

**DIA, DEOGHAR IAS ACADEMY**

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# Epstein scandal backfires on Trump as his supporters seek transparency

The U.S. President has spent years stoking dark theories and embracing QAnon-tinged propaganda that casts him as the only saviour who can demolish the 'deep state'; Trump took to Truth Social, urging supporters off the Epstein trail, claiming it was undermining his administration

Associated Press  
NEW YORK

As his supporters erupt over the Justice Department's failure to release much-hyped records in Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking investigation, U.S. President Donald Trump's strategy has been to downplay the issue.

His problem? That nothing-to-see-here approach doesn't work for those who have learned from him that they must not give up until the government's deepest, darkest secrets are exposed.

Last week, the Justice Department and the FBI abruptly walked back the notion that there's an Epstein client list of elites who participated in the wealthy New York financier's trafficking of underage girls. Mr. Trump quickly defended Attorney General Pam Bondi and chided a reporter for daring to ask about the documents. The online reaction was swift, with followers calling the Republican President "out of touch" and demanding transparency.

On Saturday, Mr. Trump used his Truth Social platform to again attempt to call supporters off the Epstein trail amid reports of infighting between Ms. Bondi and FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino over the issue. He suggested the turmoil was undermining his administration — "all



**Like a boomerang:** A demonstrator in a Trump mask during 'No Kings' rally in Los Angeles. Now that he is running the federal government, the community he helped build is coming back to haunt him. AFP

over a guy who never dies, Jeffrey Epstein."

The political crisis is especially challenging for Mr. Trump because it's one of his own making. The President has spent years stoking dark theories and embracing QAnon-tinged propaganda that casts him as the only saviour who can demolish the "deep state."

## **Demands answers**

Now that he is running the federal government, the community he helped build is coming back to haunt him. It's demanding answers he either isn't able to or does not want to provide.

"The faulty assumption Trump and others make is

they can peddle conspiracy theories without any blowback," said Matt Dalek, a political scientist at George Washington University. "The Epstein case is a neat encapsulation that it is hard to put the genie back in the bottle."

Last week's two-page statement from the Justice Department and the FBI saying they had concluded that Epstein did not possess a client list roiled Mr. Trump's supporters, who pointed to past statements from several administration officials that the list ought to be revealed.

Ms. Bondi had suggested in February that such a document was sitting on her desk waiting for review, though last week she

said she had been referring generally to the Epstein case file and not a specific client list.

Conservative influencers have since demanded to see all the files related to Epstein's crimes, even as Mr. Trump has tried to put the issue to bed.

Far-right commentator Jack Posobiec said at Turning Point USA's Student Action Summit on Saturday that he would not rest "until we go full Jan. 6 committee on the Jeffrey Epstein files."

## **Diverts attention**

Mr. Trump's weekend post sought to divert attention by calling on supporters to focus instead on investigating Democrats and arrest-

ing criminals rather than "spending month after month looking at nothing but the same old, Radical Left inspired Documents on Jeffrey Epstein."

His first-term National Security Adviser, retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, pleaded with him to reconsider. "@realdonaldtrump please understand the EPSTEIN AFFAIR is not going away," Flynn wrote, adding that failing to address unanswered Epstein questions would make facing other national challenges "much harder."

Other Trump allies continue to push for answers, among them far-right activist Laura Loomer. She told *Politico's* Playbook newsletter on Sunday that a special counsel should be appointed to investigate the handling of the files on Epstein, who was found dead in his federal jail cell in 2019 about a month after he was arrested.

Experts who study conspiracy theories warned that more sunlight does not necessarily make far-fetched narratives disappear.

The President and many figures in his administration — including Ms. Bondi, Mr. Bongino and FBI Director Kash Patel — earned their political capital over the years in part by encouraging disproven conspiracy theories on a range of topics, from elections to vaccines. Now, they are tasked with trying to reveal

the evidence they had long insisted was there — a challenge that's reached across the government.

The value of conspiratorial fabrications is that they help people get political power, said Russell Muirhead, who teaches political science at Dartmouth College. He said Mr. Trump has exploited that "more ably than anybody probably in American history."

But the Epstein case brings unique challenges, he said. That's because it's rooted in truth: A wealthy and well-connected financier did spend years abusing large numbers of young girls while escaping justice.

As a result, Mr. Trump needs to come forward with truth and transparency on the topic, Mr. Muirhead said. If he doesn't, "large segments of his most enthusiastic and devoted supporters are going to lose faith in him."

As right-wing outrage over Epstein dominates the political conversation, Democrats and other Trump rivals have been taking advantage. Several Democratic lawmakers have called for the release of all Epstein files and suggested Mr. Trump could be resisting because he or someone close to him is featured in them. Conservatives expressed concerns that Mr. Trump's approach on Epstein could hurt them in the midterms.

There is also the challenge of governing.

# Govt. clamping down on dumping, 'import surges'

The DGTR under the commerce ministry, last month, initiated anti-dumping investigations on 8 different product lines originating from a total of 12 countries or groupings, *The Hindu* has learnt

**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Ministry of Commerce has begun using its various departments such as the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) and the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) to clamp down on import surges and dumping in India owing to malpractice by India's trading partners. It has also begun coordinating with other Ministries on this.

The DGTR last month initiated anti-dumping investigations on eight different product lines originating from a total of 12 countries or groupings, *The Hindu* has learnt.

"In the Department of Commerce, we have started monitoring the import surges for all commodities now and have started shar-

## Under watch

Dept. of Commerce has started monitoring import surges for all commodities and is sharing reports with different ministries



- DGFT last month curbed import of palladium, rhodium, and iridium containing more than 1% of gold
- The importers had imported gold disguised as alloys of these metals to evade import duty
- DGTR has begun anti-dumping probe on import of several industrial chemicals from countries including China

ing the surge reports with different Ministries so that they can also monitor at their level," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said during a press briefing.

"Whenever we find an unusual surge, we examine it, and if need be, if we find that a surge is due to a malpractice, in that case we are also using the DGFT to restrict it," he added.

For example, the DGFT last month restricted the

import of the alloys of palladium, rhodium, and iridium containing more than 1% of gold.

According to sources, this was because the government found that importers were importing gold – which normally attracts a higher import duty – disguised as alloys of these metals, the import of which was free.

"We have also told DGTR, in view of the fact

that a lot of trade diversions are happening around the world, to look at if there is any import which may be harming the domestic sector in the country," Mr. Barthwal further said during the press briefing.

