

DIA, DEOGHAR IAS ACADEMY

Daily News Feed

D.N.F

07.07.2025

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



Why are Bihar's electoral rolls being revised?

Why has the Election Commission of India decided to conduct a Special Intensive Revision of the electoral rolls of the entire country? Why is Bihar first? What are some of the major contentions with the present SIR process? What about migrant workers within India?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:

The Election Commission of India (EC) has initiated a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar before the general elections for its Legislative Assembly.

What is an electoral roll?

Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for the conduct of elections to Parliament and State legislature shall vest with the EC. Article 326 provides that every citizen who is not less than 18 years of age shall be entitled to be registered as a voter (elector).

The electoral rolls are prepared by the EC as per the provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RP Act). Section 16 of the RP Act disqualifies a non-citizen from being enrolled in the electoral roll. Section 19 requires that the person is not less than 18 years of age on the qualifying date and is ordinarily resident in the constituency.

Section 20 of the RP Act provides the meaning of the term 'ordinarily resident'. It specifies that a person shall not be deemed to be 'ordinarily resident' in a constituency simply because he/she owns or possesses a dwelling house in such constituency. However, at the same time, a person 'temporarily absent' from his/her place of residence shall continue to be 'ordinarily resident' therein.

Why has an SIR been initiated?

Section 21 of the RP Act deals with the preparation and revision of electoral rolls. It authorises the EC to carry out a special revision of the electoral roll at any time for reasons to be recorded.

The Election Commission has noted that there have been large scale additions and deletions to the electoral rolls over the last 20 years due to rapid urbanisation and migration. This has increased the possibility of duplicate entries in the roll. The Commission is constitutionally obligated to ensure that only citizens are enrolled in the electoral rolls. Accordingly, the EC has decided to carry out an SIR for the entire country, starting with Bihar.

The last such SIR was carried out for Bihar in the year 2003. Since the Bihar Assembly elections are due in November, the EC has presently laid down the guidelines for an SIR of the Bihar electoral roll with the qualifying date as July 1, 2025.

During the last SIR, enumerators were sent for house-to-house verification with a copy of the details of the existing voters. However, in the present SIR, every elector will have to submit an enumeration form to their respective Booth Level Officers (BLOs). For electors registered in the electoral roll as of January 2003 (on the basis of the last SIR), no further documents are required to be submitted except the extract of the 2003 electoral roll. However, electors registered after January 2003, have to additionally submit documents for establishing the date and place of birth for themselves and their parent(s) as required. The schedule for the current SIR is provided in Table 1.

What are the pros and cons?

There have been arguments for and against the SIR made by various stakeholders. The key issues of contention are summarised below.



Fresh list: The District Election Officer and his team hand over enumeration forms to voters, ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections in Nawada on June 29, 2021

The process and time required for the entire exercise: Proponents in support of the SIR in its present form argue that the SIR in 2003 was carried out in 31 days without technological support. This time also the same amount of time will be taken for the exercise with technology. Moreover, there are more than one lakh BLOs, nearly 4 lakh volunteers and more than 1.5 lakh Booth Level Agents (BLAs), appointed by political parties, to ensure the smooth implementation of this exercise.

Counter arguments against the SIR in its present form state that it is a humungous task which involves the submission of forms by all eight crore voters that has never been done before. Furthermore, close to three crore voters would be required to submit documents establishing their date and place of birth for themselves and their parents. Migrant labourers and students may not be able to submit their enumeration forms within the deadline. Despite the presence of so many field level workers, there can be potential errors in inclusion and exclusion.

The exclusion of Aadhaar as a document for registration: Proponents of the SIR in its present form say that the Aadhaar is neither a proof of date of birth nor of citizenship. The Aadhaar card itself carries a disclaimer stating that it can't be used as proof of citizenship. Hence, in line with constitutional and legal requirements, the Aadhaar has been excluded as a valid document. The list of valid documents include caste certificates, family registers and land allotment certificates.

Proponents against the SIR in its

present form argue that the Aadhaar has become an omnibus identity card for all sections of society, especially the under privileged who may not possess any other document. Form 6 for the inclusion of new voters as per the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 (RER) requires that Aadhaar be provided compulsorily unless the person doesn't have one. It is mentioned as a proof of date of birth and place of residence as per Form 6. These rules were made by the Central government as per the RP Act. It is only in the SIR guidelines that the EC has added a declaration form to be submitted along with Form 6, with additional documents other than Aadhaar for the purposes of establishing date and place of birth.

