DIA, DEOGHAR IAS ACADEMY

Daily News Feed

D.N.F
02.07.2025

Sabaijor Complex, Near Jamunajor Pul, Castair Town Deoghar, Mob:-9162500508

How does a telephone intercom function in an office setting?

The technology enabling seamless communication, both within and outside the organisation, is called EPABX. EPABX stands for 'electronic private automatic branch exchange'. The most critical component of an EPABX system is the switching mechanism

T.V.Venkateswaran

In most business environments, telephone calls are typically handled by a receptionist or directed to specific extensions using an internal intercom system. The technology enabling this seamless communication, both within and outside the organisation, is called EPABX. This system allows users to answer, transfer or forward calls as needed. It facilitates internal communication between different departments or branches, streamlining workplace connectivity.

What is EPABX?
EPABX stands for 'electronic private automatic branch exchange'.

When an employee, say Arun, wishes to call another colleague, Bharathi, within the same office, the EPABX system follows a structured procedure. Arun picks up the phone, completing an electrical circuit that sends an off-hook signal to the EPABX. The system responds with a dial tone, indicating that it is ready for input. Upon dialling the extension number, for example 104, the EPABX control unit identifies the corresponding line and connects Arun to Bharathi using its internal switching matrix.

For external calls, the procedure differs slightly. Arun begins by dialling an access code (commonly 0), followed by the external phone number. Instead of routing the call internally, the EPABX locates an available trunk line linked to the public switched telephone network (PSTN), which is the local telephone exchange. The dialled number is transmitted, and the call is connected, with voice signals passing through the EPABX to the external line.

If all trunk lines are occupied, the caller may hear a busy tone, indicating that no external lines are currently free.

How are incoming calls managed?
Incoming calls are managed differently based on the EPABX system configuration. The PSTN routes the call to an available trunk line on the EPABX. Older systems require a receptionist to transfer calls manually, but modern automatic EPABX systems enable callers to dial extensions directly.

Advanced digital EPABX setups can be programmed to play an interactive voice response menu, prompt callers to enter an extension or automatically route calls to predefined numbers, such as a reception desk. The switching unit then connects the caller to the desired extension without human intervention.

How does the switching mechanism work?
The switching mechanism is the most critical component of an EPABX system: it directs calls to the correct destination.

In early systems from the 1970s and 1980s, electromechanical switches such as crossbar relays were used. These worked similarly to adjusting a ceiling fan with a regulator, where turning a knob moved internal components to establish connections. When a call was initiated, an electromagnet would pull a copper strip, bridging two phone lines like a switch. This physical connection allowed voice signals to travel between extensions.

A basic electrical switch is like a tap. Turn it ON and current flows; turn it OFF and current stops. But telecom systems like EPABX use more complex switches.

The simplest variety is called 'single pole, single throw': it's like a light switch. The 'single pole, double throw' switch is more complex: it has one input and two output choices, like a fan regulator that switches between speeds. An even more complex switch is 'double pole, double throw', which has two inputs and four outputs.

Call switching in an EPABX is like a railway yard. An incoming call is like a train arriving at a central station with numerous platforms. The EPABX is the control system, directing the call to the correct extension just like a railway point switches guide trains to the right tracks.

When a user dials a number, the EPABX activates the proper sequence of relays, connecting the caller's line to the recipient's line, much like aligning railway tracks to allow a train to proceed smoothly to its designated platform. When the call ends, the relays are reset, preparing the system for the next connection.

Another way to visualise this switching process is as a multi-level network. A main incoming line can split into four branch lines, like platforms 1 to 4. Each of these branch lines can further sub-branch into sub-extensions, for example, 11, 12, 13, 14 under line 1; 21, 22, 23, 24 under line 2; and so on. If a call is intended for extension 104, the switcher activates the corresponding combination of relay switches in that order, completing the circuit to the correct line.

What switching techs is used today?
With the growth of electronics in the 1980s, electromechanical switchers were replaced with electronic devices. A more advanced digital electronic system converted each voice signal into digital by using Pulse Code Modulation (PCM). It further utilised Time Division Multiplexing (TDM), wherein each voice channel is assigned a time slot, enabling multiple intercom users to use the system simultaneously.

With the advent of internet technologies, Voice over IP (VoIP) technology is utilised in modern digital PBX systems. Just as the IP address directs your email to the recipient, voice or multimedia communications are transmitted over the internet to the designated telephone instrument.

