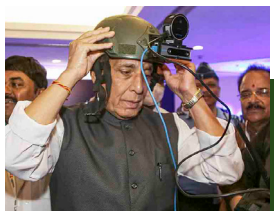
REVIVING NALANDA
ECHOES OF ANCIENT WISDOM



AI TAKES THE HELM IN BORDER SECURITY

Transcending Boundaries

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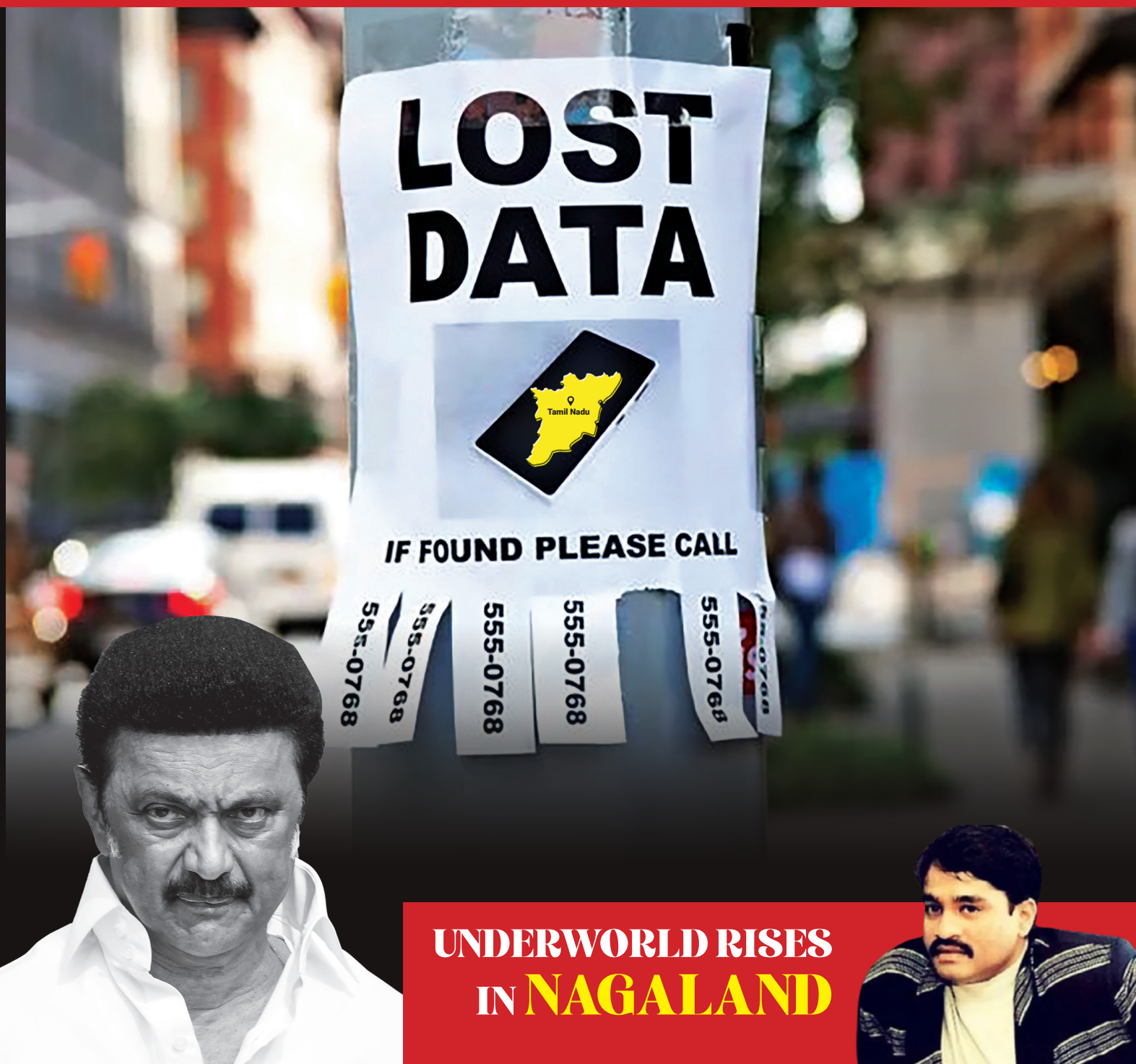

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aseemaa EDITORIAL

The Tamil Nadu government is facing a severe digital crisis just as the entire country is striving to embrace high technology. Public documents uploaded onto computers are mysteriously disappearing, rendering them inaccessible both online and offline. Surprisingly, the government seems unconcerned, largely due to a lack of understanding of data's value. Data, in fact, is the cornerstone of the modern economic system.

Despite thousands of people protesting and demanding the retrieval of their data, the government has neither ordered an investigation nor held any officials accountable for this apparent data theft.

Meanwhile, in Bihar, Nalanda University is undergoing renovations, reviving memories of the nation's cultural heritage. The latest financial budget from the union government includes plans to establish an economic and industrial corridor between Kolkata and Nalanda. This month's edition of Aseema also features an intriguing article on a collaboration between ISRO and NASA to create a map of Ram Setu.

In a shocking development, an article reveals that Nagaland, a northeastern state, is increasingly experiencing extortion by a new breed of underworld criminals, who are depositing their ill-gotten gains into bank accounts.

Another concerning issue is the series of bridge collapses in Bihar. It is becoming evident that deep-rooted corruption is hindering the state from developing the sophisticated infrastructure needed for its economic growth.

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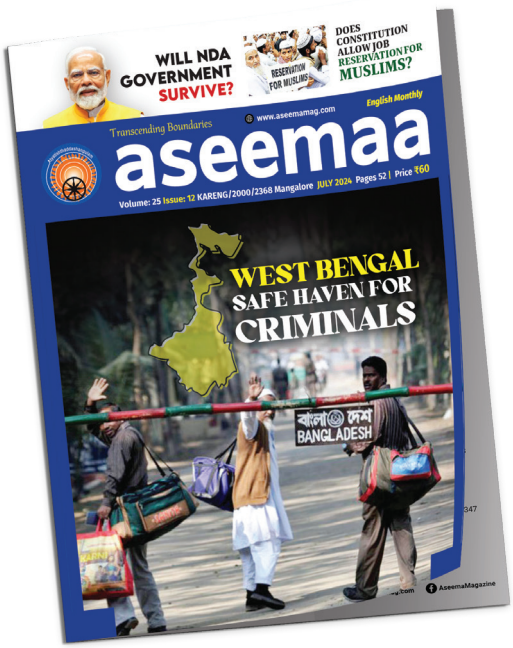
Readers opinion



The Promising Future of Green Ammonia

I recently read Wing Commander B S Sudarshan's enlightening article on "Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia" and was thoroughly impressed by the insights shared on this transformative technology. The article highlights the growing importance of green ammonia as a clean fuel, with potential applications in electricity generation, maritime shipping, and heavy transport. The discussion on the feasibility of producing green ammonia, particularly in India, was eye-opening. It mentions the Hygenco Green Energies project in Odisha and other global initiatives, showcasing significant strides toward sustainable energy solutions.

The article also addresses the practicality of green ammonia as a storage medium for hydrogen, offering solutions to the challenges associated with pure hydrogen. The explanation of the ammonia production process and its adaptation to renewable energy sources was informative and accessible, making complex technical details understandable for a broader audience.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the Central Government's solar rooftop scheme highlights a practical avenue for individual households to contribute to green energy production, inspiring community involvement in the journey toward sustainability. Overall, the article paints a promising picture of the future of green ammonia and its potential to drive India's green energy economy. It's an essential read for anyone interested in the future of energy and environmental sustainability. Thank you for publishing such a comprehensive and forward-thinking piece.

| **Ramkumar Naikar** Freelance Video Editor

share your openion: **editoraseema@gmail.com**

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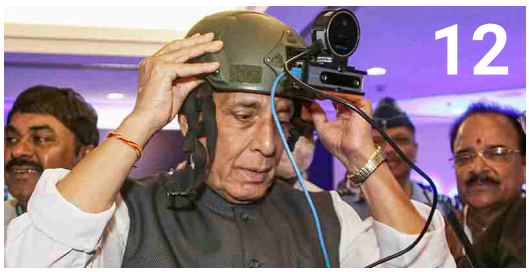

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PAKISTAN ON ITS WAY TO BECOME A SECRETIVE STATE?

By Vicky Nanjappa, Balaji Subramanian

A government that bans social media for exposing flaws in its governance invites a cloud of suspicion. Such actions suggest a troubling descent into anarchy, reminiscent of a state in disarray. This scenario is all too familiar in the neighboring country of Pakistan, where the government's efforts to revive its beleaguered economy have been faltering.

In Pakistan, the military often holds significant sway over the government. This time, however, the situation has taken a darker turn. Under the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif, social media channels have been silenced by the ISI, the powerful military intelligence agency. Adding to the turmoil,

Tapping the phone calls of its own citizens has become routine for the Pakistani government. With the press submitting to the military's control and many social media sites, such as Twitter, banned, common Pakistanis feel as if they are living in a large prison. Skyrocketing inflation and a rising crime rate have made life unbearable for millions of Pakistanis.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz

conversations of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and other top leaders have been recorded, raising alarms about the extent of surveillance.

This heavy-handed approach by the government is cause for serious concern. It begs the question: what is Pakistan attempting to achieve through such drastic measures? Is the control of information now deemed essential for the state's survival? These actions have sparked widespread doubts and questions about the future of governance and freedom in Pakistan.

The Government of Pakistan has entrusted ISI with the above two responsibilities. Despite claims that such an action was taken citing national security, the use of such a prominent investigative agency to investigate such a sensitive matter has led to much confusion and skepticism.

Pakistan's security apparatus claimed it was a wise move by the government. But severe criticism is being expressed not only in the country but also abroad. The opposition, which has already said that the Pakistan government will have to face a legal challenge, has said that this is not a decision that suits the government.

What is the reason?

This order came in the wake of the coup by former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. Khan-led Tehreek-e-Insaf has posed a major challenge to the incumbent government. The mainstream media here is praising Shahbaz Sharif as Prime Minister. However, social media is not limited to just coloring. Challenging some social media has touched the heat for the government. Many are voicing their opinions on major micro-blogging websites. It reveals the state of affairs in Pakistan. The whole world is becoming aware of the reality of Pakistan.

Shehbaz Sharif Prime Minister of Pakistan

Now, the historic decision taken by Pakistan, which is trying to suppress such a situation, is giving rise to many doubts. Is Pakistan also strategizing to remain a secretive country like its all-time friend China? Looking at the developments of the last couple of months, it is clear that Pakistan has indeed become a secretive nation. This means that Pakistan considered the decision to restrict background information which could not deal with fundamental issues within the country to be better.

