

**SANTIAGO
MARTIN**
A GAMBLERS' BOSS



**HAS MODI
GOVERNMENT
TAXED
PETROL?**



Transcending Boundaries

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GIVING SUPARI

TO PAKISTANIS

TO KILL TERRORISTS



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g r o u p



aseema
EDITORIAL

Islamic terrorists hiding in Pakistan are being gunned down one after another by unknown hitmen. More than 20 such criminals have been killed so far, according to a report by British news daily The Guardian.

Aseema has come up with a special article, adding more details to the Guardian's story.

We dug out numerous articles published by Pakistani news media on these killings.

Although Pakistani papers did report on these killings, they appeared to believe that they happened because of a rivalry between terrorist groups.

We assembled a lot of news articles from the Pakistani press and wove them together into a comprehensive article, portraying all the executions in an orderly manner.

This edition of the magazine also covers the story of TN Sheshan, a former election commissioner who transformed India's electoral system once and for all.

Here is also an article about the new laws that came into effect over the last 10 years of Narendra Modi era.

Another interesting read this month would be about Santiago Martin, the lottery king who donated a large sum of money to political parties.

West Bengal political landscape is changing with each passing day. A judge in Calcutta High court resigned recently and joined the Bhartiya Janata Party.

Reports from Bengal also suggest that the BJP is more likely to win more seats this time than in 2019.

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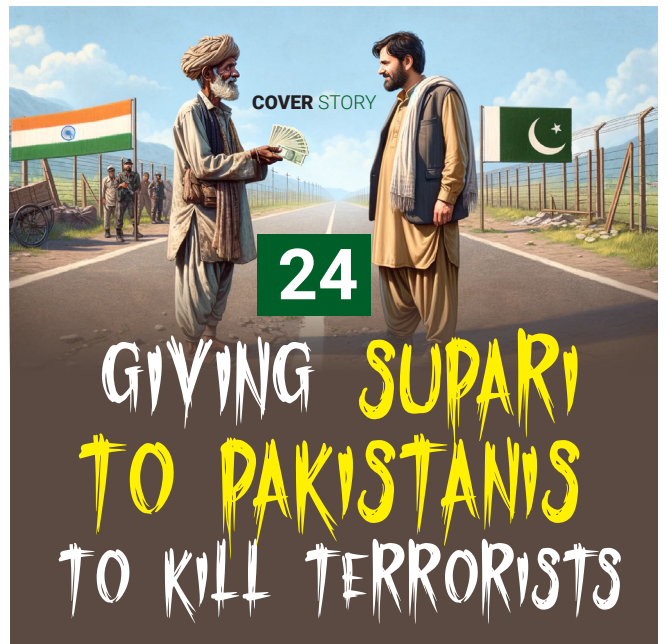
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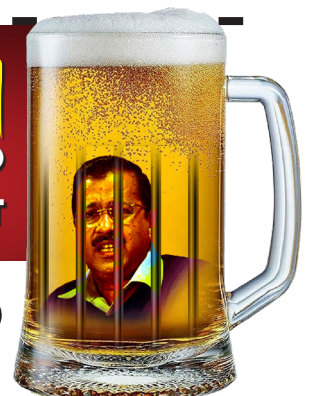
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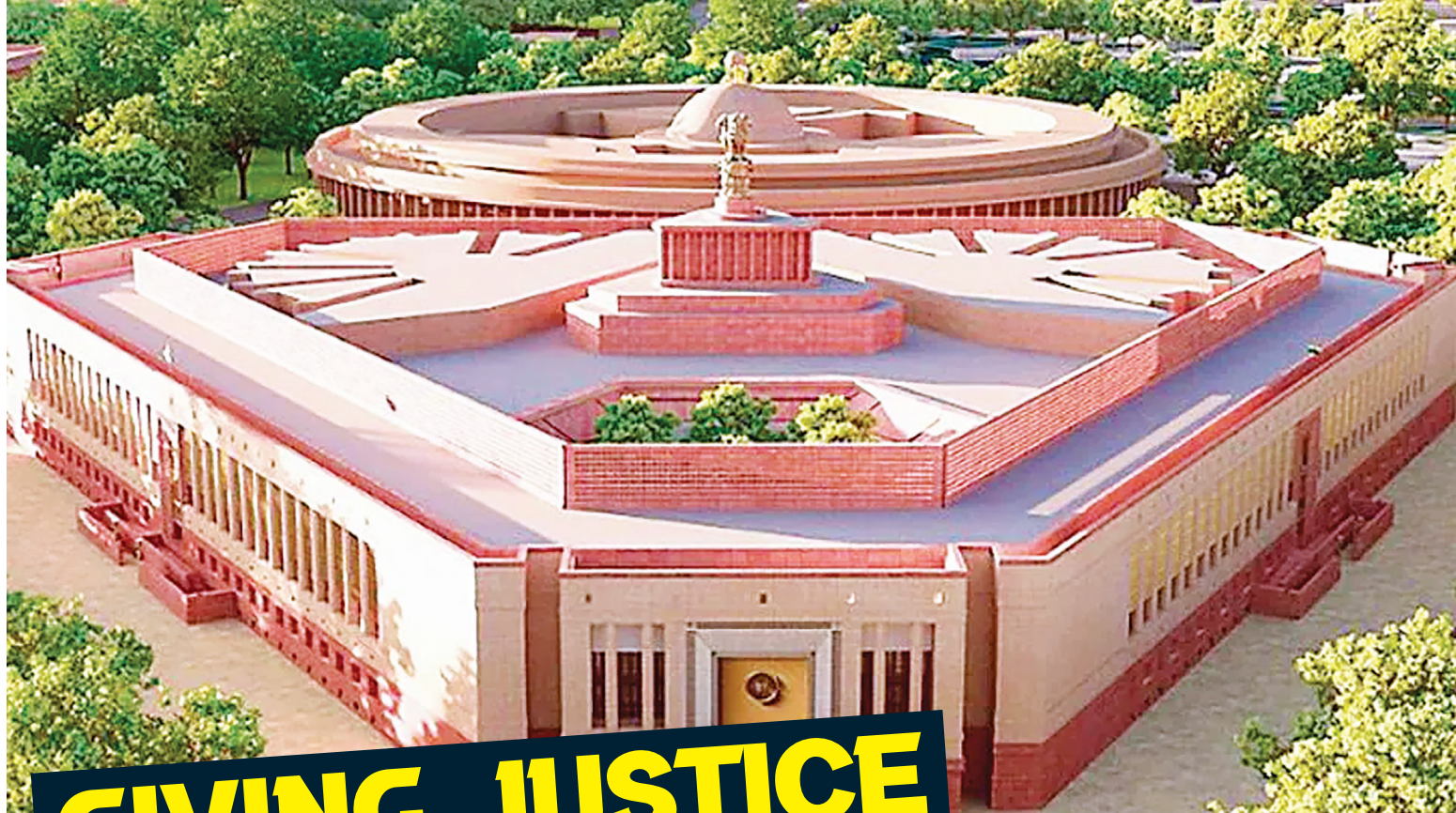
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GIVING JUSTICE

TO LAWS

HOW MANY LAWS
MODI
CHANGED IN LAST
10 YEARS?

🕒 NAVIKA

As societal dynamics evolve with shifts in lifestyle, globalization, burgeoning private enterprise, and technological advancements, many laws become irrelevant and outdated. What was once deemed relevant can swiftly become antiquated, prompting the need for legislative reform to align with contemporary realities.

The Narendra Modi government has made significant progress in removing redundant laws. Over 1200 such acts have been scrapped in just three years, surpassing the total repealed during the entire pre-Modi era. Additionally, the NDA government has introduced and passed numerous new bills, including those related to finance, home affairs, law and justice, and



Modi government has reformed dozens of laws over the past ten years. GST, bankruptcy code, laws related criminal justice system and Triple Talaq are the major ones. Read below as to what changes they have brought about.

tribal affairs.

This reformative process encompasses several facets, including the repeal of obsolete statutes, the introduction of new legislation reflective of societal needs, and the amendment of existing laws to address emerging challenges.

Many colonial-era laws remain on the books in India, creating a mismatch with the modern democratic setup. These laws often appear nonsensical in today's world and are ripe for repeal.

Prime Examples of Outdated Laws

The Motor Vehicles Act, 1914: Believe it or not, a section of this act dictates that a vehicle inspector in Andhra Pradesh must have "well brushed teeth" and be disqualified for physical attributes like "pigeon chest" or "flat feet."

The Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878: This act mandates imprisonment for anyone who finds more than 10 rupees (a meager sum today) and fails to report it to a revenue officer.

Toll Tax for River Boats

An archaic law restricts toll tax for boats crossing the Ganges River to a maximum of "2 Annas" (a defunct currency unit).

Police and Airdropped Pamphlets: Some state laws inexplicably task police with ensuring no airdropped pamphlets land in their jurisdiction. This likely aimed to prevent the distribution of anti-colonial material, but holds

no relevance in a free society.

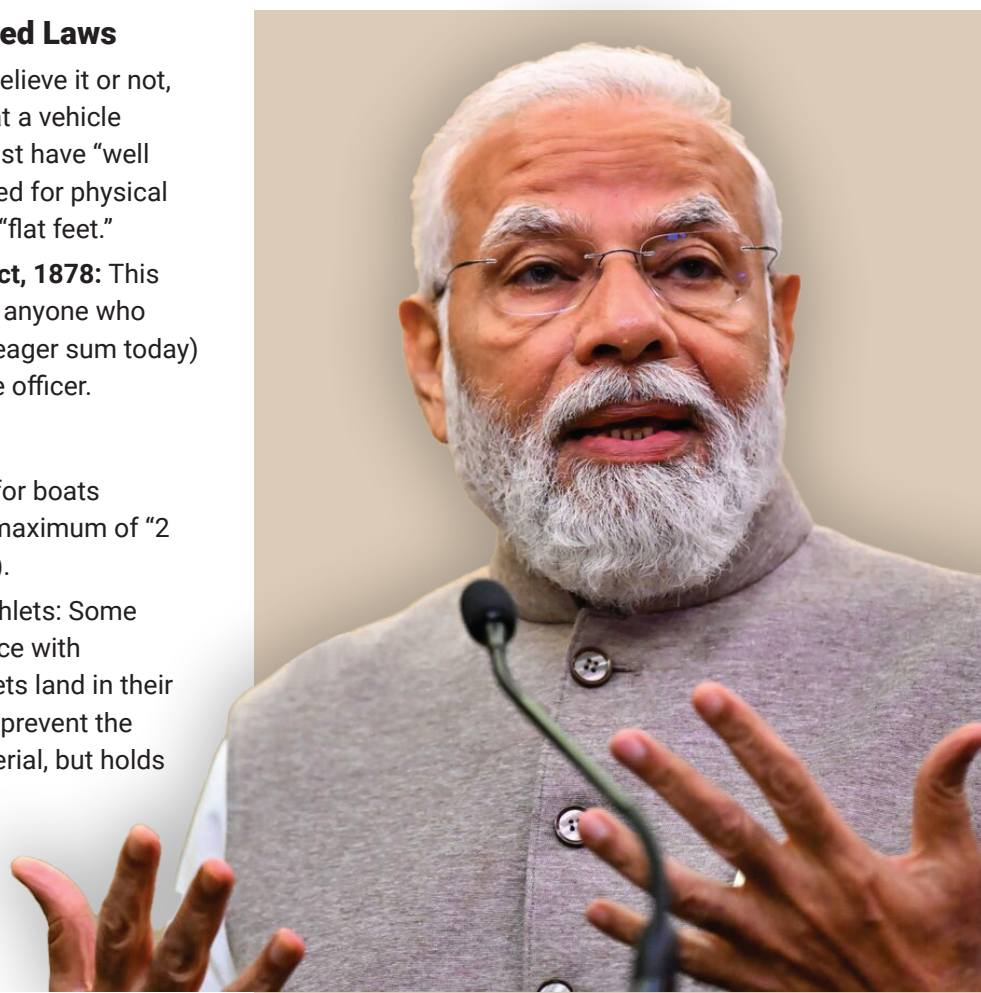
Three major new acts are set to replace outdated colonial laws in the field of criminal justice, coming into effect on July 1st of this year. This signifies a crucial step towards a more modern and efficient legal system.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023 replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860, while the Bharatiya Nagarika Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita (BSA) 2023 superseded the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act (IEA) 1872, respectively.

Notably, Home Minister Amit Shah, while presenting these bills to Parliament, emphasized their grounding in three core principles: personal freedom, human rights, and impartiality. According to him, these new statutes embody the spirit of a modern Indian code of justice.

Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita

This legislation supersedes the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, retaining the majority of its provisions while introducing significant



Some old laws were strange and weird. The Motor Vehicles Act, 1914, was just an example. A section of this act dictates that a vehicle inspector in Andhra Pradesh must have “well brushed teeth” and be disqualified for physical attributes like “pigeon chest” or “flat feet.



modifications concerning various aspects of evidentiary procedure such as Documentary Evidence, Oral Evidence, Admissibility of Electronic or Digital Records as Evidence, Secondary Evidence, and Joint Trials.

Under the Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita, electronic evidence is reclassified as primary evidence, a departure from its classification as secondary evidence under the Indian Evidence Act. This reclassification permits the admission of electronic evidence, encompassing a wide array of digital materials such as emails, server logs, computer and smartphone files, website content, location data, and text messages, among others.

Furthermore, the legislation allows for the presentation of oral evidence electronically, subject to authorization. Additionally, an expansion of secondary evidence types is introduced, including both oral and written evidence, as well as testimony from individuals proficient in document examination.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

This Act of the Central Government under “One Nation -One Tax” policy simplified the tax policy bringing various taxes under one tax called Goods and Services Tax. It had simplified the procedure of collection and payment of tax.

The collection of tax has increased by manifold due to this change. The average

monthly collection of Goods and Services Tax is as below:

Financial Year (₹ in Crores)	Average Monthly Collection
2017-18	82294
2018-19	98254
2019-20	100894
2020-21	105726
2021-22	127819
2022-23	150334
2023-24	166945 (upto Jan.24)

This Act has really helped in reducing the tax evasion substantially, increasing the revenue. The Constitutional(102st Amendment) Act 2016 enabled the Central Government to bring the above Law. The aim was to bring the whole country under single market.

Article 370

The enactment to nullify Article 370, introduced by Home Minister Sri Amit Shah on August 5th in the Rajya Sabha, underwent due legislative procedures, effectively eliminating the special status accorded to the State of Jammu and Kashmir. This legislative move rendered all provisions of Article 370 defunct, save for Clause one, which underwent modification to extend the applicability of the Constitution to the



The enactment to nullify Article 370, introduced by Home Minister Sri Amit Shah on August 5th in the Rajya Sabha, underwent due legislative procedures, effectively eliminating the special status accorded to the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

entirety of Jammu and Kashmir.

This significant legislative action marks a pivotal step towards the integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India. Despite being an inherent part of India, historical oversights led to the marginalization of Jammu and Kashmir, a legacy unaddressed until the tenure of the NDA Government. The credit for ushering Jammu and Kashmir into the national fold rests with the NDA Government, rectifying past neglect.

The revocation of Article 370 has resulted in the alignment of Jammu and Kashmir with the mainstream. Formerly a state, Jammu and Kashmir has now been reconstituted into two Union territories: Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. The former operates akin to Union territories like Delhi, boasting a Legislative

Assembly, while the latter functions similarly to Chandigarh.

The abrogation of Article 370 has been warmly received by the populace of Jammu and Kashmir, as it signifies their equal treatment with the rest of the country. Noteworthy reforms include the extension of property rights to women, the empowerment of Indian citizens outside the state to own property in Jammu and Kashmir, and enhanced rights for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, reinforcing their integration into the nation.

Since the removal of special status, tranquility has prevailed in Jammu and Kashmir, catalyzing a surge in tourist influx. The Central Government's substantial investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare sectors have attracted global entrepreneurs, promising heightened job opportunities and economic prosperity for the region.

The resolute crackdown on terrorists and anti-national elements has quelled unrest, evident in the absence of incidents like stone-pelting. Political detractors, anticipating turmoil post-revocation, have been discredited, as the populace prioritizes peace and prosperity, assured of their interests being safeguarded by India.

Citizenship for Hindus Abroad

The Citizenship Amendment Act, enacted by Parliament on December 11, 2019, brought amendments to the Citizenship Act of 1955, introducing an expedited pathway to Indian citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Specifically, the provision extends to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians who entered India on or before December 31, 2014.

The Central Government has reiterated on multiple occasions that the CAA does not preclude individuals of any religion from seeking citizenship under existing naturalization laws. In clear terms, the CAA does not nullify these laws, allowing individuals, including Muslim migrants



Many Muslim women welcomed the bill that made 'triple talaq' a criminal offence

from any foreign nation, to pursue Indian citizenship through established legal channels.

Despite clarifications, unfounded apprehensions persist across the country regarding the CAA's purported impact on Muslim citizenship rights in India. It is emphasized that the legislation does not strip any individual of their citizenship but rather facilitates the citizenship process for religious minorities fleeing persecution in neighboring nations.

However, certain entities, including Amnesty International and the United States, have voiced concerns about the secular nature of the law. Critics are accused of exhibiting selective outrage, particularly when personal freedoms and human rights are jeopardized elsewhere, highlighting what some perceive as hypocrisy.

The CAA underscores India's humanitarian commitment to safeguarding persecuted religious minorities in the region. Importantly, it is emphasized that the legislation is distinct from the National Register of Citizens, which is exclusively implemented in Assam to identify illegal migrants.

Triple Talaq Act

The enactment known as the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019, colloquially termed the Triple Talaq Act, was implemented in 2019. Initially proposed by the Central Government in 2017 to outlaw the practice of triple talaq, the bill faced obstruction in the Rajya Sabha.

However, in 2019, the Act was successfully passed, rendering the practice of instantaneous and irrevocable triple talaq illegal. This practice, rooted in Sharia law, had been prevalent among Muslims in India. The Supreme Court of India, in 2017, had deemed triple talaq unconstitutional, prohibiting its utterance in any form.

The ramifications of this legislation are manifold:

It criminalizes the practice of triple talaq, or talaq-e-biddat, as a form of instantaneous and irrevocable divorce, subjecting offenders to punishment.

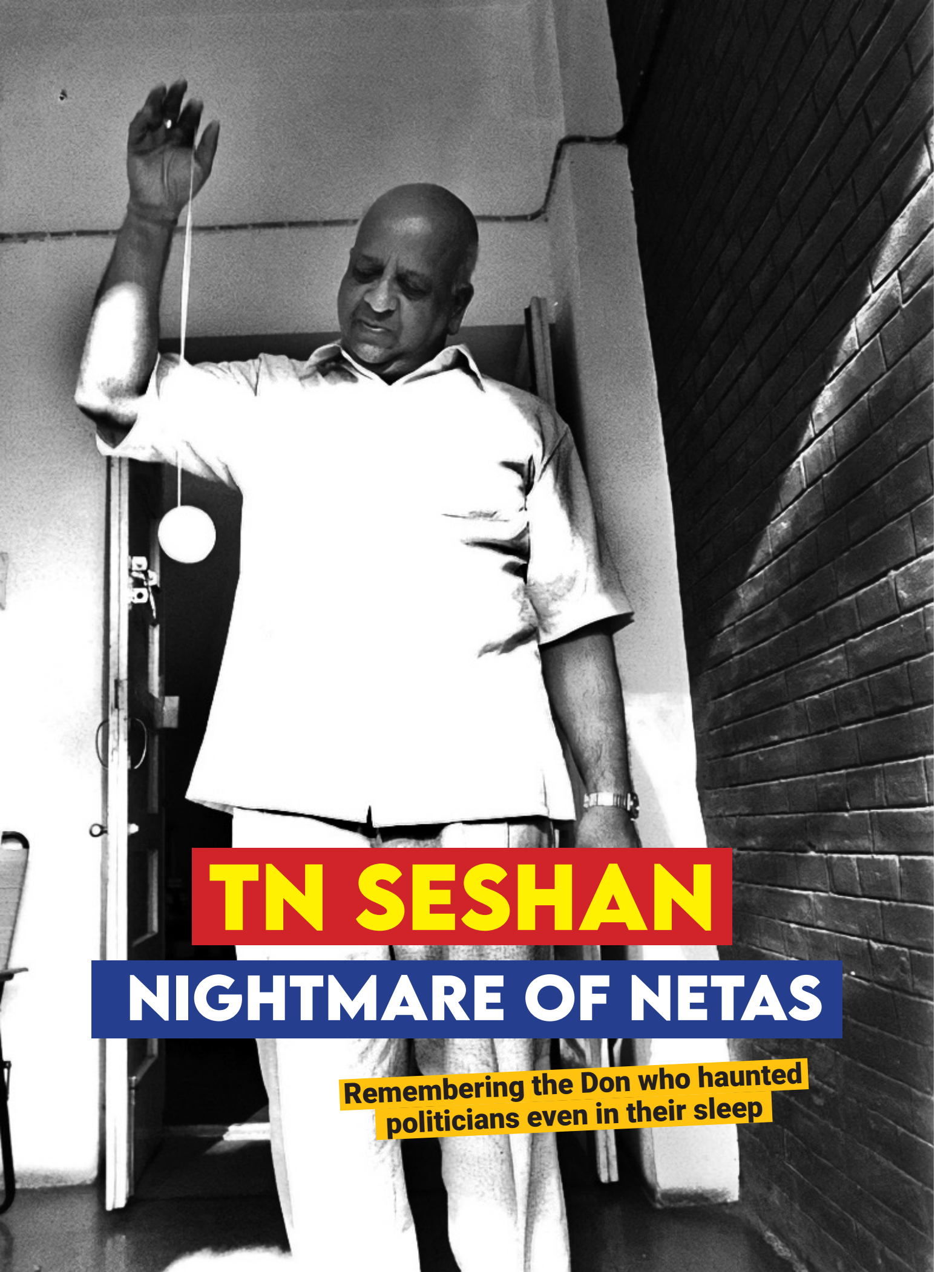
Designating talaq-e-biddat as a cognizable offense empowers law enforcement to arrest perpetrators without a warrant.

Violators face imprisonment for up to three years.

Provision is made for dispute reconciliation outside the Nikah Halala process, with the option for proceedings withdrawal.

Divorced Muslim women gain the right to seek custody of minor children and are entitled to maintenance.

While numerous provisions exist within the Act, the aforementioned highlights underscore its significance. Notably, a substantial 92% of Muslim women oppose the practice of triple talaq. Additionally, it's noteworthy that 21 Islamic nations, including neighboring countries, have also banned the triple talaq system.



TN SESHAN

NIGHTMARE OF NETAS

**Remembering the Don who haunted
politicians even in their sleep**

Until TN Seshan became the CEC, hardly a few were aware of the fact that the Election Commission is not part of the government. Even the commissioners served in the past would use envelopes marked with "Election Commission, Government of India". TN Seshan cleaned up the country's electoral system once and for all. This Narayan Iyer Seshan was no doubt a nightmare for corrupt netas.

① Purushottam Bhat

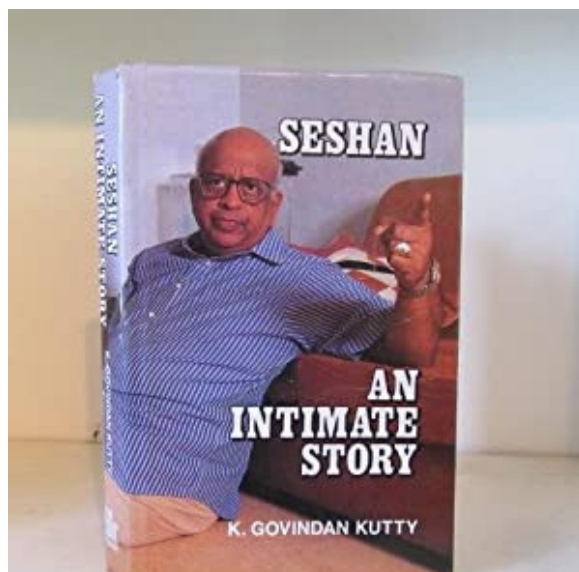
Before he took the throne, the Election Commissioners used to wait outside the Law Minister's office to be called inside. Additionally, the Prime Minister would suggest when the Commission held elections, or whether to hold elections in the first place.

We are talking about Tirunellai Narayan Iyer Seshan, the IAS officer who revolutionized India's electoral system once and for all.

If we no longer witness vehicles blaring political slogans through mounted microphones, it is thanks to him. If we observe candidates' wealth disclosed well in advance of polling day, it is because of his initiatives. If politicians are no longer able to purchase votes, it is due to his efforts. And if the current Election Commissioner refrains from acting as a mere puppet of the government, it is a testament to Seshan's influence.

Born Tirunellai Narayana Iyer Seshan on December 15, 1932 in Thirunellai, Palakkad district of Kerala, he ruthlessly enforced the model code of conduct much to the chagrin of political parties.

On August 2, 1993, TN Seshan issued a 17-page order, stating that elections would not be held until the government recognized the Election



Biography, "An Intimate Story" written by a journalist Govindan Kutty

Commission's powers. This sent shockwaves throughout the country. It was a defining moment when Indians, including politicians, realized that the Election Commission's independence and autonomy from the government.