*The Hindu* has learnt that the DGTR in June 2025 initiated eight investigations on possible dumping activities. Dumping refers to the practice of exporting goods to other countries – including to India – at prices well below their normal rate. The DGTR has launched such anti-dumping investigations on the import of several industrial chemicals from China, Taiwan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Switzerland and the EU, as well as types of glass wool from Egypt and types of paperboards from Indonesia.





# How genocide came to be named and codified

Raphael Lemkin, a Jewish lawyer from Poland, used the term 'genocide' for the first time in his book in 1944. It was coined when humanity witnessed a category of evil so unspeakable that none had thought of a word for it

G. Sampath

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian occupied territories Francesca Albanese, "Israel's genocide on the Palestinians is an escalatory stage of a longstanding settler colonial process of erasure". Her latest report urges UN member states "to enforce the prohibition of genocide" in accordance with their obligations under international law. The debate is no longer about whether what Israel is doing in Gaza is genocide. It is about whether the international community, including private citizens, will uphold their moral obligation to oppose the genocide unfolding before them in full social media glare.

## On naming evil

The term 'genocide' belongs to the language of transgression – words that describe the wilful violation of basic moral codes such as, for instance, the universal taboo on killing children. But there are gradations even in the forms of extreme violence that determine whether a given atrocity is to be deemed a war crime, a crime against humanity, or genocide – a category of evil so unspeakable that humanity hadn't thought of a word for it.

It was a Jewish lawyer from Poland, Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term in his book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944). As a university student in the 1920s, Lemkin was horrified by the mass killing of Armenians during World War I. He couldn't believe there was no international law under which the Ottoman leaders could be tried. "Why was killing a million people a less serious crime than killing a single individual," he wondered. Lemkin's interest in the crime of mass murder took a different colour after World War 2, during which he lost 49 members of his own family in the Holocaust. He devoted the rest of his life to the mission of getting recognition in international law for what Winston Churchill called "a crime without a name".

As Lemkin explains in his book, he formed the word from the Greek 'genos', meaning 'race' or 'tribe', and the Latin 'cide', meaning 'killing'. He defined 'genocide' as "the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group". Despite serving as advisor to Justice Robert H. Jackson, the lead prosecutor at the International Military Tribunal (IMT) that conducted the Nuremberg trials, he wasn't happy with how it dealt with the Nazi leaders.

The IMT prosecuted them for 'war crimes' and 'crimes against peace'. But how should they be prosecuted for crimes against civilians who were their own citizens – German Jews targeted for their ethnicity? British and French prosecutors sought to use Lemkin's concept of genocide, but the Americans steered clear of it. Given their own (then prevalent) Jim Crow laws of racial segregation, they were anxious not to grant international court jurisdiction over how a government treated its own citizens, a sentiment that was shared by the Soviets as well.

Lemkin was disappointed as the IMT prosecuted the Nazis politicians only on charges of "crimes against humanity", a juridical approach that failed to account



**As the world watches:** A Palestinian girl queues for a portion of hot food distributed by a charity kitchen at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip on July 15. AFP

for the criminal logic of the Holocaust, which picked out specific ethnic and political groups, including Jews, gypsies and communists. As Lemkin put it, "The Allies decided a case in Nuremberg against a past Hitler – but refused to envisage future Hitlers." His fears have come true in Gaza, where the Israeli military continues to enjoy impunity for its mass murder of Palestinians even as Western governments seem unable or unwilling to acknowledge that these crimes have surpassed the threshold of genocide.

## Codifying genocide

In the years following the Nuremberg trials, Lemkin worked relentlessly to get genocide codified in international law. His efforts bore fruit in 1948 with the United Nations adopting the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Although the Genocide Convention included much of Lemkin's

ideas, it did not accept all of them.

It had a rather narrow legal definition of genocide, with two main elements. It had a mental element, the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group", and a physical element, consisting of any of these five acts: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Initially, this definition was criticised on the grounds that "intent" is difficult to establish since no government publicises its intent to commit genocide. Also, it is tough to attribute genocidal intent to individuals who can claim to be merely carrying out orders in their official

capacity. However, subsequent proceedings, including those of the tribunals set up to try the accused in the Rwanda genocide (1994) and the 1995 genocide of Bosnia Muslims in Srebrenica have clarified that "a pattern of purposeful action" leading to the destruction of a significant section of the targeted group would suffice to establish genocidal intent.

While the 1948 Genocide Convention defines the crime and obligates the states that are parties to the Convention to prevent and punish it, the 2002 Rome Statute gives the International Criminal Court the jurisdiction to take up and try cases of genocide.

The Genocide Convention, however, still does not recognise mass murder of any social or political group – say, communists – as genocide, an aspect considered a major lacuna by genocide experts. The concept of genocide has also not been adequately applied to understand colonial mass murder, slavery, deportation and other atrocities inflicted upon native populations, including aboriginals by erstwhile coloniser nations and empires.

Away from the media spotlight, the egregious practice of forcefully transferring children away from their Aboriginal families – now seemingly benevolent in intent but barely distinguishable from genocide in practice – still goes on in Australia, according to a 2025 report by Human Rights Watch.

## The importance of 'thinking'

Mass murder is by no means a modern phenomenon. Even in ancient times, it was not uncommon for the victors in a war to massacre the entire male population of the conquered kingdom or state. Typically, however, genocides occurred against an enemy population, or in the context of a war. The phenomenon of a state conducting mass murder of a certain ethnic or national group among its own citizens is a more recent phenomenon – one that has raised fundamental philosophical questions about human nature and evil.

Some of the most profound engagement with these questions came from Hannah Arendt, a German American Jewish historian and philosopher who covered the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a key architect of the Holocaust. In her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), Arendt asks the question: does a person have to be evil in order to do evil? Her answer is 'no'. All that is required for a person to do evil is to suspend thinking.

Arendt argued that it is the exercise of the capacity to think that connects one human with others. What gave Nazism its power was its all out assault on thinking, and on the very impulse to reflect. Eichmann's crime, in this sense, was the banality of doing what seemed to be in the best interests of his career – to please his bosses. This is because for him, thinking had been outsourced to the Nazi bureaucracy and leadership. It is this failure to think – achieved on a mass scale through institutionalised assault on intellectual life, on the life of the mind – that is banal. This banality creates the space for evil to assume the garb of the routine, the normal, and the quotidian, all of which are in ample evidence in the routinised daily massacres of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

As the philosopher Judith Butler observed in an essay on the banality of evil, "[Arendt's] indictment of Eichmann reached beyond the man to the historical world in which true thinking was vanishing and, as a result, crimes against humanity became increasingly 'thinkable'. The degradation of thinking worked hand in hand with the systematic destruction of populations."