Exclusion of migrants from the electoral roll: Arguments for the SIR in its present form state that the RP Act provides that only citizens who are 'ordinarily resident' should be included in the electoral roll of a constituency. Migrants who have moved away for long periods of time on account of education or employment would be included in the electoral roll of the constituency of their current residence as per provisions of the RP Act and the RER.

However, counter arguments posit that the RP Act provides that 'persons temporarily absent' do not cease to be 'ordinarily resident'. Many migrant workers shift to other places within the State or outside the State but return at regular intervals to their place of birth/upbringing. The families and properties of such migrants may continue in the same location where they would want to retain their right to vote. The EC, as recently as January 2023, had indicated its

intention of providing a remote voting facility for such migrant workers subject to technical feasibility and acceptance by all stakeholders.

What can be the way forward?

To provide an analogy, the inclusion of an ineligible name in the electoral roll is like a guilty person going scot-free, while the exclusion of an eligible voter is akin to one innocent person suffering. Both these prospects would be a blight on democracy. Therefore, electoral rolls should be thoroughly checked and verified.

First, the proposed timelines for the completion of such a mammoth exercise are stretched. The EC should ensure that adequate safeguards are put in place for the completion of the exercise without errors. The BLAs should actively participate to prevent errors of omission or addition.

Secondly, the exclusion of Aadhaar from the list of valid documents can create issues for many, especially the underprivileged. After considering the ground realities during the first phase of the enumeration, the EC should adequately tailor the process, during the claims and objections phase, to ensure that no eligible citizen is excluded due to their inability to produce any document from the list of valid documents.

Finally, migrant workers should not be removed from the rolls as that can result in significant deletions. Many such migrants have exercised their right to vote in the place of their birth/upbringing as per their choice and should continue to do so. It is pertinent to note that as per the amendment of the RP Act in 2010, non-resident Indians who have shifted out of India, even for the long term on account of employment, education or otherwise, are entitled to register and vote in the constituency in which their address as per passport is located. The issue of duplicate voter IDs for the same person in different constituencies should be addressed through Aadhaar seeding for which the EC had begun its consultative process in March 2025.

Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified'. He currently trains at Officers IAS Academy. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for the conduct of elections to Parliament and State legislature shall vest with the EC.

The Election Commission has noted that there have been large scale additions and deletions to the electoral rolls over the last 20 years due to rapid urbanisation and migration. This has increased the possibility of duplicate entries in the roll.

During the last SIR, enumerators were sent for house-to-house verification with a copy of the details of the existing voters. However, in the present SIR, every elector will have to submit an enumeration form to their respective Booth Level Officers (BLOs).

Election revision

Table 1: Schedule for the SIR being undertaken in Bihar

S.No.	Activity	Timeline
1	Distribution and submission of pre-printed enumeration forms and scrutiny by BLOs with recommendation	25.06.2025 to 26.07.2025
2	Publication of draft electoral roll with names of electors who have submitted the enumeration forms	01.08.2025
3	Period of filing claims and objections	01.08.2025 to 01.09.2025
4	Decisions on enumeration forms and disposal of claims and objections by Electoral Registration Officers	By 25.09.2025
5	Publication of final electoral roll	30.09.2025

India's diplomacy is measured, not mute

On June 13, Israel struck Iranian targets in several provinces, even as it continued its war against Hamas. Its conflict with Iran in an already unstable West Asia lasted 12 days.

India's response to the Israel-Iran conflict was cautious. India called for restraint and de-escalation to maintain peace in the region. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly expressed concern for humanitarian losses and has reiterated that this cannot be an era of war. Under his leadership, the Indian government has been quick to provide humanitarian aid when requested; voted in favour of a permanent ceasefire in Gaza at the United Nations General Assembly; and swiftly evacuated its citizens from conflict zones. Most recently, as part of Operation Sindhu, India evacuated citizens, mostly medical students, from Israel and Iran.

A sign of strength

The world recognises India's growing credibility and diplomatic weight. India's strategic silence is a sign of its growing stature – it speaks when it matters most, acts when it counts, and leads when it is required to. India has strategic interests in West Asia, including close defence co-operation with Israel, energy and trade ties with Iran, and a large diaspora spread across many Gulf countries. One of Prime Minister Modi's diplomatic successes has been to overhaul ties with Arab nations so much so that some of them have become India's largest foreign investors and trading partners. For India, the fourth largest global economy, economic ties have to take centre stage in diplomatic calculations. To unnecessarily intervene in a war which is not ours is against national interests and irresponsible. Being able to maintain an independent stance doesn't betray India's values; rather, it allows the country to engage with all sides and assert its interests more deliberately.