Social Media Platform Twitter is banned in Pakistan

Pakistan's decision to install national firewalls on various internet service providers to hide itself adds to the above suspicion. This was clearly done with the intention of filtering social media. It has succeeded in blocking unwanted content from reaching a large audience.

Imran tries to hide his voice

Allegations are being made that there was an attempt to hide the voice of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan. Khan himself has accused that foreign powers are behind his ouster and has stated that he will continue to fight.

Imran Khan was arrested after his statement. There was a

widespread protest against this. The ISI and the government are convinced that the country is unstable and Khan is able to send his ideas and message through social media.

Social networking site X (formerly Twitter) was banned in April 2024 immediately after Imran Khan made the decision to manipulate the elections. A four-week ban was imposed for this. Imran Khan mentioned that a government official is behind this. During this time there was a massive blackout on social media.

A close look at the developments in Pakistan reveals that there is an attempt to curtail freedom of speech and prevent any internal information from reaching outside the country.

The government of Pakistan has explained that social networking site X has been banned for the purpose of maintaining national security. The social networking platform (X) said the ban was imposed with the intention of resolving the issue raised. However, according to social activists, this is an apparent attempt to calm dissent after widespread protests following the February 8 election.

Pakistan secret agency tapping telephones of citizens including ex PM Imran Khan and his wife.

The army is the car

Since its inception in 1947, the army has been directly or indirectly at the helm of governance in Pakistan and has been in a constant effort to maintain its hegemony. Keeps an eye on politicians and any other person of interest. ISI is used for this. Surveillance of politicians by the ISI typically involves monitoring communications, tracking movements and gathering intelligence on political

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan

Pakistan secret agency ISI

activities. The army is particularly capable of maintaining law and order during times of political turmoil or economic instability. Concerns are being raised about the agency's role in undermining democratic processes and violating civil liberties. ISI involvement in domestic politics is controversial. Critics argue that this undermines the independence of civil political institutions and contributes to a culture of political manipulation and coercion. Additionally, the political class, in its quest for power, has allowed the ISI to manipulate the political landscape.

Role of ISI

The ISI also recorded a conversation between former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife. For this, the telecom companies of the country have been used. When the situation gets out of control, the ISI has the power to cut off the internet and ban social media platforms to stop the flow of news. Its actions contribute to the perception of an imbalance of power between the military and civilian agencies in Pakistan, and that there is no transparency and accountability in the activities of this intelligence agency.

In fact, the Pakistani government has given the ISI legal authority to tap telephone calls. This measure is only used to detect criminal and terrorist activities. Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar said in Parliament that the government will ensure that people's lives and privacy are not compromised.

"In the interest of national security and apprehension of any offence, the federal government... empowers authorities to intercept calls and messages or trace calls through any telecom system," Tarar said.

In fact, in Pakistan, the government and the army are trampling on civil liberties citing national security as an excuse. Ex-minister of Pakistan's human rights department, Shireen Mazari, said that strict measures can also be implemented. They remind me of George Orwell's book, 1984. He said the ISI has the power to snoop on anyone without any legal procedures or regulatory mechanisms and does not require authority like warrants to carry out such actions even if mandated by law.

The ISI has developed extensive capabilities in both foreign and domestic intelligence. It is one of the most feared and respected agencies in the Global South. It is now a powerful and formidable force within the state, running covert operations including vast human intelligence networks and support for Islamic jihadists in its rivalry with India. During the height of the Cold War, the ISI was a critical intelligence partner for the West, particularly in its role in supporting the Afghan Mujahideen against the Soviet Union.

The Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), established after partition in 1947, is now de facto the fifth branch of government. It is linked to an often

Ex-minister of Pakistan's human rights department, Shireen Mazari

defunct executive, legislature, judiciary and a powerful army. The ISI, with its vast resources, has great influence over Pakistan's democratic institutions.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's Cabinet Committee on Law and Order had called for a ban on all social media platforms from July 6 to 11 during Muharram and July 13 to 18 during Ramadan. Accordingly, YouTube, X, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok were banned in the province of Punjab. It is the most populous province with over 120 million people.

An alarming development

While the ban on social media is indeed worrisome, many feel that the unfettered power given to record conversations is more dangerous in nature. None of the recordings being made at the behest of the ISI have been spared. Questions have been raised as to how the documents of important government figures were leaked.

It is said that the powerful ISI has its hands on all the developments going on very secretly and behind the scenes. Suspected that the country is slowly losing its relevance, the organization is trying to control the system with the advent of information warfare. For example, it taped a conversation between Pakistan's Prime Minister Sharif, who was asking whether it would be beneficial to import Indian machinery for a power project.

This is not the only instance, but calls made by those within the Ministry of Defense have also been recorded. Information control is nothing new and is practiced in many parts of the world. But internal espionage by Pakistan is a prime example of a secretive state. In economically weak Pakistan, it is well known that the incumbent government cannot take the country to progress. It has found an easy way to suppress those who raise their voices.

Indian Army Hosts 'Inno Yodha 2023' Innovation Competition in New Delhi

AI TAKES THE HELM IN BORDER SECURITY

Last year, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled a tech arsenal of 75 AI-powered gadgets, from robotic helpers to super-smart surveillance. These digital sentinels, equipped with eagle-eyed algorithms, scan the border 24/7, sniffing out suspicious activity and giving our troops a heads-up.

By Kunal Chatterjee

India's frontiers are getting a high-tech upgrade. The Indian Army is spearheading a digital revolution by deploying artificial intelligence (AI) surveillance systems along its sensitive borders with Bangladesh, Pakistan, and China.

A prime example of this technological leap is unfolding in Tripura. The Border Security Force (BSF) has recently installed AI-powered cameras and facial recognition technology along the

1. Artificial intelligence (AI) surveillance systems along sensitive borders with Bangladesh, Pakistan, and China.

2. STEAG, will provide strong digital communication to 12 lakh soldiers

India-Bangladesh border to thwart illegal infiltration and smuggling. This strategic move came after a joint meeting between Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and BSF officials, who underscored the urgent need for heightened security in the region.

BSF IG Patel Piyush Purushottam Das has revealed that the force is not only relying on AI but also bolstering its manpower in critical border areas. Crackdowns on smugglers and touts have been intensified, and efforts are underway to fortify vulnerable sections of the border fence.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveils 75 AI-powered gadgets

With the addition of AI, the army's weapons have also become sharper and more precise. In December 2022, a decision was made to develop 75 AI tools exclusively for military use. The army has already begun deploying 32 of these tools in missiles, tanks, and rifles.

Senior Army officials said the Army has deployed hundreds of AI-based surveillance systems, which include high-resolution cameras, sensors, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) feeds, and radar feeds, across several international borders. These are then collected and applied through AI, all in the name of detecting intrusions along borders while classifying targets.

In the coming days, war tactics will depend more on signals or communication systems than on power and capability. The faster the communication strategy is in hand, the more ahead he will be in the strategy. Keeping that vision in mind, the army is building an elite unit called the Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG).

STEAG's job will be to research and evaluate next-generation communication technologies, i.e. to modernise them with the help of AI. It will include research on artificial intelligence, 5G, 6G, machine learning, and quantum technology for military use.

A senior army official said that, in this time and future, ultra-advanced communication systems will be the main weapon of any force. As the use of technology on the battlefield evolves rapidly, the more advanced communication systems are at hand, the more advanced they will be. Providing seamless and fast communication to soldiers is essential in modern warfare.

This elite unit of information technology, STEAG, will provide strong digital communication to 12 lakh soldiers, which is the goal of India. This unit will be headed by an officer with the rank of colonel. The team will make both wired and wireless technology usable seamlessly. According to him, this will lead to a bridge between the armed forces, the IT industry, and research.

According to retired Army General GD Bakshi, “On March 9, 2022, an Indian missile missed its target and landed in Pakistan. There was no damage as the missile fell into the empty ground. However, such a situation will not take place because, with the addition of artificial intelligence, the weapons of the army are now sharper and more perfect. In December 2022, it was decided to develop 75 AI tools for military use only. The Army has already started using 32 of these tools in

Former Director General of Military Operations Lt. Gen. PR Kumar

BSF IG Patel Piyush Purushottam Das

missiles, tanks, and rifles."

Increasing deployment of AI

AI-based real-time surveillance software has also been deployed to generate intelligence in counter-terrorism operations. The Army has also started using high-tech military simulator technology to train its first batch of recruits, a trend that could see its prevalence in military training in the future.

According to senior officials in the Defence Ministry, "AI can be a game-changer in logistics, information operations, intelligence gathering, and analysis. Although the adoption of military AI technology in India is relatively recent, India has made great progress in introducing AI-enabled military equipment."

Using AI-powered drones and robots to patrol borders increases coverage and reduces the need for human intervention. The Indian military is also looking to harness the potential of AI, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched 75 newly developed AI technologies during the first "AI in Defence" symposium last year, showcasing products such as robotics, automation equipment, and intelligence surveillance.

The US and India have agreed to launch the inaugural Defence Artificial Intelligence Dialogue and expand their joint cyber training. Earlier this year, at Aero India, one of Asia's largest air shows, AI-based surveillance software called AGNI-D was unveiled to monitor and thwart encroachments. It has been deployed in the eastern Ladakh sector, an area of strategic importance due to its proximity to China.

Rajnath Singh

The software can detect any movement, weapon, vehicle, tank, or missile, live and recorded by the army's surveillance cameras. With advanced algorithms, the AI-based system analyses video footage and detects activity along the border, alerting troops about suspicious activity.

Impact on tools of war

According to the security think tank, Delhi Policy Group, the army is allocating around 400 crore annually for AI spending. "This is a good initial step, but inadequate compared to our primary strategic challenger, China, which is spending more than 30 times this amount. If we are not to fall behind in the technology cycle, we need to invest much more at the beginning to boost domestic industry players," the DPG said.