When Seshan refused to allow Rajya Sabha elections, then-Union Minister Pranab Mukherjee was forced to resign. West Bengal's Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, was so enraged that he called Seshan a "mad dog."

Former Prime Minister VP Singh remarked at the time, "We've heard of factory lockouts, but Seshan has locked out democracy itself."

In an attempt to dilute his power, the government appointed two additional election commissioners, GVG Krishnamurthy and MS Gill.

Seshan refused to cooperate with them, leading the matter to the Supreme Court. The court ruled in Seshan's favour, stating that the Deputy EC could take charge of affairs only in the absence of the Chief Election Commissioner.

During his tenure, Seshan didn't hesitate to take action against anyone, from Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to Himachal Pradesh Governor Gulsher Ahmed and Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav.

If we no longer witness vehicles blaring political slogans through mounted microphones, it is thanks to him. If we observe candidates' wealth disclosed well in advance of polling day, it is because of his initiatives. And if the current Election Commissioner refrains from acting as a mere puppet of the government, it is because of the legacy left behind by Seshan.

Cleaning up Elections

Seshan is credited with a series of impactful reforms that cleaned up the country's electoral process.

Curbing Malpractices:

- **Voter ID:** To prevent fraud, Seshan introduced photo identification cards for voters, ensuring only eligible individuals could cast ballots.
- **Campaign Finance:** He imposed spending caps on elections, forcing candidates to play by the rules. Additionally, candidates were required to disclose their income to promote transparency.
- **Fair Play:** Seshan banned divisive tactics like caste-based campaigning and the defacement of public property with political slogans. He even made candidates clean up their own mess!
- **Monitoring:** Video surveillance teams were deployed to deter misconduct, and a code of conduct prevented candidates from bribing voters with last-minute promises.
- **Neutrality:** Seshan ensured a level playing field by prohibiting the use of government resources like vehicles and buildings for campaigning.

The first example of his independent nature was found when, after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, he postponed the Lok Sabha elections without consulting the government.

In his biography, "An Intimate Story" written



by a journalist Govindan Kutty, Seshan recounted that the Chief Election Commissioner preceding him used to wait outside the Law Minister's office waiting to be called in.

A 1955 batch IAS officer, Seshan was appointed as the Chief Election Commissioner on December 12, 1990. The Election Commission is a constitutional body, meaning the government cannot dismiss the commissioner for six years once appointed.

He could have been forced to resign by impeachment in parliament. Members of Parliament also tried to impeach him for canceling the Punjab and Bihar elections, but failed.

During this period, he scrutinized around 40,000 candidates for income fraud and submission of false documents and disqualified 14,000 candidates from the elections.

Seshan's most high-profile victim was Gulsher Ahmed, the then Governor of Himachal Pradesh. He had to resign from his post after the Election Commission postponed the Satna elections.

During this period, he scrutinized around 40,000 candidates for income fraud and submission of false documents and disqualified 14,000 candidates from the elections.

Gulsher Ahmed was accused of campaigning in the Satna constituency in favor of his son while holding the post of Governor. Seshan refused to hold the elections as scheduled, forcing Gulsher to step down.

Similarly, in eastern Uttar Pradesh, former Minister of State for Food Kalpanath Rai was caught campaigning for his nephew after the election campaign had stopped. Seshan warned him that if he continued to deliver the speech, the Commission would have to cancel the election.



Former Governor of Himachal Pradesh, Gulsher Ahmed had to resign his post after the Election Commission postponed the Satna elections. Seshan Refused to conduct the elections as Gulsher was accused of campaigning in the Satna constituency in favor of his son

'Mr Prime Minister, Dont think that I am the Horse and You are the Rider': Seshan

Once Law Secretary Rama Devi called the Election Commission and said that Minister of State for Law Rangarajan Kumaramangalam wants that the by-election of Etawah should not be held right now.

Seshan writes in his biography, "I called the Prime Minister directly and said that the government probably has the misconception that I am the horse and the government is the rider. I will not accept this."

"If you have a good reason for implementing any decision, let me know. I will think about it and give my decision. But I will not follow any orders."

"After listening to me, the Prime Minister said, you resolve your matter with Rangarajan. I said, I will resolve this matter with you and not with him." That was style and stature of Seshan. Throughout his tenure, he played by the book, and asked others to do the same.

"I am not Cooperative Society, I am Election Commissioner": Seshan

When Seshan became the CEC, Law Minister Vijay Bhaskar Reddy started asking the Election Commission to answer the questions raised in Parliament. Seshan strongly opposed this. He clarified that the Election Commission is not a department of the government. Vijay Bhaskar took this issue to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. TN Seshan writes in his biography, "Reddy said to me in the presence of the Prime Minister, Seshan, you are not cooperating. I replied, I am not a cooperative society. I represent the Election Commission." "The Prime Minister was stunned to hear this. Then I turned towards the Prime Minister and said, Mr. Prime Minister, if your minister continues to have the same attitude, then I cannot work with him."



SANTIAGO MARTIN

A GAMBLERS' BOSS

HOW TAMIL NADU'S LOTTERY KING ALWAYS HIT JACKPOT?

📍 Narayan Ammachchi

Santiago Martin's story is a head-scratcher. In the 1980s, he was just another face behind the counter at a Coimbatore tea shop, selling lottery tickets.

He was not making much money to enjoy life. It was during these days that he must have realized that the one who places the bet never makes money, but the one who organizes the game does.

He launched his own lottery agency instead of waiting for someone to draw a jackpot. He was mesmerized by the craze around lottery tickets in Tamil Nadu. Within a matter of days, Martin's agency grew rich and overtook two competitors to become the biggest seller of lottery tickets in the state.

He has since never looked back. As years went by, he started branching out into various other businesses, from movies to hotels

Investigative agencies have made very severe allegations against Santiago Martin, the Lottery King. They claim that he falsely claimed prize money from unsold tickets and rigged lottery draws. If proven guilty, Martin might spend the rest of his life in jail.



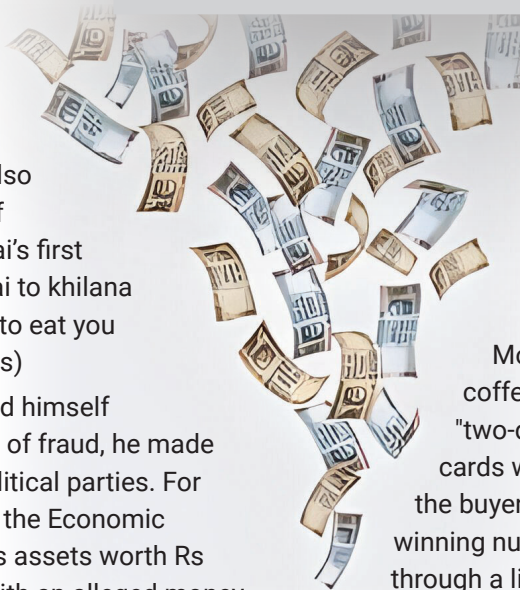
Martin used to be a lottery seller before getting into gambling business

and TV channels to real estate. Perhaps, he was also aware of a usual saying of Haji Mastan Mirja, Mumbai's first underworld don. Khana hai to khilana bhi padta hai (if you want to eat you have to share it with others)

Every time Martin found himself surrounded by allegations of fraud, he made generous donations to political parties. For example, on April 2, 2022, the Economic Directorate (ED) seized his assets worth Rs 409 crore in connection with an alleged money laundering case. Five days later, on April 7, 2022, his company purchased electoral bonds worth Rs 100 crore.

Between April 2019 and January 2024, his Future Gaming and Hotel Services Pvt. Ltd bought election bonds worth Rs 1,368 crore. As expected, a lion's share of his political donation went to Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the ruling party in Tamil Nadu.

Martin's life reveals a fascinating rags-to-riches story, as he went from working as a daily-wage labourer to running a lottery empire



that stretches across several states as well as Bhutan, which is the country where he was once a laborer.

The Turning Point

Money started to mount in his coffers when he started selling "two-digit" lottery tickets - scratch cards which revealed two digits that the buyer could instantly check against winning numbers, which are revealed through a live telecast facilitated by his company.

In late 90s, across Tamil Nadu, hundreds of ticker buyers, mostly poor households, would wait for the draw of jackpot in tea shops, watching the results on small TV sets.

Many lottery buyers went bankrupt, but Martin's riches kept on growing in an unprecedented way. At this time, he expanded his business to other Southern states, including Karnataka and Kerala and then to north-eastern states such as Sikkim.

By the turn of the century, in early 2000, Martin had started selling 12 million lottery

He Spent Seven Months in Jail

Martin's empire faced a significant setback when the Enforcement Directorate (ED) launched an investigation into his company's practices. The charges, filed several years ago, alleged that Martin's company claimed prize money from unsold tickets and even manipulated lottery draws. Martin's associates vehemently denied these claims, countering that their competitors, in collusion with politicians, were attempting to cripple their business. Martin's fortunes had already begun to wane a few years prior. In 2003, Tamil Nadu's then Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, citing concerns about the lottery's detrimental effects on families, banned the sale of lottery tickets in the state. This move dealt a severe blow to Martin's business. Martin's legal troubles escalated when he was arrested in a land grabbing case in Coimbatore. He was subsequently arrested under the Gangster Act within a two-week period. A total of 14 charges were filed against him, including the sale of unauthorized lottery tickets. While the Madras High Court later struck down the Gangster Act charges, Martin remained in jail for approximately seven months before securing bail. Adding to Martin's woes, his wife, Leema Rose Martin, filed a police complaint against individuals from Coimbatore and Chennai, alleging extortion and threats to smuggle and sell lottery tickets illegally in Tamil Nadu under Martin's name.



tickets every day. By then, his company had agreements with several state governments for distributing lottery tickets.

Martin paid massive sums every day - 350,000 rupees in sales tax to the Tamil Nadu government- underscoring the thundering success of his business, according to a 2001 article on Rediff.com.

As the owner of a lottery agency, he cannot afford to stay away from politicians and the people with power. Nor can he afford to openly support a particular party. Therefore, Martin's family members have ties to different political parties - his son-in-law is a member of the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi, which is part of a Congress-led opposition alliance, while his wife Leema has joined the Indhiya Jananayaga Katchi (Indian Democratic Party), an ally of the BJP.

Sikkim Scandal

In 2008, Martin found himself thrust into the spotlight amidst accusations of defrauding the Sikkim government to the tune of over Rs 4500 crore.

According to court documents, Martin and his company allegedly conspired to flout the Lottery Regulation Act of 1998 by striking a deal with Sikkim officials. This alleged agreement, involving Martin's company purportedly handed them significant control over the Sikkim State Lottery. The ED claims that this maneuver was designed to sidestep regulations mandating the remittance of the lottery ticket face value to the government, ultimately enabling Martin and his company to rake in substantial profits.

The wheels of justice began turning in 2019, with the investigation officially kicking off. By July of that year, assets worth Rs 250 crore belonging to Martin's company were promptly seized. Later in 2022, ED attempted to seize his property worth 409 crore.

Martin was, in fact, a small-time lottery salesman. Perhaps he quickly realized that the one who places the bet never makes money, but the one who organizes the game does. Therefore, he chose to become the organizer of the game instead of a punter. This strategy yielded rich dividends, catapulting him to the status of a 'business tycoon'.

Martin paid massive sums every day



3,50,000

CASES AGAINST MARTIN

In 2007, Kerala was shaken by a political scandal when the then Chief Minister, VS Achuthanandan, publicly condemned his party's newspaper for accepting a significant donation of 2 crore rupees from Santiago Martin. The donation was directed to Desapimani, the official newspaper of Kerala's Marxist Communist Party. The Chief Minister appeared to believe that the Lottery King's donation is 'dirty money'. It caused considerable embarrassment to the party, leading to the resignation of Desapimani's general manager, E.P. Jayaranjan. And the money had to be returned. In 2011, Martin found himself entangled in another controversy, this time in Tamil Nadu. He had begun funding movies. In Tamil Nadu, you cannot win the hearts of people unless you find yourself mingling with film celebrities. Martin

funded the film 'Ilaignan', adapted from Maxim Karki's novel 'Tai'. The screenplay was penned by M. Karunanidhi, the leader of the DMK party and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Despite its substantial budget of around 20 crores, the film received predominantly negative reviews. Even five years ago in 2019, Martin once again found himself embroiled in controversy. Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister at the time, MK Stalin, took legal action against a popular magazine, Junior Vikatan, following the publication of a story alleging that he had struck a deal worth crores of rupees in political donations. Stalin vehemently denied these accusations, dismissing them as unfounded and asserting that Martin had never contributed to his party.



