



Transcending Boundaries

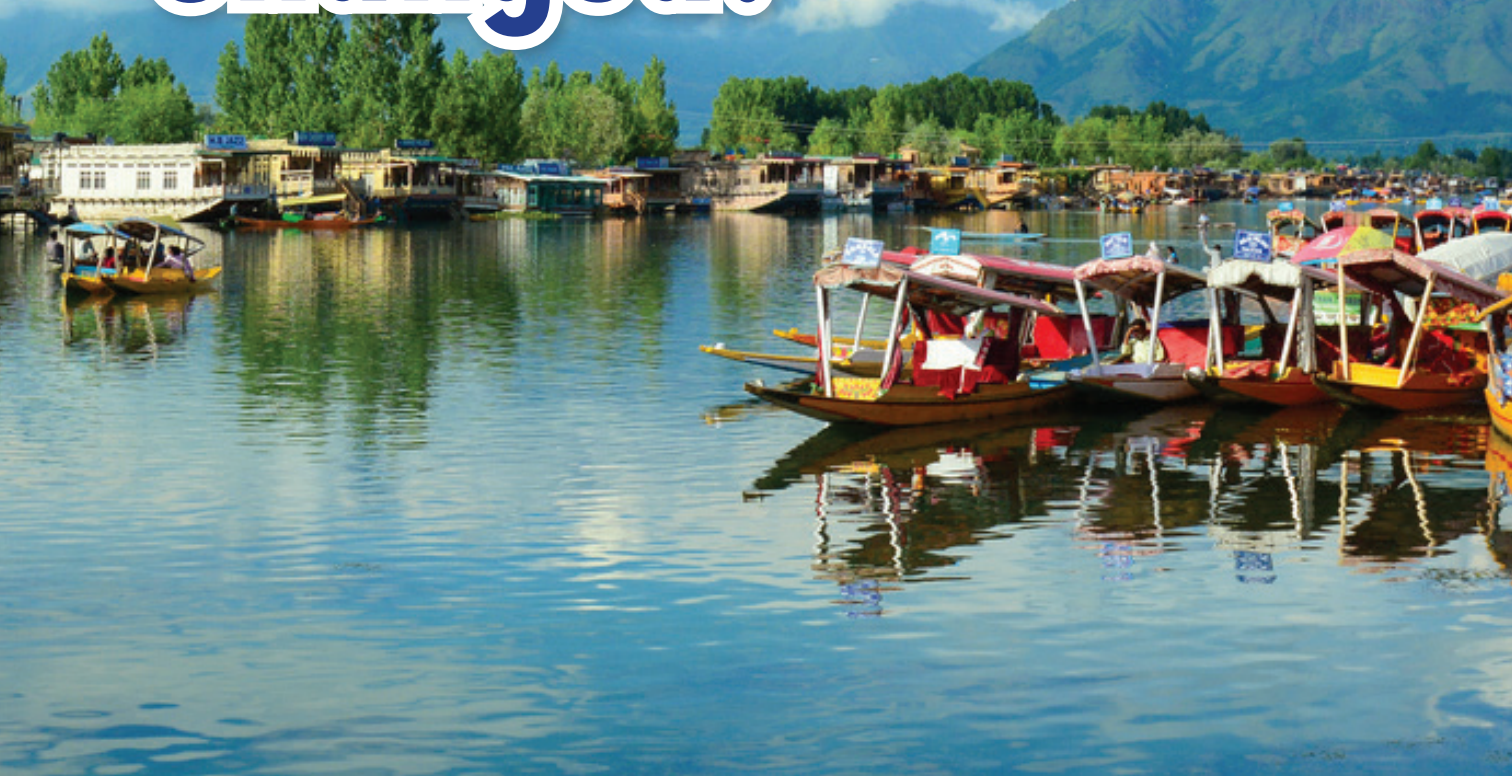
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Has Kashmir Really Changed?

With Article 370 gone, winds of change sweeps through Kashmir



Goldie Brar:
Criminal on
the Loose



Flamboyant
but
Controversial

Assam Turns
Madrassas into
General Schools



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Winds of change in Kashmir

For 70 years, Kashmir played host for a number of terrorists trained in neighbouring Pakistan.

Gone are those days. The abrogation of article 370 has brought both peace and development to the state.

Today roads in Kashmir are widening, and businesses are blossoming.

Children are happily going to school as their parents are living a normal life.

Many youths across the valley are no longer interested in terrorism. They have realised that waging war in the name of religion is a waste of time and outdated, more than anything else, self-destructive.

Even those who tried to kill police or an outsider are getting caught in a space of a few hours and facing quick justice.

Thanks to drones and other advanced military technology, hiding from the long hand arms of law is also becoming increasingly impossible in the valley.

In addition, expanding highways and railway lines are exposing Kashmir to the wider world, bringing it out of the decades of isolation.

Our cover page article has chronicled entire developmental activities that took place in the past 4 years.

This edition of the magazine also covers an interesting story about how the government in Assam is converting Islamic religious schools into general educational institutes.

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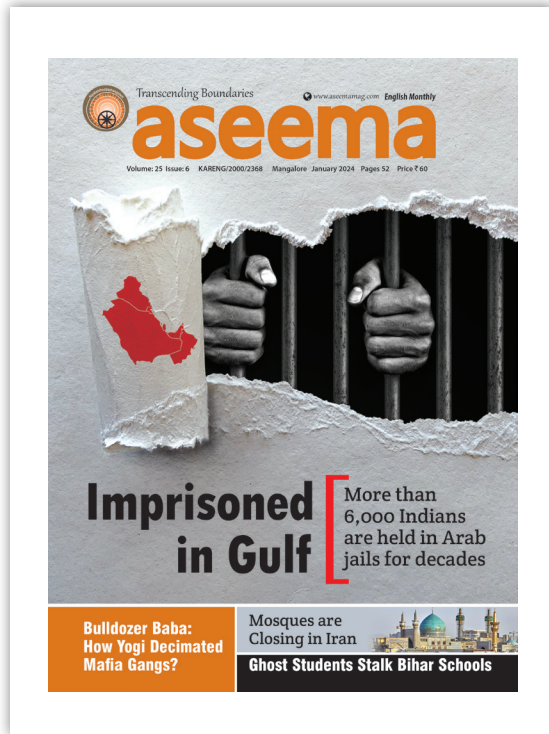
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Respected Sir/Madam,

I am a student from Mysore. I am very interested in the topics which provides information and builds curiosity in me. Because of my interest I read a lot of magazines and search the web as well. While browsing I came across Aseema website and found it quite interesting and diverse.

Later I got to know that Aseema has launched magazine and I have started to read it. I feel intrigued with the topics and writings as it is so well calculated and written. I wish the best for the team and continue to keep providing us with such wonderful knowledge.

Praful
Commerce Student
Mysore

Today to get details without any fake reference is far from reach and this creates a totally different deal. As a common man it is difficult to get right news and this has caused a big problem to know which is true and which is not.

Aseema doesn't follow any crap and that is what the best part is. I really enjoy reading the magazine and always look forward every month. The topics covered in the month of Jan issue is very interesting and very different. I read all the articles with interest and enjoyed. Thank you for the team.

Ranjana S
Entrepreneur
Goa

If interested in providing us your feedback, please send your opinions to:

✉ editoraseema@gmail.com




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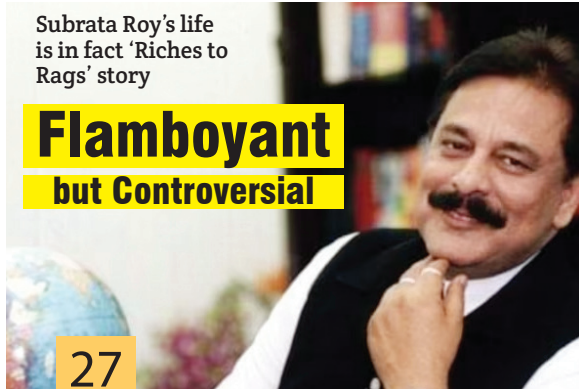
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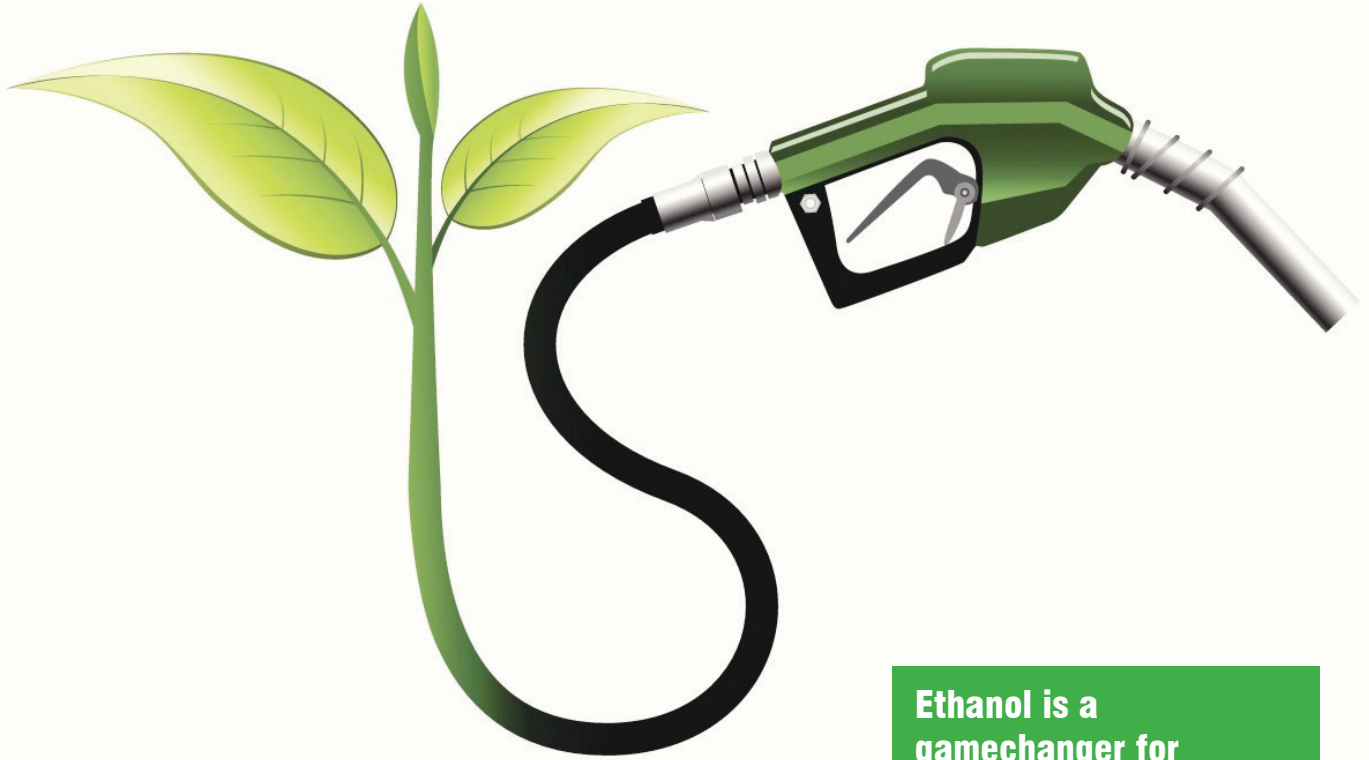
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ETHANOL

India's Economic Gamechanger

▀ **Purushottam Bhat**

The Central Government is doing everything it can to diversify away from traditional fuels like petrol and diesel.

Therefore, while green hydrogen holds immense promise for the future, the government would be wise to acknowledge the current economic realities and prioritize solutions that cater to the vast majority of drivers. Focusing on ethanol as a stepping stone might be the key to kickstarting India's

Ethanol is a gamechanger for farmers, environment as well as the government. 10% ethanol blending in petrol has saved the country a staggering Rs 53,894 crore in foreign exchange by reducing crude oil imports. The government has procured Rs 49,078 crore worth of ethanol from farmers in the last eight years. In addition, ethanol industry is estimated to have created 50 lakh jobs across production, application, and distribution sectors.

clean transportation journey in a way that truly leaves no one behind.

