



**TATHASTU**  
Institute Of Civil Services

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

## 11th September 2025



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Institute Of Civil Services



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11<sup>th</sup> September 2025

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### 1. Trump, Modi signal trade negotiations may resume

## Trump, Modi signal trade negotiations may resume

Both leaders to speak in the 'upcoming weeks'; the countries are 'still on track to meet the fall deadline for the deal'; Union Minister Goyal says the country is in an active dialogue with the U.S.

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

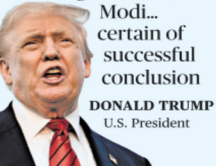
**T**rade negotiations between India and the U.S. are set to resume, President Donald Trump has announced, as he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi exchanged cordial messages on social media.

The leaders will speak directly in the "upcoming weeks", which could indicate a restart to relations that were ruptured over the imposition of 50% tariffs on India, demands for India to stop importing Russian oil, and conflicting versions on the Operation Sindoor ceasefire.

While no date has been announced for the formal resumption of talks for a Free Trade Agreement

India, U.S. [are] continuing negotiations to address trade barriers. Look forward to speaking with my very good friend

Modi... certain of successful conclusion  
**DONALD TRUMP**  
U.S. President



(FTA), government sources said on Wednesday they were "still on track to meet the fall deadline for the deal", referring to the commitment made by both leaders at their White House meet in February.

Mr. Trump was the first to post overnight on Truth

Teams working to conclude discussions at the earliest. Looking forward to speaking with Trump... will work together to secure more prosperous future...

**NARENDRA MODI**  
Prime Minister



Social, four days after he told presspersons at the White House that India-U.S. tensions were "nothing to worry about".

"I am pleased to announce that India and U.S. are continuing negotiations to address Trade Barriers between our two Na-

tions," Mr. Trump said. "I look forward to speaking with my very good friend, Prime Minister Modi, in the upcoming weeks," he added, promising a "successful conclusion" for both countries.

Hours later, Mr. Modi quoted the U.S. President's post on X, saying that he was "confident that trade negotiations will pave the way for unlocking the limitless potential of the India-U.S. partnership".

"Our teams are working to conclude these discussions at the earliest," Mr. Modi said, adding that he too looked forward to the call with Mr. Trump.

"We are in active dialogue with the U.S.," Union Minister Piyush Goyal said.

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## 2. Army takes charge of security in Nepal as uneasy calm returns

# Army takes charge of security in Nepal as uneasy calm returns

**Sanjeev Satgainya**  
KATHMANDU

An uneasy calm returned to Nepal on Wednesday after two days of protests led by Gen-Z members which resulted in the deaths of over two dozen people, even as the Army took control of security and issued restrictive orders and a night-time curfew.

Soldiers fanned out across the capital Kathmandu and other regions of the country from early Wednesday, in accordance with the decision taken by the Army leadership in consultation with President Ram Chandra Poudel late on Tuesday, following K.P. Sharma Oli's resignation as Prime Minister.

After 19 people were killed in police firing on Monday, when Gen Z took to the streets demanding "an end to corruption and misgovernance", the protests turned violent on

## Indian pilgrims, tourists stranded across Nepal

**NEW DELHI**

Nearly 600 Indian pilgrims who had gone for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra have been stranded in Taklakot, on the Nepal-China border. A large number of Indian tourists are also stranded in Kathmandu, Pokhara and other locations across the country. » **PAGE 12**

Tuesday. Demonstrators torched major government buildings. The Ministry of Health and Population, in a statement, updated the death toll to 30, with 1,033 people receiving treatment at various hospitals.

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## Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q. Nanda Devi peak forms a part of : [2003]**

- (a) Assam Himalayas
- (b) Kumaon Himalayas
- (c) Nepal Himalayas
- (d) Punjab Himalayas

**Q. Consider the following pairs : [2016]**

Community - sometimes in the affairs of mentioned in the news

- 1. Kurd - Bangladesh
- 2. Madhesi - Nepal
- 3. Rohingya - Myanmar

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 3 only



### 3. Delhi govt to microchip 10 lakh stray dogs for rabies control

## Delhi govt. to microchip 10 lakh stray dogs for rabies control

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Development Minister Kapil Mishra on Wednesday said the government will implant microchips in nearly 10 lakh street dogs in the city in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme over the next two years.

