion.

# Rajnath Singh says target is to achieve self-reliance in defence manufacturing

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The government's target will be to export defence equipment worth over ₹50,000 crore by 2028-2029, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday after assuming charge for the second consecutive term.

He chaired a review meeting on the action plan for the first 100 days of the Ministry under the new government, with a focus on the welfare of ex-servicemen. "The meeting focused on the welfare of veterans, wherein major issues pertaining to the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare were discussed. He instructed the officers to re-dedicate themselves to fulfil the agenda laid out in the 100 days' action plan," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

#### Focus areas

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, our aim will be to further strengthen the security apparatus of the country, with focus on



**Setting goals:** Rajnath Singh took charge as Union Defence Minister for the second term, in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

**'Our aim will be to further strengthen security apparatus, and also ensure welfare of soldiers'**

achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing. Armed forces modernisation and the welfare of the soldiers, both serving and retired, will continue to be our main focus," he said.

In this regard, Mr. Singh noted that defence exports touched a record ₹21,083 crore in financial year 2023-24. "It was historic."

He said the armed forces were being equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and platforms. In line with this, Mr. Singh said he would hold regular review meetings to fast-track the progress of the flagship schemes and the initiatives of the Ministry.

Emphasising the growing salience of the Indian Ocean Region in the defence calculus, Mr. Singh's first visit this term would be to the Eastern Naval Command, Visakhapatnam, where he would interact with officers and sailors, the Ministry said.

# Do coalition governments slow down the economic reforms agenda?

PARLEY

**U**ntil the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 282 seats and Prime Minister Narendra Modi rode to power, India had had coalition governments for 21 years. Ten years later, the BJP has 240 seats in the Lok Sabha and India once again has a coalition government in power. Fitch had stated that coalition politics and a weakened mandate for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) could make it challenging to pass legislation on the more ambitious parts of the reform agenda. Do coalition governments slow down the economic reforms agenda? K.K. Kailash and Sanjay Ruparella discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Sobhana K. Nair. Edited excerpts:

**Do coalition governments end up making too many policy concessions?**

**K.K. Kailash:** This question is based on two assumptions which need to be cleared. First, that single-party governments are the natural order of things and multi-party governments are an aberration and will therefore have undesirable consequences. Comparative studies show that this is not necessarily true. Second, that a single-party government behaves as a unitary actor. Once we remove these two assumptions, we will see that differences between coalitions and single-party governments have actually reduced. There will always be competing ideas and interests and as a consequence, we are likely to see policy compromises and bargains in both. The only difference, perhaps, is that in multi-party governments, much of it (compromises) takes place in the public, so in a way they are more transparent. So far, India's experience with coalition governments has not been bad. There have been checks and balances which have helped governments work better as compared to single-party governments.

**Sanjay Ruparella:** Economic growth requires reform. We often believe that reform requires decisiveness, and that decisiveness, in turn, requires a single-party majority government. But it is more complicated than that, since the form of government is just one of the many factors influencing economic growth. The process of liberalisation of the economy tentatively began under the Janata Party government and was then taken forward by the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi and the National Front government. The minority government of Narasimha Rao introduced it fully. And then it accelerated under the United Front government and since.

On the question of social policy reforms, earlier coalition governments, despite their rhetorical commitment to a more social



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in conversation with TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in New Delhi. *K.K.*

democratic agenda, actually had quite a few setbacks. The rights-based welfare paradigm was introduced under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). If you have to negotiate and bargain and compromise in order to settle on a policy, it is true that there can be multiple veto points that coalition partners can exercise. As Montek Singh Ahluwalia once said, "There is a strong consensus for weak reform." But the fact that parties are engaging in negotiations means that there is less radical change and there is more policy stability that facilitates investments over the longer term. The fewest checks and balances are seen under single-party majority governments. That could lead to rather unpropitious policy decisions. We have seen some of those in the last decade.