Compared to their petrol or diesel counterparts, hydrogen-powered cars are likely to be a luxury few can afford. This puts the onus squarely on ethanol, a more viable near-term alternative that sits closer to the Indian consumer's wallet.

With cost-effective production processes and existing infrastructure for blending with petrol, ethanol presents a more immediate path to cleaner transportation. While not entirely emission-free, it offers a significant reduction compared to traditional fuels and aligns with the government's focus on fuel independence.

Increasing Vehicle Demand

India's growing population and aspirations are fueling a surge in demand for vehicles and energy. Its global oil demand, currently at 5%, is expected to more than double to 11%, while gas demand is poised for a 500% jump.

Meanwhile, there are efforts underway to triple gas's share in the energy mix by 2030, from 6% to 15%. The "One Nation One Grid" initiative will build the necessary infrastructure, including doubling the LNG terminal re-gasification capacity and expanding the gas pipeline network by 60%.

Refining capacity is set to surge from 250 million metric tonnes per annum (mmtpa) to 450 mmtpa.

Blending biofuels with petrol and diesel can reduce

vehicle emissions and decrease fossil fuel dependence. The government's plan to increase ethanol blending holds promise for both environmental and economic benefits.

Ethanol and Methanol

While both methanol and ethanol share the title of "alcohol," their paths to existence and purpose couldn't be more different. Ethanol, the familiar friend found in fermented beverages, derives its life from natural bounty like sugarcane, corn, and wheat. In India, this renewable resource is primarily born from sugarcane molasses through a fermentation process.

On the other hand, methanol, a low-carbon fuel carrier, emerges from diverse sources like coal, agricultural waste, and even thermal power plants. This versatility makes it a promising alternative fuel, as it burns cleanly in internal combustion engines, emitting minimal particulates and soot.

In essence, ethanol, the sustainable spirit, draws its energy from the sun and earth, while methanol, the versatile fuel, emerges from the ashes of industry and nature. Both play crucial roles in our future, one quenching our thirst for cleaner energy, the other fueling its very production.

Green hydrogen's potential as a clean fuel in India is immense, impacting fuel consumption significantly. The government's draft notification on ethanol blending paves the way for a multi-pronged approach to clean energy. While ethanol stands poised as the





leading alternative fuel, green hydrogen has promising prospects to secure the second spot.

Blending ethanol with petrol offers practical advantages as well. It not only reduces fuel leakage but also holds the key to bringing down skyrocketing petrol prices, which recently breached the Rs. 100 mark. The draft proposes blending levels of 12% and 15% ethanol in petrol, offering a two-pronged attack: curbing vehicular pollution and mitigating the burden of rising fuel costs.

Paris Agreement

Driven by its commitment to the Paris Agreement's aggressive goals of a 33-35% carbon emissions reduction by 2030 and net-zero by 2050, India is actively pursuing green transportation solutions. Electric vehicles stand as a key focus, with numerous initiatives incentivizing their production and adoption. But the government isn't stopping there. Ethanol-blended fuel is another strategic play in India's clean energy playbook.

The Expert Committee on Roadmap for Ethanol Blending in India has charted a bold course: achieving 20% ethanol blending in petrol by 2025. This nationwide program, implemented by oil marketing companies, boasts significant benefits beyond environmental gains. Increased ethanol production has directly translated to reduced petrol imports, saving India valuable foreign exchange.

Ethanol's reach extends beyond national coffers. Its adoption has revitalized the sugar industry,

leading to improved cash flow for mills and prompt payments for sugarcane farmers. In fact, during the 2022-23 season, sugar mills cleared a remarkable 98.3% of cane arrears, building on the previous year's 99.9% achievement. Over the past decade, this shift has generated over 94,000 crore in earnings for sugar mills, demonstrating the program's economic impact.

To support India's sugarcane farmers and boost ethanol production, the government approved a 3.28% increase in the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for the 2023-24 sugar season. This translates to a record Rs. 315 per quintal at a base recovery rate of 10.25%. For each 0.1% increase above 10.25%, farmers will receive a bonus of Rs. 3.07, while a deduction of the same amount applies for decreases below 9.5%.

This hike represents a significant 100.6% increase over the production cost of Rs. 157 per quintal, demonstrating the government's commitment to fair compensation for farmers. Notably, the FRP for the current season is also 3.28% higher than the previous year, showcasing a consistent trajectory of support.

Ethanol production from sugarcane plays a crucial role in this initiative, offering multiple benefits beyond fair prices for farmers. The reduced reliance on petrol imports translates to substantial foreign exchange savings for India. Additionally, increased ethanol sales boost the cash flow of sugar mills, enabling them to settle dues with farmers more promptly.



Why Ethanol is Such a Gamechanger for India?



With an ambitious target of 20% ethanol blending by 2030, India is on the right track to harness the power of clean and renewable fuels. Continuous research and development, coupled with robust farmer support policies, are crucial to unlock the full potential of this green revolution.

Ethanol's benefits extend far beyond the engine, offering a potent mix of environmental, economic, and agricultural advantages.

Blending ethanol with petrol helps tackle air pollution, with estimates suggesting a 50% and 30% reduction in carbon monoxide emissions from two-wheelers and four-wheelers respectively, when using a 20% ethanol blend. This translates to cleaner air

and improved public health.

Unlike fossil fuels, ethanol's carbon footprint is nearly closed-loop. Plants absorb carbon dioxide while growing, which is released during combustion but reabsorbed by new crop growth. This effectively minimizes net carbon emissions, contributing to India's climate change goals.

10% ethanol blending in petrol has saved India a staggering Rs 53,894 crore in foreign exchange by reducing crude oil imports. This translates to increased national energy security and a more resilient economy.

The ethanol economy is a job bonanza, with estimates suggesting 50 lakh jobs across production, application, and distribution sectors.

This provides much-needed livelihood opportunities, particularly in rural areas.

Ethanol production thrives on agricultural produce like sugarcane, broken rice, and other grains. This creates a stable market for farmers, leading to increased income and financial security. Reports suggest the government has procured Rs 49,078 crore worth of ethanol from farmers in the last eight years, showcasing the sector's potential.

Ethanol production encourages farmers to explore beyond traditional crops like wheat and rice. Grains like maize and millets become valuable additions to their repertoire, promoting crop diversification and enhancing agricultural resilience.

The BJP government in Haryana recruiting people to work in Israel. Yes, you are reading it right. This is the first in the country, a government agency helping its people find jobs abroad. Can other state governments elsewhere in the country follow suit?

Why Haryana Government Hiring People for Israel?



■ **Kunal Chatterjee**

In a massive recruitment drive, the Haryana government has invited applications from ten thousand people for jobs in Israel and the response of the youth to grab this opportunity seems to be outstanding.

This is the first time that the state government company 'Haryana Skill Employment Corporation' is providing people the opportunity to work abroad. The company has invited applications from people for various positions in Dubai and the UK, opportunities in Israel stand out because 'Haryana Skill Employment Corporation' has issued a whopping 10,000 recruitments.

The job openings cover primarily skilled construction workers, such as carpenters, iron benders, ceramic tile fixers, and masons.

The Background

Gaza has been Israel's target since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7. According to the Health Ministry of Hamas-run Gaza, the death toll in this war has crossed almost 18,000, and it is still uncertain about the end of the war, as of now.

At the very beginning of this war that has been going on for the last two months, Israel canceled the work permits of the Palestinians working from there, due to which it is facing an intense shortage of manpower.

According to estimates, Israel needs about one lakh workers, to fulfill their labour demand, for which it is looking towards India. To fulfill this need, Haryana Skill Employment Corporation is seeking applications from people with experience in the construction sector, but there are some important conditions that people are still now sure about.

How long will the contract last? What will be the living arrangements? Will the ones going from here get medical insurance or not? Can a person from outside Haryana apply for this job? There are many such questions, the answers to which are important to know. How much money will you get in this job? Before talking about this, what work needs to be done in Israel? Let's talk about that.

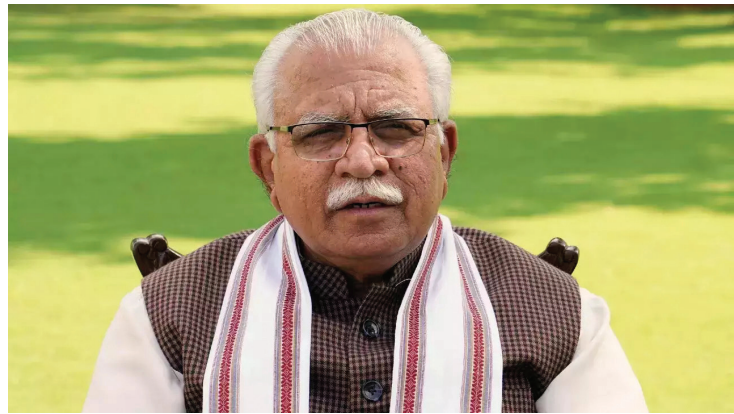
What work needs to be done?

According to the Haryana Skill Employment Corporation, a person can apply for four types of jobs. This includes Framework workers, a Shuttering Carpenter, Iron Bending workers, and Ceramic Tile and Plastering experts. Israel plans to hire around six thousand people for the said profiles.

Eligibility

The person applying for the job should have at least three years of experience and education up to the 10th standard. The age limit for these jobs has been kept at 25 to 45 years. Apart from this, the selected person can work in Israel for a maximum of five years, but his work visa will be extended every year.

The special and considered to be the best thing is



that the English language is not mandatory for doing these jobs. Pallavi Sandhir, Secretary, of Haryana Skill Employment Corporation, has explained this program.

“This is the first time that we have invited applications from people for jobs abroad. So far, we have received 800 applications to work in Israel, 300 to the UK, and 700 to work as security guards in Dubai. We have started a special drive and will recruit more people by sending our teams to the district from where we have received thousands of queries. We will also extend the date of the recruitment process considering the demand from the youth”

Well Paid Jobs

According to the Haryana Skill Employment Corporation, people will be selected for these jobs based on offline interviews. A person getting a job in Israel will have to work nine hours a day and 26 days a month. If a person needs to take leave from work, it will be provided by the Israeli company under Israeli labour laws.

The employed person will get 6100 Israeli New Shekel currency every month, which is approximately Rs 1,38,000 when converted into Indian Rupees. Apart from this, there will also be arrangements for medical insurance and accommodation for the working person, but the person will have to pay for it from his pocket.

According to the advertisement, one may have to pay around Rs 3000 for medical insurance and around Rs 10,000 per month for housing facilities. The thing to note here is that the money received every month will be deposited into the person's bank account and this money will be given to him in lump sum, along with interest, only when he leaves Israel

after the completion of the contract. This means when an employee is working in Israel, he will not get money in hand every month. However, his medical and residential expenses will be deducted every month. Apart from this, the working person will have to take care of the cost of food and water himself.

Is this Opportunity Open Only for the people of Haryana?

On October 13, 2021, the Haryana Government formed the Haryana Skill Employment Corporation under the Companies Act 2013. It provides manpower to the state government as well as private companies in a transparent manner.



Company Secretary Pallavi Sandhir says, “Suppose a state government or a private company needs 100 computer operators or security guards, they will tell us their needs and accordingly we make that manpower available.”

She says, “The only difference is that now there is no contractor in between. Interested people are applying and a merit list has been prepared transparently and their names are put forward.”

Pallavi Sandhir says that it is mandatory for a person applying for a job in Israel to have 'ParivarPehchan Patra' of Haryana because only then he will be able to apply on the website. She says, “The primary merit list of the candidates has been prepared under the Deployment of Contractual Persons Policy. In this, parameters like annual income, age of the candidate, socio-economic criteria, work experience, and previous experience of working with the state government are considered. In this, each parameter has different numbers, based on which a

candidate makes his place in the merit list.”

Employment Crisis

With the help of Haryana Skill Employment Corporation, the state government is trying to reduce unemployment.