Priyam Gandhi-Mody

Director of
VishwaMitra
Research Foundation,
a Mumbai-based
foreign policy
think tank

India's strategic silence is a sign of its growing stature – it speaks when it matters most, acts when it counts, and leads when it is required to

Today's international diplomacy prioritises protecting national interests. The recent Pakistan-led terror attacks in Pahalgam, India's retaliative Operation Sindoor, and the subsequent global response to the India-Pakistan conflict were telling of the changing geopolitical times we live in. Over the years, several nations, particularly western powers and multilateral bodies, which are seemingly against terror, have extended funds and other military support to embolden Pakistan, a known sanctuary to terror groups. The western world, a large part of which has worked overtime to build strategic relationships with India, once again re-hyphenated Pakistan and India, which the Indian government had managed to de-hyphenate in its past two terms. Several countries remain oblivious to Pakistan's official role in sponsoring terror activities, many of which are directed towards India, so that they can obtain access to ports and airbases in Pakistan, which will provide an edge to them in their own conflicts with Iran and China. Pakistan's loyalty, which seems to be on sale to the highest bidder, is being courted with loans from the International Monetary Fund, state-of-the-art military equipment, and lunches with its leaders. The irony is that the same countries which are often quick to give lectures on democracy and invade nations to "protect democratic values" are eager to engage with Pakistan's unelected military regime because it suits their interests. The Arab world, despite growing ties with India, is also quick to side with Pakistan as it is bound by religious brotherhood with the country. India's foreign policy calculations take into account all these nuances. India's diplomatic position also prioritises its own national interests, security, value system, and growth story.

West Asia is one of the most politically unstable regions in the world. There are multiple ongoing

and recurring conflicts and a network of non-state actors in the region. In such a highly volatile environment, to be in possession of nuclear weapons would dramatically increase the risk of escalation and unauthorised use. Nuclear weapons could lead to prolonged conflicts and have disastrous consequences on civilians. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is already under pressure. A nuclearised West Asia will embolden other conflict regions such as in parts of Africa and South America to pursue more aggressive nuclear weapons acquisition programmes. A stable West Asia requires arms control, de-escalation, and regional cooperation.

Selective outrage

Often, ill-informed preaching, which is often politically motivated, demonstrates a limited understanding of today's evolving global dynamics. India cannot selectively ignore the role of Iran in destabilising the region. Indian diplomats cannot ignore the horrific October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas on Israel or its use of civilian Palestinian infrastructure as a shield in diplomatic response calculations. Selective outrage and heated opinions often disguised as moralistic views run a dangerous undercurrent against the core interests of the country. Many people hold views that are passionate but under-informed. If their opinions are taken seriously, it could lead to dire diplomatic consequences and stall India's strong economic progress.

India's strategic autonomy reflects its quiet confidence, conviction, and clarity. We live in an India that is confident of its growth story. This is also an India that is capable of maintaining its own opinions and upholding the ability to engage with both warring sides instead of getting swayed into making public statements due to pressure from any one side during global conflicts.

Common goals

Modi's visits reflect India's efforts to engage with others of the Global South

In his way to Brazil to attend the ongoing BRICS summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made back-to-back bilateral visits to Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Argentina. Each stop was with a view to enhancing bilateral cooperation in fields which included some common themes on pharmaceuticals and vaccines, digital technology, food security and critical minerals. In Accra, India-Ghana ties were upgraded to a comprehensive partnership, with discussions on helping Ghana become a “vaccine hub” for West Africa. In the Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, there was a major MoU on “Indian pharmacopeia”, to improve access to quality and affordable generic medicines from India. In Buenos Aires, President Javier Milei agreed to enhance cooperation on critical minerals as well as Argentina's vast reserves of shale gas and oil, while India pitched its pharma to Argentina. The three stops were in countries of the “developing world” or the Global South, and the onward journey to Brazil, and then to Namibia, also highlight India's commitment to building alternative economic mechanisms to the “developed world” or Global North. India's offer of cooperation for low-cost solutions to global challenges includes the promotion of India-led international organisations such as the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) to these countries. Mr. Modi also made his signature pitch to the Indian diaspora – his speech in the Port of Spain, where Indian labour was brought by British colonial ventures since 1845, is one to note. Referring to the Indian ancestry of President Christine Carla Kangaloo and Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Mr. Modi said that the 35 million Indian diaspora worldwide were India's “pride”.