The evolution from electromechanical relays to digital switching has significantly enhanced EPABX systems. Today's EPABX technology integrates seamlessly with modern communication tools, supporting features like voicemail, call recording, and automated attendants.

T.V. Venkateswaran is visiting professor, IISER Mohali.
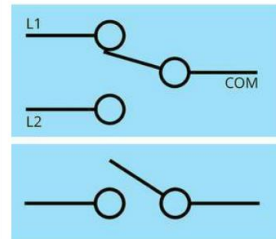
The **top** image shows the 'single pole, double throw' switch and the **bottom** image represents the 'single pole, single throw' switch.

A look at India's sports policy journey

When was a dedicated Department of Sports created? Why did India's sports policy remain tepid while the global sport ecosystem thrived in the 1980s to 2000s? How have Indian athletes fared over the decades? Does India have a chance to host the Olympics?

Malathi Renati

The story so far:

Sport in India can trace its roots back to pre-historic times, when physical skills that are now foundational to modern sports were then integral to daily life. As hunters and gatherers, humans relied on abilities like archery, wrestling, swimming, and climbing, not for recreation, but for survival. These have now evolved into the individual and team sports that we are familiar with today.

How did sports do post 1947?
India's sports policy journey since 1947 must be seen in the context of the nation's broader socio-economic development. Post the British Raj, India's prime focus was on rebuilding the nation by addressing poverty, health, and education. It is therefore understandable that sectors like sports did not feature prominently in the national agenda. Even so, India hosted the first Asian Games in New Delhi in 1951, a bold assertion of the country's regional aspirations and soft power. In 1954, the government set up the All-India Council of Sports (AICS) to advise on sports matters, support federations, and fund elite athletes.

However, allocations were modest, resulting in athletes missing international competitions due to a lack of financial support. For nearly three decades, nothing notable transpired on the policy front. Yet, India's men's hockey team dominated the Olympics from 1920 to 1980. And Indian athletics saw stars emerge such as Milkha Singh (200/400m), Gurbachan Singh (decathlon), Praveen Kumar Sobti (discus and hammer throw), and Kamaljeet Sandhu, the first Indian woman to win an individual gold medal at the Asian Games.

When did India's sports policy begin?
The 1982 Asian Games catalysed change.

Over the ages: Russian coach Imant Kuklich and Uday Prabhu (sprints coach) giving a pep talk to the 'athletics probables' at the SAI camp, Kengeri in 1990. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

The government created a dedicated Department of Sports under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Riding the post-Games momentum, India finally unveiled its first National Sports Policy (NSP) in 1984. The NSP 1984 aimed to improve infrastructure, promote mass participation, and raise standards in elite sports. It also stressed the importance of integrating sports with education, which was formalised in the 1986 National Education Policy. That same year, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) was established to implement policy, and athlete development programs.

While global sports ecosystems evolved rapidly between 1986 and 2000, they remained tepid in India. Sports is a 'State' subject in the Constitution and though the Union government had earmarked it a modest budget, the involvement of society and markets were minimal. Policies remained weak, and implementation inconsistent. India's economy too remained sluggish through the 1980s. However, 1991 marked a turning point, with the emergence of liberalisation. This economic shift coincided with cultural changes. Cable television, global exposure, and a rising middle class brought greater visibility and aspiration for sports. A Draft NSP in 1997 recognised this, proposing that States focus on broadbasing, while the Union concentrated on elite excellence. But it never went beyond the draft stage.

How has sports evolved post-2000?
In 2000, India created a dedicated Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS). A revised National Sports Policy was launched in 2001, setting clearer goals for mass participation and international excellence. This period also saw sports feature in the Union Budget, albeit with a small allocation. India's Olympic medal tally remained modest, with Rajyavardhan Rathore's silver (2004), Abhinav Bindra's gold (2008) and bronzes in boxing from Vijender Singh (2008) and Mary Kom (2012).

In 2011, the National Sports Development Code (NSDC) was introduced, aiming to regulate and professionalise National Sports Federations (NSFs). It addressed governance, anti-doping, age fraud, betting, gender issues etc. but as always, implementation remained the hurdle.

However, several impactful schemes were launched over the years – TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme 2014) provided elite athletes with coaching, nutrition, and infrastructure support; Khelo India (2017) conducted youth talent identification across schools and universities; and the Fit India Movement (2019) promoted physical activity and fitness as a public health priority.

Can India host the Olympics?
India's intent to host the 2036 Olympics has ignited momentum. In 2024, the government released both the Draft National Sports Policy and the Draft National Sports Governance Bill for public feedback. Whether these make it to law remains to be seen. The good news is that yesterday the NSP 2025 was announced, unveiled as " Khelo Bharat Niti - 2025", reinforcing India's 2036 Olympic bid.