# Rethinking the reinforced one-front war concept

Indian strategists have long worried about the deepening security partnership between China and Pakistan. The bilateral relationship today extends well beyond arms sales to include diplomatic shielding, intelligence sharing, and even elements of tactical integration. Some observers, however, suggest a more diabolical possibility: the threat of a “reinforced one-front war” – a scenario in which India would face Pakistan and China fighting together on a single front. Proponents of this view imagine a deeper military integration, with Pakistan benefiting directly from Chinese technology, intelligence, security assets, and even military personnel. When the balloon goes up, they warn, China would act as a strategic enabler on India’s western front, turning Pakistan’s challenge into a more formidable, integrated threat.

The argument seems almost a truism at first glance. China’s support for Pakistan is undoubtedly real, sustained, and strategically motivated. Even so, describing it as a “reinforced one-front war” risks overstating the degree of operational integration in ways that misread Beijing’s intentions and distort India’s own strategic calculus. At the very least, it calls for a dispassionate assessment of the facts.

## Not one front

Let’s begin with the undeniable. China has become Pakistan’s principal arms supplier, offering advanced drones, missile systems, naval platforms, and even satellite navigation support through its BeiDou system for missile targeting. During crises, Beijing has provided diplomatic cover, blocking UN sanctions and limiting international fallout. This sustained support ensures Pakistan remains a capable military adversary, able to field modern systems despite economic constraints, while also deepening Beijing’s political influence in Islamabad.

Worrying as these



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However serious China-Pakistan nexus may appear, Indian planners ought to avoid turning prudent concern into simplistic formulations

developments are, they do not readily lend themselves to the notion of a single, integrated military front. Arms transfers – even at scale – are not the same as a shared war plan. India itself is a major buyer of Russian, Israeli, American, and French military systems. Nobody claims India is fighting America’s or Russia’s wars by proxy. India has even begun exporting weapons – such as BrahMos missiles to the Philippines – without any suggestion from Beijing that Manila is fighting an Indian war against China. Similarly, advanced sales – such as China’s potential supply of J-35 stealth fighters to Pakistan, or India’s exploration of Russia’s Su-57 – do not imply joint war planning or a unified front.

China may have provided direct military support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, even monitoring the performance of its weapons systems in Pakistani use, as Indian military officials recently stated. However, monitoring battlefield performance of supplied systems is standard practice for arms suppliers. The United States, Russia, Israel, and France all routinely do this, and India itself will understandably be interested in how the BrahMos missile performs in the Philippines. This is all typical of arms sales relationships, not evidence of a single, unified war front with joint command or shared planning.

What many alarmist narratives often gloss over is that China and Pakistan have very different strategic interests vis-à-vis India. For Pakistan, the military contest with India is existential – a constant, defining rivalry. For China, India is a regional competitor to be managed and contained, but not an existential enemy. Beijing’s principal strategic focus remains the U.S. While China has much to gain from an India tied down on its western border, Beijing’s preferred denouement is an India that is cautious, preoccupied, and wary of escalation. That is precisely why China might be careful about escalation itself. The caution is

evident in the absence of any commitment to join Pakistan in a full-scale war with India. China-Pakistan military exercises, while symbolically important, fall short of the combined-force planning seen in alliances such as NATO or even U.S.-South Korea.

## Challenges for India

This is not to deny the challenge of China-Pakistan collusion altogether. Their defence partnership does complicate India’s security environment, increasing the costs of military preparedness and the demand for sophisticated countermeasures. Even so, framing the threat as a single “reinforced one-front war” risks misunderstanding. It imagines a level of operational integration that does not exist, encouraging Indian planners to over-invest in blunt, worst-case military postures that may be unaffordable or strategically rigid. It also underplays opportunities for diplomatic management with China, further shrinking India’s options.

Beijing may shield Pakistan diplomatically and arm it militarily, but it also has an interest in limiting escalation that could trigger nuclear thresholds or force Chinese military intervention. That is a lever India can look to exploit. Overstating China’s willingness to fight India directly on Pakistan’s behalf risks creating a self-fulfilling prophecy in which all crisis management is abandoned in favour of maximalist, binary threat perceptions.

However serious the China-Pakistan nexus may appear, Indian planners ought to avoid turning prudent concern into simplistic formulations. Instead of declaring the threat a single, unified front, Indian analysts must see it for what it is: a complex, asymmetric partnership in which China equips Pakistan to be a tougher local rival without assuming the costs and risks of fighting India itself.

That is the harsh strategic truth. Planning for it requires clear-eyed analysis, not rhetorical overreach.

# Fencing out the voter in Bihar's poll roll preparation

**W**hat does it mean to live in a democracy if your name no longer appears on the electoral roll? In Bihar today, this question has attained chilling salience. Lakhs of citizens face an imminent threat of disenfranchisement solely because they may be unable to meet the onerous, shifting, and arbitrary burdens imposed on them by the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

The revision, announced in June 2025, with Bihar's State elections looming in the background, has ushered in a period of deep uncertainty. There can be little doubt that electoral rolls must be periodically updated, ensuring that people eligible to vote are included and ineligible persons are excluded. The integrity of our democratic process demands nothing less.

However, the present exercise seeks to redraw the rolls in a fashion that is both opaque and hurried. With the publication of a draft roll scheduled for August 1, it is difficult to see how the administration can conduct so expansive an exercise in a constitutionally sound manner within so narrow a time frame.

## What is troubling

More troubling still is the nature of the classifications that the ECI has introduced. A June 24 notification lists 11 acceptable forms of documentary proof – these range from passports and caste certificates to matriculation records. But, notably, it omits others that are more widely held, including Aadhaar card, ration card, driver's licence, and even the Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) issued by the ECI itself.

In parallel, the exercise also carves out a difference between voters who were included in the roll as part of the last intensive revision in 2003 and those added subsequently. The latter group must now re-establish their eligibility through a fresh application supported by documents. The ECI has not explained why it believes these entries, created and verified through its past processes, now warrant re-verification on a mass scale. If the implication is that the prior inclusion was flawed, then the onus must lie with the state, not with the voter.