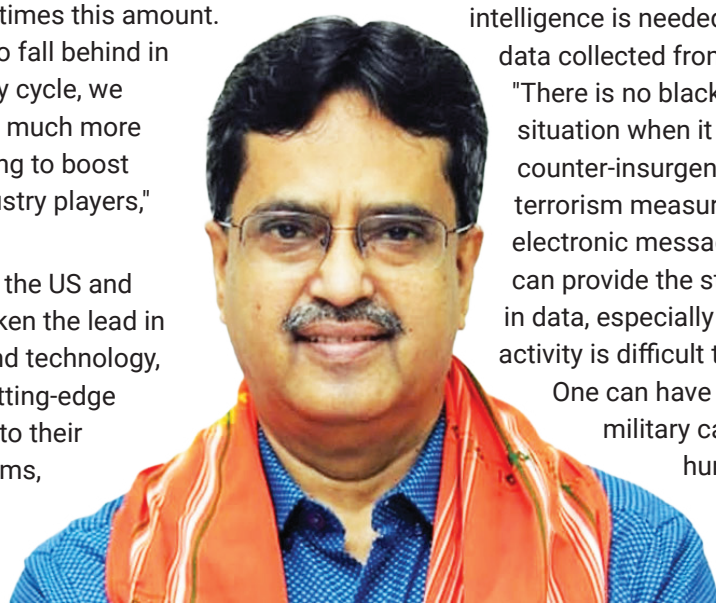
While both the US and China have taken the lead in AI research and technology, integrating cutting-edge innovations into their defence systems, India is also catching up. New Delhi is trying to position itself at the forefront of smart war strategy.

"From border control to drones equipped with AI-based aerial technology capable of carrying out large-scale surveillance and day-night reconnaissance missions, India, like other armies around the world, realises the importance of integrating AI into its war-fighting systems," says retired Lt. Gen. Shankar Prasad, now a defence analyst.

Can human intelligence be ignored?

However, Prasad also pointed to the limitations of even the most advanced and aggressive surveillance systems, citing the October 7 surprise attack on Israel by terror group Hamas, which has now escalated into a full-scale war. "This is a tough lesson we must learn. Israeli surveillance and intelligence are the most sophisticated. Yet they failed to detect covert attacks and were not given any early warning signals," Prasad said.

His views were reiterated by former Director General of Military Operations Lt. Gen. PR Kumar, who believed human intelligence is needed to interpret data collected from AI solutions. "There is no black-and-white situation when it comes to counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism measures. Neither electronic messaging nor AI can provide the state of the art in data, especially when human activity is difficult to interpret. One can have innovative military capabilities, but humans have to interpret this



Tripura Chief Minister

Retired Army General GD Bakshi

Retired Lt. Gen. Shankar Prasad who is now a defence analyst

data and make it useful," Kumar said.

AI is a must in modern defence

Lt. Gen. Ravi Sahni, who retired as the army's vice chief, said AI is one of several enabling technologies that promise to change the face of warfare in the coming years. "It is now at a stage where defence services that do not adopt AI will be technologicalunderdogs. The problem is that collecting and analysing data can be a time-consuming process. However, it is important to recognise that a greater reliance on AI for military power will make the human element in warfare more important, not less," Sahni told media.

Indian scientists have worked on an all-terrain AI-enabled robot that can be used to patrol the country's international borders. The Bengaluru-based Central Research Laboratory of Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) developed such a prototype this year.

The report said that the BEL robot will be equipped with sensors and programmed to communicate with the control centre. Also, it will be able to operate in situations like the recent Easter bombings in Sri Lanka while carrying out surveillance.

The primary purpose of the border patrol robots will be to protect the lives of security personnel deployed for border surveillance. The estimated cost of these robots for small orders will be between Rs 70-80 lakh. According to the report, this price can be significantly reduced if the Army places a large order.

A report states that 80 scientists and engineers are working on the AI-enabled patrol robot at three AI-dedicated labs: CRL in Bengaluru and Ghaziabad, and the BEL Software Technology Centre (BSTC) in Bengaluru. This number is expected to rise to 100 in the coming days.

The report states that the team has already built an initial robot, but work is underway on developing next-generation robots with AI capabilities. Among the problems is the need for a lot of raw data required for such products, which, once collected, can be used to customise algorithms to instruct the robot to perform particular tasks.

Nicobar island state-of-the-art international airport

TURNING NICOBAR INTO SINGAPORE

Nicobar island set to get International seaport

By Parikshit Dhume

Opposition leaders and environmental advocates are raising concerns about the government's ambitious plan to transform Nicobar into an international trade hub on par with Singapore and Hong Kong. They argue that developing a port could pose a grave threat to the island's indigenous inhabitants and its fragile ecosystem.

In contrast, the government's vision seeks to harness the island's strategic location for

The government has set its sights on transforming a slice of the Nicobar Islands into a bustling metropolis, akin to Singapore or Hong Kong. The island's prime location, equidistant from major shipping hubs like Colombo and Singapore, and its proximity to the world's busiest shipping lanes make it an enticing prospect. However, this ambitious plan has encountered a storm of opposition. Environmentalists and political rivals alike are raising concerns about the potential ecological and social impacts of such a massive undertaking.

1. Nicobar into an international trade hub

2. Great Nicobar project: investment of Rs 72,000 crore

Nicobar Island

both economic and strategic advantages. Great Nicobar is perfectly situated, equidistant from Colombo to the southwest and Port Klang and Singapore to the southeast, and it lies close to the East-West international shipping corridor, a crucial route for global trade.

To kickstart this bold initiative, the central government has approved the diversion of forest land, setting the stage for a transformative development project. With an estimated investment of Rs 72,000 crore, this project promises to usher in a new era of progress for the island, with a strong emphasis on sustainability and responsible growth.

With environmental clearances secured, the project is set to begin its developmental activities in the current financial year, marking the start of a new chapter in the island's history. Through strategic planning and concerted efforts, Great Nicobar is poised to realize its full

Shompen and Nicobarese tribes of Nicobar Island

potential, aspiring to become a model of sustainable development that exemplifies the harmonious coexistence of nature and progress.

This transformative project is led by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO), under the visionary plan of NITI Aayog. The aim is to capitalize on the island's prime location along the international sea route, developing it into a sustainable, green, global destination for business, trade, and leisure, much like the modern cities of Singapore and Hong Kong.

International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT)

At the heart of this initiative is the creation of a trans-shipment port, the ICTT. With a staggering capacity of 14.2 million TEUs, this terminal is set to become operational by 2027-28. Strategically positioned, it will make Great Nicobar a major player in cargo transshipment, drawing traffic from ports along the eastern coast of India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.

International Airport

The island will also boast a state-of-the-art international airport, designed to accommodate Airbus A-380 aircraft and handle up to 4,000 passengers during peak hours. This dual-use airport, operated jointly by the military and civilian authorities under Indian Navy control, will not only bolster tourism but also serve strategic military needs.

Township Development

A modern township will spring up, featuring a mixed-use development that includes commercial, business, industrial, and residential zones. With a special emphasis on tourism, this township aims to offer a vibrant and diverse living environment.

Sustainable Energy Solutions

To power this new city, a 450 MVA gas and solar-based power plant will be established on the island, ensuring that energy demands are met sustainably.

This comprehensive project follows a detailed report by NITI Aayog, which

highlighted the island's strategic location.

Through these developments, Great Nicobar is set to become a beacon of progress, exemplifying how strategic planning and sustainable development can transform a region into a global hub of commerce and tourism.

A Military Base

This initiative is also designed to facilitate the deployment of additional military forces, including larger and more advanced warships, aircraft, missile batteries, and troops. By enhancing the island's military capabilities, India aims to establish a strong deterrent and ensure close surveillance of the entire region surrounding the archipelago.

Great Nicobar's strategic location near the Malacca Strait, a crucial waterway connecting the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, makes it a linchpin in India's security strategy. The planned International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT) will not only boost the island's role in the regional and global maritime economy but also position it as a key player in cargo transshipment. This development aligns with India's broader objective of securing its interests in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean regions.

The significance of this upgrade extends beyond economic benefits. The Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean are critical for India's strategic and security interests, especially in light of increasing Chinese military activities. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is making concerted efforts to enhance its presence and influence in these waters, raising alarms in New Delhi. India is particularly

Endangered species of Nicobar Island: leatherback turtles

wary of China's potential to strengthen its naval forces at crucial choke points in the Indo-Pacific region, such as the Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok Straits.

Adding to India's concerns is China's reported plan to establish a military facility on the Coco Islands, located just 55 kilometers north of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This proximity poses a direct threat to India's maritime security, as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are pivotal to India's strategic interests in the region. The potential for increased Chinese military presence so close to Indian territory underscores the urgency of strengthening India's own military infrastructure at Great Nicobar.

The upgrade at Great Nicobar is not just about economic development; it is a critical component of India's national security strategy. By enhancing its military presence on the island, India aims to create a robust deterrence against any potential threats and secure its maritime interests in the Indo-Pacific region. This initiative reflects India's commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and maintaining stability in a region that is increasingly becoming a focal point of geopolitical tensions.

Why the Opposition?

At the heart of the controversy is the fate of the indigenous Shompen and Nicobarese tribes, classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). These hunter-gatherers, numbering only a few hundred, have lived in harmony with the island's ecosystem for centuries. The proposed development, critics argue, threatens their traditional way of life and could lead to their displacement.

Environmentalists are alarmed by the project's potential ecological devastation. The clearance of nearly a million trees for the infrastructure will have a profound impact on the island's biodiversity. The proposed port development poses a serious threat to coral reefs, while the construction activities could disrupt the habitat of endangered species like the Nicobar Megapode bird and leatherback turtles.

Furthermore, the island's susceptibility to seismic activity, as evidenced by the 2004 tsunami, raises questions about the safety and feasibility of constructing large-scale infrastructure in the region.

However, the government maintains that it is committed to sustainable development and has taken measures to address environmental concerns. It has accused critics of spreading misinformation to hinder the project's progress.

The government will need to carefully weigh the potential economic benefits against the environmental and social costs to ensure a sustainable path forward.

Basic Details of the Island

- **Great Nicobar is the southernmost and largest of the Nicobar Islands, a sparsely inhabited 910-sq-km patch of mainly tropical rainforest in southeastern Bay of Bengal.**
- **Indira Point on the island, India's southernmost point, is located 90 nautical miles (<170 km) from Sabang at the northern tip of Sumatra, the largest island of the Indonesian archipelago.**
- **The Andaman and Nicobar Islands consist of 836 islands, divided into two groups known as the Andaman Islands located in the north and the Nicobar Islands situated in the south, separated by the 10° Channel which is 150 kilometers (about 93.21 mi) wide.**
- **Great Nicobar has two national parks, a biosphere reserve, small populations of the Shompen, Onge, Andamanese and Nicobarese tribal peoples, and a few thousand non-tribal settlers.**

Piccaption: Endangered species of Nicobar Island:Nicobar Megapode bird

FROM GOAT HERDER TO CROREPATI: SANTOSH AGRE'S STORY

Santosh Agre, a resident of Babhulgam village in Maharashtra, has defied odds to transform his life from a struggling goat herder to a successful entrepreneur, generating crores of rupees annually.

His journey is a testament to sheer determination and the power of agricultural enterprise.