Similarly, measures that have been deliberated for a while, like the Draft National Code for Good Governance in Sports, 2017 should be given the go-ahead. India had the ignominious distinction of topping the latest global doping list released by WADA. It's about time for all stakeholders to move beyond self-interest and enforce reforms for the larger good of Indian sport. We must now prioritise scientific coaching, physical literacy, and sports in education. Lasting change demands sustained action. Building a 'sporting nation' doesn't happen overnight.

Malathi Renati is Head of Policy School at the Takshashila Institution.

THE GIST

India hosted the first Asian Games in New Delhi in 1951, a bold assertion of the country's regional aspirations and soft power.

In 2000, India created a dedicated Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. A revised National Sports Policy was launched in 2001, setting clearer goals for mass participation and international excellence.

India's intent to host the 2036 Olympics has ignited momentum.

Using tech to empower women and children

Annapurna Devi

Union Minister of Women and Child Development

Empowerment begins with access – access to rights, to services, to protection, and to opportunity. Over the past decade, this access has been redefined and democratised through the focused commitment of the Modi government to build a more inclusive and digitally empowered India. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has been at the forefront of this transformation. Guided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, the Ministry has integrated technology into its programmes, ensuring that benefits reach the last mile swiftly, transparently, and efficiently.

What was once aspirational is now operational thanks to the government's emphasis on digital public infrastructure, real-time data systems, and responsive governance. With steadfast focus on care, protection, and empowerment, the Ministry has strengthened access to nutrition, education, legal safeguards, and essential entitlements, ensuring that women and children lead healthier, more secure lives, and also emerge as confident leaders and change makers of Amrit Kaal.

Transformative initiatives

A cornerstone of this transformation is the Saksham Anganwadi initiative, designed to modernise and empower over 2 lakh Anganwadi centres across India. These centres are being upgraded with smart infrastructure, digital devices, and innovative learning tools, enabling more effective delivery of nutrition, healthcare, and pre-school education services.

The integration of services provided by 14 lakh Anganwadi centres across the nation with the Poshan Tracker has enabled real-time data entry, performance monitoring, and evidence-based policy interventions. Over 10.14 crore beneficiaries, including pregnant women, lactating mothers, children under six, and adolescent girls, are now

Over the last decade, the Ministry has strengthened access to nutrition, education, legal safeguards, and essential entitlements

registered on Poshan Tracker. By equipping Anganwadi workers with smartphones and comprehensive training, the initiative ensures quality service delivery at the last mile.

At its core, Poshan Tracker is driving the national vision of a Swasth Bharat, Suposhit Bharat. It reimagines Anganwadi centres as digitally empowered community hubs that bridge the urban-rural divide. Recognised with the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration (2025), it also supports Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi, providing digital training modules to Anganwadi workers for early childhood education.

Further, to reduce leakages in the Supplementary Nutrition Programme, a facial recognition system has been introduced to ensure that eligible beneficiaries alone receive nutrition support.

Beyond nutrition, the Ministry is ensuring safety and support for women through technology-led platforms. The SHe-Box portal provides single-window access to every woman to lodge complaints under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. It enables online redressal and tracking. Meanwhile, the Mission Shakti dashboard and mobile app provide integrated assistance to women in distress, connecting them to the nearest one-stop centre, now operational in nearly every district. These interventions exemplify how technology is being used not just for efficiency, but for justice, dignity, and empowerment.

The Modi government has also operationalised the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) – a game changer in maternal welfare. Under the PMMVY Rules, 2022, pregnant women receive ₹5,000 for their first child. Under Mission Shakti, the benefit extends to ₹6,000 if the second child is a girl – promoting positive reinforcement for daughters. Delivered through a paperless Direct Benefit Transfer system, about ₹19,000 crore has

reached over 4 crore women beneficiaries since its inception.

PMMVY is a fully digital programme – leveraging Aadhaar-based authentication, mobile-based registration, doorstep assistance from Anganwadi/ASHA workers, and real-time dashboards. A dedicated grievance redressal module and citizen-facing portal ensure transparency, trust, and accountability, strengthening the government's commitment to Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

Tangible outcomes

These targeted efforts are delivering tangible outcomes. The latest reports from the Health Management Information System of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) reveal that the Sex Ratio at Birth has increased from 918 (2014-15) to 930 (2023-24). The Maternal Mortality Rate has declined to 97 per 1,000 births (2018-20) from 130 per 1,000 births (2014-16).