To be sure, Article 324 of the Constitution empowers the ECI to maintain superintendence, direction, and control over the preparation of the electoral rolls. Article 326 also mandates that elections are predicated on adult suffrage – that is to say, every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than eighteen years of age on an appointed date shall be eligible to vote.

To that end, The Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1950, authorises the ECI to revise the rolls from time to time, and even to carry out "special revisions" where necessary. But these



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The Supreme Court must intervene, once again, in the matter of the Bihar Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and ensure that the manner of the preparation meets India's exacting constitutional standards

powers are not unlimited. They are subject to a slew of constitutional protections. The exercise of discretion, however well-intentioned, must be rooted in legality and proportionality and must remain restrained by the rights of those it affects.

## Need for fairness and non-discrimination

The Supreme Court of India has long affirmed that free and fair elections constitute a non-negotiable cornerstone of India's constitutional order. While the right to vote flows from statute, it remains critical to this guarantee – it operates within a framework that promises equality and political participation.

Consequently, the process by which electoral rolls are revised must conform to standards of procedural fairness, transparency and non-discrimination. A revision that imposes unduly onerous burdens – particularly without adequate notice – on registered voters to re-establish their citizenship and which permits exclusions based on vague and inconsistently applied criteria would certainly fall afoul of these imperatives.

Under Article 14 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to equality, a classification made by the state must satisfy a two-part test: there must be an intelligible differentia distinguishing those people grouped together from those people left out. And that differentia must bear a rational relation to the object sought to be achieved by the law or action in question.

On this test, the classifications made under the SIR are deeply suspect. First, there is the division between voters added during the intensive revision in 2003 and those added thereafter. Even assuming that this distinction is intelligible, its relevance to the stated objective – of ensuring electoral-roll integrity – remains unclear. Is the ECI suggesting that its post-2003 additions were based on weaker evidentiary standards? If so, why have those names remained on the rolls through successive elections?

Second, the categorisation of identity documents also appears arbitrary. The notification treats school-leaving certificates as sufficient documentation, but disregards ECI-issued EPIC Cards, introducing, in the process, an element of unreasonableness that is impossible to reconcile with the guarantee of equal treatment. The consequences of these decisions are far-reaching. If the draft electoral roll published on August 1 omits previously registered voters, they will be left with a mere 30 days to furnish further documents evincing eligibility. That burden will fall most heavily on individuals who are least equipped to shoulder it – the socially marginalised and the economically disadvantaged. Many might not even be aware that their names have been deleted. To impose

new documentary hurdles is to raise the cost of participation for those already furthest from the system.

## Top court's intervention

On July 10, lengthy arguments were advanced before a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court on whether the SIR should be stayed. During the hearing, the Bench appeared perplexed by the ECI's exclusion of widely held identity documents. While it did not issue any interim restraint, the Court said that it would be in the "interest of justice" if the ECI "also considers the following three documents as well (apart from the 11 documents mentioned in order dated 24.06.2025), i.e., A) Aadhaar Card; B) Electors Photo Identify Card (EPIC), which is issued by Election Commission of India itself, and C) the Ration Card".

But what does the word "consider" mean in this context? Must the ECI accept these documents as valid evidence, or merely review them and reject them if it so chooses? The ambiguity leaves enough doubt to create further delay, which can also potentially lead to the creation of a fait accompli. By the time the matter returns to the Court, the draft roll will be on the verge of publication, with voters who have been wrongly excluded scrambling to meet deadlines.

Given the gravity of the issues involved and given the impending Assembly elections in the State, the status quo in the case must be preserved. But, equally, given that the questions are limited and the record essentially documentary, the Court must move swiftly. It should prompt parties to exchange pleadings without delay and schedule the matter for a final hearing before the revision becomes irreversible.

The legitimacy of an election depends not only on the fairness of its outcome but also on the inclusiveness of its process. When the rules of inclusion are changed midstream, when the onus of proof is moved without reason, and when constitutional guarantees are filtered through layers of bureaucratic and administrative discretion, what remains is not participation but performance. The Court can scarcely supervise every line on the roll, but it must ensure that the manner of its preparation meets our exacting constitutional standards.

In India's founding moment, the electoral roll was an act of republican recognition. As Ornith Shani has shown in her book, *How India Became Democratic: Citizenship And The Making Of The Universal Franchise*, it was built not by excluding the undocumented but by bureaucrats striving to find and register them. The presumption then was that people belonged. That presumption now hangs in the balance. It is for the Court to decide whether it still holds.





# A tectonic shift in thinking to build seismic resilience

The tremors that were felt in Delhi on July 10, 2025, at 9.04 a.m. with a magnitude of 4.4 on the Richter Scale – as reported by the National Center for Seismology (NCS) – are a wake-up call for India's seismic vulnerability. The epicentre, which was located approximately 20 kilometres southwest of the city at a shallow depth of five kilometres, did not cause significant damage but exposed the fragility of the capital's infrastructure, where over 80% of buildings, especially those pre-dating the year 2000, fail to comply with seismic codes.

The July event follows a series of earthquakes across Asia since March 2025, including the devastating quake in Myanmar and Thailand (magnitude 7.7), tremors in Tibet and Greece, and recurring seismic activity along the India-Myanmar border. As India sits on one of the world's most tectonically active plates, the urgency to build seismic resilience has never been greater.

## The danger of unpreparedness

India's seismic risk is rooted in the northward drift of the Indian Plate, colliding with the Eurasian Plate at 4 centimetres to 5 cm a year, shaping the Himalayas, which is a region overdue for a "Great Himalayan Earthquake" of magnitude 8 or higher, potentially impacting over 300 million people across northern India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Delhi, which lies in Seismic Zone IV (high risk), with a peak ground acceleration (PGA) factor of 0.24g, lies perilously close to this tectonic frontier.

The tremors felt in July, though moderate, highlighted the risk to the city's estimated 33.5 million residents and over 5,000 high-rises, many built without adhering to the Bureau of Indian Standards' IS 1893:2016 Code, which mandates ductile detailing and shear walls. Historical events such as the Bhuj earthquake of 2001 (7.7 magnitude, 20,000-plus deaths) and the Nepal quake of 2015 (7.8 magnitude) underscore the catastrophic potential of unpreparedness.



