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WAYANAD
 LANDSLIDES WERE
MAN-MADE



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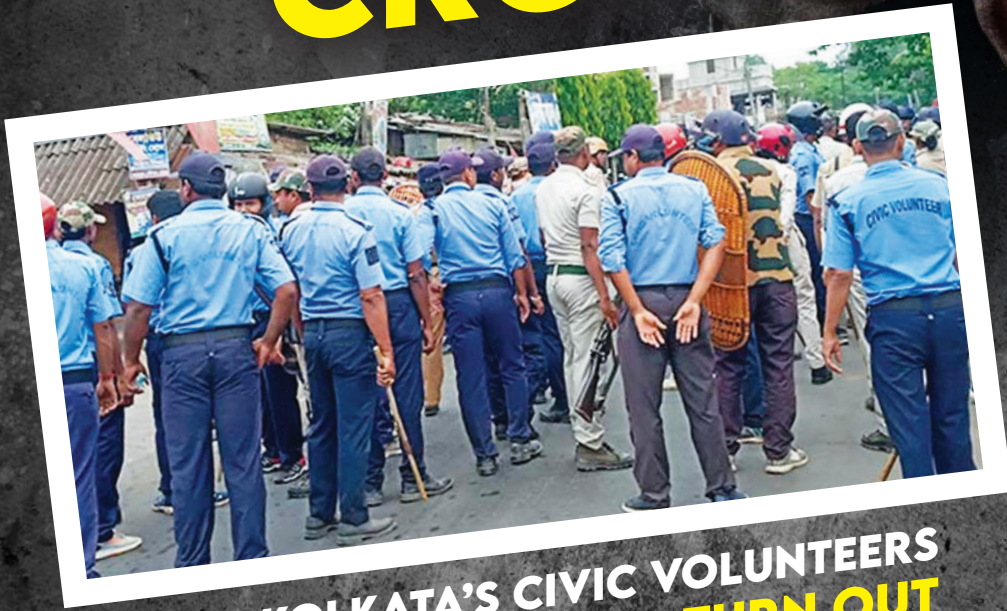
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**FENCE EATING
 CROPS**



**KOLKATA'S CIVIC VOLUNTEERS
 (POLICE ASSISTANTS) TURN OUT
 TO BE REAL CRIMINALS**



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The recent protests by doctors in Kolkata over the killing of a junior physician have brought attention to a deeper issue plaguing West Bengal - the escalating crime rate. However, beneath the surface lies a more sinister culprit - the civic volunteers who serve as constables in the state. These individuals, who are essentially foot soldiers of the Trinamool Congress party during elections, are being recruited through a questionable process that lacks transparency.

Unlike regular government employees, civic volunteers are not held to the same recruitment standards, nor do they receive the same salary as other policemen in West Bengal. This raises serious questions about their accountability and loyalty. The decision by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to hand over the investigation to the CBI may be seen as an attempt to shield these civic volunteers from scrutiny.

As the truth begins to unravel, it is becoming increasingly clear that the civic volunteers may be more involved in the state's crime rate than initially thought. It's time for a thorough examination of their role and recruitment process to ensure justice is served and the people of West Bengal are protected.

In addition to the unfolding drama in West Bengal, this edition delves into other pressing concerns across the nation. A comprehensive analysis sheds light on the devastating landslides in Wayanad, unraveling the underlying causes of this tragedy.

Meanwhile, a spate of political murders in Tamil Nadu raises alarming questions about the state's stability, echoing the turmoil witnessed in Kerala. Is Tamil Nadu heading down a similar path of violence and instability?

Furthermore, the escalating drug peddling crisis in the North Eastern states demands urgent attention. Our in-depth coverage highlights the severity of this issue and its far-reaching consequences.

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Editor: **P. S. Prakash**
Resident Editor: **Prathima G. K.**
✉ editoraseema@gmail.com

Design: **Ashwath Krishna**

Business Head
Chandrakant Patil ☎ 8530941088
✉ aseemaadvertise@gmail.com

Office Head
Jayavanth ☎ 9686113537

Mentor: **Bhuvanish Sheth**
✉ bhuvan.aseemagoa@gmail.com

Advertise & Circulation Executive
Vikas Patil ☎ 9049958797
✉ vikaspatillic475@gmail.com

Dr. Sunil G. Gurav ☎ 8421647603
✉ aseemamaharashtra@gmail.com
Maharashtra Executive

HEAD OFFICE

Aseema Monthly, HOSADIGANTHA
"MICASA", 2nd Floor, Opp.to TATA Show Room
Near KSRTC Bus Stand, Mangalore-575003

GOA OFFICE

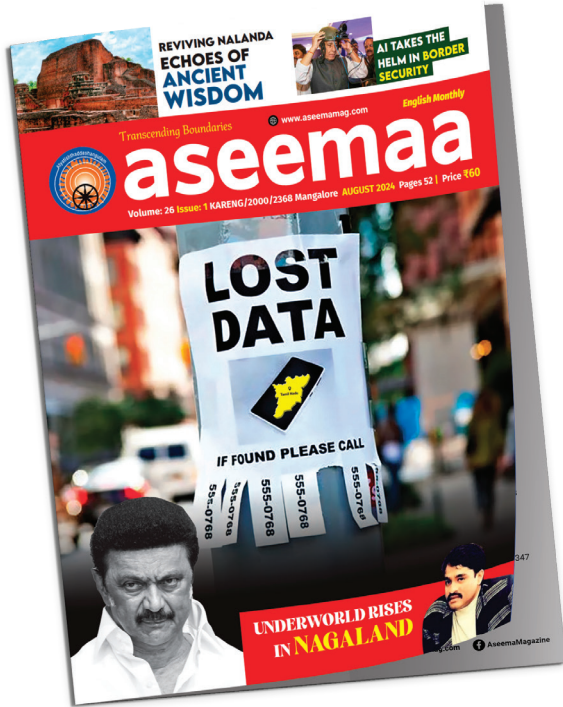
Aseema Monthly, SM-112,
Nova Cidade Complex, Near Mall De Goa,
Alto Porvorim, North Goa 403 521
✉ aseemagoa@gmail.com ☎ 0832 6747347

BENGALURU OFFICE

Aseema Monthly, Vikrama Building,
No. 106, 5th main Road, Chamarajpet,
Bengaluru – 560 018



aseemaa Readers opinion



The article “Reviving Nalanda: Echoes of Ancient Wisdom” is a captivating journey into the past, reminding us of the rich cultural and intellectual heritage that Nalanda University represents. The historical insights provided, especially the detailed account of its rise, devastation, and recent revival, are both informative and inspiring. It’s a piece that not only revives our connection to India’s glorious academic past but also sparks hope for the future as we see this ancient center of learning being restored to its former glory. The coverage of Nalanda’s significance during its golden age, as well as its symbolic importance today, is truly commendable.

What stands out most is the meticulous research and storytelling that bring the history of Nalanda to life. The article effectively highlights the contributions of various patrons across centuries, showcasing how Nalanda was not just a university, but a symbol of global collaboration and intellectual excellence. The revival efforts, as detailed in the piece, evoke a sense of pride and optimism, reminding us of the enduring value of education and cultural preservation.

Moreover, the small “Weird World” fillers added a refreshing twist to the magazine. These quirky snippets provided an unexpected but delightful break from the heavier topics, lightening the overall reading experience. The story of the ‘robot suicide’ was particularly intriguing and added a unique flavor to this issue. Kudos to the editorial team for including these fun and thought-provoking pieces that refresh the mind!

| **Chinnu** Hubballi



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No Doubt, Wayanad
landslides
were Man-made **07**



Interesting stories

Brace Yourselves:
The Apophis
Asteroid Approaches **10**

Buffalo Thief Nabbed
After 58 Years **45**

Creamy Layer to be
Excluded from
SC/ST Reservations? **11**

Dozed with Drug **13**

Cover Story
Fence Eating Crops **16**

Weird World
Mosquito Mania:
A Day of Appreciation and
Awareness **24**

Grinning Bots: The Dawn of
Living Skin Robots **25**



26 A series of Political
Murders Rocks
Tamil Nadu



30 Bihar: Collapsing
Bridges Expose
Corruption

35 Hasina's Fall
and Jamaat-e-
Islami's Rise



40 Thulasendrapuram
& Kamala Harris

46 Arundhati
Roy: Why she
supports Islamist
Separatists?

Wayanad landslides



Until 1950, approximately 85% of Wayanad was covered by forests. Today, the landscape is dominated by rubber plantations, scattered settlements, and tea plantations. Unlike forests, these plantations do not hold the soil together as effectively. This makes the area highly susceptible to landslides. Scientists warn that the potential for landslides had been evident for a long time, but local residents may not have fully understood the risks.

NO DOUBT, WAYANAD LANDSLIDES WERE MAN-MADE



By Vicky Nanjappa

The devastating landslides in Wayanad, Kerala, were a calamity that was years in the making. Heavy rains may have been the immediate trigger, but this was, by all accounts, a man-made disaster. The death toll has reached a grim tally of 333, with 281

others still unaccounted for.

The question of blame looms large. Was this the result of reckless human activity, or did nature's fury simply overwhelm the region? For many, the answer is clear: this tragedy was no surprise, but an inevitable consequence of long-standing neglect and environmental mismanagement.

The Chooralmala-Mundakkai area within Meppadi Panchayat bore the brunt of the disaster. These forest-fringed enclaves, home to tea plantation workers and small business owners, were flagged in 2011 by the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel as part of an Ecologically Sensitive Zone. Led by the ecologist Madhav Gadgil, the panel had warned against destructive activities in these delicate ecosystems, given their unique geography and dense forest cover.

Climate scientists point to the warming Arabian Sea as a key factor in the extreme weather patterns that caused the landslides, but many also argue that the disaster was exacerbated by relentless environmental degradation. Wayanad, once celebrated for its natural beauty, has in recent years become a magnet for eco-tourism. The boom has brought with it a surge in construction—resorts springing up in droves, tunnels burrowed through hillsides,



Death toll

333

Unaccounted

281

62% of the forest cover disappeared between

1950 & 2018

and quarrying activities carried out with little regard for the region's carrying capacity.