The decision was made at a meeting of the Delhi Advisory Board for Animal Welfare, which reports to the Development Ministry. Senior officials from the Animal Husbandry Department, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and other agencies concerned were also present at the meeting.

"Ahead of World Rabies



The govt. has directed a dog census at the earliest. FILE PHOTO

Day [September 28], it was decided that comprehensive measures would be undertaken in Delhi for rabies control. These include microchipping of dogs, preventing dog-bite incidents, and digitising the vaccination process. Special emphasis was placed on strengthening rabies control and dog population management through

microchips," read a government statement.

The Minister directed that a dog census be conducted at the earliest to ensure accurate data and informed planning.

MCD Standing Committee chairperson Satya Sharma, who also heads the subcommittee on stray dog management, said the civic body had held deliberations at a meeting last month on implanting microchips in strays and received suggestions from various stakeholders.

The corporation is responsible for leading the rabies control programme in the areas under its jurisdiction, which covers over 90% of Delhi. A municipal official estimated the cost of each chip to be around

₹200. "These chips will store key details, including the animal's vaccination and sterilisation history," said the official, adding that handheld scanners worth ₹4,000 would have to be procured to read data embedded in microchips.

#### The hardware

Addressing reporters, Mr. Mishra said the government will soon make the registration process for pet shops mandatory. He added that a separate monitoring committee will be set up to ensure compliance.

"A detailed advisory will be drafted soon, clearly outlining guidelines on pet shop registration, as well as those on rabies control, microchipping of strays,

prevention of dog bites, and the role of monitoring committees in the process. In addition, social media would be used more actively to enhance awareness and participation," said the Minister.

Mr. Mishra said all related rules will be implemented soon, and every regional committee will be activated to ensure monitoring and action at the local level.

#### Bengaluru programme

A similar programme to regulate the population of stray canines is being implemented in Bengaluru. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Animal Husbandry Department has chalked out a detailed plan earmarking ₹60 crore

for stray dog management in 2025-26. The civic body is preparing tenders worth ₹3.23 crore for microchipping stray dogs after conducting a pilot project in which microchips were implanted in 500 stray dogs.

Delhi has reported 26,334 dog bite cases this year and 49 rabies cases as of July 31, as per the MCD.

On August 22, the Supreme Court modified its August 11 suo motu order asking agencies in the National Capital Region to capture stray dogs and relocate them away from public places. In the latter order, the court had directed that the animals be released into the localities from which they were captured after being sterilised and immunised.

### 4. Dalit residents allege 'untouchability wall' blocking access in TN

## Dalit residents allege 'untouchability wall' blocking access in Tamil Nadu

**M. Nacchinarkkiniyan**  
TIRUVARUR

A 200-metre-long wall blocking a common pathway in Valangaiman town panchayat of Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district has triggered allegations of caste discrimination.

The wall, nearly 10 feet high, was erected three years ago at Kovilpathu in Valangaiman, bordering Pathiripuram in Virupachipuram panchayat. Kovilpathu and Pathiripuram house over 1,000 Dalit families, which say the closure of the pathway has forced them to walk an additional kilometre via the main road for daily needs.

The road was a 2-km stretch connecting their settlements to Valangaiman's primary and higher secondary schools, rice mills, government hospital, and police station. More than 800 school-going children have been directly affected by the wall.



The wall, nearly 10 feet high, was erected about three years ago at Valangaiman in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Most residents are daily wage workers and they say the longer route adds both time and costs to their already strained lives.

"To run household errands and access shops, this was the shortest path. Now, we are forced to take detours," said Manimegalai R., an elderly resident.

According to local activists, dominant caste groups tacitly support the wall. "There is fear that if Dalits have free access,

then property rates in the new layout will drop. We see this as an untouchability wall in all but name," said Murali K., district president of the Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front.

Plot developer J. Jekabar Ali, however, denied the charge. "This is patta land belonging to me, not a common pathway. There is a conspiracy to defame me. There are other walls around the Dalit settle-

ment - not just mine," he told *The Hindu*.