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With earthquake activity intensifying, regionally and globally, the Government of India must lead a national dialogue to enforce seismic codes rigorously

Beyond Delhi, India's seismic zones, which range from Zone II to V, span a vast vulnerable area. The northeast, including Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram in Zone V (very high risk, PGA 0.36g+), has felt the ripple effects of seismic activity in Myanmar, notably the 7.7 magnitude Mandalay quake on March 28, 2025, and a 5.2 magnitude event on May 17, 2025. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, also in Seismic Zone V, remain prone to tsunamis following subduction zone activity, as seen in 2004. The 5.7 magnitude Tibetan quake on May 12, 2025, caused tremors in Sikkim, reinforcing the restlessness in the Himalayan belt. Even distant events, such as the quake of magnitude of 6.2 in Greece on May 22, 2025, reflect a global pattern of tectonic unrest, though their direct impact on India is minimal.

## Greater danger with urbanisation

Delhi's rapid urbanisation exacerbates the risk it faces. Older structures in East Delhi, built on liquefaction-prone soils, and poorly designed high-rises pose a threat during strong quake shaking. The NCS's real-time monitoring using the IndiaQuake app offers early warnings, but enforcement and public awareness lag behind. Compare this to Bangkok, where updated seismic codes since 2007 mitigated damage despite a flat-slab collapse in 2025, or Myanmar, where unenforced codes worsened the quake toll in 2025. India must bridge this enforcement gap to protect its cities.

The global seismic context heightens the urgency. The Greece earthquake, though 5,000 km away, is part of a series of tremors since March, including those in Indonesia, the Chile-Argentina border, and Ecuador on May 3, 2025. While these do not directly trigger Indian quakes, they signal a dynamic earth, pointing to the need for preparedness. The Himalayan seismic gap, where strain has built since the quake in Kangra (1905) and the 'Gorkha quake' (Nepal, 2015), are a ticking clock, with a major event potentially devastating Delhi and beyond.

To counter this, India must enforce seismic codes rigorously. In Delhi, retrofitting older buildings with steel jacketing and mandating deep pile foundations in vulnerable areas can enhance stability. Guwahati, in Zone V, needs strict IS 1893:2016 compliance, avoiding Brahmaputra floodplain construction to prevent liquefaction, and adopting base isolation for critical infrastructure. Bhuj requires expanded retrofitting and community disaster response teams. The Delhi Development Authority should accelerate compliance checks, while the NCS expands early warning systems to rural Zone V areas.

## Global lessons

The international lessons are instructive. Bangkok's use of high-strength concrete (30MPa-40 MPa) and ductile detailing offers a model, though its lower seismic risk (0.1g-0.2g) differs from India's Zone V challenges. The damage seen in Myanmar due to unreinforced masonry is a warning about neglect – a risk India must avoid. Tailored solutions – accounting for the Northeast's soft soils and Kutch's sandy basins – require annual retrofitting investments of ₹50,000 crore, as estimated by experts.

With seismic activity intensifying regionally and globally, India cannot afford delay. The Government of India must lead with stringent enforcement, public education, and resilient infrastructure investment. Citizens should educate themselves about the need for emergency kits, safe building practices, and evacuation plans. The Bhuj disaster, where unpreparedness amplified casualties, remains a haunting lesson. As tremors punctuate India's seismic landscape, building resilience is a technical and moral duty in order to protect lives and livelihoods.

There needs to be a national dialogue urging action before the next major quake strikes. Delhi's tremor echoes this urgency, demanding a transformation from vulnerability to strength.



## Some cheer

India needs to diversify its energy sources to keep trade deficit low

India's trade data for the first quarter of this financial year (Q1FY26) and for June 2025 are leading to some room for cheer but there is considerable concern as well. The Commerce Ministry's monthly export-import data indicate that June's merchandise trade saw the sharpest uptick in outbound shipments to the U.S. in 14 months, at a growth rate of 23.5% to \$8.3 billion. This was likely aided by importers wishing to stock up before the July 9 "pause" in "reciprocal tariffs", but now extended to August 1. While overall goods exports in June almost stayed flat at \$35.14 billion (\$35.16 billion, last June), likely on account of softer crude oil prices, Q1FY26 registered a marginal year on year growth of 1.92% at \$112.17 billion. Despite the widening year on year merchandise trade deficit to \$67.26 billion (\$62.1 billion, Q1FY25), it is the impressive growth in services exports, by almost 11% to \$98.13 billion (\$88.46 billion, Q1FY25) that has aided in shrinking India's overall trade deficit by 9.4% in Q1FY26. This mirrors years of India's trade trajectory, where services have outperformed goods exports.

It is important to note that refined petroleum products have traditionally constituted the largest chunk of India's goods export (at about 15%). While many believe U.S. President Trump is unlikely to stay the course on his threat of a 100% "secondary tariffs" on countries buying Russian crude – to pressure Moscow to end its invasion of Ukraine – it hits an underbelly in India's merchandise trade. India overtook China recently to become the largest importer of Russian crude, forming 36% of its oil imports. This has helped India leverage the cost arbitrage as western European nations maintain a ban on Russian crude imports. But Mr. Trump's threat makes India's need to diversify its fuel and energy imports more urgent, as it focuses on electrifying transport and ramping up renewables. It also highlights the need for India to diversify and grow merchandise trade, by further leveraging its sprawling, labour-intensive micro, small and medium enterprises, which constitutes almost half (46%) its goods exports. Exports in electronic goods (46.93%), tea (32.64%), meat, dairy and poultry (19.7%) and marine products (13.33%), saw steady growth this June when compared with last June. But overall goods exports excluding petroleum and gems and jewellery were almost flat in the same period. With a fortnight to go and three rounds of negotiations to scramble a 'mini deal' before the autumn deadline to reach a Bilateral Trade Agreement, the government has its task cut out to reach a favourable outcome. The stakes could not be higher as the U.S. has constituted the largest share of India's overall exports for some years now, at nearly a fifth (17.7%) of total exports in the last fiscal alone.





# CERN collider reveals major clue to universe's bias against antimatter

For the first time, scientists have observed that the laws of physics are different for the particles that make up visible matter and their antiparticles. The finding is key to understanding why matter dominates the universe even though it once had equal quantities of matter and antimatter

Yasudevan Mukunth

**T**he universe is made mostly of matter, not antimatter, but scientists believe that after the Big Bang, both must have existed in equal amounts. One of the big mysteries in physics is understanding why matter dominates the universe today and what happened to all the antimatter.

A key clue comes from something called CP violation – a difference in the behaviour of matter and antimatter.

While CP violation has been observed in certain types of particles called mesons, it has never been reported in baryons, which are the particles (like protons and neutrons) that make up most of the matter around us.