These reckless practices have left Wayanad vulnerable, the perfect setting for a disaster waiting to happen.

In 2019, a similar disaster struck the hilly regions of Kerala, serving as a grim precursor to Wayanad's recent tragedy. Despite clear warning signs, unchecked construction continued unabated. Roads and infrastructure were built with little regard for environmental consequences, the lack of scientific oversight allowing haphazard development to erode the region's fragile landscape.

Kerala's terrain, with nearly half its area comprising hills and mountains, is particularly vulnerable to landslides, especially during heavy rains. The slopes, many of which exceed 20 degrees, make these regions inherently unstable. But instead of cautious evaluation and responsible land-use planning, powerful lobbies, backed by political support, pressed ahead with projects that fundamentally disrupted the ecological balance.

The Wayanad landslides are a stark reminder of how human intervention in land use, combined with climate change, can lead to catastrophic flash floods.

The Toll of Depleting Forests

A study conducted in 2022 revealed a

significant loss of green cover in Wayanad, with 62% of the forest cover disappearing between 1950 and 2018. During the same period, plantation cover surged by nearly 1,800%. The study, published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, noted that until 1950, around 85% of Wayanad was forested. Today, the landscape is dominated by rubber plantations, which are far less effective at stabilizing the soil than the dense forests that once blanketed the region, contributing to the heightened intensity of landslides.

The responsibility for this ecological degradation does not rest with one government alone. Successive administrations have turned a blind eye to reckless construction and the proliferation of rubber plantations. Roads and culverts have been built without accounting for shifting rainfall patterns, relying on outdated data that no longer reflect the realities of a changing climate. The result has been a series of ill-conceived projects that have further destabilized an already precarious environment.

Development at a Cost

Wayanad's proximity to the proposed four-lane tunnel project connecting Bengaluru with Kozhikode has fueled development fever in the region. The tunnel, set to be the third-longest in India, has been undertaken by the Konkan Railway Corporation Limited



but has drawn sharp criticism from environmentalists. The project is seen as a threat to wildlife and is believed to exacerbate the risks of landslides and floods.

Newly discovered scenic spots and the rising popularity of the Soochipara Waterfalls have only added to the frenzy. Resorts have sprung up, and homesteads have proliferated in landslide-prone areas. Many of these developments are funded by remittances from Gulf nations, resulting in a wave of concrete houses now dotting the region's vulnerable slopes.

Wayanad's recent landslides have left three wards—Attamala, Mundakkai, and Chooralmala—devastated. Over 1,000 households have been affected, with 560 destroyed. Mundakkai, in particular, was nearly leveled, with the town almost entirely wiped out by the disaster.



Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel ecologist Madhav Gadgil

A Tale of Ignored Warnings

The Gadgil Commission's prophetic warnings fell on deaf ears. In 2011, the report designated Wayanad as an Environmentally Sensitive Locality (ESL), highlighting its ecological fragility. Despite these clear recommendations, the state's response was largely one of indifference and denial.

The report urged immediate action, including bans on new hill stations, stricter tourism regulations, and a rigorous approval process for construction. However, these measures were met with protests from those who feared for their livelihoods. The result was a tragic stalemate, with the state's priorities skewed towards short-term economic gains at the expense of long-term environmental sustainability.

The K Kasturirangan-led working group and an expert committee later echoed the Gadgil Commission's concerns. Their proposals for including the affected region in the ecologically sensitive zone were met with similar resistance. Despite draft notifications being issued, the finalization of these measures has been inexplicably delayed. It seems that these reports are only remembered in the aftermath of disasters, their urgent recommendations gathering dust on bureaucratic shelves.





BRACE YOURSELVES: THE APOPHIS ASTEROID APPROACHES

Get ready for some celestial excitement! An asteroid named Apophis is on a close encounter course with Earth, sparking both wonder and apprehension among scientists. Named after the ancient Egyptian god of chaos, Apophis is a relic from the early solar system, dating back around 4.6 billion years.

Discovered in 2004, Apophis initially caused a stir due to its potential to collide with Earth. Early predictions hinted at possible impact during the years 2029 or 2036. However, recent observations by NASA and other space agencies have reassured us that a collision is not on the horizon—at least not for the next century.

On April 13, 2029, Apophis will make a close flyby, coming within 20,000 miles of Earth's surface—closer than many geostationary satellites. This presents a unique opportunity for scientists to study the asteroid up close and for skywatchers to witness a spectacular cosmic event with the naked eye.

NASA and other space agencies are gearing up for this historic flyby, using it as a chance to better understand near-Earth objects (NEOs) and refine asteroid impact models. This valuable data will help improve our predictions for future asteroid encounters and enhance our preparedness for potential threats.



CREAMY LAYER TO BE EXCLUDED FROM SC/ST RESERVATIONS?

The Supreme Court's recent ruling has mandated that economically privileged families, often categorized as the 'creamy layer,' should forgo the preferential treatment they receive under job reservation policies intended for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). While this decision is widely regarded as a positive step towards ensuring equitable opportunities for historically marginalized communities, it has encountered fierce opposition from certain Dalit leaders. This raises the pertinent question of why these leaders, who are ostensibly advocates for the rights of the downtrodden, are not wholeheartedly supporting a ruling that directly benefits their constituents.



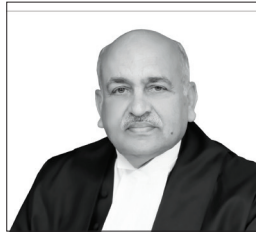
By Pariskhit Dhume

The Supreme Court has made a bold move to reshape the reservation system for the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). In a landmark judgment, the court ruled that states must identify and exclude the "creamy layer" (those families who have already climbed up the socio-economic ladder) from reservation benefits, so that those SC/ST families that are still struggling can get their chance.

It was a mute point of discussion for long: Should the more privileged among SCs and STs continue to



Justice B.R. Gavai



Justice Pankaj



CJ D.Y. Chandrachud



**Justice Satish
Chandra Sharma**

benefit from reservations? Or should these communities be treated as homogenous groups?

This seven-judge bench, led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, ruled by a 6:1 majority that states could indeed sub-classify SCs and STs. The ruling effectively overruled the 2004 decision, signaling a shift in India's approach to reservations.

By excluding the creamy layer—socially and economically advanced individuals within these communities—the court aims to promote real equality.

Justice B.R. Gavai, one of the proponents of the judgment, emphasized that now it should be the turn of the most disadvantaged to enjoy the benefits of job reservation. He pointed out that children of SC/ST individuals who hold high-ranking positions in the civil services, such as IAS or IPS officers, no longer face the same hardships as those in rural areas, yet still enjoy reservation benefits. His call for identifying and excluding the creamy layer was echoed by other justices, including Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Pankaj Mithal.

The term "creamy layer" refers to a segment within the reserved categories that is socially and economically advanced. While this concept is already applied to Other Backward Classes (OBCs), where households earning over Rs. 8 lakh annually are excluded from reservations, the Supreme Court now proposes extending it to SC/ST communities.

The Supreme Court's ruling has stirred political waters. Mayawati, leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), condemned the decision, likening it to an "emergency-like situation." She argued that SCs and STs face discrimination as a collective group, and sub-classification would undermine their unity. On the other hand, Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party, a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) ally, has vowed to seek a review of the decision.

Both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress are treading cautiously on this sensitive issue. With reservation policies often serving as political tools, neither party has fully embraced nor rejected the judgment. In states like Telangana and Karnataka, where internal divisions within Dalit communities have long sparked demands for quota within quota, this ruling could have a significant impact on local political dynamics.

As India grapples with this judicial development, the political landscape could shift dramatically. Will the creamy layer judgment spark a new wave of electoral debates? Or will parties shy away from the potential fallout, opting instead for safer rhetoric? Only time will tell.

For now, the Supreme Court's ruling has set the stage for states to recalibrate their reservation policies and ensure that affirmative action serves those most in need, bringing the country closer to the ideal of social justice envisioned in its Constitution.





Myanmar Drug dealers arrested in Northeast India

Dozed with DRUG

Northeastern states are hit by deadly drug peddlers

By Rupali N

In April 2024 alone, heroin worth nearly 300 crores was seized from traffickers in Manipur. This staggering haul, within a single month, highlights the alarming prevalence of drug trafficking in the northeastern states.

The northeastern states, often described as a paradise, are grappling with growing turmoil. Beyond the deadly ethnic clashes that have dominated headlines in recent months, the region faces another enduring threat: drug smuggling. What was once a longstanding issue has now escalated into a severe security concern, exacerbated by geopolitical unrest and the involvement of powerful international cartels.

The smuggling and consumption of drugs in the northeast has been a persistent problem for decades. However, the situation has grown markedly worse. Myanmar's ongoing turmoil has created fertile ground for anti-social elements, with poppy cultivation thriving along the border. While India's Home Ministry acknowledges that drug trafficking is not a new phenomenon, the scale and complexity of the issue present new challenges for security agencies with each passing day.



Nigerian Drug suppliers arrested in Northeast India

A recent and troubling development is the growing nexus between drug dealers from Myanmar and Nigerian cartels, one of the most powerful drug syndicates operating in India, rivaled only by Russian networks. This collaboration has taken full advantage of the region's instability, channeling vast quantities of narcotics into what is known as the Seven Sister states—regions already precariously close to the Golden Triangle, a notorious drug-producing area.

The Nigerian cartels' entry into the northeast is not without precedent. Drug cartels have long operated in the region, but the involvement of newer and more sophisticated players has complicated efforts to control the flow of narcotics. The infiltration of heroin into the northeast was first reported in 1983, when it spread through Churachandpur district in Manipur, driven by addiction among young people aged 15-30. From there, the problem quickly spiraled, affecting the entire region.

The situation had been brought under relative control until the conflict in Myanmar reignited the crisis. The war-like conditions across the border have created an environment in which drug cartels flourish, and the ethnic clashes in Manipur have only served to worsen the situation.