Hailing from humble beginnings, Agre faced skepticism when he decided to return to his village after working in Aurangabad. Undeterred, he initially raised goats for sustenance.

A pivotal turning point came when he connected with individuals in the agriculture sector, leading to mentorship from Deepak Joshi.

With encouragement from friends and family, Agre established 'Babhulgaonkar Mitra

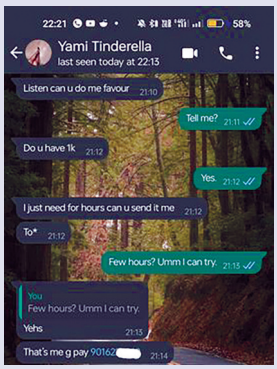
Farmer Producer Company Limited' in October 2021. The company began by purchasing maize from local farmers, gradually expanding its operations to include other crops like wheat, soybeans, sorghum, and chickpeas.

Despite initial challenges and farmer skepticism, Agre's company has flourished. With a turnover of over 1 crore rupees, it has gained the trust of farmers from four surrounding villages. Agre's success story is not only a personal triumph but also a model for agricultural entrepreneurship in the country.

SCAMMER GETS SCAMMED JAY'S VIRAL REVENGE

Jay, a social media user, recently turned the tables on a scammer and turned the incident into a viral sensation. What started as a typical online dating encounter took a surprising turn when the "girl" he was chatting with requested a financial favor.

The ordeal began when Jay, looking for love, matched with a woman named Yami on a dating app. As their online relationship progressed, Yami requested a financial favor, claiming to be in dire need of Rs. 1000.



Sensing something amiss, Jay devised a clever counter-scam. He sent fake transaction screenshots and asked for a small amount in return to "verify" the payment system. Yami complied, unknowingly falling into Jay's trap. With swift action, Jay blocked her on Google Pay and shared the entire encounter online.

The internet erupted in praise for Jay's quick thinking, with many hailing him as a "legend." His story serves as a cautionary tale for potential victims and a satisfying moment of poetic justice.

CITU Protest in Tamilnadu

M.K. Stalin

The data of Tamil Nadu welfare boards has mysteriously vanished, leaving potential beneficiaries in a frustrating bind, forced to resubmit applications and other essential documents from scratch. Reports suggest that information for over 70 lakh individuals has gone missing. Curiously, the government isn't holding any agency or officials accountable for this disappearance. There's no effort to retrieve hard copies of the documents either. Instead, the beneficiaries are simply being asked to re-upload their documents.

MISSING DATA

TONES OF GOVERNMENT DATA DISAPPEARS IN TAMIL NADU

By Vicky Nanjappa

A few days ago in Tamil Nadu, an auto driver and member of the Drivers' Board Welfare Association passed away. He was entitled to receive Rs 50,000 from the board for his last rites. However, when his family and friends sought the benefit, they were informed by the Board that the original documents had been destroyed, necessitating a new registration.

Determined to secure the funds, the family agreed to re-register. But they were hit with an absurd requirement: the deceased auto driver had to take a live photograph. The question loomed large: How can a dead man pose for a photo? Due to this bureaucratic blunder, the grieving family lost their rightful benefit, highlighting severe mismanagement and denial of their due rights.

This incident is not isolated; it's part of a broader issue plaguing the state. Allegations have surfaced that documents of thousands of workers registered with various welfare boards in Tamil Nadu have mysteriously vanished from official records.

Confusion reigns supreme. The government blames a private company responsible for managing the data and documents, assuring that benefits will

Tamil Nadu welfare board's data stolen leading to many families to struggle.

Missing Data

not be stopped. On the other hand, unions accuse the government of creating a mess, leading to delays in disbursing benefits to deserving beneficiaries.

This situation underscores the urgent need for better management and accountability to prevent further hardships for the workers and their families.

Benefits for beneficiaries

To ensure that members get the benefits,18 welfare boards for unorganised workers were set up. This sector of workers must register with these boards to get various benefits. Some benefits include maternity allowance, education allowance for the children, pension, funds for religious purposes, and marriage allowances.

The funding for the same comes from cess tax and also from allocation by the government. While at first the registrations were done in person, following the outbreak of COVID-19, the process was moved online. The registration process online would be completed after documents such as an Aadhaar card, a ration card, a photograph, and a signature were provided.

Boards that provide cash benefits to their members include the Construction Workers' Welfare Board, the Drivers' Welfare Board, and the Garment Workers' Welfare Board.

Re-doing the process

The disappearance of these

1. Data of welfare boards has mysteriously vanished

2. Need live photo of a dead person to receive the funds

3. Boards that provide cash benefits to their members include the Construction Workers' Welfare Board, the Drivers' Welfare Board, and the Garment Workers' Welfare Board

documents has wreaked havoc on the lives of beneficiaries. The Tamil Nadu wing of the Indian Trade Union Centre assures that documents are being re-uploaded free of cost.

However, beneficiaries still have to go through the cumbersome process of submitting a petition to access their benefits. Previously, for example, a student applying for a scholarship after completing the 10th grade only needed a bonafide certificate from their school. But now, with documents lost, there's a new and arduous challenge ahead.

Beneficiaries must start the process anew, which now includes an additional step: submitting a petition to the respective board. Once this petition is submitted and accepted, the beneficiary can then re-upload their documents one by one.

This raises another concern: will the allowances be disbursed if applicants must repeat the entire process? According to the website where applications are submitted, once the process is completed again, the amount will be credited to the beneficiary's bank account. It clearly states that re-submission of the application is necessary, adding another layer of frustration for those affected.

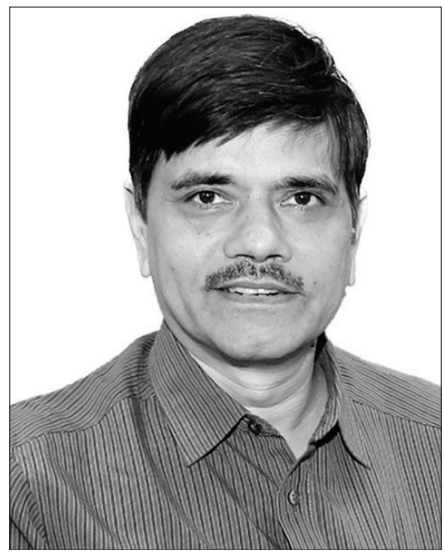
Expenditure once again

In addition to the delays and the hassle of reapplying, beneficiaries must also pay Rs 300 to complete the process. This fee, required at computer centers, adds an extra burden on the already struggling workers.

These workers rely on computer centers because they lack the skills

and access to do it themselves. Without home access to computers, their challenges multiply. What makes it worse is that even if their documents are intact, they still have to spend money at the computer center to verify and use the systems.

The true status of their documents can only be checked online. The Labour Welfare Department has issued a general notification instructing workers to re-upload or re-register their documents. As a result, workers only discover whether their documents are intact or missing when they go online.



Chief Department Secretary Kumar Jayant, the Commissioner of the Labour Welfare Department

The Tamil Nadu Labour Welfare Department suggests that the government should conduct camps to collect documents and streamline the process. However, no such initiative has been announced, leaving beneficiaries to navigate this complicated and costly situation on their own.

The delay: The notification and the assurance by the government may seem appealing as they send the message that there is nothing to worry about. However, numerous complaints have come up where, despite uploading the documents over a year ago the allowance has not come.

A 60-year-old cloth vendor, Srinivasan cited by the BCC, says that he has not received his pension yet. He has been selling vests and handkerchiefs on the streets of Chennai for 30 years now. He said that he got a scholarship of Rs 1,500 after his daughter completed 10th grade. He says that the pension amount he was supposed to get was Rs 1,000, but he has not received the same yet.

The callous manner in which this issue has been treated is disheartening in many ways. Many had enrolled themselves in these schemes. They had uploaded their documents in the right manner and were even receiving their assured benefits. However, following this alleged mess in which documents have gone missing, those who were getting their benefits have stopped getting them despite spending their money and re-uploading the documents.

The problem is bigger for those who have applied for a pension. With the process having to be re-done, they must re-upload the documents with proof that they are alive. In cases where the person is dead, and the family wants to claim the pension, the bizarre norm is that the person in question must get his photograph clicked. Now, how will that be possible if a person is dead? This is a question that the government or its boards do not have an answer to.

True or false?

The Communist Party of India (CPI) claims that millions are struggling due to this administrative chaos, while the state government refutes these allegations. According to the CPI, a total of 74 lakh workers registered online for these schemes across the state, but their data and

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin

documents have been destroyed, forcing them to re-upload everything.

In a letter to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin dated May 21, 2024, the CPI stated that lakhs of workers are unable to access their benefits due to this mess.

The government, however, counters this narrative, asserting that the figures are exaggerated. They claim only 43 lakh people registered, and while the data is intact, the documents are missing. The government insists that cash benefits are not restricted despite these issues.

The state's response seems indifferent. A consultation meeting was held two months ago with Chief Department Secretary Kumar Jayant, the Commissioner of the Labour Welfare Department, and others. However, the minister in charge did not attend, citing the election code of conduct in place at that time.

A thorough review of this situation reveals a troublingly dismissive attitude from the government. None of the private firms responsible for managing the data have been held accountable. These agencies simply state that the data has gone missing and needs to be re-uploaded. There has been no mention of seeking explanations or taking action against those responsible. The only response has been a directive for district officials to collect the documents once again.

Where is the data?

The million-dollar question is:How has all this data gone missing? Allegedly, the issue happened due to a technical glitch at the server's end. There were efforts made, but the same could not be restored, due to which the process had to be redone. The private firms in charge of managing the data say that while the same has gone missing online, they have the details intact on Excel sheets.

While private firms have been tasked with this job, the data must be uploaded on the website of the Labour Department. It is unable to take the load. To upload one single file, it takes a couple of minutes, so one can imagine the time taken to upload the data of lakhs of workers who have applied for the benefits.

While the drive to re-upload the documents has begun, it is not clear how long the process will take. In the interim, it is the beneficiaries who would suffer the most, running from pillar to post for their legitimate rights.

WEIRD WORLD

WORK PRESSURE PUSHES EVEN A ROBOT TO SUICIDE!

In a startling turn of events, a robot in South Korea seemingly succumbed to work pressure and ended its own existence. The incident took place at the Gumi City Council, where the robot served as an administrative officer. This unprecedented event, being dubbed a "Robot Suicide," has left many in shock and prompted an ongoing investigation.

On June 26th, the Gumi City Council announced that their premier administrative robot was found lifeless at the bottom of a six-and-a-half-foot staircase. The robot, known for its autonomous mobility and ability to operate elevators, was discovered unresponsive and unmovable.