#### Official response

A peace committee meeting was held on September 26, 2024 by the then Valangaiman Tahsildar. The meeting recorded that a wooden footbridge existed for public use before the wall was built. Resolutions called for a government survey to verify if there were encroachments. However, they remain unimplemented.

Tahsildar K. Om Sivakumar said he wrote to the Special Tahsildar (Adi Dravidar Welfare) to inspect the land and take steps if it is found to be an encroachment. District Revenue Officer B. Kalaivani said she would inquire into the matter.

"This appears to be a personal property dispute. No complaint regarding untouchability has reached us," said P. Tamilmaran, DSP, Nannilam.



## 5. Constitute Indo-Bhutan River Commission with WB as member

# Constitute Indo-Bhutan River Commission with West Bengal as member: Mamata to Centre

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday reiterated her demand for the establishment of an Indo-Bhutan River Commission with West Bengal as one of its members.

"We have repeatedly demanded that Bengal be made a member of such a panel. It is necessary because the waters of Bhutan's Sankosh river flood Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar. Malda also goes under water," the Chief Minister told reporters during a three-day visit to north Bengal.

In response to a question posed by Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Ritabrata Banerjee on August 11, the Ministry of Jal Shakti had informed Parliament that there is no proposal under consideration for setting up such a commission.



Mamata Banerjee in Jalpaiguri, north Bengal, on Wednesday. PTI

However, the Ministry pointed out that India and Bhutan have entered into bilateral cooperation on flood-related issues, which includes a Joint Group of Experts and a Joint Technical Team on flood management, and a Joint Experts Team on flood forecasting. "These expert groups meet at regular intervals to discuss issues related to trans-border rivers," it stated.

The Chief Minister said there is "impending danger" of floods in the State and that the rivers of Bhutan, Nepal, and Teesta

from Sikkim pose a risk to north Bengal. She said the release of waters from reservoirs of the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) causes floods in south Bengal. She has previously blamed the DVC for flooding in south Bengal, terming it "man-made".

"The terrain of West Bengal is like that of a boat. The Ganga in Bengal is still full because of waters from U.P. and Bihar. The Centre must think about how much water Bengal can actually absorb," she said.

The Chief Minister criticised the Union Budget, claiming that "not a single paisa" was allocated to the State for flood control, whereas Assam was given funds. "But they must understand that whenever a disaster comes, it does not remain confined to one region, it affects all... it is Bengal that is facing the maximum brunt," she said.

## Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q. With reference to river Teesta, consider the following statements: (2017)**

1. The source of river Teesta is the same as that of Brahmaputra but it flows through Sikkim.
2. River Rangeet originates in Sikkim and it is a tributary of river Teesta.
3. River Teesta flows into Bay of Bengal on the border of India and Bangladesh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

## 6. The way forward on Katchatheevu, Palk Strait disputes

### The way forward on Katchatheevu, Palk Strait disputes



India has historically shaped regional and global diplomacy through the Panchsheel principles, the Non-Aligned Movement, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, and, most recently, with its "Neighbourhood First Policy." This stance has generally promoted peace and interdependence in South Asia. However, its unresolved issues with Sri Lanka, as the fisheries crisis in the Palk Straits and the sovereignty of Katchatheevu island, pose challenges.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Colombo in April 2025, both governments revisited these long-standing concerns. Mr. Modi emphasised a "humane approach" to the fisheries issue – one that balances livelihoods with conservation. This vision can succeed only if India and Sri Lanka address ecological imperatives and historic grievances in a spirit of cooperation.

**Livelihood and conservation at odds**  
Fishing communities along the Tamil Nadu coast and the Northern Province of Sri Lanka have, for centuries, shared the Palk Straits. But disputes today are exacerbated by Indian vessels carrying out mechanised bottom trawling in Sri Lankan waters.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) lays stress not only on equitable use of marine resources but also their conservation. Similarly, the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries 1995 deems destructive practices such as bottom trawling to be unacceptable.