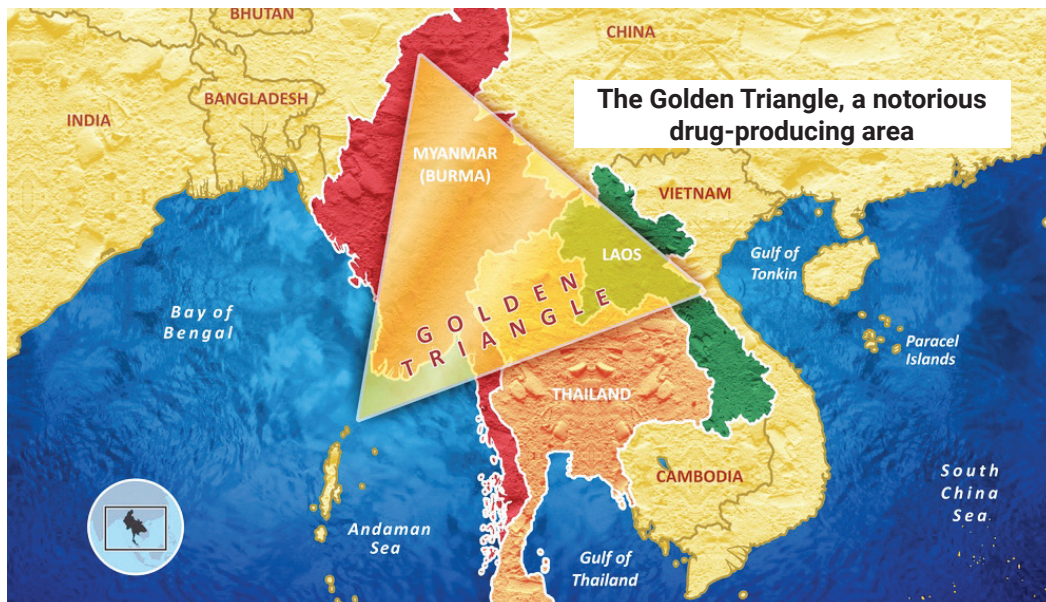
Security agencies destroyed a massive 40,000 kilograms of narcotics in 2022. To date, over 150,000 kilograms of drugs have been seized and destroyed, according to the Union Home Ministry.

The northeast serves as a key transit route for narcotics produced in Myanmar's Wa and Shan states. Control over poppy fields and drug laboratories rests with a mix of drug lords, insurgent groups, and now, Nigerian cartels, which dominate the drug trade before pushing their illicit goods into India.

Alarming Statistics

The Central Government has recently imposed restrictions on cross-border movement, which has aided security efforts. In April 2024 alone, heroin worth over \$35 million was seized from traffickers in Manipur. This substantial haul, within a single month, illustrates the gravity of the problem.

In 2022, a high-level meeting in Guwahati, Assam, prompted a major crackdown, resulting in the destruction of 40,000 kilograms of narcotics across the northeast. The Ministry of Home Affairs reported that a total of 150,000 kilograms



of drugs had been destroyed—twice the initial target.

A Vicious Cycle of Demand and Supply

Despite the crackdowns, cartels continue to operate with relative impunity, in part due to the complicity of some local governments. The central government’s agencies have made strides in combating the issue, but the rising number of addicts in the region only exacerbates the problem.


Reports indicate that in 2014, Manipur alone had around 50,000 drug addicts. Despite intensified efforts, this number has not diminished. The International Journal of Novel Research and Development highlights a particularly high demand for heroin and opioids, followed closely by methamphetamine. According to a 2019 Union Government report, opioid usage is alarmingly prevalent, with Arunachal Pradesh at 22.1%, Mizoram at 26.57%, and Nagaland at 25.22%. Manipur and Assam also report significant opioid use, at 14.22% and 2.9%, respectively.

The Government's Response

Since coming to power, the Modi

government has pledged a policy of zero tolerance toward drug trafficking. To curtail the drug trade, the police have been empowered with new regulations, and vulnerability mapping has been conducted along the 1,642-kilometre border with Myanmar.

Moreover, advanced surveillance systems, including long-range reconnaissance and battlefield surveillance radars, have been deployed in the northeastern states. Between 2014 and 2022, 3,172 cases were lodged, and 4,888 arrests made. During this period, 33,000 kilograms of narcotics were seized, a marked increase from the 152,000 kilograms confiscated between 2006 and 2013.

While these efforts represent a step in the right direction, the problem persists. The intermittent actions by state governments often undermine the sustained measures being taken by central forces. A more coordinated approach between state and central authorities is essential to fully stem the tide of drug trafficking in the region. Only through joint efforts can the northeast hope to free itself from the grip of this deadly trade. 



FENCE EATING CROPS

KOLKATA'S CIVIC VOLUNTEERS (POLICE ASSISTANTS) TURN OUT TO BE REAL CRIMINALS

By Kunal Chatterjee

For over a decade, the Mamata Banerjee administration in West Bengal has quietly cultivated a shadowy force of civic volunteers—a group privately recruited yet publicly funded. Some of these volunteers have taken on law enforcement duties, only to be implicated in severe criminal activities, including kidnapping and murder.



Mamata Banerjee



Killed student activist Anis Khan

In West Bengal, those enlisted to aid the police are now casting shadows over the force itself. Civic volunteers, intended as guardians of the law, are becoming its violators. The man behind the horrific rape and murder of a junior doctor this August was one such volunteer. With over a lakh of them operating as de facto police constables, a disturbing truth emerges: hundreds of these so-called protectors are now entangled in criminal cases, turning a once trusted support system into a source of fear and betrayal.

The growing controversy came to a head when the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) began questioning a civic volunteer named Sanjay Roy. His confession to the murder of a junior doctor at RG Kar Medical College in Kolkata sent shockwaves across the state. Outraged, medical professionals launched protests in early August, denouncing the government for enabling such dangerous actors.

Critics argue that these civic volunteers are less public servants and more uniformed foot soldiers for the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC). Political analysts suggest that the force plays a critical role in maintaining political dominance, particularly during elections.

From kidnapping and murder to theft and fraud, civic volunteers seem entangled in a web of criminal activities of every sort. The recruitment process behind their selection is nothing short of alarming—many haven't even completed their 10th-grade education. With a meager salary of just 9,000 rupees, it's little surprise that some of them turn to crime once they experience the intoxicating sense of power that comes with wearing the uniform. What else could be expected when authority is handed to those so poorly equipped to handle it?



Allegations have surfaced accusing these volunteers of manipulating voter turnout and participation, further entwining their presence with the political machinery.

The recruitment of civic volunteers, critics say, is not just a bureaucratic process—it's a strategic effort to entrench TMC's influence. The selection committees, often composed of party loyalists, ensure that those recruited are sympathetic to the ruling party's agenda, perpetuating political power under the pretense of community service.

This isn't the first time civic volunteers have been entangled in scandal. In 2022, the death of Anis Khan in Howrah, who was allegedly thrown from a rooftop, sparked widespread outrage. Among the accused were three civic volunteers and a police constable. When the case reached the Kolkata High Court, then Advocate General



Soumendranath Mukhopadhyay called for a halt to civic recruitment across the state. Yet, as political tensions flared, Mukhopadhyay quickly retracted his statement, downplaying it as a personal opinion rather than a policy recommendation.

Just as the Advocate General warned, many in West Bengal are increasingly aware of the dangers of handing police powers to individuals without properly scrutinizing their backgrounds. A chilling example surfaced just before the most recent parliamentary elections when explosives were discovered at the home of a civic volunteer in Murshidabad's Papardah village.

Ibrahim Sheikh, also known as Chand, had stockpiled socket bombs in buckets within his residence. What's more disturbing is that Sheikh had been charged with murder the year prior and had been evading capture ever since.

This isn't an isolated incident. Civic volunteers have been involved in a series of alarming criminal activities. Take the case of Anishur Rehman, a civic volunteer stationed at Dinhatra Police Station, who was arrested for drug smuggling after authorities found 23 kilograms of marijuana in his vehicle. In another shocking event in 2023, Feroz Midda, a civic volunteer at Kashipur Police Station, was

police station where they'll serve.

This last requirement has raised eyebrows, particularly since it deviates from the Election Commission of India's standard rule of not allowing government officials to serve in their home regions during elections—a measure designed to prevent undue influence. Critics question why civic volunteers, who hold positions of authority, should be stationed in their own communities where conflicts of interest could arise.

To make matters worse, the recruitment process itself remains shrouded in secrecy. The entire procedure is conducted offline, fueling speculation that this lack of transparency may be deliberate. An online system could potentially expose irregularities and reveal how deeply political connections are tied to these appointments, critics say. This opaqueness only adds to the concerns surrounding the force, leaving many to wonder whether it serves its original purpose—or something far more self-serving.

Imported Concept from Bangladesh

The concept of civic volunteering in West Bengal actually took inspiration from neighboring Bangladesh, where the capital, Dhaka, relies on an unarmed traffic-managing force known as 'Ansar Bahini.' During the communist era in West Bengal, no such civic volunteer force existed to assist the police. However, in 2008, the Kolkata Municipality, still under communist leadership at the time, launched a new



initiative—a force called the 'Green Police,' aimed at improving traffic management in the city. This experiment eventually grew into a statewide program.

According to the official website of the Chief Minister's Office, the state government set an ambitious target in 2013: to recruit 40,000 police officers and 130,000 civic volunteers. Faced with a growing financial crisis and a shrinking number of police constables, the West Bengal government leaned heavily on civic volunteers to fill these gaps. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee even floated the idea of promoting select "good" volunteers to the rank of full-fledged police constables.

Currently, around 120,000 individuals have joined this force. Initially branded as 'Civic Police Volunteers,' the term quickly drew backlash, particularly from the police force itself, who opposed the merging of identities. By mid-2014, the government responded by removing the word "Police" from their title. Despite the rebranding, civic volunteers are still widely seen as part of a 'uniformed cadre,' embedded in the state's fabric of law enforcement.