A civilian Buying lottery tickets





MISSION DIVYASTRA PROPELS INDIA TO ELITE CLUB

Mission Divyastra places India among a select group of nations with MIRV technology, such as the United States, Russia, and China. This confirms India's emergence as a leading power in missile technology. More than anything else, the mission has reduced the country's reliance on foreign suppliers, fostering domestic production of advanced missile systems.

🕒 **Wing Commander BS Sudarshan**

On March 11, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the successful completion of Mission Divyastra, the country's maiden flight test of the Agni-V missile using Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology, developed in-house.

So, what significance does this success hold for India? Well, it is multipronged. We now know that while the MIRV will make sure that a single missile can deploy several warheads in



various places, the system's domestically built avionics system and highly accurate sensor package will guarantee that the re-entry vehicles arrive at the target places with the appropriate level of precision.

However, the biggest highlight is that the development will reduce India's dependency on foreign suppliers for defence needs and, bolster the production of advanced missile technologies indigenously. Besides this, there are only a few countries like the US, Russia, and China that possess MIRV technology. Mission Divyastra's success places India in this 'Elite League,' of leading powers in missile technology.

The Rise of Dependence

India's dependence on the Soviet Union for missiles was significant during the Cold War era. The Soviet Union emerged as a major arms supplier to India in the mid-1960s, following the Sino-Indian War of 1962. Western powers, like the US and UK, were hesitant to provide military equipment to India due to its non-aligned foreign policy. However, the Soviets, on the other hand, saw India as a strategic partner against China and offered advanced weaponry, including MiG-21 jet fighters and SA-2 surface-to-air missiles. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, India's dependence shifted towards Russia, which inherited the Soviet military-industrial complex. This dependence, however, created some limitations for India, such as limited bargaining power when negotiating arms deals with the Soviets and vulnerability to disruptions in supply if political relations soured.

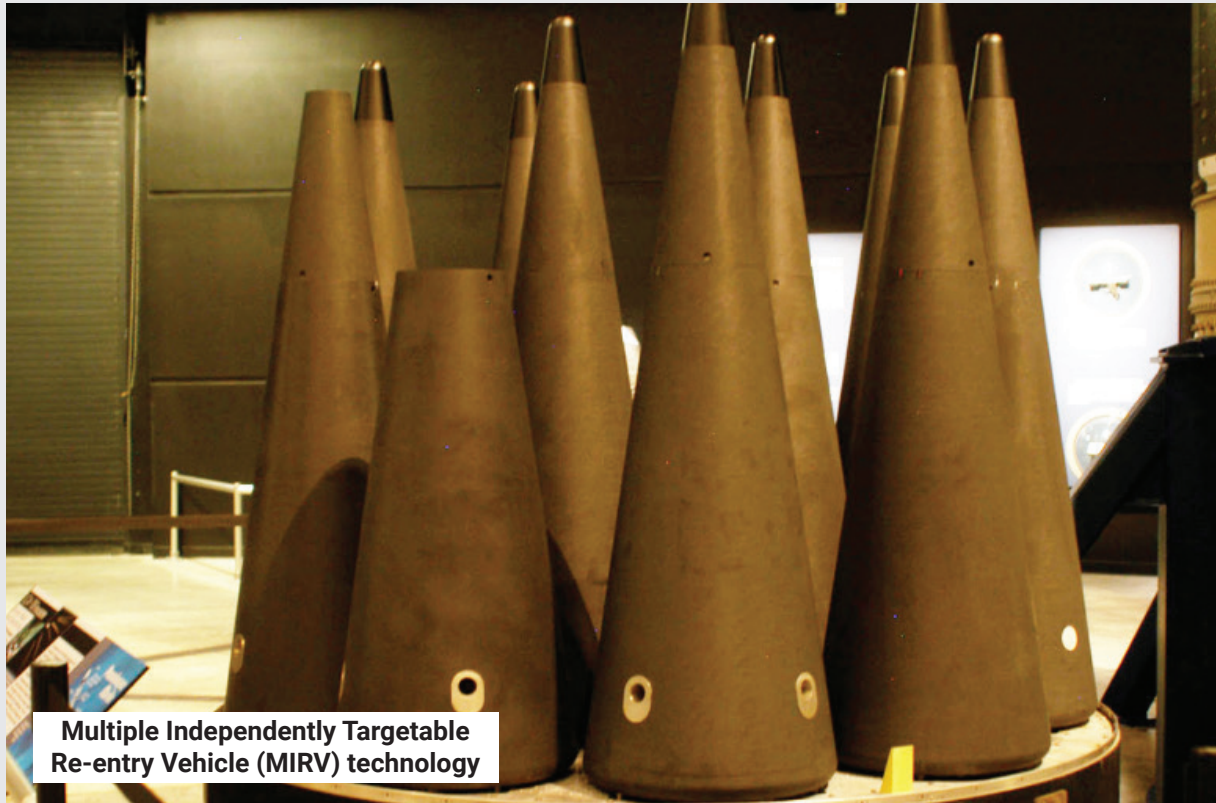
Today, India is diversifying its arms acquisitions, with countries like France and Israel becoming important suppliers. However, Russia remains a key partner, and India recently acquired the S-400 missile defence system from them, despite potential sanctions from the US.

Meanwhile, India has also actively pursued indigenous development of its missile technology. India has gradually diversified its sources for acquiring missile technology to reduce dependence on any single supplier, specifically the then-Soviet Union. This shift away from over-reliance on Russian technology compelled India to develop its missile technology, and India started investing heavily in indigenous missile research and development programs.

Towards Self-Dependence

The ultimate goal for India is to achieve self-sufficiency in





missile production and reduce dependence on external powers. Institutions like the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) have spearheaded efforts to design and produce various missile systems domestically. Thus, India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP) came into existence in 1983 to achieve self-reliance in the field of missile technology.

One of the primary goals of IGMDP was to develop a range of guided missiles entirely within India. The program aimed to acquire advanced missile technologies through indigenous research, development, and collaboration with other countries by developing a variety of missile systems capable of fulfilling India's strategic and tactical requirements, including deterrence, defence, and precision strike capabilities.

The program aimed to develop missiles that were not only technologically advanced but also cost-effective, allowing for mass production and deployment. The development of a diverse

range of missiles capable of serving different purposes, including surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, air-to-air, and anti-tank roles.

Undoubtedly, India is inching closer to fulfilling one of the biggest dreams of the "Missile Man of India," AJP Abdul Kalam of self-reliance and technological innovation.

Many Missiles

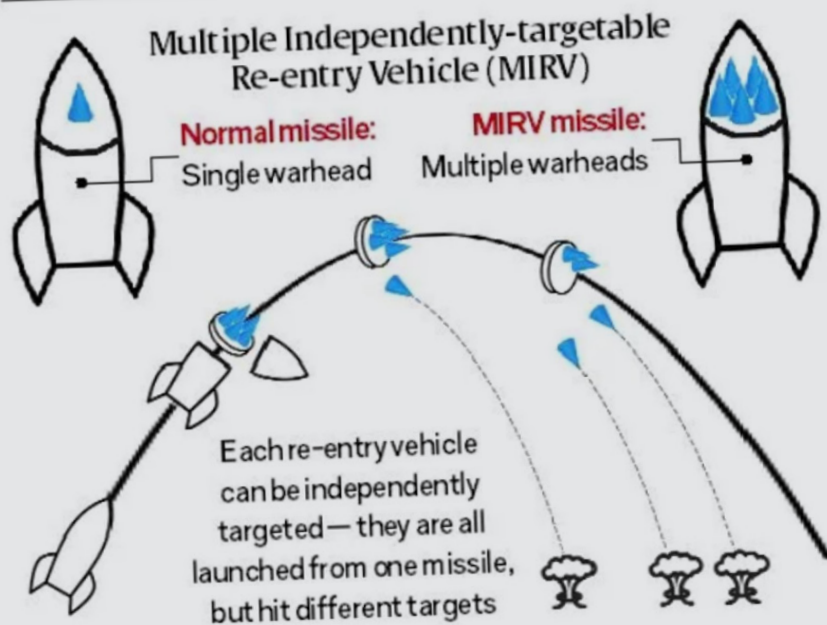
The IGMDP resulted in the successful development and deployment of several missile systems. Here is an overview:

Prithvi: A short-range ballistic missile capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads. It was developed in both land and sea-based variants.

Agni: A family of medium to intercontinental-range ballistic missiles. Agni missiles have been developed in various versions, including Agni-I, Agni-II, Agni-III, Agni-IV, and Agni-V, each with different ranges and capabilities.

Akash: A surface-to-air missile system designed to intercept and destroy enemy aircraft and

ONE MISSILE, MANY WARHEADS



INDIA'S STRATEGIC LEAP WITH AGNI-5 MIRV TECHNOLOGY

MISSION DIVYASTRA UNVEILED

missiles in the air. It provides air defence coverage to critical assets and areas.

Nag: An anti-tank guided missile system designed for use by infantry and armoured vehicles. It can engage and destroy armoured targets at ranges of up to 4 kilometres.

Trishul: A short-range, quick-reaction surface-to-air missile system designed for use by the Indian Air Force and Navy. It provides close-range air defence against enemy aircraft and missiles.

The successful development and deployment of these missile systems under the IGMDP have significantly bolstered India's defence capabilities, providing the country with a robust and versatile missile arsenal for both deterrence and defence purposes.

About Agni

The Agni missile is a family of ballistic missiles developed as part of India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Program. The word "Agni" means fire in Sanskrit, and these missiles are named after the ancient Vedic deity of fire. The Agni series comprises several variants with



ISRO scientist testing the missile

different ranges, capabilities, and purposes. Here's a detailed description of some key Agni missile variants:

Agni-I: The Agni-I is the first missile developed

under the Agni series. It is a short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) with a range of around 700-900 kilometres. Agni-I is primarily designed for tactical use and can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads. It is road-mobile, allowing for quick deployment and increased survivability.

Agni-II: The Agni-II is an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) with an extended range compared to Agni-I. It has a range of approximately 2,000-3,000 kilometres, making it capable of reaching targets deeper into enemy territory. Agni-II is also road-mobile and can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads.

Agni-III: The Agni-III is an intermediate to long-range ballistic missile with a range of around 3,000-5,000 kilometres. It represents a significant advancement in India's missile technology, with improved accuracy and range compared to earlier variants. Agni-III is designed to provide a credible deterrent against potential adversaries and can carry both conventional and nuclear payloads.

Agni-IV: The Agni-IV is an intermediate-range ballistic missile with a range of approximately 4,000 kilometres. It is an improvement over the

Agni-III, featuring enhanced range and accuracy. Agni-IV is capable of striking targets across a wide area, including deep inside enemy territory. Like other Agni variants, it can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads.

Agni-V: The Agni-V is the most advanced missile in the Agni series and represents a significant leap in India's ballistic missile technology. It is an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a range exceeding 5,000 kilometres, making it capable of reaching targets anywhere in Asia and parts of Europe and Africa.

Agni-V is designed to provide India with a credible strategic deterrent. It can carry multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs), further enhancing its effectiveness.

Overall, the Agni missile series plays a crucial role in India's strategic deterrence posture, providing the country with a versatile and potent missile arsenal capable of delivering both conventional and nuclear payloads to targets across a wide range of distances.



ISRO research center



What is MIRV Technology?


Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology is a sophisticated feature employed in certain ballistic missiles, enhancing their effectiveness and versatility. The MIRV payload of Agni-V is equipped with multiple nuclear warheads, each of which is designed to be delivered at a different speed and along a different trajectory to strike distinct targets hundreds of kilometres apart.

The missile defence system can be defeated by MIRV and intelligent re-entry vehicles, which is what DRDO has been working on for several years. For several to the real warhead, MIRV can also use decoys to avoid detection. The test signifies the successful miniaturisation of nuclear warheads by DRDO. The impact location of each warhead is separated by approximately 200 kilometres as it descends at varying speeds into the earth. Carbon composites are used in manufacturing to ensure that the warhead

can survive high temperatures and not disintegrate during the re-entry phase.

Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) technology is a sophisticated feature employed in certain ballistic missiles, enhancing their effectiveness and versatility.

Here's a scientific breakdown of how MIRV technology works:

Re-entry Vehicle (RV): A re-entry vehicle is the payload section of a ballistic missile that carries the warhead(s) and any associated decoys or penetration aids. The RV is designed to survive the intense heat and pressure of re-entering the Earth's atmosphere after being launched into space. The Earth's atmosphere is composed of several layers, each with distinct characteristics and properties. These layers collectively form the Earth's atmosphere, providing vital support for life on our planet and playing a crucial role in regulating climate, weather, and various atmospheric phenomena. 