Affectionately nicknamed "Robot Supervisor," the robot had been part of the city council's workforce since August 2023. It worked a standard 9 to 5 shift and even had its own ID card, integrating seamlessly with human employees.

The robot's death is being treated as a suicide due to its unusual behavior observed before the fall. Colleagues reported seeing it circling in one spot, appearing distressed. This has raised questions about whether the robot was subjected to excessive workloads or stress.

Investigations are underway to determine the exact cause of the robot's demise. Authorities have collected parts of the robot for analysis and have requested the manufacturers to conduct a thorough check. The incident has sparked a broader conversation about the pressures faced by robotic workers and their potential impacts.

USE GOOGLE MAPS TO DODGE TRAFFIC POLICE IN BANGALORE

Picture this: you're driving and want to avoid an encounter with traffic police. Simply ask Google for help, and it will reveal their usual locations. Anonymous users have marked areas frequented by traffic police on Google Maps, allowing Bangalore residents to navigate away from these spots and avoid getting fined.

Bangalore's traffic police are now facing a unique challenge as Google Maps displays these marked locations, helping drivers evade them. The search giant's map features these tags, pinpointing where officers typically set up to catch violators.

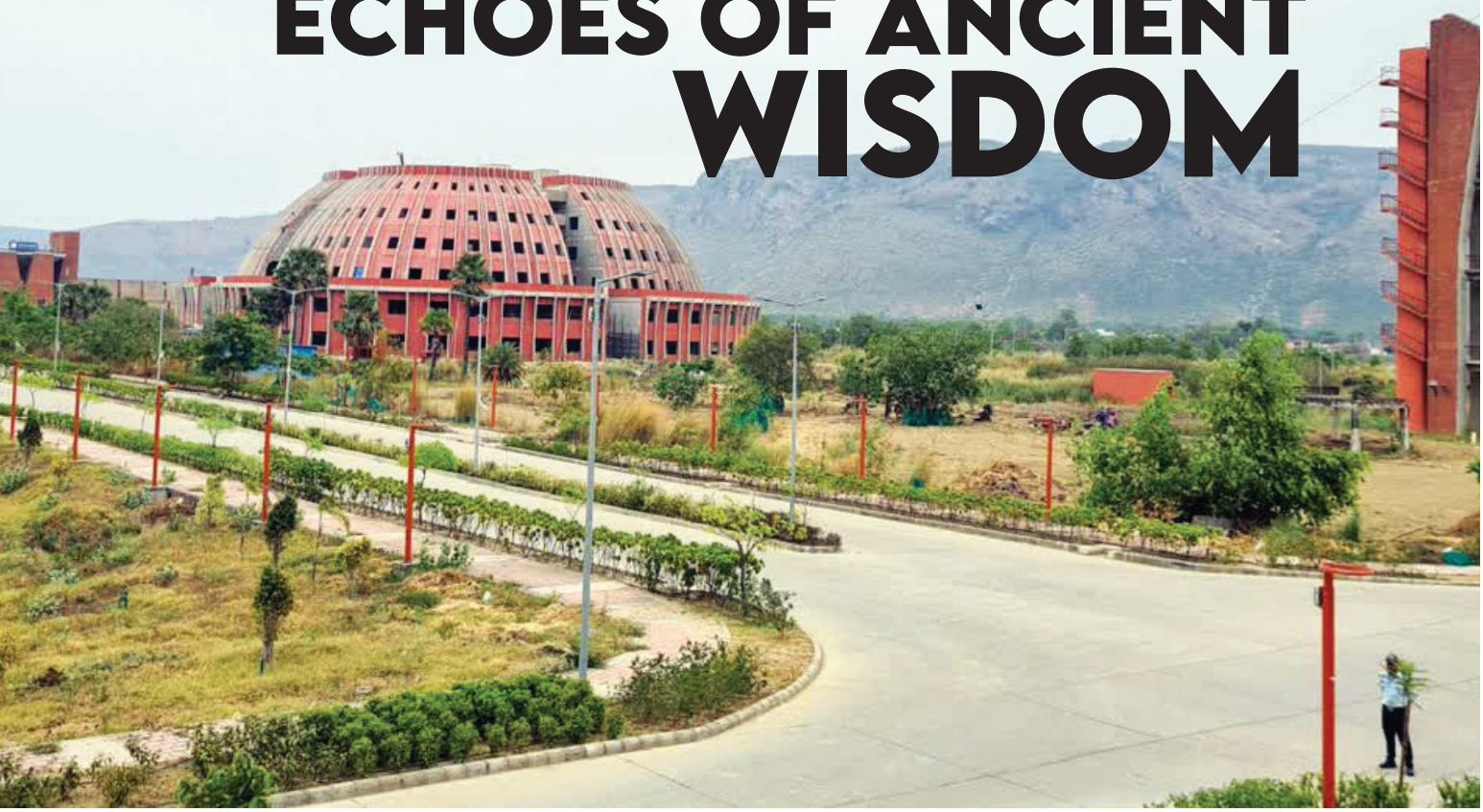
These markings gained attention when a user shared a screenshot on social media platform X, with the post going viral. It read, "Police irthare, Nodkond hogi," meaning "Police will be there, watch and go."

Approximately 10 such location tags have been identified across the city. While being caught by traffic police usually results in a fine or challan, these markings help drivers steer clear of trouble.

Following the viral post, many users shared similar screenshots. One user advised, "Just type 'Police irt' on Google Maps and thank me later." Others hailed it as an "early disaster warning system developed by citizens."

Another tag warns, "Helmet hakond banni, police irthare," which translates to "Please wear your helmet, police will be here."

REVIVING NALANDA
ECHOES OF ANCIENT WISDOM



Nalanda University, once destroyed during the Islamic invasion, has now resurged as a prominent tourism hotspot in the country. Its sprawling campus not only revives the memory of India's cultural glory but also stands as a symbol of the destruction the country endured through centuries of foreign attacks.

By NV Kamath

Over ten centuries ago, it was a beacon of knowledge—a university with books and teachers possessing deep expertise in a variety of subjects vital to human progress. However, it faced devastation during the Islamic invasion when Muslim invaders targeted it and set it on fire. Historical accounts suggest that smoke emanated for months. This great institution is Nalanda University, which the Narendra Modi government has begun rebuilding.

Historians believe that the legendary Nalanda University emerged in the 5th century CE, during the reign of Shakraditya. A seal bearing his name, discovered at the site, supports this theory. Corroborating evidence comes

from the renowned Chinese traveler, Xuanzang, who described a thriving monastic university in his travelogue.

Nalanda wasn't merely an institution; it was a sprawling intellectual metropolis. Its multi-story buildings housed classrooms buzzing with debate and a library brimming with countless manuscripts. Thousands flocked here to quench their thirst for knowledge, making admission to Nalanda a coveted honor.

Founded by Emperor Kumaragupta I in the 5th century, the institute flourished under the Pala Dynasty (750-1161 AD) but met a tragic end in 1200 AD when Muslim invader Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji razed it to the ground.

Despite this, Nalanda didn't vanish completely. With support from local rulers, it limped on for two centuries before finally closing its doors around 1400 AD. These local leaders, often called Pithipathis, played a crucial role in rebuilding the shattered university. Though never regaining its former glory, Nalanda's legacy as a centre of learning lives on.

The modern University of Nalanda commenced its first academic year on September 1, 2014, with an initial batch of 15 students at Rajgir. The Bihar Government sanctioned 455 acres of land for the university. The modern campus, spread over more than 400 acres (160 hectares), is expected to become the largest campus in Asia upon completion.

A golden History

While today's education powerhouses were still in their infancy, Nalanda drew scholars and students from across Asia and beyond. It's astonishing to think that while today's global education powerhouses were still in their infancy, Nalanda was already a thriving intellectual hub. Thousands of scholars, monks, and students from across Asia and beyond flocked to its gates, a testament to its unparalleled reputation.

This intellectual powerhouse, also known as Mahavihara, covered thousands of acres and was a

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara, in Nalanda district

Xuanzang Chinese traveller who vidited Nalanda

1. India's three world-renowned universities: Nalanda, Taxila and Vikramashila

2. "Knowledge has no boundaries."

testament to India's rich Buddhist heritage. It's no coincidence that Bihar, the state where Nalanda thrived, gets its name from the very word "vihara," meaning Buddhist monastery.

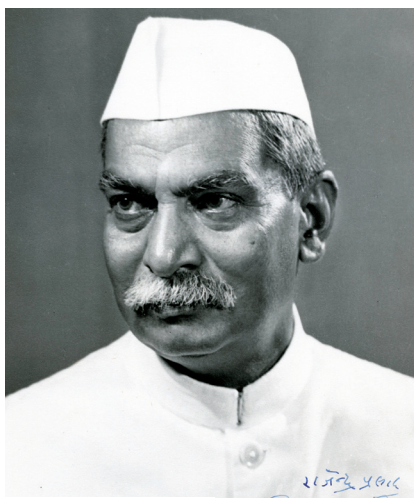
Nalanda was one of ancient India's three world-renowned universities, along with Taxila and Vikramashila. While other universities like Somapura, Jagaddala, and Odantapura thrived, Taxila, Nalanda, and Vikramashila stood out for their excellence. These institutions were inspired by the formalized Vedic learning tradition.

Mahayana Buddhists played a major role in founding Nalanda University, but contributions from non-Buddhists like Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and others were also significant. This made Nalanda a center for studying both religious and secular literature. The university truly embodied the saying "Knowledge has no boundaries." Students were free to pursue any subject of interest and study for years. Nalanda's library housed millions of granthas and manuscripts, systematically collected and preserved for students' benefit.

Why did Bhaktiyar destroy the university?

There are two versions explaining Bhaktiyar's destruction of the university and its library. One version claims he was enraged upon not finding a single copy of the Qur'an in the library, prompting the destruction. The other version suggests that a Buddhist monk named Rahul Sri Bhadra cured the Sultan of a serious disease, making Bhaktiyar intolerant since his own doctors couldn't cure him. Regardless of the reason, the great university and its internationally renowned library were destroyed, resulting in a significant loss for future generations.

Bhaktiyar Khilji



Rajendra Prasad

View of Nalanda University

The formation and continuation of the university were supported by patrons from India and Java. During the "Golden Period of India," particularly the 5th and 6th centuries CE, the university promoted every subject, especially arts and academics.

King Harshavardhana of Kannauj in the 7th century AD, along with the Palas, also patronized Nalanda University. Despite Bhaktiyar Khilji's fatal attack, the university had already faced two earlier assaults—one by the Huns in the 5th century AD and another by the Gauds in the 7th century AD.