Bharatiya Janata Party leader Manohar Lal Khattar has been holding the post of Chief Minister in Haryana since 2014. In August 2023, in response to a question asked in the Assembly regarding unemployment, he informed that from 2015 to 2022, about 1.69 lakh people have registered annually in employment offices for jobs.

Apart from this, the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation of the Government of India conducts a Labour Force Survey every three months, which reveals the unemployment rate in the states. According to this survey (January-March 2023), the unemployment rate in the country was 6.8 percent and in Haryana, it was 8.8 percent.

According to the Haryana government, till July 31, 2023, 1,3, 265 graduates, 29,988 postgraduates and 21,569 professional degree holders have registered for employment in the state.

The state government also provides unemployment allowance under the Saksham Yuva Yojana. Under this, an unemployment allowance of Rs 3,000 is given to postgraduates, Rs 1500 to graduates, and Rs 900 to 12th-pass.

Massive Response

The recruitment drive for Israel has already bagged a huge response. A large number of youth are coming not only from Haryana but also from Punjab, UP, and Rajasthan to take tests for jobs in Israel. Taking note of the response, the government has decided to allow people from other states to take the test. However, they must come in person and will not be able to apply through the Haryana government's website. The government also announced that in this recruitment process for Israel, the youth of Haryana are being given priority.

The job crisis in Haryana is pushing hundreds of young people to face the risk of finding work in Israel. These are the young people who are struggling to make ends meet, and greater pay is the primary motivator behind their decision to try their luck in a nation that is facing a volatile situation.



In Rajkot, farmers are using treated sewage water to boost agri output

Turning waste into Wealth

Villages around Gujarat's Rajkot are increasingly using the sewage water from city dwellers. Their agriculture production is doubling year after year. That's because the wastewater contains a lot of nutrition for plant to grow. Today, farmers are not even finding the need to purchase fertilizer.



█ Kaushik Patel

As urban water consumption rises in Rajkot, a surprising phenomenon unfolds in surrounding villages – agricultural production is soaring. Farmers, far from struggling, eagerly collect treated wastewater, a potent fertilizer that has doubled their yields and boosted their incomes.

Elsewhere in India, tensions could simmer between urban water users and rural farmers. But in Rajkot's Saurashtra region, more use of water by city dwellers presents a unique story of mutual benefit.

This precious resource irrigates 7,000 hectares of land, nurturing a vibrant agricultural landscape. Three to four bountiful harvests per year yield 16,500 tonnes of vegetables, 1,100 tonnes of flowers, and 8,200 tonnes of other crops, sustaining the livelihoods of 9,300 farmers.

The secret weapon is Wastewater's natural nutrients, which significantly reduces the reliance on costly fertilizers. Pumping this readily available water also minimizes expenses compared to deep-well groundwater extraction, and its proximity to farms further reduces transportation burdens.

Rajkot's story challenges our perception of

wastewater. In a world grappling with water scarcity and climate change, it emerges not as a burden, but as a valuable resource. This unconventional water source fosters life, promotes sustainability, and fuels economic growth, offering a glimpse into a future where waste becomes wealth.

Water shortage

Saurashtra region, like western Rajasthan, has historically been one of the most drought-prone areas in the country. Saurashtra recorded 31 cases of drought during the last 130 years. About half of them were severe droughts. In 1986, there are also instances of people having to bring water in trains for drinking in Rajkot city.

Geographically, Rajkot is a hot semi-arid climate. Rajkot district has unpredictable rainfall and high water evaporation rate. Agriculture here is rainfed and groundwater dependent, as Saurashtra's 71 rivers are seasonal and the canal network is limited as Saurashtra has very few dams.

In addition, the rate of evaporation of water against the annual rainfall figure is 2,103 mm in Rajkot district, which is the highest in the whole country. Therefore, it becomes a challenge for local farmers to get irrigation water for growing winter crops.





Looking at the annual pattern of rainfall, Rajkot receives an average rainfall of 655 mm with approximately 29 days of rainy days during the year.

However, during the year 2015-16, Rajkot district received a total of 35 days of rainfall and the average was 807.26 mm. While in the year 2022, there was a total of 86 days of rain. It means, 51 more days of rain in 2022 compared to 2015-16.

According to the Meteorological Department, the rainfall pattern has changed over the last five years and Rajkot has received an average of 1000 mm of rain during these years. However, it exceptionally received only 464 mm of rainfall in 2023.

August 2023 recorded the lowest rainfall (1.24 inches), while the highest rainfall was recorded in 2022 (27.48 inches).

How it all started?

Due to extreme weather conditions like unpredicted rains and drought, farmers here turned to using wastewater for irrigation with the support the Rajkot city administration.

Rajkot City Municipal Corporation (RMC) entered into an agreement with the farmers for the use of wastewater through a cooperative society made up of farmer-members.

In 1989, the Standing Committee of the RMC resolved that farmers' cooperative societies would be provided with sewage water for irrigation instead of canal water, which required laying pipelines in their fields. Farmers agreed to use sewage water.

Now farmers are demanding that the government build infrastructure to supply wastewater to them. Amidst water scarcity, farmers point out the remarkable willingness to even pay for guaranteed wastewater supply for agricultural purposes. This, they argued, reflects the significant demand for wastewater as a valuable resource for farming. However, they expressed concern that this resource is currently being channeled elsewhere, urging the development of infrastructure to enable its delivery to agricultural fields.

There is an urgent need to focus on transport and storage infrastructure for this resource so that more and more farmers' livelihoods are sustainable in times of climate change crisis, they say.

Ishwariya Piyat Sahakari Mandali, for example, was formed in 2013. Since the formation of this society, its irrigated area has increased from 600 hectares to 1271 hectares.

Wastewater is simply water, the volume of which increases with increasing demand for water. Getting wastewater instead of fresh water for agriculture has become a bonus for farmers, as the nutrients in it are being used for agriculture.

In some parts of Suarashtra, farmers have installed their own electric pumps to draw treated wastewater from the Rajkot city.

The irrigation potential of wastewater generated from Rajkot city is very large. A conservative study says that Rajkot generates about 275 million liters of wastewater daily. It is estimated to use 210 million liters of wastewater daily.



With Article 370 gone, winds of change sweeps through Kashmir

Has Kashmir Really Changed?





Four years have passed by after article 370 was removed. Today, Kashmir is a different place. Terrorist activities have decreased significantly, tourism is booming and infrastructure development programs could be seen all over the valley.

NV Kamath

A shift is underway in Jammu and Kashmir, where the constant shadow of violence that once dominated daily life is giving way to a growing sense of peace and normalcy. The fear that gripped the region for years, fueled by bombings, attacks, and uncertainty, is slowly receding.

While the challenges of the past remain etched in memory, with residents who endured years of hardship finally finding a semblance of carefree life, it is important to acknowledge the ongoing transformation. The current situation, where people are rebuilding trust and pursuing peaceful lives, resonates with the hopeful message of the prayer line "Mrityorma Amritham Gamayya" (From death, lead us to immortality).

Prior to 2019, achieving lasting peace in Jammu and Kashmir seemed an impossible dream. The very idea of peace in the region had seemed farfetched.

In August 2019, Jammu and Kashmir entered a new chapter with the abrogation of Article 370, which previously granted the state special status within the Indian Constitution. This decision, while highly debated, has undoubtedly impacted the region in multifaceted ways.

One significant aspect is the perceived improvement in security. Events like the Bioproducers' terror attack in 2010, once tragically common, are now seemingly relegated to the past. Recent celebrations like the New Year's Eve gathering at Srinagar's Lal Chowk, the first of its kind, indicate a growing sense of confidence and normalcy among residents. While a single event cannot definitively prove lasting peace, it stands as a symbol of hope and progress.

Athar Ameer Khan, Commissioner of Srinagar Mahanagara Corporation and CEO of Srinagar Smart City Ltd, expressed his excitement on social media platform "X," stating that the city's vibrant celebrations were unlike anything he had witnessed

before. His emotional message described a "big wind of change" blowing through Srinagar, highlighting the renewed hope and optimism amongst residents.

New Year celebrations extended beyond Srinagar's Lal Chowk to various locations like Gulmarg and other cities across the state. Even traditionally tense areas like Ghanta Ghar witnessed midnight revelry.

Shopian, previously known for its association with militant activities, hosted a significant event on August 3rd, 2023. This gathering, held at the Government Degree College, brought together students, journalists, scholars, and local residents for open discussions on various topics.

Road construction

The state is witnessing a significant transformation in its road network, with connectivity reaching new heights in the past few years. 6,912 km of rural roads constructed under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

Average travel time between Jammu and Srinagar has been slashed by 3-5 hours, significantly reducing travel fatigue and boosting inter-regional trade.

A total of 19,096 km of roads have seen blacktopping in the last four years, ensuring smoother and safer journeys across the state. Macadamization

rate has nearly doubled from an average of 8.75 km/day to 15.75 km/day, highlighting the accelerated pace of road development.

Over 302 bridges have been constructed in the past four years, bridging geographical barriers and linking remote villages to the mainstream.

Upgradation of five express highways is underway, fostering faster and more efficient transportation across the state.

Construction of ring roads around Jammu and Srinagar, along with 10 major and 11 other tunnels, will significantly improve urban mobility.

Investments and other general matters

Since the beginning of record-keeping, a total of 1,77,866 projects have been completed in Jammu and Kashmir. These projects encompass a wide range of sectors, from infrastructure development to healthcare and education, significantly improving the quality of life for residents.

In 2022-23, a staggering 92,560 projects were completed, marking a tenfold increase compared to the 9,229 projects finished in 2018-19. This impressive rise highlights the accelerated pace of development initiatives across the state.

Prior to the abrogation of Article 370,



Legal Changes and their effect

The state has undergone significant changes since the abrogation of Article 370. The following initiatives aimed at peacebuilding and development have brought the local community closer to the national mainstream.

Several key reforms have been implemented:

- **Repeal of divisive legal provisions:** Laws deemed to create a sense of separation have been repealed, promoting equal rights and opportunities for all citizens.
- **Strengthened legal framework:** The application of Central laws and the modernization of state legislation have created a more uniform and efficient legal system.
- **Empowerment of local communities:** The elected panchayat raj system fosters greater participation and decision-making by local communities.
- **Prioritization of development:** Initiatives like the Saubhagya Yojana aim to achieve universal electrification and improve living standards.
- **Focus on security:** Efforts to combat terrorism and anti-national activities seek to instill confidence in the minds of citizens.



total investment in Jammu and Kashmir from independence amounted to only 14,000 crore. However, since the abrogation and the implementation of the new Industrial Development Scheme, investments have surged, with a remarkable influx of 81,122 crore over the past two years. This represents a more than fivefold increase, showcasing the growing confidence of investors in the state's future.

Further reinforcing the commitment to industrial development, the Government of India has launched a new Central Sector Scheme with an allocation of 28,400 crore. This initiative aims to create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive, generate employment opportunities, and contribute to the state's economic prosperity.

Tourism development

Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a remarkable surge. In 2022, the Kashmir Valley alone welcomed approximately 26.73 lakh tourists. During the 2022-23 period, the state received a total of around 1.10 crore visitors, including 16,423 foreign tourists. This represents a fourfold increase in foreign visitors compared to the previous year, highlighting the growing global appeal of the region.

With 1.88 crore tourists visiting in the last year, Jammu and Kashmir has established itself as one of the country's most significant tourist destinations. This remarkable growth showcases the positive impact of the abrogation of Article 370 on the tourism sector.

The rise in tourism goes beyond mere numbers. It signifies a revitalized economy, increased local employment opportunities, and a renewed sense of hope for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. As the state continues to invest in infrastructure, improve accessibility, and promote its unique cultural experiences, we can expect even greater heights for Jammu and Kashmir's tourism industry.

The state actively welcomes filmmakers, with over 400 permissions granted for movie, web series, documentary, and music video shoots. This initiative leverages the picturesque landscape and rich cultural heritage to attract productions and promote tourism.