It is also impossible to escape the deep connections between India and the five nations in terms of political history. Each country shares a bond – colonies that suffered under British, Spanish, Portuguese and German forces – and why some of them joined the Non-Aligned Movement. They have all, at various points, committed to building South-South cooperation, and India and Brazil's role in founding the BRIC mechanism, along with Russia and China, and IBSA with South Africa, was an outcome, strongly pitching the interests of the Global South. None of the countries on the tour can be called “anti-West”, and New Delhi has had some differences with them over specific conflicts (Ukraine and Gaza). The motivating force behind the ties, however, and consequently Mr. Modi's nine-day itinerary, is more about a common desire to look beyond the present global order to one that is more equal, representative, and sensitive to the needs of developing and under-developed nations.



The new battle challenge of China-Pakistan collusion

On July 4, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Rahul R. Singh, confirmed an important aspect of the China-Pakistan nexus that has been discussed in the strategic community since the four-day military hostilities with Pakistan (Operation Sindoor, May 7-10).

Speaking publicly, he said that China was an ever-present factor bolstering Pakistan's military efforts through unprecedented battlefield collusion during Operation Sindoor. Lt. Gen. Singh also spoke of the military assistance extended by Türkiye, but that was of a much lesser order of magnitude.

In the India-Pakistan military confrontations of 1965 and 1971, and even during the Kargil operations in 1999, China was a background player, offering diplomatic backing and token military gestures on Pakistan's behalf, without engaging directly in hostilities. This time, however, China's posture was distinctly more layered and collusive, leveraging its robust defence-industrial base, sophisticated intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, practised interoperability, and geostrategic assets to reinforce Pakistan's war efforts without overtly crossing red lines. This represents a major progression in China's traditional strategy of building up Pakistan's strategic and conventional capabilities through overt and covert help to counter India and keep it off-balance.

Subtle but strategic diplomatic signalling

In the diplomatic arena, China refrained from condemning the Pahalgam terrorist attack (April 22) until a belated telephonic conversation on May 10 between Foreign Minister Wang Yi and National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval. In fact, China's official responses mirrored Pakistan's narrative – advocating a “quick and fair investigation” of the Pahalgam attack and expressing “full understanding” of Islamabad's “legitimate security concerns”. The May 7 strike by India on terrorist targets was deemed “regrettable” by the Chinese Foreign Office spokesperson. China also collaborated with Pakistan in diluting the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) press statement, excising any direct reference to The Resistance Front, the group behind the Pahalgam attack.

Significantly, India avoided any political-level contact with China in the context of Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor (until the NSA's conversation with Wang Yi), unlike with other UNSC members (excepting Pakistan), signalling India's assessment of China's unhelpful stance.

The Chinese media played a very active role in shaping perceptions. State-affiliated platforms amplified Pakistan's propaganda, which included exaggerated claims about the loss of Indian fighter aircraft. Social media commentators aligned with the Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR)-fuelled psychological warfare efforts – this included celebrating the alleged success of Chinese-origin military platforms deployed by Pakistan in its first-ever encounter with advanced western weapon platforms in a combat situation.

This digital landscape underscored not only China's active informational support but also its alignment with Pakistan's strategic messaging. By omitting the context of the terror attack's severity, Chinese reports sought to imply that



Ashok K. Kantha

is a former Ambassador to China, now involved with think-tanks

India's military actions were disproportionate. A recurring theme among Chinese experts was the concern that the crisis could escalate into a nuclear conflict, prompting calls for international diplomatic intervention to prevent further escalation.

Hardware, ISR and tactical integration

China's military collusion, however, went beyond diplomatic alignment and propaganda. The less-likely scenario of a “two-front war” – with China and Pakistan launching simultaneous military operations against India – has distinctly metamorphosed into the more imminent challenge of a “one-front reinforced war”, where a conflict with Pakistan can now openly involve China.

For the first time, advanced Chinese-origin systems were visibly employed by Pakistan in a live operational environment. The Pakistan Air Force's deployment of Chinese J-10C fighters armed with PL-15 beyond-visual-range missiles, alongside HQ-9 air defence systems, demonstrated enhanced capability through operational integration honed over the years of joint exercises such as the Shaheen-series. This interoperability was not just symbolic. It was translated into tactical advantages in real-time combat.