Civic Volunteers Salary of 9000Rs

Civic Volunteers Duties

- Assisting the police during Pujas and Festivals.
- Traffic control and illegal parking
 - Public security

WHY DO CIVIC VOLUNTEERS BECOME CRIMINALS?



The Unraveling of a Complex Reality

It's a paradox that has left many scratching their heads—why do civic volunteers, appointed with the noble intention of uplifting the poor youth of Bengal, often find themselves on the wrong side of the law? Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in her pursuit to improve the lives of these impoverished young men and women, created a path for them to serve as civic volunteers or police assistants. But beneath this façade of opportunity, lies a troubling reality.

The root of the problem begins with their background. These young people, often uneducated and struggling to make ends meet, take up the role of civic volunteers as a lifeline. The job offers a paltry sum

of 9,000 rupees a month—a paycheck that barely covers basic living expenses, let alone the financial demands of a family with children. But desperate times call for desperate measures, and for many, this meager income is their only option. According to government's own data, there are more than 60 lakh job seekers in the state.

Once these volunteers don their uniforms and step out alongside real police officers, a dangerous transformation begins. Their close association with politicians and local powerbrokers fills them with an intoxicating sense of authority. History has shown that when the powerless suddenly taste power, things can

Civic Volunteer Mohammed Hasan Arrested for Stealing Judge's ATM Card

As Kolkata continues to reel from the shock of protests sparked by the horrific rape and murder of a junior doctor at the hands of a civic volunteer, another scandal has emerged—this time, involving theft. And once again, the perpetrator is someone entrusted with a position of authority.

Mohammed Hasan Ghazi, a civic volunteer assigned to protect a retired judge, has found himself on the wrong side of the law. Instead of safeguarding the ailing Sessions Judge Biswanath Dey, Hasan decided to exploit the judge's vulnerability.

The incident unfolded while Judge Dey was recovering in a private Kolkata hospital. Hasan, placed in charge of his security, saw an opportunity in the judge's incapacitated state. He discreetly swiped the judge's ATM card and made his way to a nearby ATM. There, Hasan proceeded to withdraw 40,000 rupees, lining his own pockets with money meant for the retired judge's needs.

The theft might have gone unnoticed if not for a vigilant complaint filed at the Phulbagan police station. Upon investigating, the police turned to the most reliable of modern witnesses—CCTV footage. The surveillance footage from the ATM clearly revealed Hasan, debit card in hand, making the illegal withdrawal.

Within hours of this discovery, Phulbagan police acted swiftly, apprehending Hasan and bringing him into custody. What makes this betrayal even more shocking is the context in which it occurred: during a period when civic volunteers are already under intense public scrutiny for their alleged misdeeds.

Hasan's arrest only deepens the questions surrounding the integrity of the civic volunteer program—can those tasked with protecting society be trusted when they themselves prey on the very people they are meant to defend?

go awry. It's this newfound sense of invincibility that tempts many into criminal activities, as the line between enforcer and perpetrator blurs.

It's an open secret that Mamata Banerjee's appointment of these volunteers isn't merely a matter of public service but a calculated political maneuver. If not, why would the recruitment process be so opaque? The answer may lie in the strategic advantage these volunteers provide during elections, helping Banerjee maintain a firm grip on power.

Despite the glaring issues, the state government continues to invest in these civic volunteers. Every year, their incomes rise as Mamata Banerjee allocates more funds for bonuses and pay hikes. Even during moments of national outcry—such as when thousands of doctors protested in Kolkata following the tragic murder of a junior doctor—Banerjee responded not with urgency for the medical community but with an announcement of bonus increases for her civic volunteers.

The question lingers: are these young people victims of a flawed system, or has power simply corrupted them? Perhaps it's a bit of both— a tragic outcome of well-intentioned policies gone astray, where those meant to serve and protect find themselves succumbing to the very vices they were meant to stand against.





MOSQUITO MANIA: A DAY OF APPRECIATION AND AWARENESS


August 20th is a day that might not immediately inspire joy, but it's actually a day of celebration for those who appreciate the unsung villains of the insect world. It's World Mosquito Day.

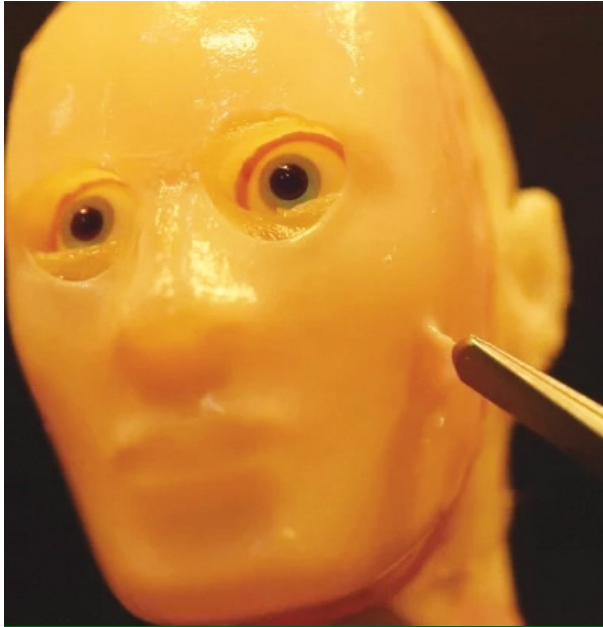
Before you reach for your flyswatter, let's take a moment to acknowledge the significance of this day. It's not just about appreciating these tiny tormentors for their buzzing abilities; it's about raising awareness of the serious diseases they spread, including malaria, dengue fever, Zika virus, and West Nile virus.

The day commemorates Sir Ronald Ross, a British medical officer who made a groundbreaking discovery in 1897. He proved that mosquitoes were the culprits behind

the deadly disease malaria. This discovery paved the way for better disease control and prevention.

Since the 1930s, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine has been honoring Ross's discovery by celebrating World Mosquito Day. The focus is on highlighting effective mosquito control strategies, such as insecticide-treated bed nets, indoor spraying, and environmental management to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds.

So, the next time you're swatting away a particularly pesky mosquito, remember that August 20th is a day to appreciate the ongoing battle against mosquito-borne diseases and the tireless efforts to create a world with fewer bites and more smiles. 



GRINNING BOTS: THE DAWN OF LIVING SKIN ROBOTS

Hold onto your hats, folks! A new era of robotics has arrived, and it's one that's downright creepy in the best possible way. Scientists have managed to do the unthinkable: they've given robots the ability to smile, and not just any smile, but a genuine, human-like smile.


How did they pull this off? By wrapping these machines in a layer of living skin. Yes, you read that right. Living. Skin.

Researchers at Tokyo University have developed a groundbreaking technology that allows robots to be covered in a layer of cultured human cells. This skin isn't just a cosmetic cover-up; it's functional, stretching,

healing, and regenerating like the real thing. It's like giving your robot a full-body makeover – with a side of biology.

The skin is attached to the robot's underlying structure using a clever system of V-shaped perforations filled with collagen gel. This allows the skin to move in perfect synchronization with the robot's movements, creating a natural and lifelike appearance. No more stiff, robotic grins. These bots can now smile with the same ease and authenticity as a human.

But the implications of this technology go far beyond robotics. It could revolutionize fields like cosmetics and plastic surgery, offering new possibilities for skin treatments and grafts.

So the next time you encounter a robot flashing a friendly smile, remember: it's not just a programmed response. It's a testament to the incredible advancements in science and technology, and a glimpse into a future where the lines between human and machine blur even further. 



Late BSP leader Armstrong



A SERIES OF POLITICAL MURDERS ROCKS TAMIL NADU

A spate of violent attacks in Tamil Nadu has seen nearly half a dozen political figures killed in recent months. The nature of these incidents has left authorities baffled, as it remains unclear whether the victims were genuine criminals masquerading as politicians or were targeted by political rivals. Police have struggled to curb the escalating violence, and government reshuffles within the police ranks have failed to address the crisis.

The data paints a grim image of Tamil Nadu's murder rate. In 2024 alone, there have been 595 murders—an average of four a day. While the number of homicides has fluctuated over the past few years, it remains disturbingly high, hovering around 770 to 816 murders annually.



By Vicky Nanjappa

The question swirling around Tamil Nadu's recent spate of murders is whether these heinous acts are politically motivated or simply coincidental given the individuals involved. The state has seen a troubling series of killings, with many victims connected to political parties, prompting debates about the root causes.

Some voices suggest the murders are politically driven, but investigations so far hint at personal motives behind the violence. The probes, while illuminating, are still inconclusive, leaving it up to the courts

to ultimately decide the truth. Nevertheless, what is clear is that each suspect in these brutal crimes is a political figure. Many of them appear to have joined parties not out of a sense of civic duty, but to shield their criminal activities behind the protective umbrella that party affiliation offers.

Just in July, three political operatives from different parties were hacked to death in separate incidents across Tamil Nadu. The opposition, particularly the AIADMK, quickly pointed fingers at the ruling DMK, accusing them of allowing lawlessness to flourish. AIADMK's Kovai Sathyan claimed that the killings—of an AIADMK member, a BJP functionary, and a Congress worker—exposed the breakdown of law and order. The opposition also alleged that police forces have been rendered powerless by the ruling party's refusal to take firm action.

BJP Tamil Nadu chief K Annamalai chimed in, branding the state a "murder capital" since the DMK took power. The

BJP Tamil Nadu chief K Annamalai



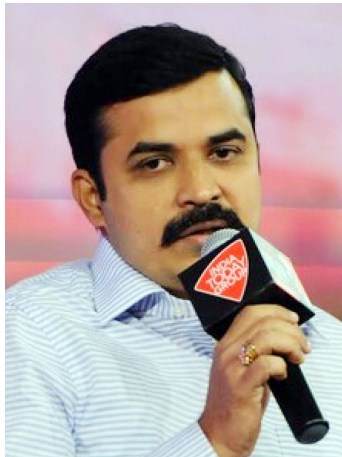
slaying of BJP district secretary Selvakumar, he argued, was emblematic of the spiraling violence driven by unchecked criminality.