The Film Policy 2021 introduces a single-window clearance system, simplifying the filming process and making it more accessible for filmmakers. This

Employment Drive and Investment Boom

A major recruitment drive is underway in Jammu and Kashmir, with 29,295 vacancies filled and 7,924 more advertised. This commitment to job creation is backed by substantial investment. In 2022-23 alone, 2153 crore was allocated, generating over 11,000 new jobs.

The duly elected three-tier panchayat raj system empowers local communities by directly transferring funds and decision-making authority. This approach fosters greater participation and accountability in governance.

Despite a 20,000 MW hydropower potential, Jammu and Kashmir has only tapped 3,500 MW in the past 70 years. However, the government is taking action, reviving approximately 3000 MW projects. This initiative aims to unlock the state's significant clean energy potential.

The Saubhagya Yojana is on track to achieve 100% household electrification in the state. This ensures access to reliable electricity for all residents, improving living standards and economic opportunities.



streamlined approach removes bureaucratic hurdles and encourages creative expression.

Before 2019, the faced significant security challenges. Frequent incidents like killings, violence, stone pelting, shutdowns (hartals), terrorist recruitment, hit-and-run cases, grenade attacks, and blasts were a daily reality, leading to widespread insecurity.

The security situation has demonstrably improved in recent months. A comparative analysis of 17 security indicators by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reveals significant decreases in violence:

- Stone-pelting incidents: 92% decrease (from 5050 to 445)
- Injuries to security personnel: 84% decrease (from 13100 to 797)
- Injuries to civilians: 99% decrease (from 9303 to 117)

These figures suggest a notable improvement in public safety and a reduction in the threat of violence. While attributing this solely to the abrogation of Article 370 is an oversimplification, it is undoubtedly a factor contributing to the positive trend.



Education and Healthcare Improve All Around

The Economic Survey 2022-23 highlights key developments in Jammu and Kashmir's health and education sectors. Here are some notable achievements:

Healthcare:

- **Expanded Access to Care:** Janaushadhi centers and dialysis facilities are now available in all districts, and ambulatory services (102/108) cover the entire region.
- **Enhanced Capacity:** Geriatric and palliative care facilities are established in all districts, and saturation of COVID-19 vaccination for 18+ and 15-17 age groups has been achieved. Additionally, all districts are equipped with dedicated DGPs and ICUs.
- **Strengthened Medical Education:** Over the past two years, 2100 additional seats have been added in various medical fields like DNB, MBBS, BDS, Nursing, and Paramedics. Notably, MBBS seats have doubled to 1000, placing J&K with a commendable 8.23 MBBS seats per lakh population.

Education:

- **Expanding Opportunities:** IIT Jammu and IIM Jammu have been established, increasing

the total number of degree/engineering colleges from 96 to 147. This provides students with greater access to higher education.

- **Diversified Programs:** Additional seats have been created in specialized fields like BDS (26), Medical PG (50), Dental PG (38), DNB (250), and BSc (Paramedical) (590). This diversification of programs caters to a wider range of student interests and career aspirations.
- **Traditional Medicine Integration:** Government Unani Medical College Kashmir and Ayurvedic College, Akhnoor, Jammu have been allocated 60 and 63 BUM/BAM seats respectively, recognizing the value of traditional medicine in the region's healthcare landscape.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure:** A network of 2966 health and wellness centers is operational, and initiatives like drug addiction control have been introduced to address community health challenges.





Man declared dead regains consciousness after ambulance accident

An elderly man in Haryana, who was declared dead by a hospital, regained consciousness after the ambulance carrying him to his funeral collided with a pothole.

Darshan Singh Brar, 80, was reportedly on a ventilator for four days in a hospital in Patiala before being declared dead. His family then took him in an ambulance to their village for his final rites.

On the outskirts of town, the ambulance hit a notorious pothole, causing the vehicle to swerve and the coffin carrying Brar's body to fall to the ground. This seemingly unfortunate incident resulted in Brar's grandson noticing movement in his body and detecting a heartbeat.

The ambulance immediately rushed Brar back to the nearest hospital, where doctors confirmed he was alive. However, he remains in critical condition due to a chest infection and breathing difficulties.

Dr. Netrapal, who is treating Brar at the hospital



in Karnal, acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding the previous diagnosis. "The family said he was on a ventilator in Patiala for four days but is now breathing on his own. He is still critical and in the ICU. The breathing is laborious because he has an infection in his chest," Dr. Netrapal stated, according to NDTV.



When a lottery ticket you did not purchase hits jackpot!



Gurdev Singh, a rickshaw driver living in Moga village, Punjab, recently experienced a dramatic change in fortune. One day, while navigating the bustling market, he was given a lottery ticket as a gesture of thanks. This seemingly insignificant act held a surprise fate – the ticket turned out to be the winning one, netting Gurdev millions of rupees.

This windfall undoubtedly improved the lives of Gurdev and his family. They transitioned from their previous mud house to a new one and acquired new cars. Despite the media attention and newfound wealth, Gurdev remained grounded. He continues to be seen pedaling his rickshaw through the familiar streets of Amritsar, unchanged in his routine.

Perhaps the most significant takeaway is not the luxurious upgrades, but the quiet contentment radiating from Gurdev. His words speak volumes: "If I sit still and do nothing, I get sick. Driving a rickshaw keeps me fit."

This attitude reflects a deeper truth – the windfall has not overshadowed Gurdev's sense of purpose.

He remains an active social worker, dedicated to community service such as filling potholes and caring for local greenery. As he puts it, "I have been doing this for a long time. Taking care of these trees is important to me."

Gurdev Singh's story is not a rags-to-riches fairytale, but rather a testament to his resilience and enduring values. The lottery prize did not erase his past or redefine his priorities. He continues to find meaning in work and community service, demonstrating that wealth can coexist with simplicity and purpose.



Assam Turns Madrassas into General Schools

Assam has stopped spending taxpayer's money on Islamic studies. Therefore, the government is converting madarassas into general schools. Educationists have applauded the move. Perhaps, Uttar Pradesh will be the next state to do so.

▀ **Kunal Chatterjee**

A significant change ripples through Assam's educational landscape as 1,300 Middle English madrassas across the state undergo a shift. Effective immediately, these institutions under the Directorate of Elementary Education will now be known simply as "ME schools," marking a transition to a general education curriculum.

This move builds upon earlier efforts in April 2021, when all 610 state-run madrassas under the Madrassa Board were converted into upper primary,



high, and higher secondary schools. Importantly, this conversion preserves continuity for staff – their status, salaries, allowances, and service conditions remain unchanged.

As Suranjana Senapati, Director of Elementary Education, clarifies, the change focuses solely on nomenclature. Classes in these institutions have continued uninterrupted, and only their official designation reflects the new framework. When questioned about pre-existing religious instruction, Ms. Senapati declined to comment.

Specific examples illustrate the renaming process. Anandapur ME Madrasa in Bajali will now be Anandapur ME School, and Charakpara ME Madrasa in Barpeta becomes Charakpara ME School. This system applies to all madrassas covered by the directive.

This recent transformation stems from the December 2020 repeal of two key acts: the Assam Madrassa Education (Provincialisation) Act of 1995 and the Assam Madrassa Education (Provincialisation of Services of Staff and Reorganisation of Madrassa Educational Institutions) Act of 2018. This paved the way for the current government's decision to convert state-funded madrassas into general schools.

The policy faced legal challenges, reaching the Supreme Court after being upheld by the Guwahati High Court in February 2021. Petitions by Mohammad Imaduddin Barbhuiya and others argued that the Repeal Act and subsequent orders violated their fundamental rights enshrined in Articles 25, 26, 28, and 30 of the Indian Constitution. However, the High Court dismissed these petitions.

Importantly, the court clarified that the change applied only to "provincialized" madrassas – those funded by the government. Private and community-run institutions remain unaffected.

What is the Assam Repealing Act?

In December 2020, the Assam government, under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma, enacted the Assam Repealing Act. This Act repealed the Assam Madrassa Education Act of 1995, effectively

dismantling the state's system of government-funded madrassas. The High Court's subsequent decision upholding the Act was hailed by Sharma as "historic."

Over 100 small madrassas have been merged into larger ones so far. The aim is to improve educational standards and infrastructure while fostering a more consolidated system.

The Act's implementation has seen two key measures: the merging of smaller madrassas into larger ones and the closure and conversion of approximately 800 government-aided madrassas into general schools.

To address security concerns and potential infiltration of radical elements, the government has implemented stricter regulations. These include mandatory reporting to the nearest police station for teachers from outside Assam and increased scrutiny of madrasa activities.



Merger of small madrassas

State Director General of Police

Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta says, "The decision to merge small madrassas into big ones had been taken after reports that these places were allegedly used for spreading radicalism. "It has been done. This will reduce the risk." Mahanta said adding that there will be only one madrasa within a radius of three kilometers and madrassas with 50 or less students will be merged with nearby bigger madrassas.

A survey was carefully conducted to prepare a database of all such madrassas in the state. The Director General of Police says that Assam has a sizable population of Muslims and this state has been a natural target of fundamentalists. Such anti-national activities are usually done in small madrassas. Last year, Assam Police had busted nine modules of terrorist organization Ansarul Bangla Team (ABT) and Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent and arrested 53 suspected terrorists so far. According to Mahant, after the ban on these organizations in Bangladesh, their workers are now trying to trap the youth of Assam.

Educational reforms in madrassas

Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said, "To stop such

anti-national activities, many Muslim leaders had contacted the government officials. In a meeting held with 68 leaders of the community, it was agreed to bring educational reforms in madrassas. Four centers of Islamic studies have been established in the state. A board will be formed with members from all the several streams that are running the madrassas. The survey work to prepare the database of Madrasas is almost complete. This includes details of land, number of teachers, students and curriculum. The survey report was expected to be ready by January 25, 2023.”

Earlier, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma had said that all the teachers coming from outside Assam to teach in madrassas of the state will have to report to their nearest police station from time to time. He said, “This decision has been taken as part of an effort to improve madrassa education after the alleged jihadi activities of Islamic religious leaders, many of whom were connected to the madrassas in Assam and India as a whole.”

Controversy regarding madrassas of Assam has been going on for a long time. Recently some suspicious people were arrested. They were all accused of being involved in Jihadi activities. Apart from this, Imams from Bangladesh were also found working in some madrassas. Strict action was taken against him by the administration. After that, Director General of Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta

had a meeting with many Muslim leaders. In the same meeting, a consensus was reached on the survey of all the madrassas of the state.

When the Assam government decided to close government-aided madrassas and cultural schools at the end of 2020, there was a lot of opposition to this decision, especially on the issue of madrassas. Many organizations had also challenged this decision in the High Court. But the High Court maintained the government order. On the same basis, all such madrassas were closed from April 1st last year. Now the process of converting them into normal schools is going on.