COVER STORY

GIVING SUPARI

TO PAKISTANIS

TO KILL TERRORISTS

Indian secretive agents have assassinated dozens of terrorists hiding in Pakistan

Curiously, all these targeted killings were executed by contract killers who are citizens of Pakistan. Among them was an individual employed as a packing assistant at an Amazon store in Dubai. While The Guardian's narrative lacks specifics regarding the dates and locations of these operations, Pakistani publications offer detailed insights. The majority of these assassinations occurred within mosques, where the targeted terrorists had congregated for prayer. Remarkably, among the slain are individuals involved in the infamous hijacking of an Air India flight during the 1990s.

🕒 Narayan Ammachchi

Earlier in the second week of April this year, two masked men silently walked into a house on Ganga Street in the Pakistani city of Lahore and opened fire at 58-year-old Amir Sarfraz Tamba.

At least three bullets struck Tamba's chest, leaving him unconscious. As the assassins fled on a motorbike, family members rushed him to a hospital, where he was declared dead.

Tamba had in fact killed Sarabjit Singh, an Indian national who was detained in Kot Lakhpat prison on charges of espionage.

The assassination of Tamba unfolded just a week after British daily The Guardian published a sensational article. The article accused India of conducting targeted killings on Pakistani soil as part of preemptive measures against terrorist organizations planning attacks within Indian borders.

On a serene Sunday evening in February last year, Khalid Raza, a notorious figure known to be harboring terrorist ties within Pakistan, emerged from his residence in Gulistan Johar, a densely populated residential area in Karachi, Pakistan's bustling port city. As he approached a waiting vehicle stationed on the main road, two assailants on a motorcycle swiftly approached and fatally shot him. With swift precision, they fled the scene on their bikes, leaving behind a grim aftermath.

The following day, Pakistani newspapers refrained from labeling the deceased as a terrorist. Instead, they portrayed him as an "educationist" and the director of the Darul Arqam Schools. "Educationist shot dead in targeted attack," read the headline in Dawn,



India's intelligence operatives have reportedly orchestrated over 20 targeted eliminations of terrorists hiding in Pakistan. While these covert operations commenced as early as 2022, they gained widespread attention following the publication of an article by the British newspaper, The Guardian. Aseemaa has meticulously compiled a comprehensive article, amalgamating insights from both international and local Pakistani media sources, to unveil the gripping intricacies surrounding this clandestine series of assassinations.

a prominent Pakistani English daily, attributing the killing directly to the covert actions of Indian intelligence operatives.

However, a week later, the Sindh Desh Army, a separatist militant group, claimed responsibility for Raza's assassination.

The truth, however, reveals Khalid Raza's extensive involvement with terrorism, particularly with the Al-Badr Mujahideen, a group notorious for orchestrating attacks against the Indian army in Kashmir during the 1990s. Hailing from the Bihari community in Karachi, Raza received military training at Al Badr training camps in Afghanistan. Al-Badr Mujahideen, operating as a sub-military wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, has



Targetting and killing the terrorist at their home

maintained a presence in Afghanistan since the early 1980s.

In the late 1990s, Raza ascended to the leadership role within Al Badr for the Karachi division, solidifying his influence throughout the province.

Following the 9/11 attacks in New York, Pakistani military leader Pervez Musharraf, under pressure from the United States, banned "jihadi organizations," prompting Raza to adopt the guise of an educationist. This transformation was part of the "rehabilitation programs" orchestrated by Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI, aimed at concealing the identities of terrorists operating within its borders. Despite this, Raza remained a target of surveillance for Indian intelligence agents.

Another Killing of a terrorist

On February 20, 2023, Bashir Ahmad Pir, also known as Imtiaz Alam, fell victim to a fatal shooting orchestrated by unidentified assailants

on motorcycles. The incident occurred as he was returning home after prayers at a mosque in Rawalpindi. As is their modus operandi, the perpetrators swiftly fled the scene.

Bashir Ahmed, aged 60, hailed from the Kupwara area in Srinagar, India. He maintained ties with Hizbul Mujahideen, the largest Kashmiri 'jihadi' organization, since the late 1980s. Relocating to Pakistan with his family in the early 1990s, he rose to prominence within Hizbul Mujahideen, eventually becoming one of its most influential commanders. Notably, he served as the founding head of the organization and held a position on the Supreme Council.

In March 2022, a significant event unfolded in India's pursuit of justice. Two individuals parked their motorcycle in Akhtar Colony, Karachi, and swiftly approached a nearby furniture store. Upon entering the establishment, they brandished firearms and opened fire on Mastri Zahid Ibrahim.

Mastri Zahid Ibrahim was the mastermind



Al-Badr Mujahideen



Muhammad Riaz



Bashir Ahmad Pir

behind the terrorist gang responsible for hijacking an Indian passenger plane in December 1999 from Nepal, diverting it to Kandahar. This audacious act led to the release of Jaish-e-Mohammed founder Maulana Masood Azhar, who had been imprisoned in India for years, along with two other key commanders, Mushtaq Zargar, and Umar Saeed Sheikh.

What the Guardian Story says?

According to The Guardian, information sourced from Pakistani intelligence confirms India's involvement in these killings, purportedly executed by numerous hired assassins. The newspaper points to a plethora of evidence held by Pakistan's foreign ministry, including witness testimonies, arrest records, financial statements, WhatsApp messages, and passports.

Allegedly, Indian spies orchestrated over 20 killings within Pakistani territory. Notably, Pakistani authorities have been hesitant to publicly acknowledge these incidents, primarily because the targeted individuals were known criminals, and Pakistan has consistently denied providing them shelter. Consequently, these killings have proven both embarrassing and distressing for Pakistani authorities.

This policy of Indian agents orchestrating killings in Pakistan arose following the 2019 Pulwama terror attack, which claimed the lives of 40 Indian soldiers. The attack heightened concerns that Pakistani militants might stage similar assaults, akin to the 2008

Mumbai bombings. Thus, the Narendra Modi government purportedly opted to eliminate criminals within Pakistan preemptively.

According to The Guardian, India's covert operatives oversaw these killings from several neighboring countries, including Nepal, the Maldives, and Mauritius. However, their primary operational hub was reportedly in Dubai, where a significant number of Pakistanis reside. Allegedly, agents entrusted locals with the task of carrying out these hits, with one notable instance being the assassination of Shahid Latif, a commander of Jaish-e-Mohammed, through Dubai.

Reportedly, India's undercover agents enlisted a 20-year-old Pakistani worker from an Amazon packing warehouse in Dubai, described as illiterate, to execute Latif's killing.

"Pakistani investigators found that the man had allegedly been paid 1.5m Pakistani rupees (£4,000) by an undercover Indian agent



shahid-latif



to track down Latif and later was promised 15m Pakistani rupees and his own catering company in the UAE if he carried out the killing. The young man shot Latif dead in a mosque in Sialkot but was arrested soon after, along with accomplices," the Guardian report reads.

What Pakistani Papers report?

Aseema has also gone through multiple articles published by Pakistani news papers on these targeted killings. On January 25 of this year, Pakistani newspaper Dawn disclosed that Pakistan possesses compelling evidence implicating Indian operatives in the targeted killings of what it terms as "Pakistani nationals." Specifically naming Shahid Latif and Muhammad Riaz, the paper alleged that Indian agents utilized sophisticated technology and safe havens, alongside recruiting unsuspecting civilians and providing financial backing for these assassinations, as cited by the country's foreign ministry.

According to Dawn's report, Shahid Latif's assailant was identified as Muhammad Umair, while Muhammad Abdullah Ali was named as Riaz's killer. While details surrounding Umair's apprehension remain undisclosed, Ali was reportedly arrested on September 15, 2023, while attempting to board a flight at Karachi

Airport.


Mohammad Shahid Latif had drawn India's attention following his involvement in a terrorist attack on an Indian Air Force base in Pathankot in 2016.

On October 11, 2023, a chilling assassination took place at Noori-i-Madina Masjid in Mandike Guraya Chowk, Narowal, a small city in Pakistan's Punjab province. Six individuals arrived, parking their motorbikes outside the mosque during the ongoing prayer session. While three joined the congregation, the remaining individuals stayed outside.

Those who entered targeted Maulana Shahid Latif, fatally shooting him at close range, resulting in instant death. The attack also left Latif's security guard, Hashim Ali, and prayer leader, Maulana Ahad, critically injured. Although both were rushed to Daska Tehsil Hospital, they succumbed to their injuries later that evening. The assailants managed to escape.

In September 2023, another significant event occurred as unidentified gunmen in occupied Kashmir shot dead Riyaz Ahmad, also known as Abu Qasim, commander of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), at Al-Qudus mosque in Rawalkot. Two individuals, seemingly in pursuit of Qasim, waited outside the mosque before entering and executing the attack in a similar fashion to Latif's killing.

The Guardian reported that the alleged assassin, Muhammad Abdullah, a 20-year-old from Lahore, was recruited through a Telegram channel catering to individuals interested in joining the Islamic State (IS).

Indian intelligence agents purportedly infiltrated the channel, recruiting Abdullah for the assassination under the guise of fighting for IS in Afghanistan. According to Pakistani investigators, Abdullah confessed that he was promised deployment to Afghanistan if he successfully carried out the killing of an "infidel" in Pakistan, with Ahmed presented as the target. 



HAS MODI GOVERNMENT TAXED PETROL?

If the Modi Government hadn't imposed taxes on petrol and diesel, it would have been compelled to resort to substantial borrowing to sustain its social welfare initiatives, including the distribution of food grains. Contrastingly, the preceding Manmohan Government incurred significant debt due to its decision to sell petrol at subsidized rates. Presently, the revenue generated from the purchase of petroleum products largely finances vital social welfare programs under Modi's leadership.

These welfare initiatives, such as Ayushman Bharat and the distribution of food grains, are integral to the country's efforts to alleviate poverty. Over the past decade, millions of people have been lifted out of extreme poverty. It's important to note that reducing poverty also contributes to crime prevention. A stark illustration is provided by Pakistan, where a financially strained government has left the country grappling with soaring crime rates.



🕒 Parikshit Dhume

Amidst the 2015 plunge in oil prices driven by a global production surplus, the Modi government opted to implement a tax on oil rather than passing the reduced prices directly to the public. Subsequently, it redirected the additional revenue towards funding its social welfare programs, including the provision of free rationed food grains.

This tax, commonly referred to as petroleum tax, assumed heightened significance as a vital revenue source during the global economic downturn precipitated by the COVID pandemic outbreak.

The significance of tax revenue derived from the petroleum sector in India has notably escalated following the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). Over the past decade, petroleum taxes have consistently contributed more than 2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Notably, excise duty from petroleum products alone now constitutes 85-90 percent of all excises collected by the Union Government, constituting approximately 24 percent of indirect tax revenue in the fiscal year 2018-19.

From the fiscal year 2014-15 to 2019-2020, excise revenue from petrol and diesel surged by over 94 percent, escalating from approximately Rs 1720 billion to about Rs 3343 billion for the Union Government. Concurrently, for State Governments, there was a significant increase in Value Added Tax (VAT) revenue, rising by about 37 percent from Rs 1605 billion to Rs 2210 billion during the same period.

Several economists and environmentalists have proposed the rationalization of diesel excise to mitigate the adverse incentives associated with diesel consumption, particularly in high-end passenger vehicles, and to address pollution concerns.

Amidst formidable challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions like those between Russia and Ukraine, when global oil prices surged, the Modi government adeptly employed diplomacy and effective economic strategies to manage prices and ensure the uninterrupted operation of various schemes.

Why Taxing Petrol is better than Borrowing Loan From Abroad?

Compared to other funding models for social schemes, the utilization of oil tax presents distinct advantages. Unlike external funding sources such as foreign aid, oil tax offers a reliable and substantial revenue stream that can be directly earmarked for social development initiatives. This strategy ensures enhanced control over funds, facilitating long-term planning and implementation of social programs. Moreover, by reducing reliance on external sources, the government can align the social development agenda with national priorities. In summary, the Modi Government's innovative use of oil tax to finance social schemes has yielded significant positive outcomes for the people of India. Initiatives like Ayushman Bharat, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan underscore the government's dedication to social development and empowerment. Despite criticisms and challenges, the success stories and widespread public support for these initiatives underscore the effectiveness and sustainability of this approach. By leveraging revenue generated from oil tax, the Modi Government has laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and prosperous society.

AUGUST 16, 2022

Out of the Rs 1.34 lakh crore worth of oil bonds, only Rs 3,500 crore of principal has been repaid.