The official stance of the police, however, paints a different picture. According to them, these killings are not political but stem from other causes, such as gang rivalries and personal vendettas. For instance, the murder of C Balasubramanian, a deputy secretary of Naam Tamilar Katchi in Madurai, was attributed to family disputes rather than political machinations.

Still, the data paints a grim image of Tamil Nadu's murder rate. In 2024 alone, there have been 595 murders—an average of four a day. While the number of homicides has fluctuated over the past few years, it remains disturbingly high, hovering around 770 to 816 murders annually.

So, can these murders be called political? The ruling DMK and law enforcement seem to think not, but a deeper dive suggests otherwise. The political landscape in Tamil Nadu has evolved, with more anti-social elements infiltrating party ranks. What was once an arena for district secretaries and long-serving politicians has turned into a playground for those with more sinister intentions. These criminals join political parties not to serve the public but to gain leverage, using their party's letterhead to wield influence and escape legal scrutiny.

This gangster-political nexus is not new to Tamil Nadu. It dates back to the



AIADMK's Kovai Sathyan



Late Aladi Aruna

AIADMK's rise in 1977 and continued through DMK's tenure in 1989. Even today, the DMK faces sharp criticism for its handling of law and order, a sore point that has cost it elections in the past. Under AIADMK's Jayalalithaa, there was a reputation for keeping the state's rowdy elements in check. Now, many argue that the DMK's leadership has failed to do the same, allowing criminals to flourish under their watch.

While the government denies the political nature of these killings, the reality remains stark: murder is still murder, and the ruling party has struggled to contain the violence. The brazen manner in which these gangsters use political affiliations as

shields shows their lack of fear in the face of the law. After the murder of BSP leader Armstrong, changes were made to the leadership of Chennai's police force and the state's Home Secretary. But whether these moves will be enough to restore order is a question yet to be answered.

The gang culture

It's no secret that political leaders in Tamil Nadu have often been accused of acting like thugs. Concerns over law and order have been a recurring issue, especially under DMK rule. In fact, the party twice lost elections, largely due to its failure to maintain order.

The law and order situation in Tamil Nadu has even garnered national attention, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi raising

concerns during past election campaigns. Many political analysts believe that the AIADMK, particularly under Jayalalitha's leadership, managed to handle law and order more effectively. Her government was seen as being able to rein in the rowdy elements and keep criminal activity under control. However, the same cannot be said for the DMK, as the recent wave of murders seems to highlight the party's struggle in this area.

While these killings are often described as non-political, the fact remains that murder is murder, and the ruling party has clearly failed to prevent this surge in violence. The way these criminal elements are operating under the protection of political banners suggests that they have little to no fear of the law.

The chronology of murders

On May 20, 2003, former DMK minister Tha Kiruttinan was murdered in Madurai, a city that had long been a stronghold for the party. His assassination was believed to be linked to an intense rivalry with his brother Alagiri, which reached a peak with Kiruttinan's tireless work propelling MK Stalin to political success. In this familial feud, Stalin emerged victorious.

Another political figure, Aladi Aruna, who had won twice on a DMK ticket before switching to AIADMK and being nominated to the Rajya Sabha, was murdered on December 21, 2004, while on a morning



**DMK minister
Tha Kiruttinan**



**Late BJP district
secretary Selvakumar.**

walk. His death was reportedly the result of a business dispute.

One of the most significant political murders occurred on March 29, 2012, when Ramajey, the brother of former DMK minister KN Nehru, was killed. Ramajey was deeply involved in the real estate business and had close ties to his brother. Although the CBI took over the investigation, the motive behind the murder remains unclear to this day.

In addition to these cases, there have been other murders with apparent communal undertones. In 2012, Arvind Reddy, a member of the BJP's medical wing, was killed in Vellore. The following year, BJP General Secretary Ramesh was murdered in Salem. Suspects Panna Ismail,

Fakhruddin, and Bilal Malik were arrested in connection with a bomb blast case, and the investigation into the murders is ongoing.

In 2018, Sasikumar, a leader of the Hindu Munnani, was murdered in Coimbatore. The National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is handling the case, found evidence of communal hatred as a possible motive. Investigators suspect that the banned group Popular Front of India (PFI) was involved, and it has been suggested that Sasikumar's vocal opposition to religious conversions may have made him a target.

Whether these killings are politically motivated or driven by other factors remains a question that only time can answer.





Bihar bridge collapse

BIHAR: COLLAPSING BRIDGES EXPOSE CORRUPTION

By Kunal Chatterjee

It's as if a disaster has befallen the state of Bihar, with bridges crumbling at an alarming rate—15 in just four weeks! The most recent casualty was a decade-old bridge that gave way in mid-July at Amhara hamlet on the Parman River in Forbesganj block, Araria district. This bridge, which had cost crores of rupees, could not withstand the immense pressure from floodwaters and collapsed near Lakshmaniya Tola on the main rural route from Gopalpur Majhua to Amhara Haat.

This string of collapses has left locals reeling. Despite numerous warnings from residents about visible damage to these structures, officials have repeatedly ignored the red flags. Experts have already cautioned that the ongoing monsoon could lead to even more bridge failures.

Prior to the Parman Bridge collapse, another disaster struck on June 18, when the bridge over the Bakra River at Padariya Ghat sank. This 182-meter bridge, built in three segments, saw two sections along with two pillars plunge into the river.

In Bihar, the crumbling infrastructure is revealing deep-seated corruption. An alarming 15 bridges have collapsed within just a month, highlighting the state's precarious situation. Once infamous for lawlessness, Bihar now grapples with a different kind of chaos. Political strategist Prashant Kishore sheds light on the pervasive corruption with his "40% formula," where contractors are expected to siphon off 40% of the project funds to grease the palms of politicians and bureaucrats.

Fortunately, there was no traffic at the time of the incident. Even in this case, locals had previously reported visible cracks in the bridge's slab, which went unheeded.

On March 22 of this year, Bihar was jolted by the shocking collapse of the Bakaur Bridge, the largest bridge under construction in the country, spanning the Kosi River in Supaul district. This disaster claimed one life and injured nine others.

In the wake of the collapse, the Bihar government swiftly announced an investigation. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and Road Construction Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha vowed to hold those responsible accountable. Yet, despite the probe and stern warnings from the government, similar incidents persist in Bihar. A closer look reveals issues such as poor construction quality, subpar materials, design flaws, and unscientific river dredging and desilting as immediate factors.

However, locals argue that these visible problems mask a deeper issue: government inefficacy and a pervasive "commission menace" that plagues the system. This commission menace leads to the approval of flawed designs and the execution of



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar

substandard work, with the cost ultimately borne by the impoverished.

This commission system is neither new nor unique to Bihar. Contractors who win tenders often cut corners on materials and quality due to the need to pay bribes at various levels of bureaucracy and governance.

Corruption Formula

Following the collapse of an Rs 12 crore bridge on the Bakra River in Araria, Bihar—before its official inauguration—Prashant Kishor, the visionary behind Jan Suraj, has pointed the finger at rampant corruption. Kishor attributes the disaster to the

notorious "40 percent corruption formula," arguing that when Rs 40 out of every Rs 100 is siphoned off through corruption, bridge collapses become almost inevitable.

"Corruption is rampant in Bihar," Kishor declared. "When 40 percent of the funds meant for every scheme vanish into bribes, it's no surprise that not just bridges, but any construction suffers and eventually fails." He questioned why newly constructed roads are falling apart and blamed it squarely on corruption.

Kishor further explained, "If Rs 100 is allocated for road construction, and Rs 40 is stolen, contractors are left with only Rs 60 to build the road. Naturally, the road is bound to crumble." He criticized the allocation of Rs 80,000 crore intended for the poor, claiming that despite this vast sum, no significant infrastructure improvements have been made, even at the individual household level.

A staunch critic of the Nitish Kumar government, Kishor lamented the state of Bihar's infrastructure, questioning the effectiveness of the Nal-Jal Yojana, which saw Rs 30,000 crore spent. "The problem isn't a lack of funds," he said. "The government is spending huge amounts on paper, but the results are nowhere to be seen. Corruption is devouring everything in Bihar today."

Tradition in Bihar

Leader of the Opposition, Tejashwi Yadav, taking potshots at the ruling party, said that bridge collapse has become a tradition in Bihar!

"A major accident occurred in Bihar when a bridge under construction for Rs 1200 crore collapsed on the Kosi river between Bheja-Bakaur of Supaul-



Tejashwi Yadav opposition leader

Madhubani, in which many workers were reported to be buried, injured and killed. In the double-engine government, the collapse of bridges worth crores has become a tradition. The government should make arrangements for proper treatment of the injured, a compensation amount, and strict action against the guilty company and officials," he said.

What do the experts say?

Mahendra Yadav, who is continuously working on river conservation in the Kosi area, ruled out obstruction of the river causing the mishaps, and held technical bad work as the reason.

"This bridge has fallen due to improper laying of the slab and messy technical work. The flow of the river was not obstructed. The previous bridge that was built is known to us as Kosi Maha Setu. There was an obstruction in the river. Work was done by reducing both embankments by making a guide dam. Local people had also protested. There was a technical flaw in it too," he said.

Why Bakaur Bridge was Important?

The central government planned to build its largest bridge under the Bharatmala project between Bakaur in Supaul and

Bheja in Madhubani for Rs 1200 cr. The length of this bridge on the Kosi River was about 10.2 km, while the total length of the bridge, including the approach road, would have been 13.3 km.

The plan was to complete the project by 2023; however, several factors contributed to the delay in the execution of the project, and the completion date was postponed to December 2024.

Unfortunately, the girders of three pillars (50, 51, and 52) of the Bakaur bridge collapsed. Let us tell you that the longest road bridge in the country is the Bhupen Hazarika Bridge of Assam, which is known as the Dhola Sadiya Bridge. It is built on the Brahmaputra River and is 9.15 km long.