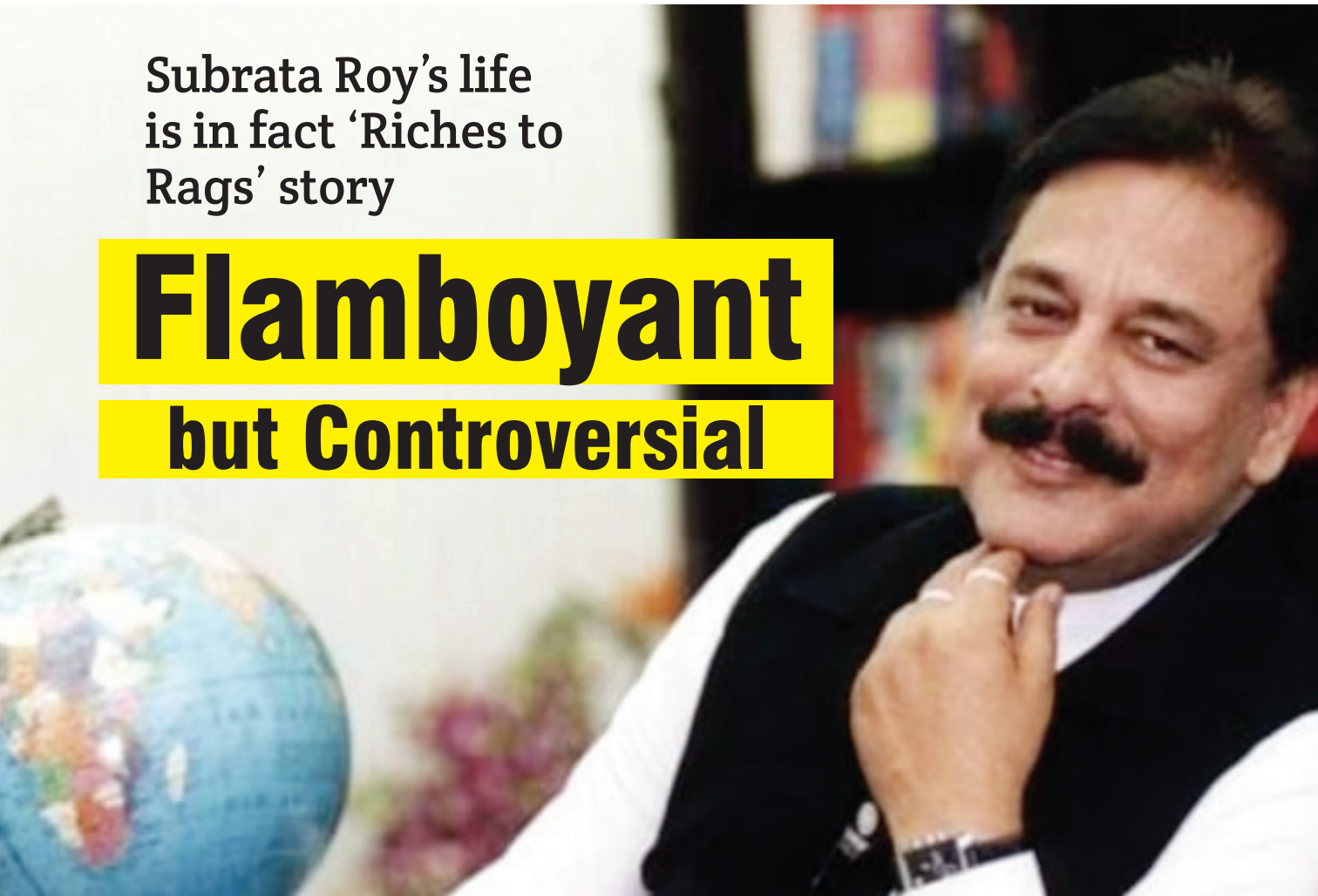
But many organizations are still opposing the government's decision. Maulana Fazal-ul-Karim, leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, says, "It is not true that only religious education is given in madrassas. Arabic is taught there as a foreign language along with Islamic teachings. Karim said, “This has helped many students to become doctors and engineers and find employment in Middle East countries.”

Some other organizations have also accused the BJP government of the state of taking biased action against the minorities. But a government spokesperson specifically said that efforts to improve madrassa education will continue. The government is determined to root out fundamentalism from the state.



Subrata Roy's life
is in fact 'Riches to
Rags' story

Flamboyant but Controversial



Sahara Group's early success capitalized on a pre-digital landscape where raising funds from the unbanked population through paper-based transactions was the norm. However, as technology advanced and online platforms gained traction, the group remained reliant on traditional paper-based process. This raised a question whether Subrata Roy was laundering the blackmoney of politicians?

▀ **Shankar Shaw**

Subrata Roy, the founder of Sahara Group, is no more. His death on November 14, 2023, marked the end of an era for the once-mighty conglomerate. What also seems to have died with him is the controversial method he used to raise cash, which ultimately led to his downfall.

It was this drastic change in India's financial system, coupled with legal troubles, that threw him into jail and sent his company teetering on the brink of collapse.

Starting out as a small chit fund in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, Sahara Group grew into one of India's biggest business conglomerates in a relatively short time.

Profile of ROY



Subrata Roy, born in 1948 in Bihar's Araria district, had Bengali roots. He started his journey in Kolkata and later reached Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. His initial foray into business was modest - selling biscuits and snacks with a friend on a scooter.

Soon, Roy took over a chit fund, understanding the needs of India's largely unbanked population. He targeted rickshaw drivers, vegetable vendors, and even those earning as little as Rs 100, offering them a chance to grow their savings. This laid the foundation for his future success.

Roy's Sahara India Financial Corporation employed millions of agents across India, collecting crores in deposits. He tapped into the lack of formal banking facilities for many and built his empire on paper-based transactions.

As funds grew, Roy diversified into various sectors, including aviation (Air Sahara), real estate (Aamby Valley City), and media (Sahara One TV). His Sahara Group became a prominent player in the Indian economy.

By the time of Roy's passing in 2023, many of his ventures faced financial disarray. He faced legal challenges regarding unaccounted money from small-time investors.

Sahara One Media and Entertainment operated three Hindi-language channels. Its production house Sahara Movie Studios co-produced several big hits including Wanted, Sarkar, and Page 3. The group also owned newspapers and magazines in Hindi, English and Urdu.

Apart from this the group also owned Air Sahara - a full-scaled commercial airline that was sold to Jet Airways in 2006 for \$500 million. In the hospitality segment the group acquired New York's Plaza Hotel and London's Grosvenor House Hotel.

The company grew fast and even sponsored the Indian cricket team until 2013.



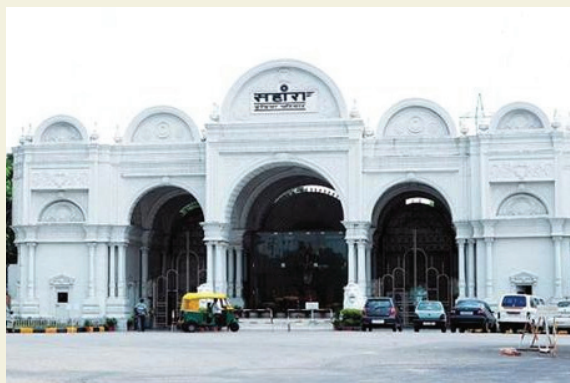
SAHARA
INDIA PARIWAR

A flamboyant lifestyle Most of you only dreamed

Interestingly, Roy never hid his wealth. Often donned in his signature waistcoat and tie, he hobnobbed with celebrities, political heavyweights, and high-profile businessmen. His sprawling 270-acre mansion, "Sahar Seher" in Lucknow, served as a testament to his opulent lifestyle, hosting lavish events and attracting the who's who of the country.

In 2004, Roy's extravagance reached new heights with the double wedding of his sons, Sushanto and Seemanto. The event, dubbed one of the most expensive weddings in Indian history,

came with a staggering Rs 550 crore price tag. Over 11,000 guests, many of them flown in from across the country on private jets, graced the four-day celebration held in Lucknow. The sheer scale and opulence of the ceremony, from exotic flowers to renowned Bollywood personalities, captured the nation's attention.



His business interests ranged from manufacturing to aviation, journalism to sports sponsorship. At its peak, Sahara was a major employer, with a staggering 11 lakh workers across thousands of offices around the country.

The group's legendary Aamby Valley Resort township in Maharashtra was a symbol of its extravagance. Cabinet members of the Uttar Pradesh government and Bollywood stars frequently visited, and in 2008, Roy's son's wedding hosted an unprecedented 9,000 guests, including then-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

However, the high life came crashing down in 2014 when Roy was imprisoned over financial irregularities. Although released two years later, his health deteriorated, and he died in November 2023.

Roy's legacy is a complex one, marked by both immense success and controversy. His fleet of jets and helicopters, Sahara's sponsorship of major sporting events, and his ambitious dreams for projects like turning the Sundarbans into a tourism hotspot all speak to his bold vision and entrepreneurial spirit.

However, the financial practices that fueled his

rise ultimately led to his downfall, leaving behind a cautionary tale for future generations of business leaders.

Cracks in Sahara Empire

Cracks began to appear in Subrata Roy's seemingly invincible Sahara Group empire. Chartered Accountant Roshan Lal raised concerns about the Group's lack of transparency in raising substantial funds for a housing venture. In fact Roy had simply continued in his familiar style: Raising money from common men.

This bond came with an unusual twist: the option to convert investments into shares. However, none of Sahara's ventures were listed on the stock market, raising eyebrows among investors and regulators. The National Housing Bank, sensing trouble, referred the matter to SEBI for investigation.

Roy challenged SEBI's authority, claiming proper compliance with regulatory procedures. Nonetheless, the investigation proceeded, uncovering irregularities. SEBI ordered Sahara to stop the bond sale and refund investors. Roy, given a three-month deadline with a hefty 15% interest penalty, initially complied with the first installment of Rs 5,120 crore.

But Roy's cooperation ended there. He asserted that investors had already been compensated, refusing to pay the remaining installments. This defiance in 2014 landed him in jail for contempt of court, facing an outstanding sum of Rs 10,000 crore. His release hinged on depositing a staggering Rs 5,000 crore in cash and a further Rs 5,000 crore in bank guarantees.

After two years behind bars, Roy obtained parole in 2016. However, the Supreme Court, concerned about his property status and the outstanding sums, ordered his return to jail. The Income Tax department, adding to his woes, seized several properties linked to the Group.



Sahara's Paper Avalanche: A Tale of Documents and Deadlines

In 2013, Subrata Roy, facing questions about his company's finances, responded with a spectacle. Instead of digital records, he sent 128 trucks filled with 31,000+ cartons of investor documents to the market regulator Sebi's office in Mumbai!

This paper avalanche caused a traffic jam and left onlookers in awe. It also revealed a stark truth: Sahara's records were entirely paper-based, a rarity in the digital age.

Sebi, overwhelmed by the sheer volume of documents, had to rent a massive warehouse equipped with automated robots and secure vaults

just to store them!

Even with this advanced setup, verifying the billions of pages was a monumental task. A court-appointed judge confirmed the difficulty, stating that matching debenture holders with redemption vouchers was nearly impossible.

Later, to manage the 200 million scanned pages, Sebi had to hire a specialized server vendor, creating a digital archive of this paper mountain.

This story highlights questions about transparency and accountability in the Sahara Group.



At last, the Union Government transformed the country's criminal justice system by bringing about drastic changes to the criminal code of conduct. The amendments have not been implemented yet. In fact, we are currently using the law framed by the British Raj.

Transforming Criminal Justice System



▀ **Kunal Chatterjee**

After serving India for over 160 years, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) is finally retiring. Critics long deemed it outdated and insufficiently victim-oriented, relics of its colonial origin. To address these concerns, the Lok Sabha passed the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) in December 2023. Marking a new era in Indian justice, this comprehensive and modern code aims to prioritize victims and provide a more robust legal framework.



The BNS is more than just a replacement for the IPC. It's a complete overhaul of India's criminal justice system. Three additional bills, known as the Indian Judicial (Second) Code, Indian Civil Defense (Second) Code, and Indian Evidence (Second) Code, will replace the Code of Criminal Procedure and Indian Evidence Act respectively. This holistic approach ensures a cohesive and modernized legal infrastructure built for the 21st century.

One of the BNS's key strengths lies in its strong focus on victim protection. It expands the definition of cruelty against women and introduces dedicated measures to combat gender-based crimes. This emphasis on empowering victims, particularly women, marks a significant step towards a more just and equitable legal system.

While the Lok Sabha has approved these bills, their implementation awaits notification from the Central Government. The exact date remains unknown, but anticipation runs high for the transformative impact these new codes will have on India's legal landscape. Their effectiveness, however, will hinge on meticulous implementation and a shift in legal culture towards prioritizing victim needs and upholding the spirit of the BNS.

Presenting the bill, Amit Shah said, "From 1860 to 2023, the criminal justice system of this country continued to run based on the laws made by the British. In its place, these three laws will be established with the Indian soul and there will be many reforms within our criminal justice system. There will be a big change."

Let us now compare the Indian Justice Code 2023 Bill and the IPC.

Mocking marriages

According to **Section 69** of the proposed law, if a person has sexual relations with a woman by making a false promise of marriage, employment, or promotion, he will be punished. This punishment can be extended up to ten years and a fine can also be imposed along with it. Under this section, if a person marries while hiding his identity, then the punishment of up to ten years will apply to him too. However, the cases falling under this section have been kept out of the category of rape.