Digital transformation has played a key role in child protection and welfare. Under the Juvenile Justice Act (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Ministry has strengthened the adoption ecosystem through the CARINGS portal (Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System). This ensures a more transparent, accessible, and efficient adoption process.

Digitisation has also improved monitoring of child care institutions, foster care placements, and statutory support structures under the Act. Platforms developed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights are tracking violations of child rights. The Mission Vatsalya dashboard strengthens convergence and coordination among various child welfare stakeholders.

This is New India where governance meets technology, and policy meets purpose. Over the last decade, the Ministry has not only adapted to digital change, but championed it.

Costly lapses

Pharma plants should have a high level of safety culture

Microcrystalline Cellulose (MCC) is chemically inert. The human body does not absorb it. The skin does not react to it. But it has several useful physical properties such as being a binder and texturiser, which is why it has varied applications in the pharmaceutical, food, cosmetics and other industries. MCC can add weight to a drug and facilitate the active ingredients to function effectively while making the drug conform to weight specifications. On Monday, however, the pharma unit of Sigachi Industries in Hyderabad, which makes this benign substance, was the scene of a lethal accident, with the toll rising to 36 on Tuesday. The making of this safe substance does involve risky processes, which can, however, be safe if appropriate procedures are followed by trained personnel. Most of the dead are young, poor, migrant workers from northern and eastern India who often lack social support. The Telangana government has announced an ex gratia of ₹1 crore and efforts must be made to ensure it reaches the families. It does seem that the response of mitigation agencies was timely and is ongoing.

The blast, however, puts the spotlight back on the pharma manufacturing industry, which has been a foreign exchange earner for India. Such accidents have been frequent, sadly. In August last year, there was a major accident at a pharma unit in Anakapalli near Visakhapatnam. Months earlier, in April, there was another accident in Hyderabad. Officials suspect that Monday's accident happened due to equipment malfunction, likely due to poor maintenance. It could have led to an abnormal build-up of temperature, leading to the blast. Key aspects of operating such hazardous units safely are that HAZOP, or a form of process hazard analysis, should be carried out by competent and knowledgeable staff. The data that individual units generate, that would indicate any abnormality, should be seamlessly integrated into operation control, again manned by competent staff. Operators should be trained, constantly aware of safety issues and implement steps that can ensure safety. While these are recommended practices, what is crucial is that such plants should have a high level of safety culture. Operators, managers and workers should be conscious of the ever-present risks. In this era of heightened scrutiny of industrial accidents by proactive media, manufacturing units are expected to conform to global norms especially regarding safety. Major slip-ups, such as this accident in Hyderabad, are likely to have a negative bearing on this key source of trade for India.

A triangular dynamic in South Asia's power politics

In the complex interplay of great power politics in South Asia, the triangular relationship between the United States, India and Pakistan reveals a story. It is one about enduring strategic necessity as much as it is about the contest of political ideologies, national interests and historical legacies.

United States President Donald Trump's recent lunch with Pakistan's Army Chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir – a deliberate overture laden with both symbolism and nostalgia – resurrects the ghosts of Cold War realpolitik. Mr. Trump's repeated claims, despite India's persistent denials, of having brokered a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, using trade as a lever, alongwith his high-profile interaction with the Pakistan Army chief at the White House signals an American eagerness to revert to a diplomacy of shortcuts.

The Trump administration's transactional view of diplomacy, privileging deals over doctrines, has led to a turnaround in U.S.-Pakistan relations, casting a dark shadow over the delicate trust meticulously built through decades of U.S.-India counterterrorism cooperation as well as strategic convergence on China – a feat often regarded as one of the most creditable episodes of American diplomacy after the end of the Cold War.

America's pronounced shift

Mr. Trump's previous tenure as President was marked by an unusually blunt censure of Pakistan's notorious double-game of a Machiavellian policy of cooperating with western countries in counterterrorism, while simultaneously supporting terror outfits that serve its regional interests. This stance had struck a chord with New Delhi's unyielding approach toward terrorism, buttressing an already blooming 'natural partnership' with Washington. Yet, in the Trump administration's second tenure, a perceptible pivot has taken shape.