Bakaur bridge is also important from a strategic point of view. The completion of the project would have reduced the distance between Supaul and Madhubani by 30 km. In other words, the distance of 100 km that had to be covered to go from Madhubani to Supaul would have been reduced to 70 km after the bridge was built. Bakour Bridge is also very important



Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and Road Construction Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha.

from a strategic point of view. With the construction of this bridge, movement between Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and the North East would become easier.

Saga of Bihar's Crumbling Infra

Bihar has a long tale of crumbling bridges. Let's have a glance at the major incidents of bridge collapse that have taken place in Bihar in the last two years.

March 22, 2024, Supaul: Earlier this year, the country's longest under-construction bridge, spanning more than 10 km over the Kosi River, collapsed, resulting in one death and nine injuries. This bridge, part of the Bharatmala project and valued at Rs 1,700 crore, had its foundation laid by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in 2014.

June 24, 2023, Kishanganj: The bridge being built on the Mechi River in Kishanganj, Bihar, collapsed. The construction of a six-pillar bridge was going on over the Mechi River between Thakurganj and Bahadurganj. During this time, it could not withstand the rain, and one of the pillars of the bridge collapsed.

June 4, 2023, Khagaria: A part of the bridge being built on the Ganga river between Khagaria and Aguwani Sultanganj in the Khagaria district of Bihar at Rs 1,717 crore collapsed. In 2022, a part of the bridge broke and fell due to storms and rain.

May 16, 2023, Purnia: An under-construction bridge in the Purnia district of Bihar fell prey to corruption within hours of its construction. Local people alleged that the contractor used substandard material in the construction of the bridge, due to which the accident happened.

March 19, 2023, Saran: A British-era bridge

Political strategist Prashant Kishor



collapsed on the Mahananda river here. It was in a dilapidated state. Despite this, it was not declared dangerous by the Road Construction Department.

February 19, 2023, Patna: An under-construction bridge collapsed near Bihta Sarmera Four lane in Patna district. This bridge connects Patna to Nalanda.

January 16, 2023, Darbhanga: An iron bridge built on the Kamala River in Darbhanga, Bihar collapsed. This bridge is used to connect Darbhanga, Madhubani, Samastipur and Saharsa. But on January 16, the bridge could not bear the weight of a truck loaded with rods and broke down. No one died in the accident.

December 18, 2022, Begusarai: A bridge was built on the Gandak River in the Begusarai district of Bihar for Rs 14 crore, which collapsed before its inauguration. Built under Chief Minister Nabard Yojana, this 206-meter-long bridge cracked before collapsing, and three days later, the entire slab of the bridge broke and fell into the Gandak River.

November 18, 2022, Nalanda:

Construction of a road bridge was going on over a four-lane section in Vena block in Nalanda, Bihar. But meanwhile, the under-construction road bridge collapsed, and a labourer died. Earlier, the bridge had collapsed due to poor-quality construction.

June 9, 2022, Saharsa: A part of the bridge collapsed in the eastern part of the Kosi embankment in the Saharsa district of Bihar, and some labourers were injured in the accident. It was alleged that the contractor of this bridge being built for 147 crores was asked to change the shuttering, but without changing the shuttering, he cast the bridge, which led to the accident.

May 20, 2022, Patna: On May 20, 2022, there was heavy rain in Patna. In this rain, a 136-year-old road bridge collapsed in Fatuha, 25 km from Patna. The accident happened when a truck was crossing the bridge carrying construction material, and the bridge collapsed due to excess weight.

The state government failed to take any strict action against the construction company whenever a bridge collapsed in the last two years. A few engineers were suspended, but the locals feel that no individual can be blamed for such large-scale disasters. The government had an opportunity to send a strong message to the construction companies and contractors by initiating strict action against the culprits. It could have set an example, but the government did not do so.

Will bridges continue to go down like ninepins in Bihar? Only time will tell.



HASINA'S FALL AND JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI'S RISE

Bangladesh may go in the path of Pakistan



Bangladeshi rally after Hasina fled to India

By Sumana C

Sheikh Hasina's political downfall might have been avoided had the military leadership aligned with her. However, when the military chief publicly stated that they would not use force against violent protesters, it became clear to Hasina that her hold



Sheikh Hasina before leaving Bangladesh

on power was slipping. Another key factor in her downfall was the role of Jamaat-e-Islami, an Islamist group known for promoting fundamentalist views in Bangladesh.

Many protesters were reportedly members of this organization, which had been co-opting the movement for its own political gains. Hasina herself had suggested that her political adversaries had infiltrated the protest movement, alluding to Jamaat-e-Islami, a known pro-Pakistan organization. In response, the government took decisive action, banning Jamaat-e-Islami and its affiliates, accusing them of exploiting the protests, which had resulted in hundreds of deaths. This move severely damaged the organization's reputation.

Jamaat-e-Islami, having already been barred from participating in elections, further lost its status as a political party following Hasina's ban. It is believed

With Sheikh Hasina no longer in power, Islamist influence in Bangladesh is steadily growing. The new government has even established a dedicated ministry for religious affairs, signaling a shift in the nation's direction. Under Hasina's leadership, the Jamaat-e-Islami party was banned, but now the group is resurging, taking a leading role in the country's political landscape. If this trend persists, Bangladesh could find itself on a path reminiscent of Pakistan's troubled trajectory.

that after this decision, its supporters intensified their efforts to overthrow her government. Jamaat-e-Islami has long been a contentious entity in Bangladesh, with various political, social, and cultural groups advocating for its ban over the last several decades. The organization has faced numerous legal battles, including a significant setback in 2018



Italian Ambassador Antonio Alessandro



Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus



Home minister asaduzzaman khan



when the Election Commission declared its registration as a political party illegal due to its refusal to recognize the supremacy of the Bangladeshi Constitution.

In a final blow, Hasina's government banned Jamaat-e-Islami under anti-terrorism laws, categorizing the group and its student wing, Chhatra Shibir, as militant organizations. She had anticipated that following the ban, members of Jamaat and Chhatra Shibir would go underground and resort to acts of sabotage. Just days before fleeing the country, Hasina called on the United Nations to investigate the loss of life and acts of sabotage during the student protests.

Bangladeshi intelligence agencies have since supported Hasina's claims, confirming that Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing were deeply involved in orchestrating the unrest and violence, hijacking the anti-quota protests to further

their own agenda of destabilizing the government.

Reports suggest that over the last three months leading up to the protests, at least five thousand cadres were mobilized from Rajshahi, Chittagong, Feni, Barisal, Sylhet, and Faridpur to Dhaka. They stockpiled flammable oil, explosives, and makeshift weapons. Additionally, trained militants from Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), a group with direct ties to Al Qaeda, were brought in from the Bagmara area. According to intelligence agencies, these preparations made it evident that their intent was to sabotage the quota movement.

During a meeting with Italian Ambassador Antonio Alessandro, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed that Jamaat-Shibir and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) had hijacked the student-led quota reform protests,



Nizam Uddin Jalil



Hasan Mahmud



AFM Khalid Hossain

Hefazat-e-Islam is a hardline Islamist organization, notorious for its anti-Hindu rhetoric and calls for a Sharia-based state in Bangladesh. The formation of the 17-member interim government raised alarm, particularly with the appointment of Abul Fayez Muhammad Khalid Hossain, better known as Dr. AFM Khalid Hossain, a prominent figure within the Islamist movement.

using the students as a cover for their violent agenda. She emphasized that these organizations had no hesitation in resorting to arson and violence to achieve their aims.

Islamist Hardliners in the Interim Government

While many in Bangladesh initially welcomed Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as the leader of the interim government, the inclusion of Hefazat-e-Islam leader AFM Khalid Hossain has stirred deep concerns about the direction of this new administration.

Hefazat-e-Islam is a hardline Islamist organization, notorious for its anti-Hindu rhetoric and calls for a Sharia-based state in Bangladesh. The formation of the 17-member interim government raised alarm, particularly with the appointment of Abul Fayez Muhammad Khalid Hossain, better known as Dr. AFM Khalid

Hossain, a prominent figure within the Islamist movement.

Dr. Hossain, a vice-president of Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh and a respected Deobandi scholar, is an influential figure in the Deobandi Islamic movement. However, his role in the interim government has provoked anxiety due to his past opposition to Sheikh Hasina's government and its amicable relations with India.

Hefazat-e-Islam had previously organized violent protests during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh in March 2021, coinciding with the country's 50th anniversary of independence. Even after Modi's departure, unrest continued, with Hefazat leaders openly expressing their desire to transform Bangladesh into a Taliban-like state. Many of these leaders, arrested in the wake of the protests, later admitted their ambition to establish a radical Islamic state, financed by Islamist forces abroad.

Radical groups such as Hefazat-e-Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami, while presenting themselves as religious organizations, have long been linked to militancy and extremist ideologies. Currently, many Hefazat leaders are stirring anti-Hindu sentiment amid Bangladesh's political crisis, further inflaming tensions in an already fragile environment.

AWAMI LEAGUE IN HIDING

As the storm of political upheaval gathered momentum, the Awami League clung to its resolve, but the sudden, unexpected departure of Sheikh Hasina left the party's leadership adrift. Her exit from the country was a shock that reverberated through the ranks, leaving ministers and key figures feeling both abandoned and exposed.

The once-bustling Awami League office in Naogaon now lay in ruins, ransacked by enraged protesters. Ministers like Sadhan Chandra Majumdar, the Food Minister, and Nizam Uddin Jalil, a Member of Parliament, found themselves caught in the violent turmoil. They were no longer shielded by the presence of their leader; instead, they were thrust into the heart of the chaos, vulnerable and unprotected.

In the wake of Hasina's departure, disbelief hung heavy in the air. She had left without warning, taking only her family with her, while her ministers and party leaders remained to face the fury of the masses. Six cabinet members and five Central Committee leaders revealed that they had been blindsided by her



Sadhan Chandra Majumdar



Obaidul Quader

resignation, completely unaware of her plans to flee. The abruptness of her exit left them scrambling for answers, grappling with a sense of betrayal.