2023-24

Rs 31,150 crore repay amount

Current fiscal year

the government is obligated to repay Rs 10,000 crore, followed by Rs 31,150 crore in 2023-24

2025-26

Repay amount Rs 36,913 crore



Debts Created by Manmohan Government

Amidst relentless criticisms from the opposition regarding fuel prices, Finance Minister Sitharaman dismissed the possibility of reducing excise duty on petrol and diesel to alleviate costs, citing constraints stemming from payments for past subsidized fuel.

During the tenure of the previous Congress-led UPA government, petrol, diesel, cooking gas, and kerosene were sold at subsidized rates. Rather than directly subsidizing the retail selling price to offset the soaring costs driven by international rates surpassing USD 100 per barrel, the UPA government opted to issue oil bonds totaling Rs 1.34 lakh crore to state-fuel retailers.

On August 16, 2022, it was revealed that out of the Rs 1.34 lakh crore worth of oil bonds, only Rs 3,500 crore of principal has been repaid, leaving approximately Rs 1.3 lakh crore due for repayment between the current fiscal year and 2025-26.



Over Half Your Petrol and Diesel Bill Goes to Taxes

The price you pay for petrol and diesel is more than double the cost of the crude oil itself. This is because of various taxes levied by both the central and state governments, which together add up to over 50% of the final price. While crude oil is purchased internationally, by the time it reaches gas stations, the cost has ballooned due to taxes imposed by both the central and state governments. These include excise duty, VAT (Value Added Tax), and dealer commission. Both excise duty and VAT are significant sources of income for the government. The Finance Minister highlighted that state VAT contributes just as much to the high prices as central taxes. Currently, petrol and diesel are not included under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), a unified tax system across India. The Finance Minister suggested keeping the current system where both central and state governments levy their own taxes, instead of opting for a single shared GST on fuel.

crore in 2025-26. Finance Minister expressed frustration over the substantial sums allocated for interest payments and principal repayments, characterizing the situation as an unjust burden.

Praise of IMF

While the Modi government's initiatives have yielded positive results, they haven't been

immune to criticisms and challenges from certain global experts and economists. However, the majority of economic experts and social sector agencies have lauded these measures as "life-changing" and "path-breaking." Notably, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has praised the government's pro-people policies, highlighting the significant achievement of lifting 23 crore people out of poverty.

The distribution of free food grains, a cornerstone of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) launched in March 2020, played a crucial role in this endeavor. Under this scheme, the Centre provided five kilograms of food grains every month to each beneficiary family, in addition to the subsidized quota distributed under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) at Rs 2-3 per kg.

According to an IMF paper released on April 5, 2022, this program served as a safety net for the poor, preventing an escalation in extreme poverty levels in India amid one of the world's largest income shocks. Extreme poverty, as defined by the United Nations, encompasses severe deprivation of basic human needs, including access to food, water, sanitation, health, shelter, education, and information. The IMF paper further posits that the provision of free food grains played a pivotal role in mitigating the increase in extreme poverty in India.

Economist Badri Narayanan Gopalakrishnan, formerly a Senior Advisor at Niti Aayog, based in the United States, expressed satisfaction with the Modi government's policies and the implementation of social sector schemes. He hailed these initiatives as "smart economics," commending the government for effectively managing the fiscal deficit despite global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which have precipitated job losses and inflationary pressures worldwide, impeding global growth and development.



A photograph of Justice Abhijit Ganguly, a man with dark hair, a mustache, and glasses, wearing a white shirt. He is waving his right hand towards the camera. In the background, another man in a blue shirt is partially visible, and a white car is parked. The scene is outdoors with greenery.

JUSTICE GANGULY

WEST BENGAL'S POLITICAL PRINCE

Justice Ganguly is highly regarded in West Bengal, with his popularity soaring even higher after a ruling that eased the concerns of thousands of job seekers. This ruling came as a blow to the ruling party, TMC, whose leaders are not fond of him. The judgment confirmed that TMC leaders were accepting bribes to offer jobs to unqualified candidates.

**Bengal's Judge
leaves Court to
Join Politics**

🕒 Kunal Chatterjee

In West Bengal, there is no need to introduce Justice Abhijit Ganguly. He has a well-deserved reputation as a fighter against corruption. Often called the 'people's judge,' he became well-known for his unapologetic opinions that frequently got the ruling party, Trinamool Congress (TMC) into hot water. He has had several unprecedented steps in his career and has now taken yet another one- becoming the first high court judge in recent memory to leave the bench and enter the political arena.

Justice Ganguly is a straightforward and outspoken individual who doesn't mince words. This outspoken attitude of the former judge could also prove disastrous to the BJP, which has already got a taste of it.

His political plunge has sent ripples through the power corridors in West Bengal. The BJP's latest recruit has been fielded from Tamruk Lok Sabha constituency, one of BJP's strongholds and this gives the TMC certain reasons to be worried.

Over the last few years, the name Justice Abhijit Ganguly has hit the headlines of almost every vernacular newspaper and TV screendue to his unwavering opposition to the Trinamool Congress.

He questioned their governances, scrutinised their policies, and delivered verdicts that went against their position.

His verdicts exposed scandals like the Bengal School recruiting procedure and others, which hauled the TMC



government, making him appear as the only person who successfully pinned the TMC in an uncomfortable position.

It is worth mentioning that Ganguly publicly criticised Abhishek Banerjee, the second-in-command of the TMC and the nephew of TMC Supremo and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, and made numerous observations about incidents involving fraudulent recruiting schemes.

While there were speculations that Justice Ganguly would be starting his political innings soon, all the rumours were laid to rest on

March 6 when he joined the BJP in the presence of West Bengal BJP chief Sukanta Majumder and senior party leader Subhendu Adhikari. Just five months short of retirement, Justice Ganguly submitted his resignation to President Draupadi Murmu, copies of which were sent to Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Calcutta High Court Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam.

Justice Ganguly made it evident that his objective was to oust the TMC regime in the state. In his statement, he revealed that he was forced to resign due to continuous taunts from the TMC and talked about the insults he endured after any judgment that went against the TMC.

While calling the BJP the only party that can fight against the Trinamool in West Bengal, he called the TMC a party of corrupt people. He also prophesied that the party would not even last until 2026. He stated that only a few more arrests would crumble the whole party and that his decision to join the BJP was driven by the motive to usher in the end of a corrupt government and a corrupt party.

Ganguly: BJP's Asset or Liability?

Ganguly has enormous popularity due to



Profile of Justice Ganguly?

- **Abhijit Ganguly is a former Indian judge of the Calcutta High Court and a Politician.**
- **During his college days, Ganguly acted in Bengali theatre. He was a member of a theatre group "Amitra Chanda".**
- **Ganguly started his career as a West Bengal Civil Service (WBCS) officer. He was posted at North Dinajpur.**
- **Thereafter, he left the job and practiced as a State Advocate in the Calcutta High Court before elevating to the bench.**
- **He joined the High Court as an additional judge on May 2, 2018. He became a permanent judge on 30 July 2020. Ganguly resigned from his post on March 5, 2024.**

the significant judgments he gave related to the members of the ruling party, TMC. He often found himself at loggerheads with the TMC and in bitter disagreement, he had often verbally attacked the TMC.

His popularity shot up by many folds after a ruling that placated lakhs of job seekers in Bengal who were agitating alleging that the TMC leaders took money to give jobs to non-eligible candidates.

He turned into an 'epitome of Justice' and the BJP has cashed in on this popularity of the former judge. The BJP will gain a great deal from his untarnished reputation as the 'messiah of the poor job seekers'. The

Saffron camp is basking, conveying to the voters that it has offered to them a formidable, non-political candidate with a clean image. The BJP feels that he will bring weightage and value to the party.

Meanwhile, there are other issues too. Justice Ganguly is a straightforward and outspoken individual who doesn't mince words. This outspoken attitude of the former judge could also prove disastrous to the BJP, which has already got a taste of it.

Justice Ganguly, BJP's candidate from Tamluk Lok Sabha seat in Purba Medinipur, was asked a 'rapid fire' question on a leading television channel. When he was asked to choose between 'Gandhi and Godse,' Justice Ganguly declined to answer the question and sought time.

This stoked a controversy and soon, the TMC plunged into attack mode. Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Saket Gokhale, while taking a dig at former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Ganguly said, "The man who was a High Court judge till 4 days ago, can't choose between

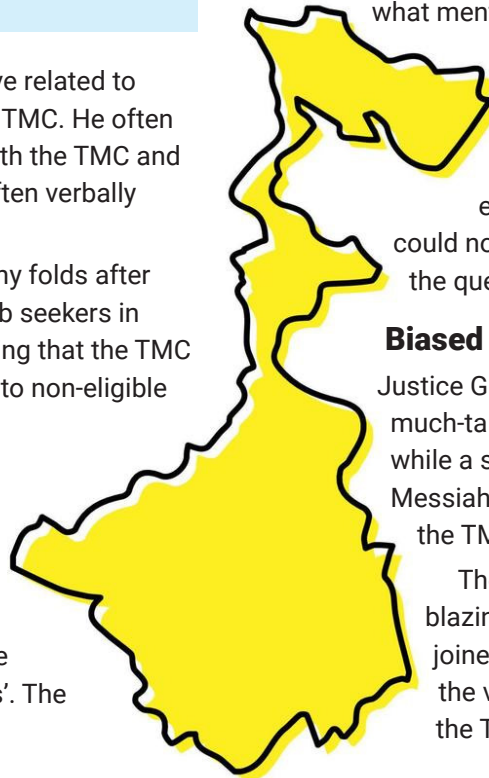
Gandhi and Godse today? Then think with what mentality this man gave his judgment when he was a judge."

Meanwhile, the Bengal BJP leaders were also embarrassed after Ganguly could not give a definite answer to the question.

Biased Judge?

Justice Ganguly's career has been a much-talked-about one. However, while a section considers him a Messiah, many others, who side with the TMC call him a partisan judge.

The TMC is going all guns blazing after Justice Ganguly joined the BJP, attacking him for the verdicts rendered against the TMC and wondering if his



WBSSC Case

West Bengal School Service Recruitment Scam is an ongoing education SSC scam in West Bengal, since 2022. The scam is being currently investigated jointly by the Central Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement Directorate. The scam was revealed, following the arrest of Partha Chatterjee, a Trinamool Congress leader, who has served as the Minister of Education in the Mamata Banerjee's cabinet until his arrest on July 23, 2022. Since November 2021, Justice Gangopadhyay has given a series of directions of inquiry to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) for the alleged anomalies in the recruitment process. He passed several orders against the officials of the School Service Commission, which led to some political issues in West Bengal as well as Calcutta High Court. Justice Ganguly wrote a letter seeking intervention from the Chief Justice of India regarding the action of the Division Bench in the cases of alleged irregularities of the School Service Commission. On April 13, 2022, the Bar Association, Calcutta High Court brought out a resolution to boycott the Court of Justice Ganguly. All India Trinamool Congress law cell protested outside his courtroom and the then Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar wrote a letter to the Chief Minister of West Bengal on this issue. On May 18, Gangopadhyay directed former Education Minister Partha Chatterjee to



Chatterjee, who is seen in green shirt in this picture, was arrested soon after the scandal emerged.

appear before the CBI for the investigation of alleged teachers' recruitment scam. On May 17, 2022, in another case, he asked Pares Chandra Adhikary, Minister of State, Department of School Education to be present before the CBI over his connection in the alleged illegal appointment of his daughter Ankita Adhikary. He also urged the Chief Minister and Governor to remove Adhikary from the post of minister. In September 2022, Justice Gangopadhyay instructed the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) to replace illegally appointed school teachers with eligible waiting list candidates. In July 2023, he instructed the West Bengal School Service Commission to publish illegally appointed 907 school teachers of XI-XII.

judgments were tilted against the TMC because he was nurturing political ambitions with the BJP.

Justice Ganguly has spoken about his opinion on several cases after quitting the legal fraternity and he has attacked TMC's Abhishek Banerjee, without taking his name. Not tolerating the same, Trinamool leaders have taken potshots at Justice Ganguly for giving a clean chit to BJP leader Suwendy Adhikari in the Narada case.

TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said, "We told many times that this former judge had a political agenda even when he was sitting on the Judge's chair and thus he delivered biased judgments. Trinamool Congress recognised and judged him long back, which he kept on denying, but now he has proved us right."

A section of the job aspirants, in whose favour Justice Ganguly delivered a judgment too complained that Justice Abhijit Ganguly's verdict has only complicated the case and left job-seekers in legal entanglement.

SLST 9th-12th Division (SSC) 2016 job aspirant Shahidullah complained that Justice Ganguly has questioned the motive of the dharna staged by the job seekers, which has been going on for more than 1100 days.

"We would have got the job in 2023 based on our merit. The issue turned out to be complicated only because he ordered a CBI probe," Shahidullah said adding that Justice Ganguly is talking like an amateur politician after joining the BJP and that the conflict between the judicial entity and the political entity is evident.