Drones, cyber operations, and net-centric warfare elements employed by Pakistan showed unmistakable imprints of the “Chinese military playbook”. As Lt. Gen. Singh has confirmed, Chinese ISR systems provided real-time data, situational awareness, and surveillance capabilities to the Pakistani forces. Even civilian assets such as the Chinese fishing fleet were reportedly leveraged to monitor Indian naval deployments, while Pakistan's Navy remained coastal-bound.

China's BeiDou satellite navigation system played a critical role, including in missile guidance for the PL-15, reaffirming the direct integration of Chinese systems into Pakistani battlefield operations. Reports also indicate the fusion of the Swedish Saab 2000 Erieye airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) platform alongside Chinese systems to down Indian aircraft, reflecting a sophisticated convergence of multi-origin platforms, many of which are enabled or integrated by Chinese technologies.

This evolving situation compels several conclusions. First, the significant role of Chinese hardware, ISR, and battlefield advisory inputs have radically complicated India's deterrence framework. China's ability to provide real-time support without overt military engagement allows it to play a long strategic game. It can test India's red lines while avoiding direct escalation.

Second, a “new normal” is emerging wherein India finds greater latitude for conventional operations against Pakistan despite the nuclear overhang. China and Pakistan are, in parallel, constructing their own “new normal” of battlefield coordination. This includes stepped-up defence procurements: Pakistan's announcement on June 6 of China offering it its fifth-generation J-35 stealth fighters, the KJ-500 AEW&C aircraft, and the HQ-19 ballistic missile defence system reinforces its position as the foremost recipient of Chinese frontline military hardware.

Third, Operation Sindoor may have inadvertently served as a “live-fire demonstration” for China's defence industry,

validating its platforms and collecting performance data in real combat against western systems.

This success offers China greater leverage in global arms markets and incentivises continued grey-zone tactics, probing India's thresholds without initiating open hostilities.

Fourth, India now faces live borders with both China and Pakistan. Despite the October 2024 disengagement in Eastern Ladakh, forces remain heavily deployed along the northern frontier. Simultaneously, the ceasefire along the Line of Control and the international boundary with Pakistan – restored in 2021 – has effectively collapsed.

This dual-front deployment forces India to spread its resources: troops, ISR assets, logistical chains, and conventional platforms must be available simultaneously on both flanks. The demand is not just for preparedness but for sustained deterrence.

Preparing for the future

India is entering a period where sub-conventional conflict and conventional operations blur across a composite threat from China and Pakistan. This “one-front reinforced” challenge demands strategic imagination, conventional build-up, institutional coordination, and diplomatic clarity.

In light of this altered reality, India must reassess its diplomatic calibration vis-à-vis China. Beijing's strategic enabling of Pakistan in battlefield conditions must carry costs. If “terror and talks” cannot coexist in India's Pakistan policy, then strategic collusion by China with Pakistan cannot be decoupled from its bilateral engagement with India.

India may need to signal consequences, both through diplomatic messaging and strategic policy shifts.

An obvious corollary to India's “new normal” of expanded scope of punitive conventional operations below the nuclear threshold is a significant expansion in conventional capabilities. This includes network centric warfare, non-legacy platforms such as drones, and ISR capabilities to counter Chinese assets. The decline in defence spending, from 17.1% of central expenditure in 2014-15 to 13% in 2025-26, must be revisited if India is to meet the demands of an increasingly complex battlespace.

India must maintain a degree of unpredictability in its response to provocations from Pakistan, avoiding knee-jerk kinetic actions. If India predictably opts for punitive military strike, it could fall in a trap that would be exploited by Pakistan and China acting collusively. Instead, it must also explore alternative forms of retaliatory actions. The abrogation of the Indus Waters Treaty could be one such option, but there are other levers available which can be deployed without publicity.

Battlefield collusion is no longer a theoretical concern; it is a lived experience. Operation Sindoor should not only serve as a lesson in tactical innovation but also as a wake-up call for rethinking India's defence posture, force modernisation, and strategic signalling. The sooner this reality is integrated into India's strategic planning, the better prepared India will be for a future shaped not by isolated provocations but by a collusive China-Pakistan challenge across a contested battlespace.

The new ‘one-front reinforced’ challenge is no longer a theoretical concern; India needs to rethink its defence posture, force modernisation and strategic signalling

WHAT IS IT?

Helgoland: a momentous island

Vasudevan Mukunth

Helgoland is a speck of red-sandstone cliffs rising from the North Sea about 50 km off of Germany's coast. Barely a square kilometre in area, it was once a naval fortress and later a holiday spot for people seeking fresh air. In June 1925, that air changed physics. Werner Heisenberg, 23 and tormented by hay fever in Göttingen, fled to Helgoland so he could breathe, and think.