Key figures such as Obaidul Quader, the Road Transport and Bridges Minister; Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud; and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan were still believed to be in the country. But their exact locations were unknown, their phones eerily silent. Speculation swirled that they had gone into hiding or were making desperate attempts to escape the chaos engulfing Bangladesh.

Within Hasina's inner circle, frustration was festering. Cabinet members and central leaders quietly voiced their anger, feeling that Hasina's unyielding

decisions had placed the entire party—and its grassroots members—at grave risk. Two ministers, speaking under the cloak of anonymity, disclosed that some within the cabinet had urged Hasina to step down and hand power to the military in an effort to stabilize the country. She had flatly rejected the idea, citing its unconstitutionality, but now, in her absence, that decision felt like a missed lifeline. Awami League in Hiding



People in Tamil Nadu celebrating the nomination of Kamala Harris as the Democratic Party candidate.



THULASENDRAPURAM & KAMALA HARRIS

A Tamil Nadu village erupts with joy as Kamala is running for US Presidency

As Kamala Harris inches closer to winning the U.S. presidency, villagers in the remote Mannargudi region of Tamil Nadu closely follow the political developments unfolding in faraway Washington, D.C. For them, Kamala Harris is more than just a global figure—she is a daughter of their village. It is here, in this small community, that Kamala’s mother was born and raised.

At the heart of the village's activity is the Dharma Shastra Temple, where special pujas are performed almost daily. Villagers offer milk and turmeric abhishekams to the deity, praying for Kamala's success. Kamala's sister, Maya, who resides in the U.S., and her aunt, Sarala Gopalan, a resident of Chennai, have generously donated large sums of money to the temple, organizing meals and services for the temple's devotees in support of their family's spiritual roots.

Banner of Kamala Harris displayed in Thulasendrapuram



By NV Kamath

When Kamala Gopalan Harris, the current Vice President of the United States, was officially declared the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, a wave of joy surged thousands of miles away in a small, unassuming village in Tamil Nadu. The streets of Thulasendrapuram, a modest agricultural village nestled in the Mannargudi region, came alive with celebration.

The reason? It might sound surprising. Thulasendrapuram is where Kamala's maternal ancestral roots lie. This once-quiet village has become a beacon of pride due to its ties to Kamala Harris, whose family called it home generations ago.

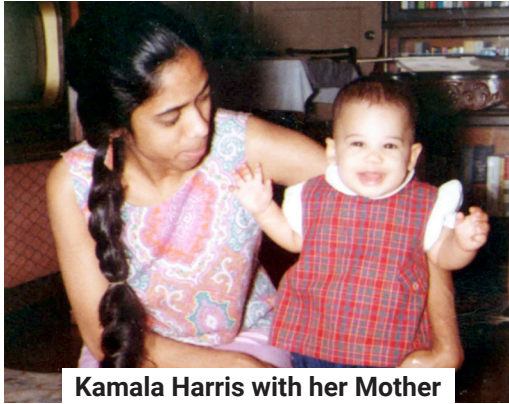
To them, she is not just a distant figure in faraway Washington, D.C.; she is a symbol of their heritage, a daughter of their soil. "She is our family member," they proudly declare, as though her meteoric rise on the world stage is their own triumph.

The village's Dharma Shastra Temple, a serene sanctuary in the heart of Thulasendrapuram, has become a place of hope and prayer for Harris's political journey. Special pujas are performed, and offerings of milk and turmeric abhishekams are made to the deity.

The air hums with whispered wishes for her success as the villagers rally



**Sarala Gopalan,
Aunt of Kamala Harris.**



Kamala Harris with her Mother when she was a toddler



Shyamala Gopalan with her two daughter

behind the possibility of her presidential candidacy. It is a curious juxtaposition—this ancient temple with its time-honored rituals, sending hopes for a woman who may soon contest for the highest office in the most powerful nation on earth.

As the temple walls bear witness to the devotion of the villagers, they recount the momentous occasion when they consecrated the temple in Harris's honor. "We have dedicated the temple to her, a tribute to her strength," a temple priest said.

Shyamala Gopalan, Kamala's mother, was born in this village about 85 years ago.

A banner depicting Kamala Harris, now 59 years old, hangs proudly in the village square of Thulasendrapuram, a silent but powerful symbol of the villagers' hopes and pride. Her name, alongside that of her grandfather, graces the list of donors at the village temple—a recent donation made in her honor by her aunt, Sarala Gopalan, affectionately known as "Siddhi."

Siddhi frequently visits the temple, which holds deep significance for their family. "This is their family deity," says

Archakar Natarajan, the temple priest. He fondly recalls Siddhi's last visit, about a year and a half ago, when she donated Rs. 5,000 in Kamala's name during the kumbabhishekam, a grand consecration ceremony.

When Kamala Harris was elected Vice President in 2020, Thulasendrapuram erupted in celebration. Firecrackers lit up the night sky, banners and posters of Harris adorned the walls, and calendars featuring her smiling face were distributed to every home. The villagers even fed hundreds of people

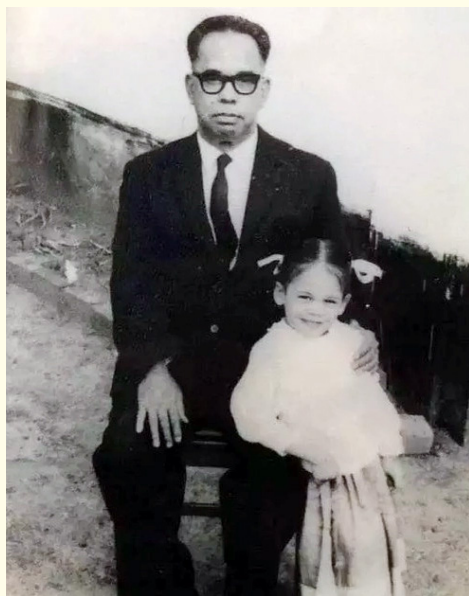
at the temple, offering food to the gods in gratitude for their connection to this remarkable woman.

A local political leader shared that "the whole village knows her; even the children call her 'My sister, my mother.'" He reflected on the significance of her rise: "Once, India was ruled by foreigners, but now Indians are leading powerful nations." Speaking with deep reverence, he admired Kamala's achievements—an ascent to heights that most can only dream of. "If she wins, we hope to maintain good relations with India," he added with a hopeful smile.

“WE HAVE DEDICATED THE TEMPLE TO HER, A TRIBUTE TO HER STRENGTH,”

The Tale of Kamala's parents and grandparents

Kamala Harris's maternal grandfather, Sri Painganadu Venkatramana Gopalan, known as V. Gopalan, embarked on a remarkable journey early in the 20th century when he moved to Delhi. Serving as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Labour, Employment,



Sri Painganadu Venkatramana Gopalan, Grandfather of Kamala.

and Rehabilitation for the Government of India, his career eventually took him far beyond his homeland. He was later sent to Zambia as the Director of Relief Measures and Refugees, living in Lusaka where he acted as an advisor to Kenneth Kaunda, the President of Zambia, for a time. Shyamala Gopalan, Kamala's mother and the daughter of V. Gopalan, was born in Chennai. After completing her graduation from Delhi University, she left India at the young age of 19 to pursue her studies at the University of California, Berkeley. There, she earned her doctorate in Nutrition and Endocrinology. Shyamala's siblings included a sister, Sarala, who became an obstetrician in Chennai, and a brother, Balachandran, who earned a Ph.D. from the University of Medicom. A dedicated researcher in breast cancer, Shyamala

traveled extensively, sharing her expertise with universities around the globe. The meeting of Shyamala Gopalan and Donald Harris, Kamala's father, was a serendipitous encounter rooted in activism. Donald Harris, a Jamaican-American economist and professor at Stanford University, met Shyamala in 1962 during a civil rights protest. Harris, an immigrant from Jamaica, and Shyamala were drawn together by their shared passion for justice, and their relationship blossomed into marriage in 1963. However, their union ended in divorce in the 1970s. Shyamala Gopalan Harris passed away in 2009 after battling colon cancer, leaving behind a legacy as both a brilliant scientist and a devoted mother.

Kamala has always acknowledged her roots. She has often spoken of her mother's journey to America at the age of 19—arriving alone, full of determination

and potential. Their bond was profound, and Kamala has expressed great affection for her mother. After her victory in the vice-presidential race, Kamala's sister,



Celebration from villagers

Maya, shared in an interview on "Good Morning America" how Kamala frequently mentioned their mother during that time.

In her autobiography, **The Truths We Hold**, Kamala reflects on how her grandmothers shaped her mother's political consciousness, fostering a sense of purpose and justice. Kamala's return to Chennai to scatter her mother's ashes in the sea, following Hindu tradition, was a poignant tribute to her connection to her Indian heritage.

Maya Harris, a lawyer and political commentator, has also contributed to their family's legacy. Several years ago, she donated Rs. 5,000 to the temple in Kamala's name, ensuring the maintenance of the place their family once cherished.

Though Kamala's immediate family has visited their grandfather, Gopalan, in

Chennai over the years, none have recently returned to Thulasendrapuram. However, some villagers claim that Kamala visited the village once, when she was just five years old.

Maya often recounted a deeply significant moment when she and Kamala returned to Chennai to perform their mother's cremation rites according to Hindu customs. It was a reminder of the Harris family's enduring connection to their roots.

As the villagers of Thulasendrapuram eagerly watch Kamala Harris's unfolding story, they hold on to a quiet hope—that one day, she will return to this village, walk its streets, and speak with pride of her ancestral ties. For them, Kamala is more than just a distant leader; she is a living link to their past, their dreams, and their future.





BUFFALO THIEF NABBED AFTER 58 YEARS

In an arrest that's nothing short of extraordinary, 78-year-old Ganapati Vitthal Wagore has been apprehended in Karnataka's Bidar district for a buffalo theft that took place back in 1965. This marks the second time Wagore has faced the law for this crime, with his initial arrest occurring nearly six decades ago.