Patrons, regardless of their diverse religious beliefs, wholeheartedly supported the university. Northeastern rulers helped run and develop it, and the King of Sumatra contributed villages for monasteries. A separate fund was established to support scholars from China. King Harsha granted one hundred villages and directed the households in each village to support the monks in all respects.

How Nalanda Looks Today?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new campus of Nalanda University on June 19, 2024. This

Late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

marks the culmination of a decades-long vision to revive India's ancient seat of learning.

The idea for a new Nalanda University was first proposed by former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2006 while addressing the Bihar legislature. This echoed a similar suggestion made by India's first President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, decades earlier. In a precursor to the modern university, the Bihar government established the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, a center for Pali and Buddhist studies, near the ruins of the ancient institution.

The concept gained international support at the 2007 East Asia Summit, with countries like China, Japan, and Australia endorsing the initiative. Subsequently, the Nalanda International University was established through an Act of Parliament in 2010, designated as an Institute of National Importance.

The university commenced its academic journey in 2014 with a batch of 15 students on a 455-acre campus granted by the Bihar government. The sprawling new campus, now covering over 400 acres, is set to be Asia's largest upon completion.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by ambassadors and dignitaries from all 18 member countries of the ASEAN, underscoring the global significance of this educational revival.

Nalanda University is not just an institution; it is a symbol of India's resurgence as a global knowledge hub, echoing the glory of its ancient past.

The Great Sariputra Stupa of Nalanda

Although the Sariputra Stupa predates the establishment of Nalanda University, it is an inseparable part of Nalanda's cultural history. Built by the great Mauryan Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century, this stupa honors Sariputra, an "Arhat" who attained salvation following Buddha's teachings. Sariputra was a devoted follower and one of Buddha's chief disciples.

Constructed with bricks inscribed with sacred Buddhist texts, the stupa is said to have been built on Buddha's ashes. The cover panels at the top depict scenes from the famous Jataka tales, and the top of the stupa resembles a pyramid.

Stupas, which are hemispherical structures, symbolize Buddha's burial mound. The Sariputra Stupa is a protected monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is said to have inspired the construction of the "Gwe Bin Tet Kon" stupa in Myanmar.

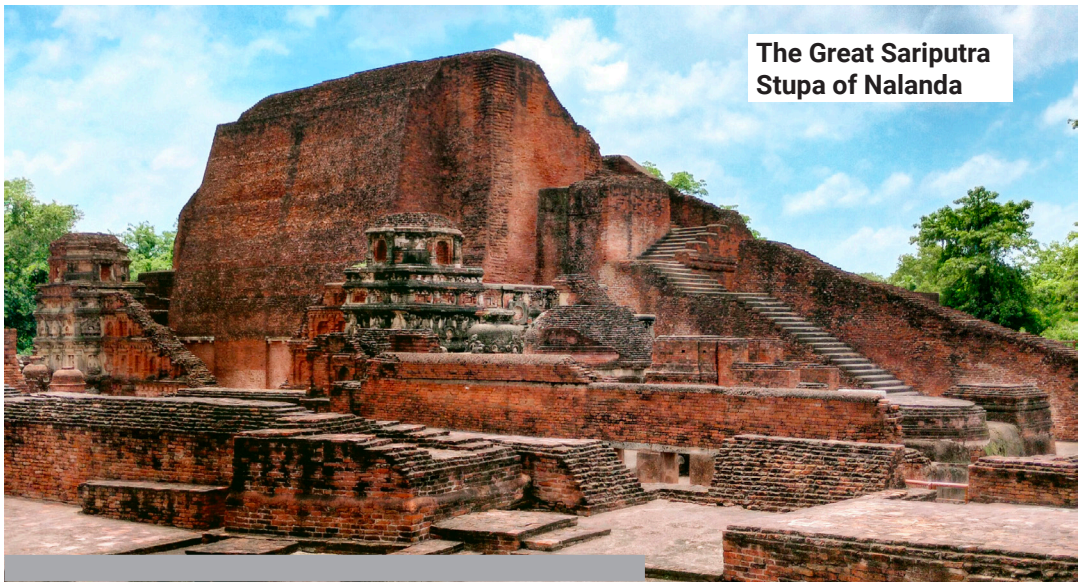
Various philosophies were taught here, including major Buddhist philosophies such as Madhyamaka, Yogachara, and Sarvastivada. The curriculum also included the Vedas, alongside subjects like grammar, logic, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, alchemy, and many more.

During its golden period, which spanned about eight centuries, Nalanda attracted many pundits, scholars, and foreign travelers as both faculty and students. Revered figures such as Aryabhata, Atisha, Aranya, Chandrakirti, Dharmapala, Dharmakirti, Harsha, Nagarjuna, Shilabhadra, Vasubandhu, and Xuanzang were among them.

The university had a vast teaching canopy and employed highly advanced scientific methods of instruction. At its peak, Nalanda housed about 2,000 teachers and over 10,000 students from countries like Mongolia, Tibet, Japan, China, Sri Lanka, Korea, Persia, Turkey, and others. Students from Southeast Asia also studied there.

Nalanda's library, an important source of Sanskrit texts, was said to hold about 9 million manuscripts. The university's three libraries—Ratnasagara, Ratnanidhi, and Ratnaranjak—were located in the

Nalanda



The Great Sariputra Stupa of Nalanda

Dharmaganj complex. "Ratna Sagara," a nine-floored building with maximum collections, led the Buddhist scholar Taranath to exclaim, "Seeming to be soaring into the clouds."

Significant works like Bodhisattvacaryavatara by Shantideva and Mahavairochana Tantra were composed at Nalanda, contributing to the growth of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. The university's campus, spanning about 12 hectares (30 acres), included ten great pools for bathing and an area with a length of 240 meters and a width of 490 meters.

According to Jain texts, Mahavira had an annual retreat at Nalanda for 14 years. The university thrived from 427 to 1197 AD, until its destruction by Bhaktiyar Khilji. However, it continued to manage for about two more centuries with the support of many rulers.

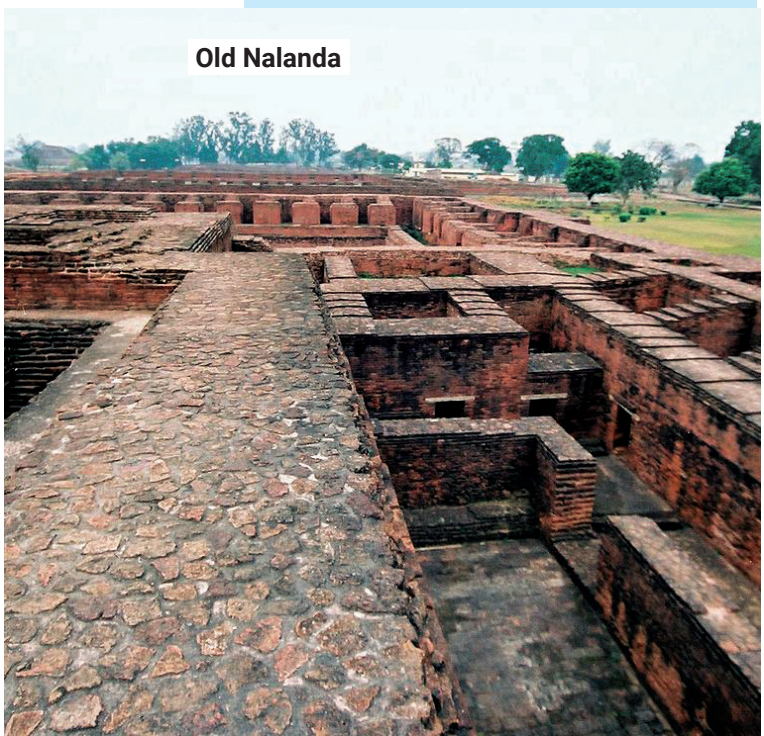
The famous traveler-monk Xuanzang from China visited Nalanda in 637 and 642 AD, studying under Shilabhadra for two years and changing his name to Mokshadeva. On his return to China in 657 AD, Xuanzang took 657 Sanskrit texts and 150 relics, showcasing the vast size of Nalanda's library. He translated 74 texts into Chinese.

Another Chinese traveler-monk, Yijing, took 400 Sanskrit texts and 300 Buddha relics. Unfortunately, the university's library was set on fire by attackers and reportedly burned continuously for about three months. Excavations in 1920-21 revealed a thick layer of ashes across many buildings.

Further excavations uncovered 11 monasteries, six major brick temples, and a 100-foot-wide north-south passage between temples on the western side and monasteries on the eastern side. Many monks fled with manuscripts during this period, and today, museums like Yarlung Museum, Tsetong, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art house these manuscripts, standing as irrefutable

The Mystery of Nalanda's Name

The origins of the name "Nalanda" remains a part of debate. Scholars have proposed various theories. One interpretation suggests that "Nalanda" is derived from the Sanskrit words "na-alam-da," meaning "not sufficient - give," implying an endless pursuit and imparting of knowledge. Another theory, based on archaeological findings, links the name to the abundance of "nalas" or lotus stalks in the region. Tibetan literature connects "Nalanda" to "Nalendra," while Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang proposed a less probable association with the serpent deity Naga. Interestingly, Faxian, another Chinese traveler who visited India before Nalanda University's existence, made no mention of the place in his records. Despite these varied explanations, the true etymology of Nalanda continues to be a subject of scholarly debate.



Old Nalanda

proof of Nalanda's legacy.

Aryabhata, the father of Indian mathematics, is speculated to have headed the university in the 6th century, highlighting Nalanda's significant contributions to the fields of science and mathematics.

Unveiling Nalanda's Past: A Journey Through Time

Today, Nalanda stands proudly as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a testament to its historical significance. However, unearthing its secrets took time and dedication.

The first official survey of Nalanda University by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) happened in 1861-62, but large-scale excavations wouldn't begin until 1915. Between 1915 and 1937, renowned archaeologists like David B. Spooner, Harinand Shastri, J.A. Page, Kuraishi, G. C. Chandra, Amalanand Ghosh, Palak Shah, and N. Nazim led the effort. Funding limitations forced a pause in 1937.

Archaeologist G. C. Chandra's words aptly capture the vastness of the buried university: "The extent of the entire monastic establishment can only be determined by future excavations."

True to his prediction, further excavations resumed during 1974-82. This phase involved meticulous digging, observation, discovery, categorization, conservation, and restoration. Efforts were made to prevent damage to the unearthed floors.

Intriguingly, excavations near Nalanda in Juafardih revealed evidence of human settlements predating even the times of Mahavira and Buddha, hinting at an even deeper historical tapestry waiting to be unraveled.