Based on new data, the LHCb collaboration in Europe has now reported the first-ever observation of CP violation in baryon decays, specifically in a particle called the  $\Lambda_b^0$  baryon (pronounced “lambda bee-zero baryon”).

Their findings were published in *Nature* on July 16.

“For the first time, we have clear evidence of CP violation in baryons,” Xuetong Yang, the corresponding author of the study, a member of the LHCb team, and a PhD student at Tsinghua University in Beijing, told *The Hindu*.

“The matter-antimatter asymmetry in the universe requires CP violation in baryons, such that the discovery is a key step forward.”

## Looking for the signal

In CP, ‘C’ stands for charge conjugation, which means the action of swapping a particle with its antiparticle. ‘P’ stands for parity, which is the action of flipping the spatial coordinates, like looking in a mirror.

CP symmetry stipulates that if you swap particles for antiparticles and look in a mirror, the laws of physics should be the same.

CP violation thus means this symmetry is broken and that the laws of physics are slightly different for matter and antimatter. This is important because CP violation is a necessary ingredient to explain why the universe is made mostly of matter.

The  $\Lambda_b^0$  baryon is made up of three smaller particles: an up quark, a down quark, and a bottom quark. The antiparticle of the  $\Lambda_b^0$  baryon is called the  $\bar{\Lambda}_b^0$  bar.

The newly reported result focuses on a specific decay of the  $\Lambda_b^0$  baryon: into a proton, a negatively charged kaon, a positively charged pion, and a negatively charged pion. This is denoted:  $\Lambda_b^0 \rightarrow p \bar{K}^0 \pi^+ \pi^-$ .

The collaboration also studied the same decay for the antiparticle,  $\bar{\Lambda}_b^0$  bar, but with all charges reversed.

The experiment used data from the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, specifically from the LHCb detector on the machine.

The LHCb team collected data between 2011 and 2018, corresponding to a very large number of collisions between beams of protons accelerated to nearly the speed of light.

In these collisions,  $\Lambda_b^0$  and  $\bar{\Lambda}_b^0$  baryons are produced and then rapidly decay. The LHCb researchers looked for events where the decay products matched  $p \bar{K}^0 \pi^+ \pi^-$ .

To reduce background noise – in the form of random combinations of particles that mimic the signal – they used machine learning to distinguish real decays from fake ones. They also used particle identification tools on computers that could tell protons, kaons, and pions apart.

The main quantity they measured was the CP asymmetry. It compares the number of  $\Lambda_b^0$  decays to the number of  $\bar{\Lambda}_b^0$  bar decays: if there is no CP violation, the value of CP asymmetry should be zero. In practice, they measured the yield asymmetry, which is the difference in the number of decays observed for  $\Lambda_b^0$  and  $\bar{\Lambda}_b^0$  bar.

There are some effects that can mimic CP violation. For example, the proton-proton collisions may produce more  $\Lambda_b^0$  than  $\bar{\Lambda}_b^0$  bar to begin with. For another, the LHCb detector on the Large Hadron Collider might have been slightly better at detecting one charge over another.

To correct for these possible biases, the researchers used a control channel – a similar decay where no CP violation is expected. Here, an  $\Lambda_b^0$  baryon decays to a positively charged  $\Lambda_c^+$  baryon, and a negatively charged pion:  $\Lambda_b^0 \rightarrow \Lambda_c^+ \pi^-$ .

Any asymmetry seen in this control channel was considered a nuisance and subtracted from the main measurement.



The Large Hadron Collider is the world's largest, most powerful particle accelerator. It accelerates particles, mainly protons, to near the speed of light in opposite directions around a 27-km underground ring. Then the particles are made to collide at four locations, where massive detectors collect data on what happens during the collision. CERN

The researchers used statistical methods to determine how many real  $\Lambda_b^0$  baryon and  $\bar{\Lambda}_b^0$  bar antiparticle decays the detector recorded. Then they checked their results for consistency across different data-taking periods, detector settings, and analysis methods.

Thus, the team found a significant difference in the decay rates: about 2.45%.

## Mesons, then baryons

According to the paper, this result is 5.2 standard deviations away from zero, which is well above the statistical threshold required for physicists to claim a discovery in particle physics.

“It was expected that the LHCb group had enough data. They are reporting it now,” theoretical physicist, University of Hawaii affiliate graduate faculty, and Chennai’s Institute of Mathematical Sciences retired professor Rahul Sinha told *The Hindu*.

This is the first time CP violation has been observed in baryon decays.

Previously, physicists had reported CP violation only in mesons, particles which are made of a quark and an antiquark, and not baryons, which are made of three quarks.

The result matches the predictions of the Standard Model, the main theory of particle physics, which says CP violation comes from the way quarks mix and decay. However, the amount of CP violation in the Standard Model is not enough to explain the matter-antimatter imbalance in the universe.

“The observation of CP violation in baryons still doesn’t settle the mystery of the universe’s missing antimatter,” Prof. Sinha said.

“The Standard Model predicts a rate of disappearance of antimatter that doesn’t match what we’re seeing in the universe.”

## ‘New physics’

The new announcement opens new ways to search for ‘new physics’, the name for hitherto unknown effects or particles beyond what the Model predicts, and which physicists believe will reveal the ‘complete’ theory of subatomic particles.

According to Prof. Sinha, the new paper reports observing CP violation in



More precise and comprehensive measurements across different particle systems are required to build a coherent and consistent picture of CP violation. Theoretically, improved calculations and refined models are essential to connect these experimental observations with the fundamental physics driving the matter-antimatter asymmetry

baryons but doesn’t say whether the amount of violation is higher or lower than that predicted by the Standard Model. Ascertaining that requires researchers to determine the complex phase.

In the context of CP violation, the complex phase is a combination of variables present in the Cabibbo-Kobayashi-Maskawa (CKM) matrix, a mathematical tool physicists use to understand how the quarks in a baryon interact with each other.

If the complex phase has a non-zero value, it means the laws of physics are not identical for matter and antimatter, leading to observable differences in their behaviour.

The Standard Model predicts specific values for the amount of CP violation, which are determined by the magnitude and phase of the variables in the CKM matrix.

By measuring the phase associated with CP violation in baryon decays, physicists can compare the observed amount of violation to the Standard Model’s predictions.

In their paper, the LHCb researchers have reported that the complex phase information proved too difficult to extract from the data collected by the detector.

“Until we measure the phase, we can’t say if the rate of antimatter’s disappearance is too high or too low compared to the Model’s prediction,” Prof. Sinha said.