Endorsing the views of the job seekers, Kunal Ghosh said that the problems of job seekers have increased due to legal entanglement and stated that Ganguly had worked for the BJP while sitting as a Judge and did everything to please the BJP.

Marching Towards Chief Ministership?

The BJP is vying to cash in the popularity of



Justice Ganguly campaigning for BJP

Justice Ganguly, but will the former judge find himself catapulted to the position of being the CM of the state if the BJP manages to plant the victory flag in West Bengal?

Given the presence of seasoned politicians such as Suwendu Adhikari, Dilip Ghosh, and Sukanta Majumdar in the BJP, it appears unlikely that Justice Ganguly will contest for the chief ministership.

Some political observers, nevertheless, believe that given the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP may present him as the next chief minister. It is anticipated that the Adhikaris will lead Ganguly to victory since the Tamuk MP seat he is contesting is widely regarded as their stronghold. Furthermore, having an orientation in the RSS is mandatory for CM candidates. There are, however, certain outliers, such as the chief minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sharma, who defected from the Congress party and was appointed to the position.

Meanwhile, many others feel that there is a lot that might unfurl in the BJP house because Justice Ganguly is known to be a short-tempered and vocal person, who does not hold back his thoughts. Conversely, a powerful figure in the BJP, Subendu Adhikari shares a similar disposition. Will an impending ego conflict alter the landscape of the West Bengal BJP? Only time will tell.





WHY BENGALURU RAN OUT OF WATER?

Bengaluru has had headlines globally for the wrong reason: severe water crisis. Over half of the city's water comes from its underground aquifers, which are now severely depleted due to excessive extraction. Encroachment of lakes is also a major reason. These lakes used to act as natural sponges, absorbing rainwater and replenishing groundwater reserves.

📍 Parikshit Dhume

Bengaluru, India's bustling tech hub, is parched. Nicknamed "Silicon City," "Air Conditioned City," and even "Old Man's Paradise," this metropolis now grapples with a scorching reality – a severe water shortage.

The city faces a daily deficit of 500 million liters, a staggering one-fifth of its total needs. This crisis stems from a perfect storm: below-average rainfall, dwindling groundwater reserves, and explosive urban growth.

The crisis extends beyond Bengaluru's borders. The entire state of Karnataka and neighboring regions feel the pinch. Urgent solutions are needed, alongside long-term strategies. Water conservation, reduced groundwater dependence, and building resilience against droughts are crucial.

By tackling Bengaluru's water woes, India can find solutions to a nationwide challenge. The city serves as a stark reminder: sustainable water management is no longer an option, but a necessity.

Center's Jal Jeevan Mission

While urban centers like Bengaluru grapple with water scarcity, rural areas across the country have been effectively addressing the crisis, courtesy of the central government's flagship program. Launched in August 2019, the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) stands at the forefront of this initiative, operating in collaboration with state governments. Acknowledging drinking water as a state subject, JJM empowers states by providing both technical expertise and financial support to design, execute, manage,

and sustain rural water supply projects.

Since its inception, JJM has made remarkable progress in augmenting tap water usage in rural regions. Initially, only 16.8% (3.23 crore) of rural households had access to tap connections. However, as of January 30, 2024, JJM has facilitated the provision of over 10.98 crore connections, extending tap water accessibility to more than 73.76% (14.21 crore) of India's estimated 19.27 crore rural households.

The implementation of JJM follows a meticulous two-step certification process aimed at achieving the objective of "Har Ghar Jal" (Water for Every Household) villages. Upon completion of tap connections to all households, the project's executing agency issues a completion certificate to the respective Gram Panchayat, designating the village as "Har Ghar Jal" in the JJM Information Management Information System (JJM-IMIS).

Subsequently, the Gram Panchayat officially declares itself a "Har Ghar Jal" village by passing a resolution during a public Gram



Nearly 50% of households in Bangalore dig a borewell in their own premises.

Sabha meeting after presenting the completion report. Documentation, including the certificate, resolution, and a video recording of the Gram Sabha meeting, is then uploaded to the JJM dashboard, affirming the village's certified status in JJM-IMIS. This meticulous process may result in slight reporting disparities between "Har Ghar Jal" villages and certified villages due to inherent time lags.

As of January 30, 2024, over 2.02 lakh villages have been designated as "Har Ghar Jal" by states, with more than 1.01 lakh villages completing the Gram Sabha certification process. This ongoing endeavor underscores the collective dedication of the central government and state administrations toward ensuring universal access to safe and potable drinking water for rural India.

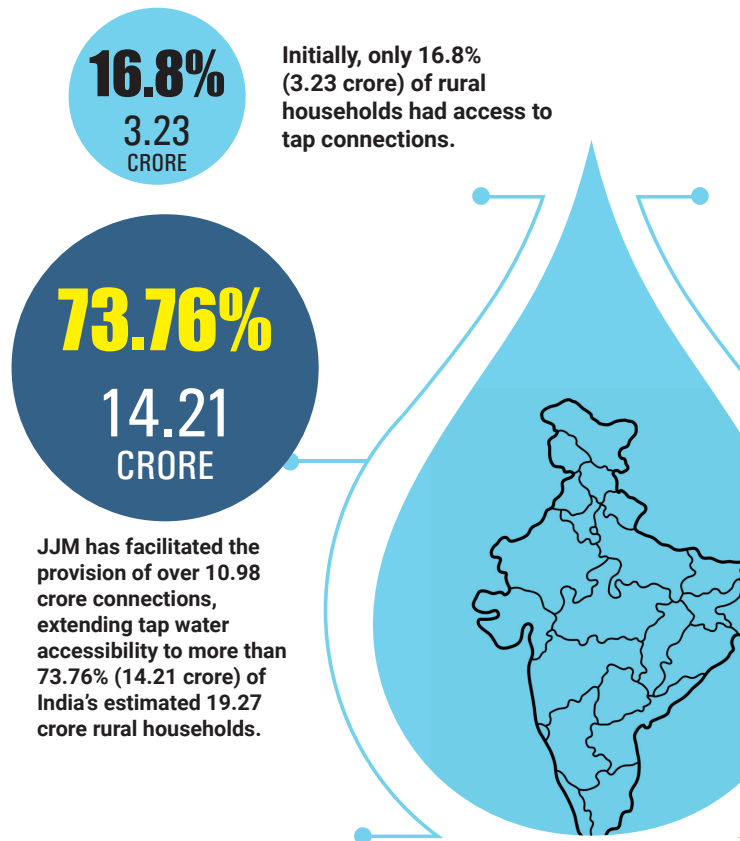
Overexploiting Groundwater Resources

- **Unsustainable Reliance:** The city leans heavily on groundwater for drinking, sanitation, and other needs, with minimal water recycling to replenish these resources.
- **Shrinking Reserves:** Decades ago, wells only needed to be 150-200 feet deep. Today, drilling reaches 800-900 feet without finding water, highlighting the drastic decline in groundwater levels.
- **Aquifer Depletion:** Over half of Bengaluru's water comes from its underground aquifers, which are now severely depleted due to excessive extraction. This unsustainable practice has created a critical water crisis.
- **Extraction vs. Recharge Imbalance:** An estimated 1,392 million liters per day (MLD) of water is extracted from Bengaluru's groundwater. However, natural recharge is only 148 MLD, representing a mere 10% of the city's annual rainfall. This stark imbalance is rapidly draining the city's water reserves.
- **Concrete Jungle vs. Natural Sponges:** Rapid urbanization has led to the encroachment upon and drying up of Bengaluru's traditional lakes. This not only impacts water supply

but also increases the risk of flooding during heavy rains. These lakes used to act as natural sponges, absorbing rainwater and replenishing groundwater reserves.

4. Climate and Rainfall Challenges

- **Overdependence on Unreliable Rain:** The city heavily relies on rainwater to recharge its reservoirs and groundwater. However, major reservoirs like Krishnaraj Sagar (KRS) and Kabini are at critically low levels, with only 20% capacity. Climate change and failed monsoons are resulting in insufficient rainfall, worsening the situation.
- **Solid Rock and Soaking Woes:** Due to Bengaluru being built on solid rock, only a meager 10% of rainwater seeps into the ground. This limited natural recharge capacity further strains the water resources.
- **Rising Temperatures, Evaporating Hopes:** Bengaluru's average temperature has risen by 1°C over the past 42 years. This increase leads to higher evaporation rates from water bodies and soil, further depleting available water.
- **Erratic Rainfall Patterns:** The city experiences



Vidharba Set An example for others to Follow

The 'Jalyukta Shiva Abhiyan', initiated by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in 2015, has emerged as a beacon of hope for farmers grappling with water scarcity in the drought-prone regions of Vidarbha and Marathwada. Aimed at achieving a drought-free status for the state by 2019, the Jalyukta Shivar Yojana, a flagship program of the Maharashtra government, has garnered significant success. Encouraging the adoption of micro-irrigation systems for optimal water utilization, the initiative has led to a notable expansion of irrigated land. With a substantial allocation of Rs 1000 crore, the government has consolidated various water conservation projects under this scheme, ensuring their sustained maintenance. As Maharashtra continues to battle drought, the state government has intensified efforts to stem the tide of farmer suicides with a comprehensive plan. This multifaceted approach includes river bed widening, pond construction, afforestation drives, and the creation of essential water

Maharashtra



infrastructure such as check dams, canals, and wells. Notably, the Jalyukta Shivar works have yielded tangible results, as evidenced by a significant reduction in water tanker usage in completed projects. Over 16,000 villages have undertaken Jalyukta Shivar initiatives, resulting in nearly 5 lakh conservation projects. While the government's contribution remains substantial, public participation has been integral, with citizens contributing over Rs 630 crore towards the scheme in the last three years, facilitating the completion of over 10,000 projects.

inconsistent and declining rainfall. Karnataka itself is receiving 26% less rainfall than usual.

5. Urban Sprawl and Shrinking Green Spaces

- Triple Threat: Population Boom, Urban sprawl, and Water Woes: Bengaluru's population has tripled since 1990, reaching 13.6 million. This rapid growth has resulted in unplanned development, leading to encroachment on lakes and green spaces.
- Green Cover Vanishing, Water Worries Rising: Between 1973 and 2022, Bengaluru lost 26.2% of its green cover, while construction areas expanded by 51.8%. This

significantly reduces the city's capacity to absorb rainwater and replenish groundwater.

6. Wastewater Woes

- A Growing Problem, Untreated and Unmanaged: Bengaluru struggles to manage its ever-increasing wastewater. A staggering 24% remains untreated, and only 33% gets recycled. This untreated wastewater pollutes lakes and groundwater sources, further reducing usable water.
- Sewage Overload: An estimated 1,000 million liters per day (MLD) of sewage flows directly into Bengaluru's lakes, rendering them unusable as a water source.

WHEN A DRONE SEARCHES OUT MISSING HUSKY....

In a tale straight out of a wilderness adventure, a pet husky's disappearance in Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula led to an unexpected discovery thanks to modern technology. As drone technology becomes increasingly utilized in search and rescue efforts, this story takes a twist that no one could have predicted.

When the missing husky finally came into view via drone footage, the scene that unfolded was nothing short of extraordinary. Instead of a solitary figure, the husky was spotted amidst a group of wild bears, engaging in what appeared to be playful interactions. The video, initially shared on Instagram, quickly captured the internet's attention, amassing over 20 million views and sparking a flurry of amusing commentary from viewers worldwide.

Witnesses watched in awe as the adventurous husky seemed to be embracing its newfound companionship with the bears. In the footage, the husky could be seen happily following the bears, even playfully circling them with a wagging tail. While one bear made a



gentle attempt to nudge the dog away, there was no sign of aggression, leaving viewers both relieved and entertained by the unusual encounter.

Among the flood of comments from intrigued netizens, a few stood out for their comedic take on the situation. One user quipped about the conversation between mama and papa bear regarding their unexpected guest, while another marveled at the husky's audacity in annoying bears, a feat humans might hesitate to attempt. Another commenter pondered the tales the husky would have to share with its canine companions, while another took the opportunity to educate fellow viewers on the unique characteristics of Kamchatka's bears.

Despite the lighthearted amusement the video brought, one question remained unanswered: Was the husky eventually reunited with its worried owners? As of now, no conclusive evidence has surfaced regarding the husky's ultimate fate, leaving its wild adventure shrouded in mystery.





A TWO-STORY HOUSE SITS ON BOAT AND TAKES A VOYAGE

San Francisco Bay witnessed a sight straight out of a dream this week: a two-story houseboat cruising across the water! This whimsical journey sparked curiosity and questions among onlookers.