Sri Lanka banned bottom trawling in 2017, but hundreds of Indian trawlers still continue the practice, damaging coral beds, shrimp habitats, and depleting fish stocks. Ironically, Tamil Nadu's smaller artisanal fishers, who use traditional sustainable methods, also suffer: their near-shore resources have been depleted by the trawler industry, forcing them into contested waters. Thus, this is not just a territorial clash but also a livelihood conflict within the Tamil communities themselves – between business trawler operators pursuing profit and traditional fishers who are dependent on the sea for subsistence.

A sustainable resolution calls for making a distinction between the needs of artisanal fishers and trawler operators. Trawler operators cannot claim empathy as their commercial profits are at the expense of marine sustainability and community welfare. Small boat artisanal fishers have fished in these waters "from time immemorial" and their plight deserves humane accommodation.

This can be worked out through dialogue between Indian and Sri Lankan fisher organisations. With the consent of the Sri Lankan fishers, they can work out quotas or regulated



**Nirmala Chandrasenan**  
is Attorney-at-law,  
Supreme Court  
of Sri Lanka

access and set out limited fishing rights on specific days or seasons for Tamil Nadu's small fishers, until India's stocks recover.

There should be community sensitisation. Sri Lankan Tamil Members of Parliament and the Tamil media can play a role by highlighting in Tamil Nadu the hardships that the Northern fishermen suffered during Sri Lanka's long civil war. Many of these families lost decades of income when the military restricted sea access during the conflict. They should not be portrayed as aggressors but as fellow victims of economic loss. Such steps would foster goodwill. It is worth remembering that during the Sri Lankan conflict, Tamil refugees were received in Tamil Nadu with compassion, housed in camps, and given assistance. Preserving these bonds of fraternity is essential.

#### Clearing the misconceptions

Public debate often portrays Katchatheevu, the tiny uninhabited islet in the Palk Straits, as the root of the fisheries dispute. This is misleading. Katchatheevu is less than half a square mile in area, and is barren except for the church of St. Anthony, which fishermen from Tamil Nadu continue to visit for the annual festival under the 1974 India-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Treaty. The 1974 boundary settlement placed the islet in Sri Lankan waters. The Treaty is legally binding. Under international law, boundary treaties are sacrosanct (*pacta sunt servanda*). They cannot be unilaterally repudiated without undermining the global order – just as China's contestation of its settled frontiers with India generates instability.

Myths such as "Indira Gandhi gifted the island to Sirimavo Bandaranaike" need clarification. In reality, India withheld the island's sovereignty before deciding. Records showed Sri Lankan administrative control dating back to Portuguese and Dutch rule, and, earlier, to the Tamil kings of the kingdom of Jaffna.

International precedents exist in the following cases. In the *Minquiers and Ecrehos* case (*France vs United Kingdom*), the International Court of Justice (1953), the ICJ awarded sovereignty to the U.K., despite France's historical claim through the Duchy of Normandy, because it had exercised administrative jurisdiction. Similarly, India conceded that Sri Lanka had the stronger claim. Another example is the *Rann of Kutch Arbitration* (1968) between India and Pakistan.

Thus, retrieving Katchatheevu is not a question of justice but of political rhetoric. It remains a settled issue under international law. Importantly, fishing rights are a distinct matter – not linked to sovereignty over the islet.

The Palk Straits and adjacent waters were recognised as "historic waters" under Indian and Sri Lankan law – areas where sovereign rights are even stronger than in normal territorial seas. As

such, there is no "right of innocent passage" or third-state fishing rights without explicit consent. Judicial recognition of historic rights dates back to the Madras High Court case of *Annakumar Pillai vs Muthupayal And Ors.* (1904), which upheld claims based on traditional pearl and conch fisheries. Therefore, India's acceptance in 1974 of the maritime boundary was not whimsical but legally consistent with historic precedent.

The UNCLOS (Article 123) encourages cooperation in semi-enclosed seas – such as the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar. Here, joint resource management is not just ideal but mandatory. Models exist as in the Baltic Sea Fisheries Convention where Latvia, Poland and the European Union share quotas to conserve resources.

India and Sri Lanka could implement similar frameworks such as equitable quotas for fishing days and catch, a joint research station on Katchatheevu for marine biologists to monitor resources and suggest sustainable practices, and promotion of deep-sea fishing in India's 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), reducing pressure on near-shore waters and lessening illegal crossings.