**How have coalition governments in the past performed on the economic agenda?**

**KKK:** There has actually been a great deal of continuity between governments and their policies, and one has not seen any major reversals. Policy change has been gradual and incremental since 1991. Public bargaining between parties signals that different viewpoints are being heard and accommodated. Coalitions over a period of time have institutionalised certain decision-making mechanisms which accommodate different voices. The V.P. Singh government had six committees to examine the most pressing issues of the time. These evolved and in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, they took the form of 'Group of Ministers', and they continued in the UPA era too.

When it comes to reforms, coalition governments have worked better. In contrast, in a single-party government, there have been decisions, such as the farm laws, which were taken without getting everyone on board. Something like that would not have probably happened in a coalition because there would have been greater dialogue.

**SR:** Institutions that are meant to facilitate and promote Centre-State relations are more



The more people involved in decision-making, the more likely that the policy will be stable and continue for longer. *K.K. KAILASH*

activated in coalition governments. That is unsurprising because the allies are often regional parties. You have a more informed policy-making process even if it might be more turbulent.

**Dialogues can also get acrimonious in coalition governments. And have there been examples where reforms have been stalled.**

**SR:** Absolutely. The Janata Party government had an ideological commitment to pro-poor, pro-labour policies, but we did see more industrial de-licensing and an increase in agricultural subsidies to relatively well-off communities and castes. The fiscal deficit drove up again. India suffered a recession at the end of that government. But there was also a worldwide recession then. Overall, I don't think there is something inherently worse in coalition governments. Rajiv Gandhi's government had the largest seat majority in the history of independent India. It tried to pursue economic liberalisation. That agenda ground to a halt because of internal checks within the Congress.

**KKK:** Often we look only at the outcome and not how the decision was arrived at. The more people involved in the decision-making, the more likely that the policy will be stable and continue for longer. The decision-making process is as important as the decision itself.

**In the last five years, the debate has sharpened on the State's share in the divisible pool of taxes. Can States expect to get a larger share now that a coalition government is in power?**

**SR:** The role of State governments is higher in a national coalition. It is also ironic that we have to ask this question considering that when Prime Minister Narendra Modi first took power, he pledged to strengthen Indian federalism by embracing a concept of "cooperative federalism". The government also accepted the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations to increase the State governments' share of the divisible pool of taxes. But over the last decade, the Centre's share of revenue increased because of the introduction of special cesses which were not part of the divisible pool. Second, the Planning Commission was abolished. It was a flawed institution, but it did provide an institutional space for negotiation. *Niti Aayog is a*

far more technocratic space and much more beholden to the Centre. In the last decade there has been political centralisation of decision-making right up to the Prime Minister's office. There is also a greater control over social welfare benefits and their packaging as directly coming from the Union government. That is what is fueling a lot of the discontent.

**KKK:** The division of taxes between the Centre and State is a complex problem. The amount of funds available to the States is also a function of the way in which the economy is functioning. When the economy does well, there will be more to go around, and vice-versa. At the same time, we also need to take into account, for instance, the regional and income disparities between States. And then there is the vertical imbalance between the Centre and the States. Another source of tension is with regard to sharing of taxes under GST. The negotiations went on for 17 years. But when the system was adopted, not all States were on board. The goods that were taxed at a higher rate in the pre-GST regime was put under a lower bracket, so there was a decline in revenue for the States. The number of commodities that were taxed at a higher rate under the pre-GST regime was reduced. I think either the States' voices were either not heard, or the States did not articulate their voices effectively. Overall, the GST architecture does not favour the States.

**The NDA is just beginning its term. Do you see their constituents having a similar economic vision?**

**SR:** The BJP needs its allies to have a majority, but all the important ministries remain with the BJP. It is an open question whether the style of decision-making and governance that we have seen in the last 10 years will change substantially or not. As far as the economic outlook of the allies is concerned, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu was the earliest liberaliser. The difference is about the distribution of power and the style of decision-making.