The same technique to measure the

phase for mesons can’t be used for baryons. To this end, Prof. Sinha added that in 2022, he and his peers Shibasis Roy and N. G. Deshpande described a new way to measure the complex phase for baryons. It was published in *Physical Review Letters*.

Observing CP violation in baryons is important because the visible matter around us today is made of baryons. Some baryons like protons and neutrons are very stable and don’t decay for a long time.

Others, like  $\Lambda_b^0$ , decay in around 1.5 picoseconds. The point is what is true for one baryon should be true for all baryons.

“To definitively resolve the asymmetry problem, both experimental and theoretical progress are needed,” Dr. Yang said.

“Experimentally, more precise and comprehensive measurements across different particle systems are required to build a coherent and consistent picture of CP violation.”

Theoretically, improved calculations and refined models are essential to connect these experimental observations with the fundamental physics driving the matter-antimatter asymmetry.”

## The Sakharov conditions

How did matter gain an overwhelming upper hand over antimatter in the universe? CP violation in baryons is an important piece of this puzzle – but also only one piece.

In 1967, the Soviet physicist and later famous political dissident Andrei Sakharov said three conditions will have to be met for the universe to be made predominantly of only matter. They are:

(i) Baryon number violation: physical processes must exist that create an imbalance between the number of baryons and the number of antibaryons.

(ii) CP violation in baryons

(iii) Departure from thermal equilibrium: to prevent processes from balancing baryon and antibaryon production, interactions must occur out of equilibrium. The observation of CP violation in baryon decays provides a ‘source’ that adds to CP violation among mesons. The complex phase of the mesons’ violation has been measured whereas that of the baryons is pending. Once the latter is known physicists will be able to compare it to that predicted by the Standard Model. If they match, it will mean the Standard Model is right – but at the same time leave a gap between the predicted matter-antimatter asymmetry and that observed in the universe.

If the values don’t match, it could be a sign of ‘new physics’, which physicists will have to explain using new theories and experiments.

Overall, the newly reported observation is a milestone showing that the laws of physics treat matter and antimatter differently not just in mesons but also in baryons – the building blocks of the visible universe.

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The LHCb detector at the Large Hadron Collider is designed primarily to study the decay of particles containing bottom quarks and charm quarks. CERN

# New NCERT textbook explains how 'colonial powers stole India's wealth'

**Maitri Porecha**  
NEW DELHI

The new Class 8 social science textbook of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), introduced to students in the academic year 2025-26, describes the colonial rule of European powers, especially Britain, as one which "drained India of its wealth".

Chapter 4 of the new NCERT textbook, *Exploring Society: India and Beyond*, says, "...the Industrial Revolution in Britain, which required investment, was made possible at least partly by the 'stolen wealth from India'." "Stolen wealth from India" is a phrase used by U.S. historian Will Durant, it says.

"The general thrust of Britain's dominance in India was plunder, exploitation, trade dominance, imposition of educational,

**The general thrust of Britain's dominance in India was plunder, and exploitation, says NCERT official**

administrative and judicial systems, and Christianisation," Michel Danino, head of the NCERT's Curricular Area Group for social science, told *The Hindu*.

An official statement released by the NCERT said, "All the facts presented in this textbook are based on well-known primary and secondary academic sources. However, in order to avoid generation of any prejudice and misunderstanding, "A note on history's darker period at page 20 has been added."

The note states, "While those happenings cannot be erased or denied, it would be wrong to hold anyone today responsible

for them..." The fourth chapter goes on to include a quote by William Digby which states, "...Modern England has been made great by Indian wealth, ... wealth always taken by the might and skill of the stronger."

"A recent estimate for the wealth extracted out of India given by Indian economist Utsa Patnaik, in the period from 1765 to 1938, coming at 45 trillion U.S. dollars or about 13 times Britain's GDP in 2023. Had this wealth remained invested in India, it would have been a very different country when it attained independence," the chapter states.

"In India, it is common to find the colonial period portrayed as a positive one, with the British bringing industries, railways, the telegraph, modern education, and so on. We have tried to correct this

perspective by showing what really happened – the destruction of India's indigenous industries and educational system, the enormous revenue extraction from the Indian population to finance railway and telegraph, etc," Mr. Danino stated.

"Of course we have also shown the other side – the opening up of India to the world and Europe's discovery of India's ancient culture, among others," he further added.

## **Chapter on Marathas**

The new NCERT textbook, unlike the old ones which made passing reference to the Marathas, has now introduced an entire chapter dedicated to "The Rise of the Marathas". "In effect, the British took India from the Marathas more than from the Mughals or any other power," the NCERT text states.





# Share of clean energy in electricity still below 30%

While installed capacity has hit 50%, clean energy sources have a lower 'capacity utilisation factor'; flexibility in the grid and improved battery storage are way forward to address gap, says expert

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

India may have achieved an important milestone of sourcing 50% of its total electric power capacity of about 484 gigawatts from non-fossil fuel sources, though publicly available data show that the share of clean energy in the electricity actually supplied is below 30%.

"India has achieved a landmark in its energy transition journey by reaching 50% of its installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources – five years ahead of the target set under its Nationally Determined Contributions [NDCs] to the Paris Agreement," Pralhad Joshi, Minister for New and Renewable Energy, said earlier this week.

"This significant milestone underscores the country's commitment to climate action and sustainable development, and signals that India's clean energy transition is not only real but also accelerating under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership."

In 2014, the share of renewable energy sources –



**Power potential:** Capacity utilisation factor is an indicator of how much available energy is usable. REUTERS

solar, wind, biomass, hydropower (small and large) and nuclear power – constituted about 30% of India's installed electricity capacity. As on June 30, 2025 – as per the Centre – it rose to 50%. However, the share of electricity generated from these sources rose from 17% in 2014-15 to 28% in the April 2024 to May 2025 period.

Experts say that despite the rise in clean energy, the slower increase in utilising clean energy was due to the "capacity utilisation factor" (CUF), a measure of how much available energy was usable.

"Solar has CUF of approximately 20% and wind around 25-30%, compared to coal's 60% or nuclear's 80%. This means their contribution to actual generation remains limited despite high installed capacity," said Arunendra Kumar Tiwari, Fellow, The Energy Resources Institute.

## Coal dependence

Base load demand, or power that is available throughout the day, is largely provided by coal, which makes up about 75% of India's energy mix. While there was a rise in solar energy utilisation

and easing demand on coal during the daytime, particularly in summer, this couldn't be seen in the evening.