There are no clear provisions in the IPC for acts like sexual intercourse under false promises of marriage, false promises of employment or promotion, and marriage by concealing identity. Such cases are covered under Section 90 of the IPC, where consent taken based on falsehood is considered wrongful. In such cases, charges are filed under section 375 of IPC. This section defines a crime like rape.

Rape cases

Under section 376 of the IPC, there is a provision of a minimum of ten years of imprisonment and a penalty for rape, which can extend up to life imprisonment. But if this crime is committed by a person like a police officer, public servant, member of the armed forces, relative of the woman, or hospital staff, or the crime occurs at a place that is related to the safety of women, then the punishment becomes harsher.

In such a situation, if the guilty person is sentenced to life imprisonment, then he will have to spend the rest of his life in jail.

Meanwhile, Section 64 of the proposed law prescribes punishment for these crimes and no changes have been made.

Under IPC- Section 376 DA, there is a provision of a minimum of twenty years of imprisonment and a fine. The punishment can be extended up to life imprisonment. Life imprisonment here means that the convicted person will have to spend the rest of his life in jail.

There are no changes in the proposed law.



IPC- Section 376 AB - Punishment for a minimum of twenty years with a fine, which may extend to life imprisonment. Besides, a provision for the death penalty has also been made.

Proposed law – There is a provision for punishment in Section 65(2) and no changes have been made.

Death for gang rape

Under IPC Section 376D, in the case of gang rape, the guilty person will be sentenced to a minimum of twenty years of imprisonment, which can be extended to life imprisonment, that is, the guilty person will have to spend the rest of his life in jail. In case of gang rape, there is a provision for the death penalty only if the age of the girl is less than 12 years.

Proposed law- Under Section 70(2), the punishment in gang rape cases is more stringent. If the girl is below 18 years, then the culprit can also be given the death penalty.

Rape is defined and criminalised in Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, but several petitions are pending in the High Court and the Supreme Court

Positive Aspects

- **Decriminalisation of adultery:** Unlike the Indian Penal Code (IPC) it replaces, the BNS removes the outdated and discriminatory law criminalizing adultery, recognizing women's autonomy in marital relationships.
- **Increased punishments for certain crimes against women:** The BNS strengthens penalties for offenses like rape, stalking, and acid attacks, potentially acting as a deterrent and providing harsher consequences for perpetrators.
- **Expanded definition of cruelty towards women:** The BNS now explicitly includes mental harm alongside physical injury in its definition of cruelty, potentially offering broader protection against domestic abuse.
- **Gender-neutral language:** The BNS generally uses gender-neutral language when referencing victims and perpetrators, promoting inclusivity and avoiding biased terminology.



Section 377 removed

Unnatural sex is no longer an offense under BNS. It is noteworthy that in the landmark judgment of the Apex Court in the Navtej Singh Johar case, where a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court struck down Section 377 of the IPC. The Act, which criminalised consensual sexual intercourse, was partially repealed, although forced intercourse with an adult male or sexual intercourse with an animal remained a crime. The BNS has completely decriminalised it, meaning that forced sexual intercourse against a man and intercourse with an animal are no longer offenses under the BNS.

objecting to Exception 2 of this section.

IPC - Exception 2 to Section 375 says that if a man, in a marriage has sexual intercourse with his wife, who is 15 years of age or above, it will not amount to rape, even if he has such intercourse without the wife's consent. However, in the year 2017, the Supreme Court increased the age of women to 18 years.

In fact, after the Nirbhaya rape case, Justice Verma's committee demanded a separate law for marital rape. His argument was that consent and

disagreement should be defined even in sex after marriage.

Proposed law – No change, nor has the word marital rape been mentioned.

Sexual harassment

The offenses of sexual harassment are defined in section 354 of the IPC. In the year 2013, after the 'Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013', four sub-sections were added to this section, in which there is a provision for different punishment for different crimes.

IPC- Under Section 354A, if a person makes a physical touch of sexual nature with a woman, behaves sexually, asks for sexual favours, and shows pornographic content against her will, then he will be imprisoned for three years along with a penalty. If a person makes sexual comments, there is a provision of imprisonment for up to one year, a fine, or both.

354B- If a man forcibly undresses a woman or tries to do so, then there is a provision of punishment of three to seven years and a fine for doing so.

354C- Watching, taking pictures, and broadcasting the private act of a woman is a crime, for which there is a provision of punishment of one to three years. On repeating the offense, the punishment increases to three to seven years along with a fine.

Proposed law- These crimes have been defined under sections 74 to 76 and no changes have been made.

Punishment for stalking

Chasing a woman, trying to strike up a conversation with a woman even after she refuses, monitoring her internet use, email or any other electronic communication is a crime.

Under IPC Section 354D, if this offense is committed for the first time, the punishment can be extended up to three years along with a fine. In case of a second offense, the punishment can be extended to five years along with a fine.

Proposed law - These crimes have been defined according to Section 77, in which the provision of punishment is the same as in the IPC.

Uttering words or sounds, or making gestures to insult a woman is considered a crime. Under IPC-

Section 509, the guilty person will be punished with a fine, which can extend up to three years.

Dowry death

If a woman dies due to burning, physical injury, or under suspicious circumstances within seven years of marriage and it is found that before her death, the woman was subjected to harassment by her husband or husband's relatives, then it is considered 'dowry death'. Under IPC Section 304B, there is a minimum punishment of seven years imprisonment, which can be extended up to life imprisonment.

Proposed law – Dowry death has been defined in section 79 and there has been no change in the punishment.

Other Amendments Under BNS

It is an offense to print or publish the proceedings of a trial court relating to sexual offenses without the permission of the court.

Section 73 states that rape, sexual intercourse by a husband while separated from his wife, sexual intercourse by a person in authority, printing or publishing any case without the prior permission of such Court in connection with any proceedings before a Court in respect of an offense relating to sexual intercourse using fraudulent means, gang rape, etc. is punishable, which can extend up to two years and a fine can also be imposed.

Organised Crime

The new law adds organised crime under Section 111, and if the crime results in the death of a person, the maximum prescribed punishment is the death penalty. Organised crime is defined as "kidnapping, robbery, vehicle theft, extortion, land grabs, hiring for murder, economic crimes, cyber crimes, drugs, weapons or illicit goods or services, prostitution or human trafficking for money, and is defined as any unlawful activity by a person or a group of persons, single or jointly, either as a member of an organised crime syndicate or on behalf of such a syndicate which, by the use of violence, intimidation, threat, coercion, or any other unlawful means to obtain direct or indirect material gain, including financial gain, will be considered organised crime. It also defines organised crime syndicates, carrying on unlawful activity, and economic crime.

One of the major strengths of the Indian Judicial Code 2023 lies in the priority given to provisions related to crimes against women and children. It has a dedicated chapter, Chapter 5, titled 'Crimes against Women and Children' dealing with sexual offenses, crimes against women and children, crimes related to marriage, crimes causing abortion, and crimes against children. It creates a legal framework for these issues. For the first time, crimes against women are recognised to include acts that are heinous, yet are not considered crimes.





40% of Guyanese are made up of Indian Origin

Will this become India's future business partner?

Indian origins are not in as big number in a foreign country as they are in Guyana, a small country on the Caribbean coast. Indian ethnic community makes nearly 40% of the country's population. Its Finance Minister Ashwini Singh also has his roots in India. These days, the country is becoming increasingly richer because of its oil wealth.

Wing Commander BS Sudarshan

Guyana, a small country on the northern mainland of South America has become the world's newest oil power after discoveries of crude oil reserves equivalent to more than 11 billion barrels since 2015. South America's second poorest nation is experiencing an oil boom that could propel it to the top of the continent's wealth ranking. The discovery of significant crude oil deposits off the Atlantic coast has had a revolutionary impact not just on the small Caribbean nation, but also on India, the world's third-largest oil importer, which is striving to bolster its energy security.

India is interested in sourcing the majority of Guyana's oil share from its oilfields through long-term contracts, therefore it approved signing a 5-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Guyana to collaborate in the hydrocarbon sector.

As the South Asian country seeks to diversify its oil import sources, the proposed agreement will cover topics such as procuring crude oil from the South American country, participation of Indian enterprises in its exploration and production sector, and collaboration in crude oil processing.

What is India's plan?

According to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2022, India stands as the world's third-largest energy consumer, the third-largest consumer of oil, and the fourth-largest refiner.

Notably, it is also the fastest-growing major economy, experiencing a surge in energy needs. Projections from the BP Energy Outlook and the International Energy Agency indicate that India's energy demand may grow at an impressive rate of about 3% per annum until 2040, surpassing the global rate of 1%. Additionally, India is anticipated to contribute significantly to global energy demand growth, accounting for 25-28% between 2020-2040.

Considering this escalating energy demand and

with a focus on ensuring energy access, availability, and affordability while reinforcing energy security, India is actively seeking to expand partnerships in the hydrocarbon sector. This involves diversifying crude oil sources and acquiring quality overseas assets, thereby reducing dependencies on a single geographic or economic unit and enhancing India's strategic maneuverability.

Recognising the strategic importance of Guyana in the hydrocarbon sector and the growing momentum in bilateral relations, the Indian government is proposing to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Guyana for cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector. This move reflects the mutual interest in fostering collaboration, potentially benefiting both countries in addressing their energy needs and promoting sustainable growth in the sector.

Highlights of the MoU

This strategic agreement encompasses the entire value chain of the hydrocarbon sector, involving aspects such as crude oil sourcing from Guyana, Indian companies' participation in Guyana's exploration and production (E&P) sector, and collaboration in areas of crude oil refining. Given that India is the world's third-largest energy consumer and importer, the country is actively seeking to diversify



its sources of oil imports, and India has identified Guyana as one of the nations for this purpose. The proposed MoU, under discussion for over two years, is set for an initial period of five years, with provisions for automatic renewal if mutually agreed upon.

The key objectives of the MoU include strengthening bilateral trade, fostering investment, and diversifying the source of crude oil, thereby enhancing India's energy and supply security. The agreement will provide Indian companies with opportunities to participate in Guyana's E&P sector, allowing them to gain valuable experience by collaborating with global oil and gas companies in upstream projects, aligning with the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' or a self-reliant India.

As per the OPEC World Oil Outlook 2022, Guyana is projected to experience a significant increase in production, with liquids supply expected to grow from 0.1 million barrels per day in 2021 to 0.9 million bpd in 2027. This further underscores the strategic importance of collaboration between India and Guyana in the hydrocarbon.

Opportunities for India and Guyana

The MoU creates significant prospects for major oil firms around the globe, including India. Guyana, with its strong Indian link, will welcome Indian enterprises in both the private and public sectors.

This possibility is not confined to upstream oil and gas giants, but extends across all sectors, from automobiles to Unified Payment Interface services.

Meanwhile, Guyanese leadership has expressed strong interest in leveraging Indian expertise to aid continue the development of a world-class regulatory framework for the oil sector.

Collaboration with India can considerably benefit Guyana's agricultural development. The intention to

sign an air services agreement (ASA) demonstrates a commitment to developing bilateral relations, promoting trade, and encouraging collaboration in a variety of industries, including agriculture. This collaboration can exploit India's agricultural experience to the mutual benefit of both countries.

How Oil Resources Changed Guyana's Status

In 2017, an economic survey highlighted that over 40 per cent of Guyana's population is living below the poverty line. However, the situation is not the same anymore, because, in 2022, Guyana stands tall as one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

The fortune of Guyana changed with the discovery of an offshore oil well in December 2019. Today, the country is on the path to becoming one of the largest per capita oil producers in the world by 2030.

Oil exploration and drilling began in 2019, and since then, the country has experienced a substantial increase in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In 2020, amidst the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Guyana's GDP exhibited remarkable growth, expanding by an impressive 43%. This growth was largely attributed to the newly established oil sector, which played a crucial role in buoying the economy during a challenging global economic environment.

The continued high GDP levels in 2021, estimated at 20%, reflect the ongoing impact of oil production on Guyana's economic landscape.