Very early on, the Trump White House reopened channels of security assistance to Pakistan, notably authorising $397 million to sustain Islamabad's F-16 fleet - ostensibly for counter-terrorism purposes. Public acknowledgments from top American military officials, terming Pakistan as a "phenomenal partner" together with Mr. Trump's own gestures of gratitude toward Pakistan's cooperation in counter-terror operations, reveal an unmistakable recalibration that privileges immediate strategic utility and transactional gains over previously cultivated long-term vision of bilateral relationship. By lauding Pakistan's knowledge of Iran as "better than most", Mr. Trump has hinted at something far more combustible – that Pakistan's military could become a potential asset in navigating the volatile theatre of Iran-Israel conflict.

This American shift has naturally caused concern in New Delhi as it could prove a serious impediment to India's aspirations for a principled partnership with the Trump-led White House. The U.S., the self-styled custodian of a liberal international order that India has also sought to embrace, now appears to treat Pakistan not as a terror-permissive and nuclear-armed outcaste state, but as a strategic interlocutor deserving engagement. The recalibration is supported by multiple factors: economic incentives, personal rapport with Pakistan's military leadership, and America's continuing desire to retain leverage in Afghanistan, and the broader region surrounding China. For Pakistan, it represents a critical opportunity to retrieve lost diplomatic space and rehabilitate its tainted global image, though domestic political currents inject ambiguity into Islamabad's willingness to fully embrace cooperation with Washington.

India's doctrinal departure

Against this backdrop, the events of late April and early May have concretised the volatility inherent in South Asia's security architecture. The devastating terror attack in Pahalgam unleashed a decisive Indian military response. India's 'Operation Sindoor' marked a doctrinal departure from the long-standing policy of strategic restraint. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's declaration of a "new normal" has signalled a readiness to transcend previous thresholds, blending kinetic military retaliation with diplomatic campaign with the intent of isolating Pakistan globally and imposing accountability on the state apparatus that enables terrorist groups aligned against India. Mr. Modi's depiction of the ceasefire as a mere pause highlights India's broader aim to alter the calculus of Pakistan's hostility, even as Beijing's close ties with Islamabad and adversarial posture toward New Delhi amplify apprehensions of a two-front confrontation.

On the other hand, Pakistan has intensified its dual-track strategy that seeks to combine military posturing with diplomatic engagement with the U.S. with the aim of reviving international attention on the Kashmir issue. The unprecedented promotion of Asim Munir to the rank of field marshal also marks a consolidation of military primacy in Pakistan's national security framework. This entrenchment of a "hard state" doctrine, characterised by centralised military authority which remains fanatically resistant to civilian oversight, underscores Rawalpindi's determination to project unbending strength amid multiple internal and external pressures.

Simultaneously, Pakistan is attempting to capitalise on its geopolitical location and diplomatic slyness to maintain its indispensability in America's current strategic calculations. Islamabad's outreach to Washington, which is reflected in trade negotiations, concessions over rare earth minerals, and innovative economic partnerships entwined with American business interests, suggests a cunning charm offensive to sustain international attention and economic lifelines. It is a strategy that perhaps recognises its own limitations in raw military power and economic scale but leverages the geographic centrality and personal diplomacy to maintain geopolitical relevance.

The U.S.'s role in this volatile equation is characterised by a deliberate ambivalence that reflects the complexity of its competing priorities. Washington today seems to have become preoccupied to the point of obsession with tariff and trade, implying that India's role in the Indo-Pacific attracts proportionately less attention than in the past, even though the Quad Foreign Ministers held their meeting in Washington on July 1.

New Delhi's persistent rejection of any third-party mediation in Kashmir underscores its determination to keep its core security issues tightly within its own sovereign domain. On the contrary, a Beijing-aligned Pakistan is desperate to embrace American engagement, perceiving it as a means to keep Kashmir from fading into diplomatic obscurity and to counterbalance India's manoeuvring space. However, any American effort to "hyphenate" New Delhi and Islamabad would run counter to India's vision of itself as a rising global power, while undermining bipartisan consensus to deepen ties with the U.S.

What drives Pakistan's relevance

Pakistan's continued relevance in American foreign policy seems to be driven by immutable facts of geography as well as carefully honed craft of personal diplomacy, giving its military leadership an inflated sense of purpose and power. Situated at the crossroads of South Asia, Central and West Asia, and bordering Iran, Afghanistan and China, there are certain quarters in Washington prone to the view that Pakistan is an indispensable linchpin to America's regional strategy, particularly in Afghanistan and Iran where its logistical and intelligence roles are still critical. This geographic leverage likely magnifies Pakistan's diplomatic voice in Washington, reinforcing a perception in Rawalpindi that it could help Pakistan counter India's superior economic and demographic credentials. Personal rapport in diplomatic corridors often translates into material and political support, ensuring Pakistan's endurance as a contradictory, yet "phenomenal" partner.