Nights on the island were long and quiet, so he paced the rocks and scribbled in a notebook. In this time he had a momentous realisation. He dropped the idea of electrons "orbiting" an atom's nucleus in favour of only those facts that fit experimental data: the frequencies and strengths of the light atoms absorb or emit.

To keep track of those numbers, he arranged them in grids called matrices. When he multiplied the grids, the order mattered: position times momentum was not equal to momentum times position. This detail produced equations that matched the spectrum of hydrogen atoms perfectly. Heisenberg had thus sketched the first complete version of quantum mechanics, later called matrix mechanics.

Soon after, contributions from



Helgoland was once a naval fortress and later a holiday spot for people seeking fresh air. CARSTEN STEGER (CC BY-SA)

Max Born, Pascual Jordan, Erwin Schrödinger, and others opened the door to the uncertainty principle, quantum statistics, and the technologies — lasers, semiconductors, etc. — that shape modern life.

Physicists today treat Helgoland as the birthplace of quantum theory: the island is now famous less for its guns and more for a night of inspired thought.

For feedback and suggestions

for 'Science', please write to

science@thehindu.co.in

with the subject 'Daily page'

Environment impact study for Nicobar project downplays earthquake risks

The report says probability of a mega earthquake, such as the one that led to the 2004 tsunami, is 'low'; however, an IIT-Kanpur report had pointed to uncertainty in 'prediction of future earthquakes'; professor who led IIT study urges infrastructure planners to conduct 'site-specific' analysis

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study carried out for the ₹72,000-crore Great Nicobar Infrastructure Project (GNIP) downplays the risk of future earthquakes that could trigger tsunamis on the scale that was seen in 2004, despite several scientists suggesting that few on-ground scientific assessments have been done in the region.

According to the nearly 900-page EIA report commissioned by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation and executed by a private consultant, Vimta Labs, the probability of a mega earthquake, such as the earthquake of 9.2 magnitude that led to the 2004 tragedy, was "low".

The EIA study, while acknowledging the region's proximity and susceptibility to massive earthquakes, primarily draws on a 2019 study by scientists of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Kanpur stating that the "return period", a term for the likelihood of a similar-



Ground zero: Aerial view of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

sized earthquake reoccurring, is 420-750 years for mega-earthquakes (magnitude of 9 or more). The return period is a shorter 80-120 years for large-magnitude earthquakes (>7.5).

Missing detail

The IIT-Kanpur report had analysed sediments from the Badabalu beach in South Andaman and revealed evidence of at least seven large tsunami events in the last 8,000 years in the region. The report states: "Andaman Segment has enough accumulated strain to trigger a mega tsu-

namogenic subduction zone earthquake in near future and that there was a 2,000-year gap in the region's sediment history added uncertainty to the prediction of future earthquakes." This bit doesn't appear in the EIA study.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Professor Javed Malik, the scientist who led the IIT-Kanpur study, said while their study did trace the history of major tsunamis, planners of any major infrastructure project in the Nicobar Islands should ideally conduct a "site-specific study". This was

because an earthquake, such as the one in 2004 that was centred in Indonesia's Banda Aceh, could play out differently if the origin point was the Nicobar Islands. The Andaman-Sumatra fault line was known to be vulnerable to massive earthquakes and there was still insufficient knowledge regarding what stretches along this line were likely to rupture.

C.P. Rajendran, geoscientist and Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, said that his own studies over the years and



Earthquake recurrence is a non-linear process. You could go centuries without any major mega quake and then witness a massive one. The GNI is highly geo-dynamic.

C.P. RAJENDRAN
Geo-scientist and Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru

emerging studies have shown that while the Banda Aceh event may have released a certain amount of pent-up energy, there were several other "parallel rupture lines south of the Andamans [and towards Nicobar] whose pent-up energy and history were unknown".

"To add to that, earthquake recurrence is a non-linear process. You could have centuries without any mega-quake and then suddenly a massive one. There are local fault lines in the Great Nicobar Island [GNI] as well as changes in land levels prior to a massive earthquake. This is an extremely geo-dynamic area and major infrastructure projects here are particularly vulnerable," he told

The Hindu. "It is better to avoid such an area for a port or a container terminal."