The revenue generated from the oil sector contributes significantly to the country's overall economic output, providing opportunities for infrastructure development, social programs, and other investments.

With a population of around 7,50,000, in per capita terms, Guyana's wealth is set to skyrocket.

Guyana's Indian Connection

Guyana with its 800,000, population and spread over an area of 215,000 sq.km, is among the least densely populated countries. A former British colony, Guyana's dominant economic activity was plantation which required labour from India during the colonial period. Today people of Indian origin are the single largest ethnic group forming 40 percent of its population.



ExxonMobil, the main operator in Guyana, says it has discovered more than 5.5 billion barrels' worth of oil beneath the country's waters in the Atlantic Ocean. It's important to note that the economic trajectory of countries heavily reliant on natural resources, like oil, can be influenced by global oil prices, market dynamics, and other factors. Therefore, the sustainability and management of this newfound resource will be critical for Guyana's long-term economic success.

In 2008, Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Limited, a subsidiary of ExxonMobil, initiated offshore exploration activities in Guyana. A significant milestone occurred in May 2015 when ExxonMobil announced the discovery of more than 90 meters of high-quality, oil-bearing sandstone reservoirs approximately 200 km off the Guyanese coastline. This discovery was recognized as one of the largest crude oil discoveries in the past decade. Following this breakthrough, subsequent discoveries were made in early 2018 at various sites within the Stabroek block, including Payara, Liza Deep, Snoek, Turbot, Ranger, and Pacora. The Liza-1 well, which was drilled to a depth of 5,433 meters in 1,742 meters of water, marked the first well on the expansive Stabroek block, covering an area of 26,800 square kilometres.

Initial estimates suggested the area contained around 700 million barrels of oil, equivalent to a total value of US\$40 billion based on international crude prices at the time of discovery. However, ongoing discoveries by ExxonMobil and its partner Hess Corporation led to a significant increase in this estimate, surpassing 4 billion barrels of oil equivalent. Projections indicated the potential to produce 750,000 barrels per day by 2025. Further assessments

in early 2020 elevated the estimated reserves to approximately eight billion barrels of oil equivalent, underlining the substantial and growing significance of Guyana as an oil-producing nation. These discoveries have positioned Guyana as a notable player in the global oil industry, with significant economic implications for the country's development and growth.

India-Guyana historic ties

The major ethnic groups in Guyana are Indo-Guyanese, Afro-Guyanese, and Amerindians. Indo-Guyanese, primarily descendants of Indian indentured labourers, form the largest ethnic group, followed by Afro-Guyanese, descendants of African slaves. Amerindians, the indigenous people of Guyana, make up a smaller but significant portion of the population.

In Guyana, Indian Arrival Day is celebrated on May 5 commemorating the first arrival of labourers from India to the country, on May 5, 1838. Between 1838 and 1917 over 500 ship voyages, with 2,38,909 indentured Indian immigrants, came to Guyana. The majority of labourers in Guyana came from the Bhojpur and Awadh regions in the present-day states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. A significant minority also came from Southern India.

The indentured labour system became the replacement system for slavery in British Guyana.

One major distinction between slavery and the indentured immigrant experience was that the



indentured labourers from India had agreed to immigration, signing contracts that bound them to a plantation for five years, while earning a small, fixed daily wage. If mutually agreed upon, five additional years working in Guyana was permitted (for a total of 10 years), and they would then be entitled either to receive passage back to India or to stay in Guyana and receive land and money to start their businesses. Some 75,898 of them or their children were recorded as returning to India. Today Indo-Guyanese are the largest ethnic group in Guyana identified by the official census. The majority religion of Guyana is Hinduism and the major spoken language is Bhojपुरi.

Diplomatic Ties between India and Guyana

The Indian community has since become an integral part of Guyanese society.

Relations between India and Guyana ever since the independence of Guyana in May 1966 have been cordial. Diplomatic relations between India and Guyana have generally been cordial, with cultural, economic, and people-to-people ties linking the two nations. The Indian government has engaged in initiatives to strengthen these connections, including assisting in areas such as healthcare and education. The cordiality in the relationship remains unaffected by changes in governments either in India or in Guyana. The cooperation between the two countries in sharing developmental experience is mainly routed through Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) under which forty scholarships are granted every year in various courses. Besides, some experts are also deputed to Guyana from time to time on request in specified areas of activity.



There is a single hand behind the recent high profile killings in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. That criminal hand is Goldie Brar. He rose to notoriety for the first time after he ordered the killing of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala. Brar is today India's most wanted criminal on the loose.

Goldie Brar: Criminal on the Loose

█ **Sumana**

Fugitive gangster Satinderjeet Singh, alias Goldie Brar, has been declared a terrorist by the Government of India. The Ministry of Home Affairs notification states that he has been involved in the smuggling of high-grade arms, ammunition, and explosive materials through drones from across the border and supplying them for carrying out killings and providing sharpshooters.

With this development, Goldie, the son of a former policeman who was involved in local gang rivalries until recent years in Punjab, has managed to climb the ladder of crime swiftly and steadily.

From being one of Punjab's most wanted men, making it to the list of Canada's 25 most wanted, to a Red Corner Notice by Interpol making him liable to arrest and extradition from any member country, and to becoming designated a terrorist by the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Goldie Brar is a name that shot to notoriety too soon.

The name of this 1994-born lad from Sri Muktsar Sahib in Punjab hit headlines for masterminding the murder of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moose Wala and Dera Sacha Sauda follower Pardeep Singh in 2022.

He's been on the run ever since. Who is this Canada-based criminal currently on the run from



Indian and Canadian police, and what has been his journey from a college dropout who had few brushes with the law during his days in Punjab to one of the most wanted criminals?

Goldie Brar in police records

Goldie Brar came to the notice of Punjab and Chandigarh Police in October 2020, following the murder of his cousin Gurlal Brar, former state president of SOPU, a student organisation of Punjab University. Brar decided to avenge the murder of his cousin and thus came in touch with gangsters like Jaggu Bhagwanpuria and Lawrence Bishnoi.

Lawrence Bishnoi was also associated with SOPU. Faridkot Youth Congress President Gurlal Singh Bhalwan was the suspect in the Gurlal Brar murder case, and it is said that Goldie and Bishnoi

allegedly conspired to murder Bhalwan.

On February 18, 2021, two persons shot Gurlal Singh Bhalwanto death in broad daylight.

Police claim that the accused arrested in this case stated during their interrogation that Goldie is the mastermind of this case who had arranged for the vehicle, weapons, shooter, and accommodation for the murder of Gurlal Singh Bhalwan. Though this wasn't the first police case against Brar, the murder boosted Brar's confidence, and soon he started making ransom calls to many people in and around the Faridkot and Muktsar Sahib areas in a bid to create an identity as a gangster.

Moosewala Murder

Goldie came into the limelight when his name cropped up in the murder case of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, who was shot dead on May 29, 2022.

In the charge sheet filed by the police in court,

Goldie Brar is the mastermind of the Sidhu Moosewala murder case, as he fixed the shooters and gave different tasks to different people.

"He is the one who provided shooters, vehicles, money, weapons, and accommodation to various gangs," said senior police officers.

It was Goldie who had allegedly informed the shooters about the withdrawal of Moosewala's security on May 28.

On May 29, the day of the murder, Goldie asked them to speed up the plan of murdering him.

Goldie had allegedly done this to avenge the murder of Youth Akali Dal Leader Vikramjit Singh, aka Vicky Midukhera, a close friend of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi. The names of Moosewala and his manager were making the rounds following the daylight murder of Midukhera.

Eventually, Rapper YoY o Honey Singh had complained to the Delhi Police against Goldie Brar

The Crime Sheet of the Fugitive

The Central Government believes that Goldie Brar is involved in terrorism and hence declared him a terrorist under the Fourth Schedule of UAPA.

The government says that Goldie Brar, supported by the cross-border agency, is involved in several murders and claims to have radical ideology.

Apart from this, he is also involved in making threatening calls to Indian political leaders, demanding ransom, and posting murder claims on various social media platforms.

Goldie Brar has also been involved in the smuggling of high-grade arms, ammunition, and explosives through drones across the border and providing supplies and sharpshooters to carry out assassinations.

Goldie Brar and his associates are conspiring to disturb peace in Punjab by creating an atmosphere of barbarity, terror, target killing, and many other anti-national activities.



A non-bailable warrant was issued against Goldie in December 2022 and a look-out circular was issued in May 2022.



for allegedly threatening to kill him if he failed to hand over a ransom of Rs 50 lakhs.

Operating from Canada

Goldie Brar is an A-plus category gangster. There are many cases registered against him in Punjab, while operating from Canada. According to the police, Goldie lives in Canada in many disguises and changes his identity often to give security agencies a slip.



Police have photographs where Brar has been known to have five different identities. He is believed to have undergone several plastic surgeries, because of which his real identity is hard to ascertain for the agencies. Despite

Red Corner notices being issued against this gangster, police have not been able to make much progress regarding Brar's arrest.

There were reports of his arrest in between, but later it turned out to be just a rumour. There have also been reports in the recent past that he has left Canada and fled to California, America, fearing attacks on him.



Profile of Mafia Boss

30-year-old Goldie Brar was born on March 11, 1994, in Muktsar Sahib. His father was a sub-inspector in the police department who wanted to educate his son and make him an honest and able man, but Satwinder, alias Goldie, had chosen a path that stood contrary to the aspirations of his father. Goldie, in 2017, left for Canada on a study visa, but destiny had something else in store.

According to Punjab Police records, Goldie Brar, who is associated with the terror outfit Babbar Khalsa International, has been active in the world of crime for the last ten years.

Goldie Brar, who was associated with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, came into the limelight after the alleged murder of Sidhu Moosewala on May 29, 2022.

Brar is Lawrence Bishnoi's closest aide, a dear friend, and Man Friday, who is spreading the Bishnoi gang in foreign countries and spreading terror in the country by committing crimes. It is believed that Goldie Brar is the man calling the shots, as Lawrence Bishnoi is in jail.

A Renewed Nuclear Arms Race?

The New START obliged parties to control the quantity of nuclear warheads which was an essential part of arms control. Moreover, the Treaty provision of ‘inspection’ promoted transparency and acted as the single-most important confidence-building measure. With the demise of the New START from the horizon, there is distrust in the air that was manifested during the NNS episode.





◀ **Niranjan Chandrashekhar Oak**

The US conducted a subsurface chemical explosion at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) on 18 October 2023 to improve its ability to detect low-yield nuclear explosions.¹ The US claimed the underground tests was a part of its non-proliferation efforts by way of developing a robust detection mechanism. Although the test was not a nuclear test but a chemical explosion, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova reiterated that if the US conducted the nuclear test, Russia would follow suit.²

The timing of the test was interesting as it was conducted just days after Russian President Vladimir Putin sounded out the possibility of Russia de-ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The possibility became a reality when Putin signed a law to revoke the CTBT ratification on 2 November 2023. Kremlin spokesperson claimed that the action was necessary to bring in parity with Washington which never ratified the Treaty.³ The spokesperson further asserted that the withdrawal of the CTBT ratification did not mean that Russia had plans to conduct nuclear tests.⁴

Russia and the US possess 90 per cent of the total nuclear stockpile and China is aggressively increasing its nuclear arsenal. The two biggest nuclear powers, Russia and the US, are indirectly fighting each other in Ukraine. The 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) is in indefinite suspension and there is no hint of renewing the same or negotiating a new arms control treaty after the expiration of the New START in 2026. Given the above, is the world bracing for a renewed nuclear arms race?

First, Washington and Moscow have failed to insulate the arms control dialogue from the war in Ukraine. As the Ukraine crisis unfolded in February 2022, the saga of the suspension—of the Strategic Stability Dialogue, the inspections of the nuclear weapons-related facilities and the Bilateral Consultative Commission—reached a logical conclusion with Russia suspending the New START in February 2023.

The New START obliged parties to control the quantity of nuclear warheads which was an essential part of arms control. Moreover, the Treaty provision of ‘inspection’ promoted transparency and acted as the single-most important confidence-building measure. With the demise of the New START from

the horizon, there is distrust in the air that was manifested during the NNSS episode. Moreover, the link between the arms control dialogue and the Ukraine war further diminishes the prospects of the resumption of the dialogue anytime soon giving a free pass to parties to develop weapon systems.