As enduring strategic sympathy for India becomes hostage to the shifting sands of personality-driven politics in the U.S., and the 'friend' in the U.S.-Pakistan frenemy dynamic gaining the upper hand, a geopolitically conscious Washington must walk a delicate tightrope. Each party seeks to instrumentalise the U.S. to its own ends, while American policy oscillates between idealism, realism and transactionalism.

Vinay Kaura

is Assistant Professor in the Department of International Affairs and Security Studies at the Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice, Rajasthan, and Non-Resident Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore

In the ties between the United States, India and Pakistan, American policy now oscillates between idealism, realism and transaction-alism

Rahul says GST is a brutal tool of economic injustice and corporate cronyism

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a "brutal tool of economic injustice and corporate cronyism", Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said on Tuesday. His remarks come on the eighth anniversary of the introduction of the GST.

He said India deserved a tax system that worked for all, not just the privileged few, so that every Indian, from the small shopkeeper to the farmer, could be a stakeholder in the nation's progress.

"Eight years on, the Modi government's GST is not a tax reform – it's a brutal tool of economic injustice and corporate cronyism. It was designed to punish the poor, crush MSMEs, undermine states, and benefit a few billionaire friends of the Prime Minister," he said in a post on X.

A 'Good and Simple Tax' was promised, he said, but what was implemented was a compliance nightmare and a five-slab tax regime that had been amended over 900 times. "Even caramel popcorn and cream buns are caught in its web of confusion," Mr. Gandhi said.

Rahul Gandhi

'Favours corporates'

This bureaucratic maze favours big corporates who can navigate its loopholes with armies of accountants, while the small shopkeepers, MSMEs, and ordinary traders drown in red tape, he said.

"MSMEs - India's largest job creators have suffered the most. Over 18 lakh enterprises have shut down since the roll-out of GST eight years ago. Citizens now pay GST on everything from tea to health insurance, while corporates enjoy over ₹1 lakh crore in tax breaks annually," he said. Petrol and diesel have been deliberately kept outside the GST framework, hurting farmers, transporters, and ordinary people, he said.

"GST dues are also weaponised to punish non-BJP ruled States – clear proof of the Modi government's anti-federal agenda," Mr. Gandhi alleged.

He said the GST was a visionary idea by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), meant to unify India's markets and simplify taxation.

"But its promise has been betrayed by poor implementation, political bias, and bureaucratic overreach. A reformed GST must be people-first, business-friendly, and truly federal in spirit," Mr. Gandhi said.

Digital India projects used technology to bridge gaps, cut out middlemen: Modi
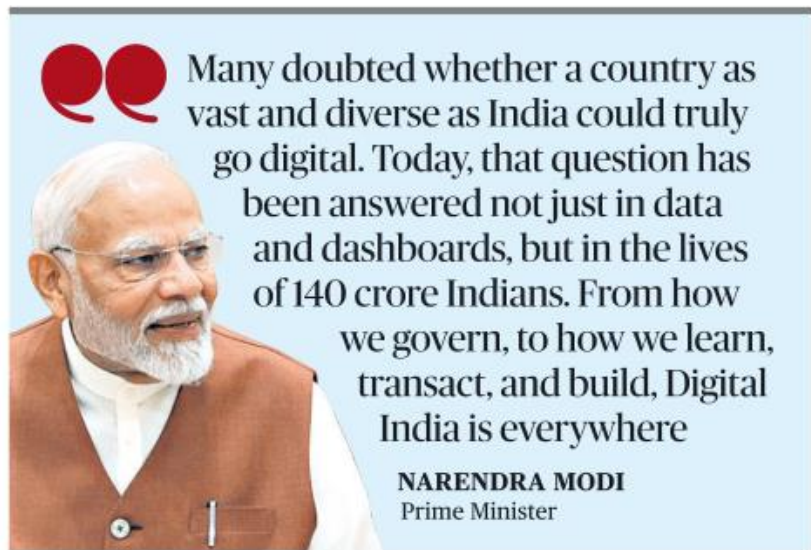
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that Digital India projects had "used technology to eliminate the gap between the haves and the have-nots", instead of causing the digital divide to "deepen".

"While decades were spent doubting the ability of Indians to use technology, we changed this approach and trusted the ability of Indians to use technology," he said in a post on LinkedIn.

Mr. Modi made the post on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Digital India programme.