The houseboat, crafted from wood and perched on a barge, drifted majestically towards its new home in Sausalito's Commodore Marina. But behind the picturesque scene lies a story of change. Lawsuits forced the eviction of over 100 residents from Redwood City's vibrant houseboat community, and this was one of the last homes to make its watery escape.

The trip wasn't all smooth sailing. Tidal currents and weather conditions turned the voyage into a delicate dance. Sausalito resident Phil Hott explains the challenges of navigating narrow channels and battling unpredictable winds.

Moving a houseboat is no small feat. Imagine the permits, the planning, the sheer logistics of getting your entire home across the bay! Safety for the house itself and other vessels is crucial for a successful aquatic move.





INTERESTING STORIES

A BANGALORE FIRMS DEMANDS 1500 RUPEES FOR HUGGING TREE

A Bangalore company is raising eyebrows with its unique offering: a guided "forest bathing" experience that includes... hugging trees... for a cool 1500 rupees.

While escaping the city grind for some nature therapy sounds appealing, the hefty price tag for a tree hug has social media users fuming.

City dwellers know the struggle of finding green spaces to unwind. That's where Shinrin-yoku, a Japanese practice of "forest bathing,"

comes in.

Shinrin-yoku involves slow, mindful walks in the forest, soaking in the sights, sounds, and fresh air. Studies suggest it can reduce stress, improve mood, and boost overall well-being. Sounds perfect, right? But here's where things get weird.

This company's program charges 1500 rupees for this essentially free experience. Social media isn't having it. People are calling it a "scam" and criticizing the commercialization of something as basic as spending time in



The Healing Power of Forests

A Forest Bathing Experience

₹1,500.00

(inclusive of 18% GST)

Cubbon Park, Behind High Court, Bangalore



nature. One user aptly commented, "You connect with nature by hugging trees, not by paying 1500 rupees to do it in a public park!"

So, while a guided nature walk can be a lovely idea, Bangalore residents are making it clear: sometimes, the best things in life are free. And sometimes, a hug from a tree is all you need.



INTERESTING STORIES

A TECHIE BECOMES FARMER AND MAKES MORE MONEY THAN SOFTWARE ENGINEER

A resident of Uttar Pradesh, Akhilesh Chaudhary used to make a cool Rs 20 lakh annually at a liquor multinational, as a technology integrator. But something tugged at him, a desire for a more fulfilling path. And he started Polyhouse farming.

This strange kind of agriculture offers a controlled environment for crops, shielding them from harsh weather, pests, and diseases. Imagine a transparent, protective dome where you can fine-tune temperature, humidity, and more – that's a polyhouse!

Chaudhary's been at it for seven years now, and his two-acre farm flourishes with vibrant flowers. Gerbera daisies, baby's breath, gladioli, and starflowers – his fields are a feast for the eyes!

Modern tools are his secret weapons. Drip irrigation ensures water efficiency, while sprinklers and foggers keep things cool during scorching summers. The result? A farm buzzing with life and generating a sweet Rs 25 lakh annually!

Chaudhary's story isn't unique. More and more



folks are seeking careers that offer fulfillment, flexibility, and financial rewards. Polyhouse farming ticks all those boxes!



LIQUOR SCAM DROWNS AAP GOVERNMENT

📍 N V Kamath

The Damocles Sword of the Liquor Gate scandal hangs over the current Delhi government run by the Aam Aadmi Party. The scam is taking unexpected turns, enlisting an increasing number of people at all levels.

Several well-known figures have been implicated in the fraud, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is accused of collecting bribes from private liquor producers. The case is only becoming more intriguing with each passing second, and from the outset, it looks like there is no respite for the AAP leaders and other accused anytime soon in this case.

What's the Scandal All About?

The ongoing probe is connected to the now-withdrawn Delhi liquor sales policy introduced in 2021 and the receipt of kickbacks by people in the government and outside.

Everything was going well in Delhi until the AAP government implemented the new liquor policy in 2021.

The liquor trade in Delhi was being run by the Delhi government without any private participation. Suddenly, the AAP government thought of constituting a committee to suggest reforms in the Delhi Excise Policy, consisting of a group of ministers that included Manish Sisodia, the then Deputy CM, and Satyendra Kumar Jain, the Health Minister. It also constituted a committee of experts to support the group.



With numerous ministers, including Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, ending up in jails, the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi appears poised for disintegration. Two accused individuals have recently come forward as approvers, confessing to paying bribes to secure liquor dealership contracts. Kejriwal, meanwhile, seems to have exhausted his arsenal of defenses against the mounting accusations, resorting instead to attributing everything to "politically-motivated charges".

It is interesting to note that Sisodia, was holding the excise portfolio at that juncture.

After looking into the discussions and suggestions, the draft bill was prepared. It was subsequently structured further by a group of ministers in the cabinet. The final draft was approved and accepted by the government in March 2021.

The AAP government projected that the steps taken would reform the excise and retail sectors, eliminate the liquor mafia, and boost revenue by ₹9500 cr.

Subsequently, on implementation, it was told that the change in the policy resulted in an increase in government revenue to the extent of 27%, amounting to ₹ 8900 cr.

The consequence of this bill was that the retail sector of liquor stood completely transferred to private players.

The impact of this move can be gauged by the statement of one of the

government officials in Delhi, who said, "For the first time, all the state-owned liquor shops were going to be shut down and transferred completely to private business players."

The final draft was brought to the then Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Sharma. He approved the bill on the condition that only those new liquor vendors who have permission from the Delhi Municipal Corporation can open outlets in the non-confirmed areas. The Delhi government implemented the policy on November 17, 2021, handing over the liquor sale to private entities.

Before this new policy came into force, four government corporations ran 475 of 864 liquor stores in Delhi. After the implementation of the new policy, private establishments started running 849 stores. The AAP Government attempted to make way for large firms in the private sector.

"The South Group" at play?

When the liquor scam hit the headlines, soon the involvement of a group of southern politicians and businessmen started



Effects and consequences

- The government's involvement in the sale of alcohol was stopped, and its ownership of liquor stores was curtailed.
- As far as the liquor sale is concerned, 32 zones were formed, each of which would have 27 outlets. An additional eight to ten wards were further included. Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said, "As many as 849 new outlets were to be opened, including in new unauthorised areas, under the new policy, which even the Governor had approved."
- It was proposed to increase the annual license fee from ₹.8 lakhs to ₹.75 lakhs.
- The new policy allowed discounts on MRP. Besides, it permitted to keep the shops open until 3 am.

making rounds and the ED, later dubbed this group as the 'South Group.' In February 2023, the ED said that the Delhi excise policy scam was a result of AAP leaders colluding with the so-called South Group, which sought to use Delhi's new liquor policy to "enrich" itself and its allies.

According to the Enforcement Directorate, the 'South Group' is a liquor cartel, comprising Telangana MLC Kavitha, (daughter of the then Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao), Sarath Reddy (promoter of Aurobindo Group), Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy (YSRCP MP, Ongole), and his son Raghav Magunta.

It is no secret that the Magunta family has

been in the liquor business for decades and that they have been the distributors for the famous UB Group for South India. The group also includes Arun Ramachandra Pillai, a Hyderabad businessman.

The ED included K Kavitha, who is also the MLC of the BRS, as accused in the charge sheet of December 21, 2022. It also filed another charge sheet against her and her husband on May 1, 2023, alleging the use of illegal funds to purchase land at a cheap price.

Here it's worth recalling the arrest of Butchibabu Gorontla, former C.A. of K Kavitha for his alleged role in the formulation and implementation of the new excise policy.

Suspecting to be a part of the South Group, the ED included Sarath Chandra Reddy, the owner of Aurobindo Pharma, and Abhishek Boinpally in the supplementary charge sheet on January 1, 2023.

The South Group allegedly met Sisodia in mid-March 2022, and the latter handed over a very important document to his secretary, which contained the draft of the recommendations of the Group of Ministers on the excise policy.

Sisodia is said to have tweaked the excise policy according to the wishes of the South Group for the upfront payment of ₹ 100 cr given by their representatives to Vijay Nair through Dinesh Arora, a confidante of Sisodia, in a South Delhi hotel.

A big share of liquor licenses in Delhi is alleged to have been paid to Kejriwal for the Punjab elections.



Telangana
MLC Kavitha

Accusations by the Opposition

It is very strange to note here that Delhi Congress President Chaudhary Anil Kumar was the first to file a complaint in June 2022, alleging corruption in the matter.

The Congress, which was hell-bent on exposing the corruption of the AAP Government

THE CHRONOLOGY OF ARRESTS



MAY
2022



Delhi Health Minister
Satyendra Kumar Jain



FEBRUARY 26
2023



Deputy CM
Manish Sisodia



OCTOBER 4
2023



Senior Leader and Rajya Sabha MP
Sanjay Singh



MARCH 15
2024



K. Kavitha



MARCH 21
2024



Chief Minister
Arvind Kejriwal

then, is a Party now holding a protest against the arrest of AAP Supremo Arvind Kejriwal. It is the same party that along with the BJP sought the intervention of central agencies for a thorough investigation.

It's alleged that serious violations were observed while implementing the policy. The recommendations of the Expert Committee were said to have been ignored, and the conditions laid by the LG while approving the policy were said to have been bypassed.

It was also accused that the license holders were allowed to act according to their will. The severe backlash of the opposition resulted in the entry of central agencies to initiate an investigation into the said scandal.

This backlash and the investigations of the central agencies finally forced the AAP government to repeal the policy on September 1, 2022.

The Investigation: Beginning and Continuation

On July 8, 2022, Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, in his report to the LG, flagged gross violations in the policy and recommended the

CBI probe against the procedural violations in the formation of the liquor policy. The violations included bypassing the conditions laid by the LG and the recommendations of the expert committee.

The LG, based on the report, recommended the CBI probe on July 22, 2022.

These violations were said to have resulted in the loss to the exchequer to the extent of ₹ 580 Crores. It's worth noting that the implementation of the new policy resulted in a batch of complaints with allegations of a "multi-crore scam."

The investigations by the central agencies led to the following allegations, among others:

- The wholesalers would get a guaranteed 12% profit margin. It's in exchange for a 6% kickback to AAP Ministers.
- The "South Group" paid ₹. 100 Crores as advance kickback to Vijaya Nair, communication in-charge of the Aam Aadmi Party.
- The above-said Nair issued wholesale and retail licenses whimsically to this South Group beyond the limits provided in the



**CM Arvind Kejriwal's
advocate, Abhishek Manu Singhvi**

policy, unduly favouring them.

- Satyendra Kumar Jain and Manish Sisodia in tweaking the policy while including the profit margin of 12% have overruled the Expert Committee and the LG.

This decision, though was agreed as a "Collective Decision of Delhi Cabinet" was not at all discussed during the meeting of the group of Ministers.

Manish Sisodia was questioned for more than eight hours before he was arrested by the CBI on June 22, 2023. Raids were conducted on Sisodia's residence on the very next day.

The CBI arrested Vijay Nair later on allegations of receiving kickbacks of ₹100 Crores. Coincidentally, the Delhi Government repealed the Excise Policy on the same day to revert to the old one of Government ownership.

In between, many charge sheets were filed by the ED in money laundering and other cases. It includes the one filed on May 22, 2022, in which seven accused were named, including some Delhi government officials and a businessman running a liquor business.

Approvers and the legal position

The liquor gate took an interesting turn when

two accused Raghav Magunta and Sarat Reddy turned approvers and gave statements incriminating Manish Sisodia and K. Kavitha.

Soon, CM Arvind Kejriwal's advocate, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, questioned the veracity of the statement of approvers used by the ED, basing his argument on the premise that the approvers were politically motivated and one of them had purchased the electronic bonds.

The Court clearly stated that the law about the approvers is more than 100 years old, and there is no question of doubting its relevance. Further, approvers giving Rs 60 crores to any party is not the concern of the court.

Justice Swaran Kant Sharma said, "This Court wonders that if the learned Senior Counsel terms the approvers in the present case as "Jaichands" then that would rather amount to saying that the approvers have turned traitors, and further acknowledging that they were part of the same plan which Directorate of Enforcement alleges that the approvers and the petitioners were part of.

However, this Court will restrain from further dwelling on this argument," adding that the court can not say that approvers' statements do not hold evidentiary value.

Conclusion

The scam has left Delhi in a politically chaotic state. The Chief Minister has not stepped down from his position despite his arrest, while it is prudent on his part to hand over the bacon to one of the leaders to run the government. If this situation continues, the LG will have no option but to recommend the President's rule in the state.

However, the Delhi government had rolled out the much-hyped liquor excise policy with a promise to "completely revamp the liquor trade" in the national capital. Interestingly, the move has revamped the landscape of Delhi's power politics and the future of the Aam Aadmi Party, which came to power swearing to bring in corruption-free governance!



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