#### Toward good neighbourhood policy

India's regional leadership is shaped not just by geography but also by cultural and civilisational ties. With Sri Lanka, those ties are especially deep. To protect them, disputes must be addressed without populist rhetoric but through quiet cooperation, legal recognition and shared livelihood security. The way forward involves multiple levels such as government-to-government talks (retaining trust and treaty obligations) and State/Provincial engagement (involving Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka's Northern Provincial Council and community dialogue, encouraging people-people empathy that overcomes media distortions).

If handled with prudence, the Katchatheevu and Palk Straits issues can become symbols of cooperation rather than conflict.

India and Sri Lanka share not only maritime boundaries but also centuries of cultural, religious, and kinship ties. The fisheries issue requires fairness to both communities, prioritising artisanal livelihoods and ecological sustainability. The Katchatheevu issue, meanwhile, is legally settled – it should no longer cloud the real problem of managing resources. By adopting a collaborative fisheries regime, investing in deep-sea alternatives, and respecting historical legal agreements, the fishers of Tamil Nadu and the Northern province of Sri Lanka could move from confrontation to cooperation. In the long arc of diplomacy, smaller disputes must not overshadow the larger vision: peace, prosperity and mutual respect in South Asia.

## 7. A joint and new journey along the SCO pathway

### A joint and new journey along the SCO pathway

Last week, I was privileged to welcome Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Tianjin, China, for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, and attend the meeting between China's President Xi Jinping and Mr. Modi. This is a summit of solidarity and friendship. After 24 years of development, the SCO has grown into the world's largest regional organisation. The SCO Tianjin Summit has been the largest since the organisation's establishment. Leaders or the representatives of 23 countries, Mr. Modi included, and 10 heads of international organisations gathered to renew friendship, explore cooperation, seek common development, and advance the SCO into a new stage of high-quality development.

#### A high-yielding summit

There were fruitful outcomes. The Tianjin Declaration announced the establishment of "four security centres", including the SCO Universal Center for Countering Security Challenges and Threats and the SCO Anti-drug Center, and decided to set up the SCO Development Bank. Member-states of the SCO issued statements which expressed a fair stance in support of the multilateral trading system, and a just voice for defending the achievements of the victory in the Second World War.

This was a summit that focused on development. The leaders adopted the SCO's development strategy for the next decade. Against this backdrop, Mr. Xi announced that China would establish three major platforms for China-SCO cooperation in energy, green industry, and the digital economy, and set up three major cooperation centres for scientific and technological innovation, higher education and also vocational and technical education. These initiatives are open to all member-states, providing the organisation with new opportunities and empowering the region's sustainable development.

It was a summit leading global governance. In response to the governance deficit facing today's



**Xu Feibang**  
is China's  
Ambassador to India

world, Mr. Xi put forth the Global Governance Initiative, calling for adhering to sovereign equality, abiding by international rule of law, practising multilateralism, advocating a people-centered approach, and focusing on taking real actions, which became the biggest highlight of this summit.

Since joining the SCO in 2017, India has played an important role in advancing the SCO's development. China deeply appreciates Mr. Modi's and India's full support for China's SCO presidency. China stands ready to work with India to enhance cooperation under the framework of SCO in various areas such as security, financing, energy, green industry and the digital economy, to better improve the well-being of their people.

#### The diamond jubilee of ties

This year marks the 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic ties. In Tianjin, Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi reached new, important and common understandings on growing China-India relations further. Mr. Xi pointed out that it should be the right choice for China and India to be good-neighbourly friends and partners who help each other succeed, and have the dragon and the elephant dance together. Mr. Modi also stated that India and China are partners, not rivals.

Their consensus far outweighs their disagreement. India is ready to view and develop the bilateral ties from a long-term perspective.

We should uphold the important and common understandings reached by the two leaders as guidance, and push bilateral relations forward for more practical progress.