'Calculated risk'

A senior scientist in the Ministry of Earth Sciences acknowledged that while no specific site studies in the Nicobar Islands were commissioned for the project, it would be impossible to forecast when a massive earthquake was likely and a "calculated risk" had to be taken in executing the project. "Depending on the nature of buildings and infrastructure, design codes will be incorporated but we can never say when the next major quake or tsunami will occur. There is much that is unknown," the scientist said.

The GNIP envisages a transshipment port, an international airport, township development, and a 450 megawatt-Amperes (MVA) gas and solar-based power plant in the GNI. Though accorded an environment and preliminary forest clearance by the Centre, concerns about the potential loss of biodiversity, tree-felling, and impact on resident tribes prompted the National Green Tribunal to order a review.



Cooperatives must be India's economic backbone, says Shah

Union Minister calls for transformation of India's cooperative sector, at the fourth foundation day celebrations of Ministry of Cooperation; he introduces five-point road map for growth, and says Amul's turnover will cross ₹1 lakh crore next year

Abhinav Deshpande
AHMEDABAD

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Sunday called for a transformation in India's cooperative sector, stating that transparency, technology adoption, and member welfare were key pillars for success.

"Without technology, there is no prosperity for cooperatives," Mr. Shah said at Amul Dairy in Anand, Gujarat at the fourth foundation day celebrations of the Union Cooperation Ministry.

"Transparency, technology, and keeping members' interests at the centre – these three principles must become the work culture of every cooperative from Jammu and Kashmir to Kamakhya (in Assam), and every village of the country," he said.

Outlines vision

The Minister outlined an ambitious vision for the sector, citing the govern-



Critical sector: Union Minister Amit Shah, along with Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, during the fourth foundation day celebrations of the Union Cooperation Ministry in Anand, Gujarat on Sunday. VIJAY SONEJI

ment's achievements since establishing a dedicated Cooperation Ministry in 2021. "Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, we have registered two lakh primary agricultural credit societies (PACS), established India's first cooperative university, and created three national-level dairy cooperatives," he said.

Mr. Shah introduced a five-point road map for cooperative growth, and said: "First – People, meaning every initiative must benefit ordinary Indians. Second – PACS, strengthening our primary cooperative networks. Third – Platforms, meaning digital infrastructure. Fourth – Policy reforms. And fifth – Prosperity, not

just for individuals but for entire communities, especially our farmers and labourers."

Success stories

Highlighting success stories, the Union Minister said: "Amul's turnover will cross ₹1 lakh crore next year. This is the power of the cooperative model when implemented pro-

perly." He inaugurated several new Amul facilities including a mozzarella cheese plant and automated processing units.

Mr. Shah paid tribute to Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his birth anniversary, attributing the integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India to Mr. Mookerjee's efforts.

He recalled Mr. Mookerjee's opposition to Article 370 and referenced his slogan – "One country cannot have two Constitutions, two Prime Ministers, and two flags".

Mr. Shah said Mr. Mookerjee's position laid the foundation for the removal of the Constitutional provision and the region's full integration into India.

The Bharatiya Janata Party leader concluded with a call to action: "The cooperative movement must become India's economic backbone. With 60-plus initiatives already launched, we're committed to making this sector a driver of inclusive growth."



Farmers, policymakers raise concern over proposal to amend Plant Treaty

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

As the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group to enhance the Multilateral System (MLS) under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the 'Plant Treaty') meets in Peru from July 7 to 11, scientists, policymakers and activists from India have flagged concerns over the proposal to amend the treaty, particularly the Annex I of the treaty.

They argue that the proposals are not only detrimental to the interests of Indian farmers, but also inconsistent with the Plant Treaty's Preamble, and Articles 10 and 11 and would impact the seed sovereignty of India as well.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research



Cropping concerns: Farmers' groups have written to the Union Agriculture Ministry against the proposed amendments. PTI

(ICAR), however, said the country's interests would be placed first, and protected during the negotiations.

India has nominated Principal Scientist, ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, Sunil Archak, to the meeting as he has been looking after the activities related to the

Plant Treaty for several years, ICAR Director General M.L. Jat told *The Hindu*. "He is highly competent to safeguard Indian interests," Mr. Jat said.

Meanwhile, the Bharath Beej Swaraj Manch and the Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh, two farmers' groups, have written to the Union Agriculture Ministry

against the proposed amendments. Kerala Agriculture Minister P. Prasad, in a letter to Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, also said the Centre should not approve the amendments.

"The Centre should consult farmers' organisations and States before deciding on the amendments," K.V. Biju of the Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh said. "Several scientists have also supported the stand of the farmers," Mr. Biju said.