Wagore, along with his accomplice Krishna Chander, was first caught red-handed but managed to secure bail. The pair vanished without a trace, leading to an intensive search that ultimately went cold. Recently, as old cases were reopened, authorities decided to revisit

the buffalo theft case.

The Bidar police launched a manhunt, beginning in Umarga, Dharashiv district, where initial reports suggested Wagore might be residing. After hitting a dead end, investigators received a tip from a local who revealed that Wagore's family had moved to Thakalgaon in Nanded. There, in a twist of fate, Wagore was found at a local temple.

Confronted with his past crimes, Wagore admitted his guilt but expressed fear about facing court proceedings. He was transported to Bidar, where, due to his advanced age, he was granted bail.



ARUNDHATI ROY: WHY SHE SUPPORTS ISLAMIST SEPERATISTS?



Arundhati Roy is fully aware that the demand for a separate Kashmir is rooted in the desire for a Muslim-only state, not one for all citizens. She knows that Kashmiri Pandits were forced out of the valley by their Muslim neighbors and is likely aware that some of the Muslim leaders she stood alongside were backed by Pakistan. Despite this, she has consistently criticized the Indian government and the military's efforts to combat terrorism in Kashmir.

Now, the consequences of her actions have caught up with her, as she faces prosecution for her previous statements. If convicted, she could be sentenced to several years in prison. One might wonder why this celebrated author is so drawn to controversy and why she seems to align with those who seek a separate nation in the name of Islam.

While Roy staunchly defends her right to free speech, critics argue that her remarks often tread into dangerous waters. Her controversial sympathies for Naxalites, and her incendiary predictions about India's democratic future have kept her in the media spotlight—especially among left-leaning platforms. In response to her repeated provocations, the Central Government has finally moved to hold her accountable.

As a high-profile author and the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, Roy is well aware that her words carry weight. But with such influence comes responsibility, especially when discussing sensitive and explosive topics like Kashmir. Critics suggest that Roy's personal biases have clouded her perspective, turning her statements into reflections of her own prejudices rather

than objective insights into the issues. In a democratic society, they argue, it is crucial to address the core problems rather than reduce debates to personal vendettas against those in power. By casting certain figures in a negative light, Roy risks undermining her own credibility, allowing her biases to overshadow any meaningful contribution to the discourse.

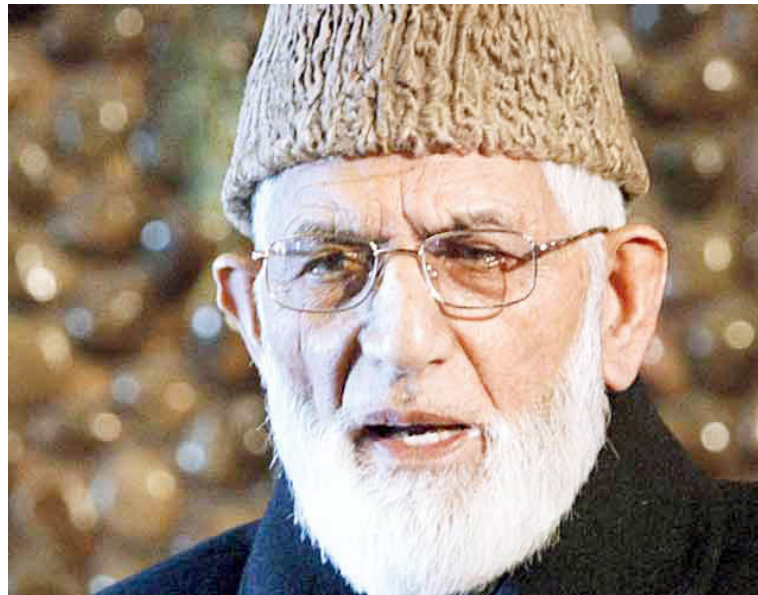
This current legal battle stems from remarks Roy made more than a decade ago. In June of this year, New Delhi authorities sanctioned her prosecution for comments made at a "Seminar on Kashmir" in October 2010. Alongside Roy, Sheikh Showkat Hussain, a former professor at the Central University of Kashmir, has also been implicated. The charges revive a debate that has simmered for years, with repercussions that could now reach their boiling point.

What Was the Event About?

On October 21, 2010, a large rally followed by a seminar titled "Azadi – The Only Way" was held at the Little Theatre Group (LTG) Auditorium on Copernicus Marg in New Delhi. The event was organized by the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners and featured prominent supporters of Kashmiri independence, including Sheikh Showkat Hussain, Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, and others.

At the time, Kashmir was in a highly turbulent state, with frequent protests and unrest. Just days before the seminar, several separatist demonstrators had died during clashes, further escalating tensions in the region.

During the event, Roy, Hussain, Geelani, and Syed Abdul Rahman Geelani made



Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Hurriyat leader

statements that the Central Government deemed "anti-India." Their speeches were seen as provocative, raising sentiments of unrest and fostering anti-national rhetoric. Consequently, they now face charges not only under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) but also under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

This is not the first time Roy has voiced such opinions. In August 2008, during a massive demonstration in Srinagar that reportedly saw five lakh people gather, she gave an interview to the *The Times of India*, openly supporting the separation of Kashmir from India and claiming that the rallies reflected the genuine desires of the Kashmiri people.

A complaint was initially filed on October 28, 2010, against Roy, Hussain, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, and Syed Abdul Rahman Geelani by activist Susheel Pandit, who was present at the Delhi seminar. Of the four accused, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Syed Abdul Rahman Geelani have since passed away.

In October of last year, Delhi's Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena, granted permission to prosecute Roy and the remaining co-accused under Sections 153A and 153B of the IPC, as any action related to hate speech requires



Delhi's Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena

government approval. The FIR alleges that their actions disrupted social harmony, incited public unrest, and engaged in seditious activities.

However, after the Supreme Court's suspension of the sedition law in 2022, the legal landscape has shifted. The Lt. Governor has now provided fresh sanction to proceed against Roy and Hussain under various sections of the IPC and the UAPA. More details on this case are explored elsewhere in the article.

The question remains: will this prosecution finally put an end to Roy's controversial remarks, or will it further fuel her defiance and deepen the national debate over free speech, dissent, and the boundaries of activism? Only time will tell.

Samples of her deadly anti-national statements

When the Supreme Court upheld the removal of Article 370, which had granted

special status to Jammu and Kashmir, Arundhati Roy expressed her disapproval with characteristic bluntness. She stated, "The latest blow to the federalism of the country is the recent Supreme Court verdict upholding the striking down of Article 370.

This is not just a Kashmir issue; it affects the fundamental structure of our polity." In making this statement, Roy seemed to challenge not only the decision but the authority of the highest court in the world's largest democracy.

It is evident here how self-proclaimed defenders of democratic values sometimes struggle to accept the rulings of a nation's apex judicial body. Roy's dissent, however, is not new. She has long supported Kashmiri separatists and has consistently voiced her opposition to various policies and decisions of the Indian government.



Arundhati Roy's Parents

WHO IS ARUNDHATI ROY?

Suzanna Arundhati Roy, a renowned author and activist, was born in Shillong, Meghalaya. Her diverse heritage is reflected in her parentage—her father, Rajib Roy, a Bengali Brahmo Samaji from Kolkata, was a tea plantation manager, while her mother, Mary Roy, was a Malayali Jacobite Syrian Christian and a prominent women's rights activist from Kerala.

Roy first rose to global fame in 1997 when she won the prestigious Booker Prize for Fiction for her novel **The God of Small Things**. The book not only cemented her reputation as a literary force but also became a global sensation. In addition to the Booker Prize, Roy has been honored with numerous awards, including the National Film Award for Best Screenplay in 1988, the Orwell Award in 2004, the Norman

Mailer Prize in 2011, and the PEN Pinter Prize in 2024.

The Western press has offered a range of opinions on **The God of Small Things**. While papers like the **Los Angeles Times** praised the novel, others, such as a **Guardian** journalist, labeled it "profoundly depressing."

Despite the divided critiques, the book remains a touchstone in contemporary literature.

Roy's talents extend beyond writing. She has also worked in film, playing the role of a goatherd in the award-winning movie **Massey Sahib**, directed by independent filmmaker Pradip Krishnan. The two later married and collaborated on a TV series about India's independence movement, further showcasing Roy's versatility as both an artist and storyteller.

Medha Patkar along with Arundhati Roy opposed Narmada dam project

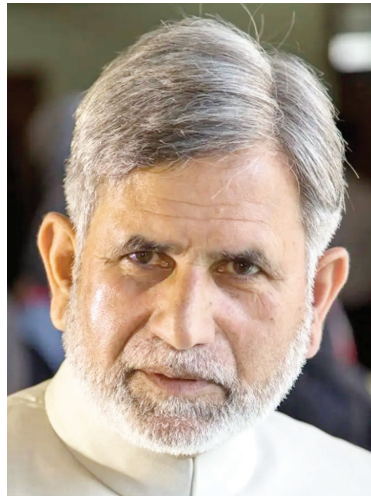


Her activism spans a wide range of issues—she vehemently opposed the Narmada Dam Project alongside Medha Patkar, even donating her Booker Prize money to the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Roy has also been a vocal critic of India's nuclear weaponry and raised doubts about the investigation into the 2001 Indian Parliament attack, calling for a stay on the death sentence of Mohammad Afzal until the inquiry was completed.

Her stance on other national tragedies has been equally controversial. In the aftermath of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, Roy argued that the incident should be understood in

the context of larger systemic issues, such as poverty, which sparked

widespread outrage. She also condemned the government's military actions against Naxals, framing it as a "war on the poor people of the country."



Sheikh Showkat Hussain
former professor at the
Central University of Kashmir

Roy's criticism extended to prominent figures as well. She openly questioned the secular credentials of revered activist Anna Hazare and cast doubts on Narendra Modi's nomination for Prime Minister in 2013.

Her views continue to challenge and

provoke, placing her at odds with both the establishment and a significant portion of the Indian public.





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