Second, the lack of qualitative risk reduction steps has led the US and Russia to modernise warhead design and delivery systems unabashedly. The Cold War era arms control treaties focused on the placement of the anti-ballistic missile systems (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty), the yield of nuclear tests (Threshold Test Ban Treaty), and the range of missiles (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty banned the development of the ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometres), apart from the number of nuclear warheads. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative aspects of arms race were taken care of by the treaties.

However, there exist no such restrictions in the current times. On 27 October 2023, the US Department of Defense (DoD) announced the development of a modern version of the B61 nuclear gravity bomb, the B61-13, subject to Congressional authorisation and appropriation.⁵ In 2022, the US Senate Armed Services Committee authorised funding for the W93 submarine-launched ballistic missile warhead⁶ and the Mark 7 aeroshell re-entry body for the Trident II D5 missiles.⁷ Likewise, Russia, according to the US Strategic Posture, is modernising nuclear warhead design and production infrastructure.⁸ Lt Gen Robert P. Ashley, Jr., then Director of the US Defense Intelligence Agency had claimed that Moscow was developing high-yield and

earth-penetrating nuclear warheads for hardened targets.⁹

Regarding delivery system modernisation, in March 2018, in an address to the Federal Assembly¹⁰, Putin declared the development of super-weapons such as Avangard, Kinzhal, Tsirkon, Burevestnik, Poseidon and Sarmat. While the former three use hypersonic technology that gives them an advantage in terms of speed, Burevestnik and Poseidon use nuclear-powered engines facilitating a practically unlimited range.

The US is also actively developing and testing hypersonic missiles. Conventional Prompt Global Strike Programme is also likely to give an edge to the US in attacking high-value targets.¹¹ While addressing the Arms Control Association (ACA) Annual Forum in June 2023, US National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan submitted that the US was investing in cutting-edge non-nuclear capabilities such as conventionally armed hypersonic missiles in contrast to the nuclear-capable missiles of the similar category developed by Moscow and Beijing. However, when the hypersonic missile is launched during the war situation, it is very difficult to discern whether the incoming missile is conventionally-tipped or nuclear-tipped. Thus, the development of such a category of missiles is bound to create strategic instability.

Moscow and Washington are not alone in the modernisation race but Beijing has also joined in. China has already tested hypersonic missiles. Moreover, the country has gone a step ahead with the development of the fractional orbital bombardment system paired with a hypersonic glide vehicle. All three countries are also employing artificial intelligence in the development of the weapons. Therefore, apart from the numerical limits, the nuclear arms race is also being manifested in qualitative terms.

Third, credible satellite images show the construction of “new tunnels under the mountain, new roads and storage facilities, as well as increased vehicle traffic coming in and out of nuclear testing sites”¹² in Russia, the United States and China. The sites include Novaya Zemlya, Russia, NNSS in the US and Lop Nur in China. In August 2023, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu visited Novaya Zemlya. According to a CNN report¹³,





Russian authorities are ensuring that the Novaya Zemlya, which is located in the Arctic, remains open throughout the year. The same report states that the US' underground facility at the NNSS—the U1a complex—saw big expansion between 2018 and 2023.¹⁴ Even China's construction of underground tunnels was in its final phase.¹⁵ These developments show that countries are readying their respective nuclear testing infrastructure to test weapons on short notice. Any miscalculation vis-à-vis the opponent's intent or action may lead to the resumption of nuclear testing, thus fueling an arms race.

Fourth, the two-pronged nuclear arms race has become three-pronged with the entry of China, impacting strategic stability. Hitherto Russia was the only competitor of the US. However, China's rising nuclear arsenal, technological advances and ambition to become a "world-class" military by 2049 has posed a major challenge to the US. According to U.S. Defense Department's annual China Military Power Report, China possesses more than 500 operational nuclear warheads in its inventory and is likely to double that figure by 2030.¹⁶

The one-off arms control meeting between China and the US on 6 November 2023 produced no results. Given the massive increase of China's nuclear arsenal, a report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States published in October 2023 has contended

that "the risk of military conflict with either or both Russia and China, while not inevitable, has grown, and with it the risk of nuclear use, possibly against the U.S. homeland."¹⁷ The report further states that the US must take into consideration "the possibility of combined aggression from Russia and China" while determining the size and composition of the nuclear forces so that the country can deter both simultaneously.

While the war in Ukraine is ongoing and Taiwan is likely to emerge as a hotspot in the Indo-Pacific, the possibility of having to deal with both Russia and China simultaneously may become a reality for the US. Moreover, Russian officials have already threatened to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine in the war. Although the US NSA has assured that the Pentagon would not increase the number of nuclear weapons to outnumber the combined total of Russia and China¹⁸, a future administration in Washington may decide to implement the suggestions of the Congressional report and redefine the size and composition of its nuclear forces. Russia has always taken into account the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nuclear arsenal to decide the size and composition of its nuclear forces. Thus, nuclear stability is going to be impacted negatively in the coming days.

Conclusion

The world is likely to witness a nuclear arms race being played out in both quantitative as well as qualitative terms in the coming years. Nuclear arms control issues between the US and Russia have also been wedded to the Ukraine War. Moreover, the Cold War-era strategic stability has been disturbed by the entry of China into the nuclear arms domain. The three nations are rapidly modernising their nuclear arsenals along with delivery systems. The introduction of hypersonic missiles, fractional orbital bombardment systems, unmanned systems, nuclear-powered delivery systems, and artificial intelligence has added new dimensions to arms development. With the last surviving arms control treaty, the 2010 New START under suspension with no sign of a successor treaty, the post-Cold War nuclear order is under stress.

This article first appeared in www.idsa.in and it belongs to them.





Man Arrested for Impersonating Girlfriend in Recruitment Exam



A man in Punjab, India, attempted to impersonate his girlfriend in a recruitment exam, sparking concerns about security measures and ethical considerations. Angrez Singh was arrested after officials at Baba Farid University of Health Sciences discovered he was not the registered candidate.

Singh, reportedly concerned about his girlfriend Paramjit Kaur's conflicting obligations on the day of the exam, decided to take the multi-purpose health worker test in her place. He donned a salwar kameez, wig, and makeup, and presented forged identification documents.

University officials grew

suspicious of Singh's elaborate disguise and accessories, including bangles and a bindi. Biometric verification ultimately revealed his true identity, leading to his arrest and the invalidation of Kaur's candidacy.

"He has been arrested and the candidature of the real candidate also invalidated," stated Dr. Rajeev Sud, Vice-Chancellor of Baba Farid University.

The incident raises questions about the effectiveness of security measures at recruitment exams and the potential consequences of impersonation attempts. While the motive might be seen as romantic or supportive, the act itself was illegal and disrespectful of the fair testing process.





Misleading Video Surfaces Claiming Army Personnel Attacked in Manipur

A short video circulating on social media falsely claims that two Indian Army soldiers were beaten to death while attempting to molest women in Manipur. The video, showing women confronting and chasing away men in uniform, has been misconstrued and weaponized to spread misinformation. Fact-checking platform BOOM has debunked this claim, revealing the video's origin and exposing the fabrication.

The 19-second clip depicts a group of women pushing

and pursuing two uniformed individuals. Posted on Twitter with a sensational caption alleging assault and murder, the video quickly gained traction on other platforms like Facebook and YouTube.

BOOM's investigation identified the incident as occurring on January 2, 2024, when the Meitei women's group Meira Paibis from Ithai Loukon, Manipur, protested against the deployment of security forces in their area. The video captures their confrontation with Mahar

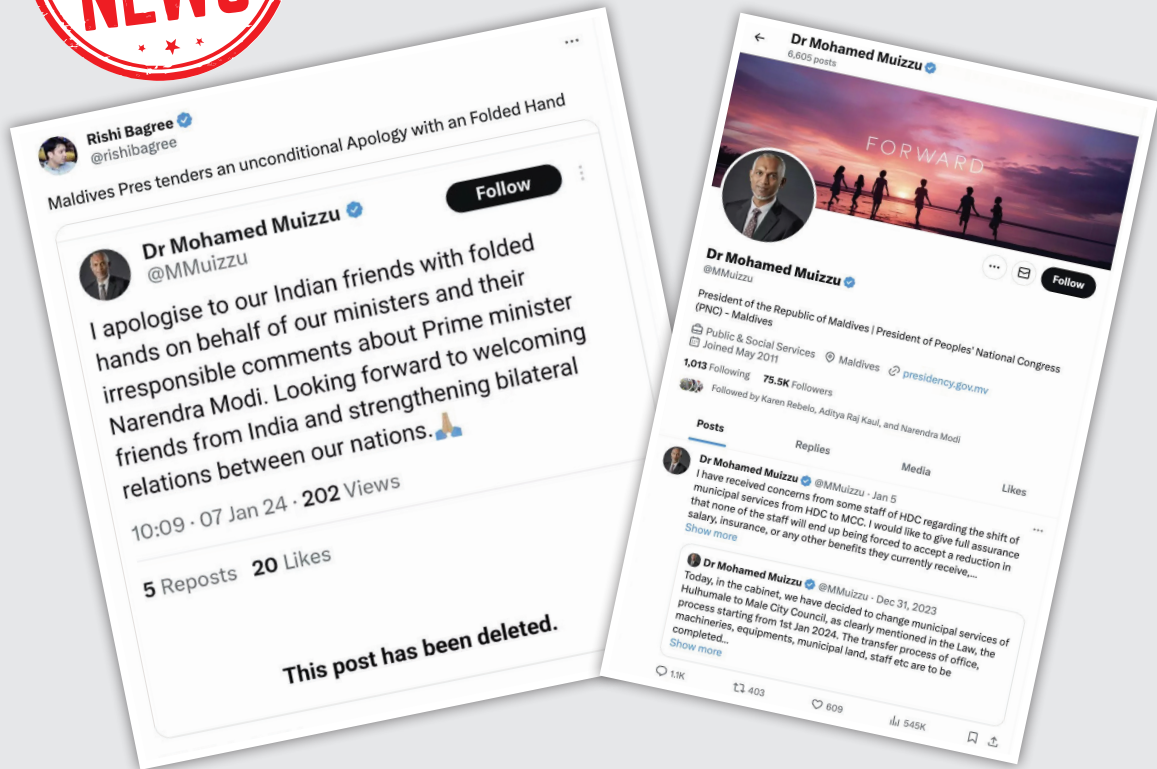
Regiment personnel during the protest.

BOOM employed multiple methods to verify the video's authenticity. Keyword searches failed to uncover any credible reports of the alleged assault and murder of army personnel as claimed in the social media post. Additionally, a reverse image search using keyframes from the video confirmed its origin back to January 2, 2024, with uploads on YouTube titled "MEIRA PAIBI vs INDIAN ARMY."





Maldivian President's Message to India is Fake



A screenshot purporting to show Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu apologizing to India for his ministers' derogatory remarks towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been circulating online. However, the image is a complete fabrication, as confirmed by fact-checking platform BOOM.

The viral screenshot depicts Muizzu with folded hands, supposedly apologizing on behalf of his ministers and expressing his desire to strengthen bilateral ties with India. The purported date of the

post is January 7, 2024.

A thorough search of President Muizzu's verified X account yielded no results for the alleged apology post. The last post on his page was dated January 5, 2024, contradicting the viral screenshot's claim.

No reputable news outlets or official sources reported any such apology from President Muizzu. The claim originated from a single social media post, highlighting the lack of concrete evidence.

The viral screenshot surfaced amid the ongoing controversy surrounding the Maldives

ministers' disparaging remarks about PM Modi. This context likely fueled the spread of the fake apology, capitalizing on heightened emotions and misinformation susceptibility.

This incident underscores the crucial role of fact-checking in today's digital age. It demonstrates how easily misinformation can spread and potentially strain international relations. Relying on credible sources and verifiable information is essential to combat such fabricated narratives.





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