**KKK:** I don't see any conflict in terms of economic policies as such as parties across the spectrum are sold on economic reforms. The only possible difference would be the pace of decisions. This also depends on how the decisions are taken and the mechanisms that are used. That might give us a clue to whether economic reforms get stalled or economic reforms are taken forward.

# China's 'grey-zone' warfare tactics against Taiwan

What are the coercive measures China has imposed on Taiwan?

**Anushka Saxena**

**The story so far:**

**S**ince the new Taiwanese president Lai Ching-te has assumed office, all eyes have been on the rocky start to his tenure. While China's belligerent response to Mr. Lai's "pro-independence" and "secessionist" statements was striking, it has now resorted to a sophisticated ploy to respond to Mr. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This is often referred to as 'grey-zone' warfare, which comprises elements that frustrate Taiwan in a sustained manner.

**What has China done?**

China's preparedness to invade Taiwan and fight a high-intensity war over the island is a much debated subject. Training drills in the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theater Command (PLA ETC) are targeted precisely at demonstrating China's ability to fight and win. However, a more cognitive tool that Beijing is

deploying to demonstrate this ability is simulated audiovisuals. On May 24, for example, the PLA ETC Weibo account released a 3D animation video depicting how in an invasion scenario, land and warship-based ballistic missile launchers would fire tens of missiles at one go, striking areas in Taipei and Kaohsiung.

Moreover, since 2020, the X account of the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defence has turned into a repository of reportage on daily sorties conducted by PLA fighter jets, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), strategic fighters and early warning aircraft. While such sorties do not engage the island's defence forces directly, they exert sustained pressure on them. Further, these UAVs also conduct intelligence work in the areas surrounding the island. The long term presence of such mobilisation induces wear-out within Taiwanese forces, even before there is kinetic combat.

**What about ideology?**

To build a favourable image for itself,

Beijing often deploys narratives within Taiwanese territory that thrust ideological choices upon its citizens. For example, sometime on May 25, just under a week after Mr. Lai assumed office, internet users in Taiwan observed a Youtube video of a Chinese citizen operating a drone to drop cardboard boxes on Kinmen Island. When investigated by the Kinmen Defence Command on May 26, the boxes unveiled fliers written in simplified Chinese, stating "Both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China, one Chinese nation. Taiwan independence is a dead end. Lai's Taiwan independence is a dead end." Some other fliers warned, "Don't sacrifice your life for Taiwan independence, do you understand?"

The Kinmen Command stated that this was "a typical cognitive warfare tactic" deployed by China, because it initiates public discussions on social media, and garners attention for the Chinese cause.

**What are political tactics China uses?**

In its 'carrots and sticks' approach

towards Taiwan, Beijing deploys sticks for the DPP and carrots for its primary opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT). Well known for its relatively pro-mainland views, the KMT continues to engage with Communist Party (CPC) officials, even as any meaningful communication between the DPP and the CPC has stalled since Ms. Tsai became President of Taiwan in 2016. DPP legislators have often described these engagements as KMT's "collusion" with the CPC. In fact, KMT officials have, in the past, been investigated by the Tsai administration under the 'anti-infiltration law' after their visits to China.

China's 'sticks' against the DPP entail coercive economic measures, which leverage the cross-strait trade and business interdependence to seek concessions. One such example is China's unilateral suspension of preferential tax rates for chemical imports from Taiwan, granted under the only trade agreement to exist between the two sides – the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Beijing announced that such a suspension, applicable to 134 items imported from Taiwan, is retaliation against Mr. Lai's propagation of "separatist" sentiments in his inaugural speech, as well as Taipei's own restrictions against imports of over 2,000 goods made in China.

As 'grey-zone' warfare tactics become a subject of deliberation, Mr. Lai will have much to grapple with during his tenure.

*Anushka Saxena is a Research Analyst at Takshashila Institution, Bengaluru.*