Underworld Rises in Nagaland

Underworld is dead in Mumbai, but organized crime syndicates appear to be growing in the North Eastern state of Nagaland. Here gangsters are those they once fought for Naga insurgency groups. Unlike Mumbai dons, gangs in Nagaland deposit their booty in banks and even in mutual funds. Therefore, the extortion came to light during investigation by the ED.

In 2013 the Dimapur Chamber of Commerce highlighted the heavy burden on locals due to multiple payments demanded by underground groups

By Vicky Nanjappa

For years, Mumbai was notorious as the hub where the underworld thrived on illegal money and rampant extortion. Few could have predicted that similar tales would echo from the northeastern state of Nagaland.

What was once referred to as "legal taxation" aimed at running a parallel government for the Naga people's benefit has now devolved into what many deem outright extortion. Insurgent groups, under the guise of protecting Naga interests, are believed to be amassing ill-gotten wealth to fuel activities against both the state and the Union of India.

Unlike Mumbai, where the extortion racket was solely the domain of the underworld, Nagaland's scenario is distinct. Here, it is the insurgent groups—not organized crime syndicates—that collect money illegally, claiming it is necessary for governance and the protection of their community.

In Mumbai, the stakes were high, and non-compliance with extortion demands could be fatal, as illustrated by the tragic case of T-Series founder, Gulshan Kumar. Investigations revealed that the Dawood Ibrahim gang, aided by close associates of Kumar, orchestrated his murder after he refused to pay up.

Dawood

While Mumbai's extortion stories were well-documented and widely reported, attention is now shifting to other regions. Recent

Gulshan Kumar

reports indicate a significant rise in extortion activities in Nagaland. Though whispers of such practices have circulated for some time, an intensified crackdown on these elements has brought the issue into the spotlight.

The extent and persistence of extortion in Nagaland reflect a troubling trend, where insurgent groups leverage fear and violence under the pretense of safeguarding regional interests, posing a complex challenge for the authorities.

Modus operandi

A deeper investigation reveals that the large-scale extortion in Nagaland is orchestrated by proscribed groups. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) recently filed a charge sheet implicating the NSCN (Isak-Muivah) faction in these activities.

The chargesheet specifically named Rayilung Nsarangbe, a self-styled colonel of the banned terror group, and his wife, Ruth Chawang, among others involved.

The investigation uncovered that the NSCN (IM) was collecting significant amounts of money through extortion. The collected funds were primarily used according to the directives of the group's collective leadership, deposited into the bank accounts of the accused, and further invested in mutual funds and insurance policies. In this particular case, the outfit had managed to amass Rs 6.88 crore.

The extent of the extortion first came to light during a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe, which revealed the terror-related aspect of the money collection. Subsequently, the ED was brought in to focus on the financial side of the investigation.

Desperate measures

The spotlight on insurgency in the northeastern states has intensified, revealing that, like terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir, operatives in these regions engage in various activities to generate funds.

In Jammu and Kashmir, extortion occurs on a smaller scale, with most money generated through fake currency rackets, cross-border trade, and the sale of arms, ammunition, and narcotics.

However, in Nagaland, terror groups have adopted a different strategy, demanding

The quicker the government cracks down on the underworld, the better it is, because mafia never allows economic growth.

protection money from locals. Many residents are compelled to pay a certain amount either weekly or monthly. This tactic emerged as traditional funding sources began to dry up.

The issue of extortion in Nagaland has escalated significantly, becoming a major problem. Locals have expressed their frustration, claiming that these groups have become a severe menace. With little intervention from the police, residents have taken to the streets in protest, demanding immediate action against those responsible.

In April this year, a bandh was called, leading to the closure of markets, private offices, and other establishments. Business owners and workers reported that operating under the constant threat of extortion from underground groups had become impossible. They alleged that refusal to pay was often met with violent threats, including having guns pointed at their heads.

The situation underscores the urgent need for effective measures to address and curb the rampant extortion by insurgent groups in Nagaland.

How did it begin?

It is widely acknowledged that these insurgent groups receive funding from foreign elements. However, over the past 8 to 9 years, increased border monitoring has caused a severe cash crunch for these groups. With their funds dwindling, they struggle to operate smoothly, hindering their ability to recruit and

ED Files Chargesheet Against NSCN-IM Treasurer For Collecting Extortion Money & Illegal Tax

procure arms and ammunition.

While technically extortion, these terror groups attempting to overthrow the democratically elected government refer to their activities as taxation. The issue gained significant attention in 2013 when the Dimapur Chamber of Commerce highlighted the heavy burden on locals due to multiple payments demanded by underground groups.

In response, the Action Committee Against Unabated Taxation (ACAUT) was formed to combat this menace. ACAUT organized protest marches demanding "one government, one tax." It's important to note that all major tribal groups in Nagaland, including the Nagas, are listed as Scheduled Tribes under the Indian Constitution and are exempt from income tax under Section 10 (26) of the Income Tax Act. ACAUT was not protesting against taxes levied by the state or union government but against those imposed by various factions.

Since its formation in 1980, the NSCN has split into four factions. These groups claim to be running a revolutionary government, insisting that any government requires money. They also assert that they are a people's movement, mandated by the Naga people.

Parallel taxation

Each of these factions has a finance ministry and these send taxation letters to the various heads of departments, accountants and disbursing officers in the state. While some officials have complied under duress the others have furthered their own personal causes.

The other problem is that these officials in many cases have collected more money than what has been demanded by these factions. It has also been found that each of these groups would demand a 24 percent deduction from the salaries of all state and central government employees. An exception was however made to the armed forces.

This is however not a new phenomenon, but the nature of collecting the money has changed. These days it is more towards achieving devious goals such as violence, while in many cases, the self-styled leaders of these factions have used the funds for their gains.

Why is policing difficult?

While collections are not new and the Naga insurgency has sustained itself through such practices, it has now become more problematic with ceasefire agreements being signed. This has given such factions more freedom in cities such as Dimapur and Kohima.

The issue never came to light, as earlier, such practices were restricted only to rural areas. Today, the business faction is affected,

and hence the noise against such acts has become louder.

Policing has also been difficult, as, in many cases, there was a nexus between the political class and the separatist groups. There is also sympathy towards the Naga political cause, and this has only added to the woes of the public. While some have vented their frustration, very few have come forward and complained. The police also tend to look the other way in many cases. In some cases, arrests have been made, but the prosecution has been a Herculean task as witnesses have turned hostile out of fear.

Statistics would show that in 2012, the number of cases registered stood at 100, while in 2013, it was 65. In the year 2015, cases had touched only the 60 mark.

The solution is a political settlement where there is a more defined role between these groups and the state. The need to urgently rid the system of corruption is also important here.

The issue is a delicate one, and the people no longer look at it as taxation to run a government. The people are now treating taxation as nothing but extortion and say that those collecting the same are unfit and not worthy of running the show and living up to the expectations and demands of the Naga people.

ISRO CREATES MAP OF THE SETU (BRIDGE) BUILT BY LORD RAMA

By Prathima.G.K

For the first time, ISRO scientists have successfully created an undersea map of the legendary Ram Setu, using technology assistance from NASA. This remarkable survey has confirmed the existence of a submerged ridge stretching from Dhanushkodi in India to Talaimannar in Sri Lanka.

Using a US satellite to reflect laser beams off the sea floor, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) managed to uncover 99.98 percent of the Ram Setu. This 29-kilometer stretch of limestone shoals was found buried in the shallow waters of the Indian Ocean.

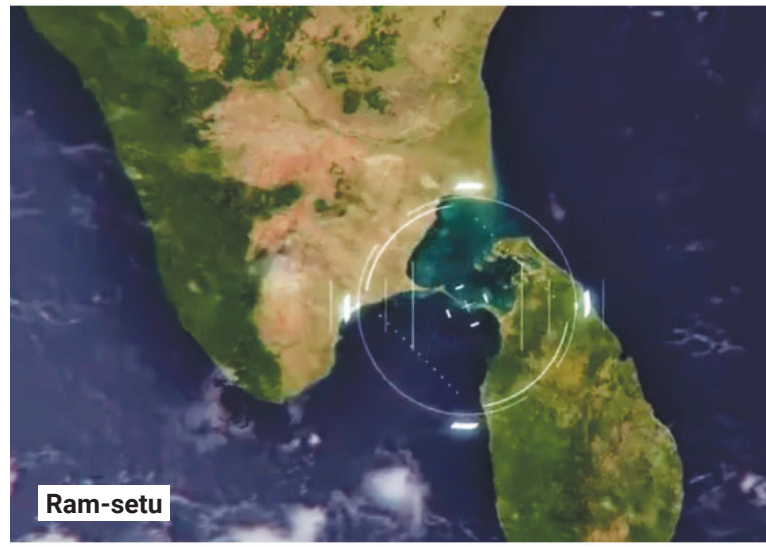
Details of this pioneering discovery were published in Scientific Reports by Giribabu Dandabathula and his team at ISRO's National Remote Sensing Centre in Jodhpur.

The Rama Setu, which the British East India Company called Adam's Bridge, has deep roots in Indian history. Epic Ramayana says it was the bridge constructed by Lord Rama's army to rescue Sita from the demon king Ravana. Geologically, it is thought to have once been a land route connecting India and Sri Lanka.

ISRO scientist Giribabu-Dandabathula

Historical records indicate that Persian navigators in the 9th century referred to it as Sethu Bandhai, meaning "bridge over the sea." Temple records in Rameswaram mention that the bridge was above sea level until 1480, when a powerful storm submerged it.

The initial satellite observations primarily focused on exposed sections of the bridge, revealing its shallow depth, ranging from one to ten meters, which complicates navigation and mapping. Using data from ICESat-2 collected



Ram-setu

between October 2018 and October 2023, researchers created a high-resolution map of the submerged ridge. The findings indicate that the ridge stands about eight meters above the sea bed, with only 0.02 percent visible above water.

The research also discovered limestone formed from the accumulation of marine fossils over millions of years. The shells and skeletons of sea life have contributed to the formation of these stones.

In addition, 11 narrow passages, just a few meters wide, were identified, allowing water to flow between the Gulf of Mannar on the southwest side and the Palk Strait on the northeast side. Scientists believe these channels are crucial for preserving the bridge from the powerful waves during the monsoon seasons.

The ISRO research team concluded that these shallow canals facilitate the free flow of water, reducing the impact of waves on the ridge and playing a significant role in its conservation.

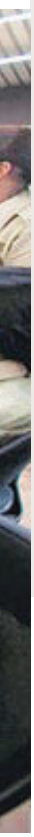
NYAYA SANHITA: REALIGNING WITH THE CURRENT AGE

Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems

By Sumana

Amid a lot of opposition, the Indian Justice Code-2023 (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita-BNS), Indian Civil Protection Code-2023 (Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita-BNSS), and Indian Evidence Act-2023 (Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam-BSA) came into effect from July 1, 2024 across the country.