"To improve solar utilisation, we need flexibility in the grid and improved battery storage. Right now, we pay the same (per unit) for electricity, whether night or day. Much like in the early days of telecom, when night calls were cheaper, we need to experiment with differential power tariffs during the day. This will require smart grids and better management," said Saurabh Kumar, vice-president, Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet and an expert on energy.

An increase in 'hybrid' power projects that combine solar, wind, hydro and storage elements to meet India's growing peak and round-the-clock power needs are the way forward, says a policy note from the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

"When paired with battery storage, these hybrids can store surplus energy and release it during peak demand hours, particularly in the evening."



# Ties in region back in focus with PM's visit to Maldives

Modi to attend Independence Day celebrations in Male on July 26; plans are also under way for a proposed visit to Delhi by Nepal PM Oli, which will be the first since he took charge in 2024

**Suhasini Haidar**  
**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

**T**ies in the neighbourhood will come back into focus next week as Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Male on July 25-26 for the Independence Day of the Maldives, and sources say a long-pending visit by Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli to New Delhi is being planned shortly after his return.

Mr. Modi was expected to travel to the U.K. to sign the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, but officials said the trip, which is still being planned for July 24, has not been "finalised" and could be delayed.

Mr. Modi is expected to land in Male on July 25, and will be given a ceremonial welcome. He will hold bilateral talks with Maldives' President Mohamed Muizzu, who visited India in June 2024 for Mr. Modi's swearing-in ceremony and then for a State visit in October. Among a number of development initiatives,



**Close ties:** Narendra Modi with Mohamed Muizzu before their delegation-level meeting in New Delhi last year. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

both sides are expected to build on the launch of the digital payment system UPI and mechanisms to increase tourist arrivals between both countries, officials working on the visit said.

On July 26, Mr. Modi has been invited as a guest to the Independence Day parade and other special ceremonies to mark 60 years of the Maldives getting independence from the British in 1965. The invitation was announced by Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Khaleel during his vi-

sit to India in May this year.

The visit to the Maldives is significant as it marks Mr. Modi's first visit to the neighbouring country since the election of Mr. Muizzu in November 2023. Ties between India and Maldives hit a rough patch over the "India Out" campaign that Mr. Muizzu had backed during his campaign, and the "Boycott Maldives" social media campaign that followed over criticism of Mr. Modi by Maldivian Ministers. However, the two sides subsequently resolved issues, af-

ter India agreed to replace military personnel stationed there for aircraft management with civilian engineers. India has also increased its Lines of Credit and outlay to Maldives from ₹470 crore in 2024-25 to ₹600 crore in the latest budget, and extended a much needed currency swap facility to help Maldives with its debt repayment crisis last year.

Diplomatic sources further said that India is expected to host Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli later this month and that discussions are on.

## Support from Nepal

Mr. Oli was one of the first regional leaders to condemn the terrorist attack in Pahalgam and, subsequently, India accommodated Nepalese citizens while airlifting stranded nationals from Iran against the backdrop of the Iran-Israel conflict.

Mr. Oli's India proposed visit has acquired heightened attention as he was sworn in on July 15, 2024 but has not visited India till now, but had visited China in December last year.



# Govt. merges 36 schemes to float farm plan

Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana was announced in the Union Budget for 2025-26

The new scheme aims to enhance productivity and promote sustainable agricultural practices in India

Committees for effective planning of the scheme will be formed at district, State, and national levels

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana, or PMDDKY, to enhance agricultural productivity and increase adoption of sustainable agricultural practices across the country.

The scheme was announced in the Union Budget for 2025-26.

After the Cabinet meeting, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told presspersons that the Centre had merged 36 schemes of 11 Ministries into the PMDDKY, which will have an outlay of ₹24,000 crore per year for six years beginning 2025-26. "This scheme will help 1.7 crore

farmers," he said.

A release said the scheme aims at augmenting post-harvest storage at the panchayat and block levels, improving irrigation facilities, and facilitating availability of long-term and short-term credit.

#### Across 11 departments

"The scheme will be implemented through convergence of 36 existing schemes across 11 departments, other State schemes, and local partnerships with the private sector... 100 districts will be identified based on three key indicators of low productivity, low cropping intensity, and less credit disbursement," the release said.

The scheme would benefit at least one district

#### Greener fields

The PMDDKY aims at enhancing **agricultural productivity**, increasing adoption of **crop diversification and sustainable agricultural practices**, and augmenting **post-harvest storage**

**₹ 24,000 cr.** to be allocated yearly for six years for the scheme

■ States and private sector to partner with the Centre to implement the scheme

**100 districts** to come under the scheme which will begin this financial year

■ Districts to be identified based on 3 key indicators: low productivity, low cropping intensity, less credit disbursement

**Helping hand:** Nearly 1.7 crore farmers will benefit from the scheme. PTI



each State.

"The number of districts in each State/Union Territory will be based on the share of Net Cropped Area and operational holdings. However, a minimum

of one district will be selected from each State," the release added.

The scheme is modelled on the "Aspirational District Programme" of the Centre.

Mr. Vaishnaw said the "first-of-its-kind" scheme would focus exclusively on agriculture and allied sectors.

Committees for effective planning, implementation and monitoring of the scheme will be formed at district, State, and national levels.

"A District Agriculture and Allied Activities Plan will be finalised by the District Dhan Dhaanya Samiti, which will also have progressive farmers as members. The district's plans will be aligned to the national goals of crop diversification, conservation of water and soil health, self-sufficiency in agriculture and allied sectors, as well as expansion of natural and organic farming," the release said, adding that

the scheme's progress will be monitored on a monthly basis.

The government hopes that the scheme will result in higher productivity, value addition in agriculture and allied sectors, and local livelihood creation while increasing domestic production and achieving self-reliance.

#### 'Significant step'

Abhishek Jain, Fellow and Director, Green Economy and Impact Innovations, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), said the scheme was a significant step toward boosting agricultural performance in India's under-performing districts by emphasising not only productivity but also resilience through crop diver-

sification, allied activities, value addition, soil health, and water use efficiency.

"However, district selection could be improved by using annual net agricultural income per hectare," he said, adding that the scheme should not focus on low-credit disbursement as an indicator for district selection.

"A resilient agriculture system should not be dependent on credit. Instead, as we expand and diversify income streams for farmers via allied and value-added activities, and as we mainstream more sustainable agriculture practices, the reliance on external credit to fund cultivation cycles should come down, while still enhancing incomes for the farmers," he said.