"In 2014, Internet penetration was limited, digital literacy was low, and online access to government services was scarce," Mr. Modi said. "Many doubted whether a country as vast and diverse as India could truly go digital. Today, that question has been an-

> **❝** Many doubted whether a country as vast and diverse as India could truly go digital. Today, that question has been answered not just in data and dashboards, but in the lives of 140 crore Indians. From how we govern, to how we learn, transact, and build, Digital India is everywhere
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister

swered not just in data and dashboards, but in the lives of 140 crore Indians. From how we govern, to how we learn, transact, and build, Digital India is everywhere," he said.

"Through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), over ₹44 lakh crore has been transferred directly to citizens, cutting out middlemen and saving ₹3.48 lakh crore in leakages," Mr. Modi said.

"Schemes like SVAMIT-VA have issued 2.4 crore+ property cards and mapped 6.47 lakh villages, ending years of land-related uncertainty," the Prime Minister added.

With digital public infrastructure (DPI) projects such as Aadhaar, DigiLocker and FasTAG, the Prime Minister said, India is "moving from digital governance to global digital leadership". He was referring to initiatives such as the Global DPI Repository, managed by India for access to countries in the Global South.

Criminal laws biggest reform since Independence: Shah

Minister says the new laws have several technology-based provisions which, once implemented, will leave no opportunity for offenders to escape punishment by getting the benefit of the doubt

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that the three criminal laws have enough checks and balances ensuring that police officers will be caught if there is any dereliction on their part in investigating a criminal case.

Mr. Shah said that whenever the three laws are analysed, they would come to be regarded as the biggest reform since Independence as there can be no greater reform than making the justice system – which protects the rights of the people – transparent, citizen-centric, and time-bound.

Mr. Shah addressed the programme "A golden year of trust in the justice system" in New Delhi to mark the successful completion of one year of the new criminal laws. Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi V.K. Saxena, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, and Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Kumar Deka were present.

The Home Minister said the new laws included several technology-based provisions which, once implemented, will leave no opportunity for offenders

Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurates an exhibition organised to mark one year of the implementation of three new criminal laws across the country, in New Delhi. X/@mssirsa via PTI @MSSIRSA

He said that after the new criminal justice system was fully implemented, the conviction rate in the country would improve significantly

to escape punishment by getting the benefit of the doubt.

He said that after the new criminal justice system was fully implemented, the conviction rate in the country would improve significantly.

Mr. Shah stated that in the past one year, 14.8 lakh police personnel, 42,000 employees posted at jails, more than 19,000 judicial officers and more than 11,000 public prosecutors had been trained in implementing the new laws.

Strict timelines

Notification of e-evidence and e-summons has been issued in 11 States and Union Territories, while Nyay Shruti has been notified in six States and Union Territories, and community service as punishment has been notified in 12 of them.

He said the laws imposed strict timelines on the three key pillars responsible for delivering justice to citizens – the police, prosecution, and judiciary.

The new laws will shift the mindset from "what will happen if I file an FIR" to a strong belief that "filing an FIR will lead to prompt justice", the Minister said.

From July 1, 2024, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) replaced the Indian Penal Code, 1860; the Bharatiya Sakshya (BS) replaced the Indian Evidence Act, 1872; and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

Kerala launches drive to brand Munnar as 'Responsible Tourism Destination'

Dhinesh Kallungal
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has started working towards turning Munnar into a 'Responsible Tourism Destination' by December this year.

Through various sustainable tourism programmes, for which a total of ₹50 lakh has been sanctioned, the government aims to enhance the popularity of the famous hill station on global tourism platforms and attract more tourists to the State.

According to an official order, the government will develop Munnar as a 'net-zero tourist destination (minimising the carbon footprint of tourists)' by "protecting the delicate

Land of beauty: A view of the Munnar hill station from the Anayirankal gap in Idukki. JOMON PAMPAVALLEY

ecosystem around the hill station while undertaking responsible and sustainable tourism initiatives".

Popular tourist spot
Munnar is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Kerala, which gets around 12 lakh tourists annually (based on hotel occupancy data).

Considering the number of travellers visiting and returning the same day, the actual number of tourists visiting the destination is expected to be up to four times higher.

Gender-inclusive model
"As part of rebranding the destination, the primary focus will be on ensuring gender equality and promoting it as a safe destination for women, both as hosts and guests, along with building sustainable and gender-inclusive tourism models," said a Tourism Department official.

Plastic-free zone
The authorities have started creating "village life experience" packages for guests and imparting training to various stakeholders in the sector, including local tourist guides, community tour leaders, as well as autorickshaw and taxi drivers.