The Indian Penal Code (IPC), 2023 aims to modernise and update the existing Indian Penal Code, 1860, drafted during the British colonial period. It had become outdated in several respects, reflecting the needs and norms of a bygone era. The new code aims to address contemporary issues, simplify legal procedures, and align the penal laws with current societal values



The criminal justice system's foundation was laid during the British colonial period with laws drafted as far back as 1860. Over time, these laws have become outdated, reflecting the needs and norms of a bygone era. The new legal code seeks to modernize the system by addressing contemporary issues, simplifying legal procedures, and aligning penal laws with current societal values and human rights standards.

and human rights standards.

At the stroke of midnight, on June 30, 2024, India witnessed the implementation of a new substantive penal code and a law on evidence, which was a significant event.

Overview

The Indian Penal Code (BNS), 2023 replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860. The Indian Civil Protection Code (BNSS), 2023 replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure (CRPC), 1973. The Indian Evidence Act (BSA), 2023 replaced the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. Three old British-era criminal laws underwent reformation, with special emphasis on eliminating organised crime against women, children, and the state.

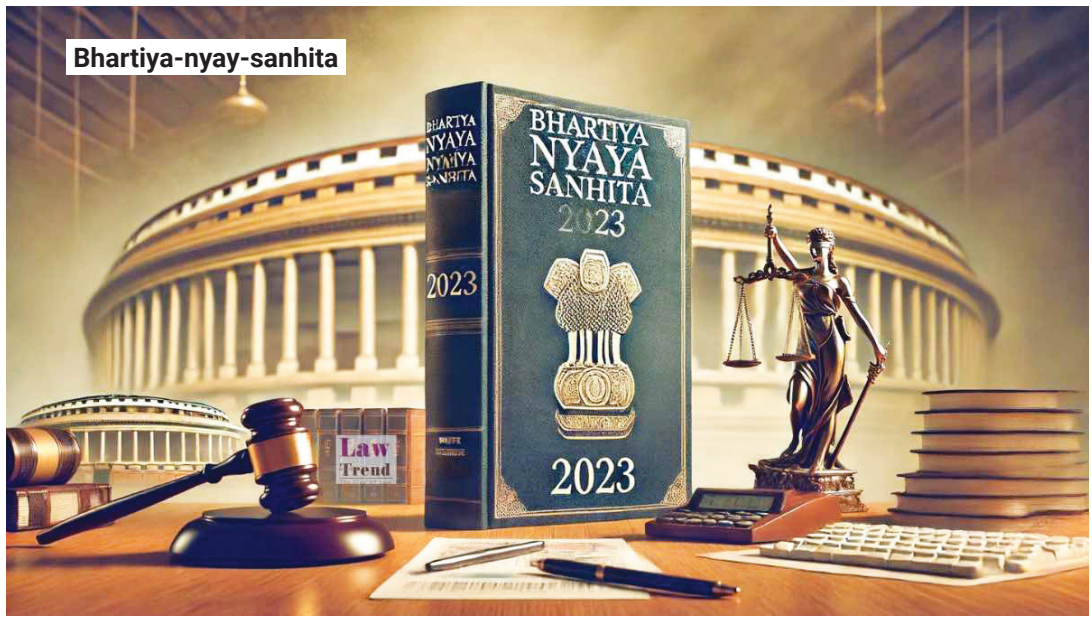
The Indian Civil Protection Code-BNSS, which replaced the CrPC, previously contained 533 sections; the new Act amended 160 sections, added nine new sections, and repealed nine sections. The Indian Code of Justice-BNS, which replaced the IPC, now has 356 sections instead of the previous 511 sections, 175 amended sections, eight new sections, and 22 repealed sections.

The Indian Evidence Act-BSA, which replaced the Evidence Act, has 170 sections instead of 167, of which 23 sections have been amended, one new section has been added and 5 sections have been repealed. The Act expands the definition of documents to include electronic and digital records, e-mails, server logs, computers, smartphones, laptops, SMS, WhatsApp, websites, location evidence, mail, and messages received on devices. The Act provides for digitalization of the entire process from FIR to case diary, case diary to charge sheet, and charge sheet to judgment. Videography is mandatory during searches and seizures, which will form part of the case and will not trouble innocent citizens, without such recording no police charge sheet will bevalid.

Key points of the new Indian Justice Code-BNS

1 **According to Section 173 of the new law, a citizen can file an FIR from any place outside the designated police station area, termed a 'Zero FIR' in this law.**

2 **The new law facilitates citizens to file an e-FIR.**



3 Section 530 of the Indian Civil Protection Code (BNSS) allows all trials, inquiries, and proceedings to be conducted in electronic mode.

4 The new law allows for the electronic presentation of remote evidence.

5 It ensures that electronic records have the same legal effect as paper records.

6 The new law empowers the police to attach any illegally acquired property.

7 The new law has provisions to avoid arrest for minor offences, especially for physically challenged or senior citizens.

8 The aggrieved litigant should be informed about the progress of the investigation within 90 days of the registration of the case.

9 The new law has provisions to ensure that the trial process starts within 60 days of filing the charge sheet.

10 The verdict must be announced within 45 days after the trial.

11 The copy of the judgment must be uploaded online within seven days.

12 Section 65(2) of the BNS originally introduced the provision of capital punishment for rape of girls below 12 years of age.

13 The new law requires the permission of an officer of at least the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police to arrest those guilty of offences punishable by imprisonment for less than three years.

14 The new Criminal Code has given serious thought to much-needed witness protection and laid down specific provisions.

15 Electronic mode shall apply to all judicial proceedings (Sections 173 and 530 of B.N.S.S.).

16 According to the new law, oral evidence will be admissible in electronic mode. This electronic testimony shall have the same weight as written, direct testimony. Witnesses can testify from a distance.

17 There are special exemptions for minor offences, especially in the case of the arrest of disabled, physically challenged, and senior citizens.

18 **A victim of a criminal incident must be informed about the progress of the investigation within 90 days of the registration of the case.**

19 **The trial must be initiated within 60 days of filing the charge sheet.**

20 **The judgment of the trial must be communicated within 45 days of the completion of the trial (Section 392 of the BNSS).**

21 **A copy of the judgment must be uploaded within seven days.**

22 **In cases of repeated rape/gang rape cases, there is a provision for capital punishment (Section 71 of B.N.S.). 106(1) of the Indian Penal Code-2023 states that negligence by a registered medical practitioner shall be punishable with imprisonment of up to two years and a penalty.**

23 **Section 51(3) of the Indian Penal Code-2023 states that the doctor must hand over the examination report of the accused immediately and the medical report of the rape victim to the investigating officer within seven days. Section 52 of the BNS emphasizes the word 'delay' to preserve the originality of a medical report and to preserve the validity of the specimen collected.**

24 **The Indian Penal Code- 2023 includes human trafficking, sex trade or human trafficking for ransom as organised crime and provides for severe punishment.**

25 **Procuring a child for the sex trade can result in a minimum sentence of seven years up to 14 years.**

26 **There is no gender discrimination in the case of trafficking of boys and girls from outside India. Trafficking boys under the age of 18 years and girls under the age of 21 years, for coercion or enticement is an offence. "The word 'begging' has been conflated with 'exploitation' in the case of human trafficking.**

27 **To save women from sexual harassment at the workplace or in cases of such incidents, the authority concerned should take legal action. Otherwise, women can opt for legal recourse if they are victims of sexual harassment.**

28 **A victim of a criminal incident must be informed about the progress of the investigation within 90 days of the registration of the case.**

29 **The court must start the trial within 60 days of filing the charge sheet. And within 30 to 45 days after the completion of the trial, the verdict should be announced (BNSS-392).**

Personnel from different departments of state governments, such as the police, prison, law, health, and family welfare, prosecution department, and state forensics science laboratory, will undergo both online and offline training in technology application for the effective implementation of the three laws.

Thousands of police have already undergone training to operate the newly revised Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) application. Infrastructural development, technological development, new recruitment, approval/ amendment of rules or Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), etc are also on the cards. The existing government guidelines will be implemented in the states in phases as per the requirements. The state governments have asked all district Superintendents of Police to continue a mass awareness campaign to inform the citizens of the states about the new law.

What is in the new law?

New offences are included in this Act. The Indian Penal Code retains provisions for offences like murder, abetment of suicide, assault, and grievous hurt and includes offences like organised crime, terrorism, genocide, etc. in the new law. It includes anti-terrorism laws like the UAPA.

Terrorist acts are now covered by the BNS, although they were previously covered by other legislation like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The new law stipulates punishments ranging from the death penalty to life imprisonment for the rape of minors under 18 years of age. Gang rape is punishable by a minimum of 20 years to life imprisonment.

In cases of sexual violence allegations, the victim's statement is to be recorded at her home. The victim can give that statement in front of the female magistrate. A sentence of 10 years has been prescribed for having sex with women through false promises of marriage.

Mandatory time limits are fixed for investigations and hearings. The verdict has to be given within 45 days of the hearing, and an FIR has to be filed within three days of the complaint.

FIR will be registered through the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS). The program operates under the National Crime Records Bureau.

CCTNS has been upgraded so that e-FIR can be lodged online without visiting any police station. An FIR can be registered at any police station, irrespective of the jurisdiction of the police station where the offence has taken place. No police station can avoid responsibility.

1 The Indian Penal Code (BNS), 2023 replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860. The Indian Civil Protection Code (BNSS), 2023 replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure (CRPC), 1973. The Indian Evidence Act (BSA), 2023 replaced the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

2 The Indian Penal Code

Earlier, 15 days of police remand could be granted. But now it can be given for 60 or 90 days. Many lawyers are expressing concern about such a long police remand before the trial of the case.

Adultery and Article 377 were removed. However, the Karnataka government has objected to this, saying the complete removal of Section 377 is not right, as it is used in cases of unnatural sex offences.

The new law also has the same provisions in the Indian Penal Code for crimes like theft, robbery, and cheating. Along with this, crimes like cybercrime and financial fraud have been listed.

Until now, there was no separate law for lynching in India. Henceforth, severe punishment has been mentioned in such cases. There are also legal mechanisms to prosecute accused in cases of assault on women or stealing mobile phones.

The highlight of the new laws is that the entire process, from FIR to court proceedings, will be online. As a result, everything from complaint filing to the final disposal of cases will be technology-driven. For the case not to remain pending for years the proceedings must be compulsorily completed within 3 years — that is what the BNSS says.

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