The proposed amendments would mean India will be legally obligated to share all of its plant germplasm under standard material transfer agreement (SMTA) determined by the Governing Body (GB) of the Plant Treaty, and not under India's own terms and conditions, the letter to the government said.



Studying in mother tongue instils strong values: Chief Justice

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Bhushan Gavai on Sunday stated that studying in one's mother tongue enhances conceptual understanding and instils strong values for life, as he reminisced about his student days at a Marathi-medium school in Mumbai.

The CJI visited classrooms at his alma mater, Chikitsak Samuh Shirodkar School, and interacted with his classmates.

'Deep gratitude'

Having studied from primary to secondary levels at the institution, he expressed deep gratitude to the teachers who shaped his early life, an official release stated.

"Whatever position I have reached today, my teachers and this school have played a significant role in it. The education and values I received here gave direction to my life. My journey in public speaking began on this very stage. Through speech competitions and cultural programs, I gained confidence. It is because of those opportunities that I am what I am today," he said.



Justice Gavai, who has studied in a Marathi-medium school, was on a visit to his alma mater

Recalling his schooling in Marathi-medium, the CJI stated that studying in one's mother tongue helps in better conceptual understanding, and also instils strong values that stay with you for life.

He visited the classrooms, library, and art section of the school, interacting warmly with his old classmates and reliving fond memories.

The CJI felt proud and deeply emotional after the heartfelt tribute given by the students, the release stated.



Indigenous heavy water reactors get licence

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) has granted Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) licence to operate two indigenously developed 700 MWe pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs) at the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS) in Gujarat.

“The AERB has concluded the design and commissioning safety reviews and issued the Licence for Operation of Units 3 and 4 of



The PHWRs during their construction at Kakrapar in Gujarat. FILE PHOTO

KAPS,” a statement from the regulator said.

The licence for a period

of five years was handed over to the NPCIL on July 3, the statement added.

The KAPS-3 reactor had received permission to operate at full power in August 2023, while the KAPS-4 unit received it in August 2024, as part of Phase-C commissioning of the project.

Rigorous reviews

Since the 700 MWe reactor was the first of its kind, the licensing process involved rigorous multi-tiered safety reviews and assessment of the reactor design, cover-

ing the entire life cycle in multiple stages from siting and construction to commissioning at full-power.

Besides the AERB, several reactor safety experts from technical support organisations made significant contributions towards review of the design and commissioning results, which spanned almost 15 years.

The issuance of the licence is a shot in the arm for the NPCIL, which is spearheading efforts to build 10 PHWRs of 700 MWe each in fleet mode.



Developing world should have a greater role in key decisions, says Modi at Brazil BRICS meet

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The majority of the world's population is not properly represented in key global institutions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday, addressing fellow leaders of emerging nations at the BRICS summit in Rio De Janeiro.

The BRICS Leaders' Declaration, adopted at the summit in the Brazilian city on Sunday, reflected India's key concerns, especially on cross-border terrorism and global governance reforms.

Noting that the Global South has often faced "double standards", the Prime Minister, speaking at the BRICS session on "Peace and security and reform of global governance", called for a greater role for the developing world in international decision-making.

"Two-thirds of humanity still lack proper representation in global institutions built in the 20th century. Many countries that play a key role in today's global economy are yet to be given a seat at the decision-making table. This is not just about representation, it's also about credibility and effectiveness," Mr. Modi said, reiterating that global institutions have "failed to offer effective solutions".

Mr. Modi also welcomed



Reform drive: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with other leaders of BRICS in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday. AFP

the expansion of BRICS, saying that it shows the grouping's ability to "evolve with the times", as the leaders welcomed Indonesia as a new member state of BRICS.

Reflecting some of India's core concerns, the declaration adopted by BRICS leaders condemned the Pahalgam terror attack in the "strongest terms", and called for a more "representative" international order.

BRICS leaders expressed commitment to combat terrorism, including "cross border" terrorism, and called for "expeditious finalization" of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism within the framework of the United Nations.

They described the Israel-U.S. military strikes

against Iran as a violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and expressed "serious concern" over the "deliberate" attack on Iran nuclear facilities.

The declaration also recorded support from Russia and China, two permanent members of the UN Security Council, "to the aspirations of Brazil and India to play a greater role in the United Nations, including its Security Council".

The summit welcomed the "new BRICS partner countries" - Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Nigeria, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and called for promotion of "dialogue and consultations" among developing countries.

EDITORIAL
» PAGE 6