Making the destination plastic-free before December and putting up signage and boards are among the standards set by the authorities.

India has right to defend itself against terror: Jaishankar

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

India has "every right" to defend its people against terrorism and the partners of the Quad grouping should "appreciate" that, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said in Washington DC, where he participated in the Quad Foreign Ministers-level meeting on Tuesday.

Mr. Jaishankar said a "more focused Quad" will "help deliver better", while Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, in her opening remarks, made the mention of the March 28 earthquake in Myanmar where the Quad partners mobilised "quickly" to help the affected communities.

"A word about terrorism in the light of our recent experience: The world must display zero tolerance. Victims and perpetrators must never be equated and India has every right to defend its people against terrorism and we will exercise that right. We expect our Quad partners to understand and appreciate that," Mr. Jaishankar said in his opening remarks at the meeting, which is being hosted by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Mr. Rubio had hosted his counterparts from Australia, India and Japan on the sidelines of the swearing-in ceremony of President Donald Trump in January.

'Significant progress'

Mr. Jaishankar reiterated India's commitment to a rules-based international order and the "free and open Indo-Pacific", and announced that India was on track to host the next Quad leaders' summit.

The meeting in Washington DC is being attended by Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya. "It is essential that nations of the Indo-Pacific have the freedom of choice, so essential to make right decisions on development and security," said the External Affairs Minister, announcing that the grouping had made "significant progress" in maritime domain, logistics, education

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington DC. AP

and political coordination in the last few months.

"The working of the Quad is also being made more efficient through streamlining the Working Groups. A more cohesive, nimble and focused Quad will certainly help deliver better," Mr. Jaishankar said.

He said India had some proposals to make the next Quad summit "productive".

Ahead of the ministerial meeting, Mr. Jaishankar met his Japanese counterpart and held "comprehensive discussions on infrastructure, investment and mobility". "Our special, strategic and global partnership continues to deepen and diversify," said the Minister.

Ms. Wong echoed Mr. Rubio's earlier remarks and described the Indo-Pacific as the region where the "future of the 21st century is being shaped". "Unfortunately, we meet in the backdrop of conflict and of escalating competition," said Ms. Wong, arguing that in the backdrop of various conflicts, it was necessary to harness Quad's "collective strength for peace, stability and prosperity for the Indo-Pacific and for our people." She also noted that the Quad partners mobilised quickly to help Myanmar in the backdrop of the devastating earthquake that hit the country in March. Mr. Rubio mentioned that the Quad could "focus and build upon" the global supply chain of critical minerals.

Cabinet announces incentive scheme to generate more jobs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved an Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme with an allocation of ₹99,446 crore to support employment generation, primarily in the manufacturing sector.

"Under the scheme, while the first-time employees will get one month's wage [up to ₹15,000], the employers will be given incentives for a period up to two years for generating additional employment, with extended benefits for another two years for the manufacturing sector," Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwani Vaishnaw told presspersons after the Cabinet meeting.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the ELI Scheme would boost job creation. "The focus on manufacturing and incentives for first-time employees will greatly benefit our youth," he said.

Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the scheme was aimed at providing jobs for 3.5 crore youth. The government said in a statement that the ELI scheme was announced in the Union Budget of 2024-25 as part of the Prime Minister's package of five schemes to facilitate employment, skilling, and other opportunities for 4.1 crore youth with a total budget outlay of ₹2 lakh crore.

"With an outlay of ₹99,446 crore, the ELI Scheme aims to incentivise the creation of more than 3.5 crore jobs over two years. Out of these, 1.92 crore beneficiaries will be first-timers, entering the

Incentive boost

The ELI scheme will provide incentives to employees as well as employers to improve creation of job opportunities

- Around **1.92 crore beneficiaries** will be first-time employees

- Scheme offers one-month wage up to **₹15,000 in two instalments**

- Benefits applicable to jobs created **between August 1, 2025 and July 31, 2027**

REUTERS

workforce. The benefits of the scheme will be applicable to jobs created between August 1, 2025 and July 31, 2027," the release said, adding employees with salaries up to ₹1 lakh would be eligible for the scheme. "The government will incentivise employers, up to ₹3,000 per month, for two years, for each additional employee with sustained employment for at least six months. For the manufacturing sector, incentives will be extended to the third and fourth years as well," the release added.

While the industries have welcomed the announcement, trade unions are looking at it with suspicion. Tapan Sen, Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) general secretary, said the move was a deceptive scheme for transferring public funds to the employers' class.