First, we should further consolidate strategic mutual trust. We should earnestly draw the lessons from the past 75 years, strengthen correct strategic perception, explore right ways for neighbouring major countries to get along with each other, which are characterised by mutual respect and trust, peaceful coexistence, pursuit of common development, and win-win cooperation, and gradually resume various

mechanisms for dialogue and exchange between the two governments.

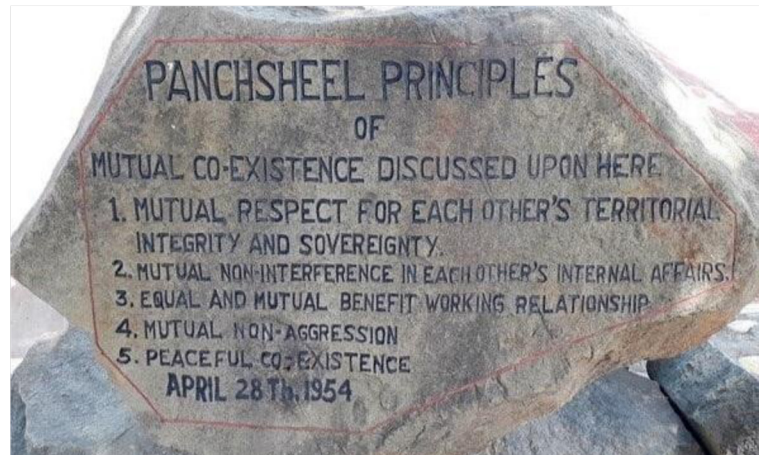
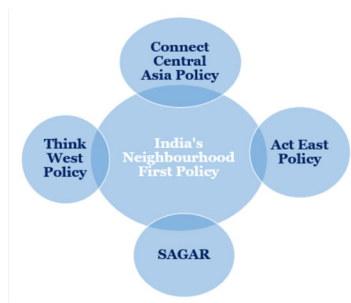
Second, we should further expand exchanges and cooperation. We should focus on development, which is the biggest common denominator of all countries, and promote mutual support and success, and better facilitate trade and investment flows. The Chinese side is ready to strengthen cooperation with the Indian side in technology, education, culture, tourism and poverty alleviation, and promote exchanges and communications between political parties, think-tanks, media and the youth, so as to expand the convergence of interests and promote people-to-people bonds.

Third, we should further enhance good-neighbourliness and friendship. We should continue to uphold the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence initiated by the older generation of Chinese and Indian leaders, truly respect each other's core interests and major concerns, and combine our strength to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas. We should not allow the boundary question that was left over from the past to define current China-India relations, nor let specific differences affect bilateral cooperation, so as to ensure the sound and stable development of China-India relations.

#### The road ahead

As the world's two most populous major developing countries and important members of the Global South, China and India share common interests in pursuing development and revitalisation, maintaining world peace and stability, and promoting global governance. India and China will successfully assume the BRICS presidency in the next two years. China stands ready to work with India to support each other's presidency, deepen and strengthen greater BRICS cooperation, jointly implement the Global Governance Initiative, resolutely oppose bullying and hegemony, defend international fairness and justice, and join hands to build a community with a shared future for humanity.





## 8. To build roads is to build peace

### *To build roads is to build peace*

In India's tribal hinterlands, especially those affected by Maoist insurgency, roads are not just a matter of transport. They are emissaries of the state, carving a path not only through forests and hills but also through histories of marginalisation and neglect. In regions where formal institutions are barely visible, a newly built road often marks the first arrival of governance itself.

A growing body of research shows that road development in conflict-affected areas has a stabilising effect. In Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, core States in the "Red Corridor," the presence of rural roads is strongly associated with improvements in electricity access, employment opportunities, and security. Roads help reclaim governance from non-state actors who thrive in isolation. When the state is absent, insurgent groups often step in with slogans and systems. Across conflict zones, insurgents have set up parallel institutions that mimic state functions. Diego Gambetta's classic study of the Sicilian Mafia illustrates this: extralegal actors assume roles such as conflict resolution and taxation when the state withdraws. In India, Maoist insurgents have attempted to fill governance gaps in remote areas by running informal courts and levying their own "taxes." The demand and supply logic applies to governance. An undersupply of formal governance leads to opportunistic entrepreneurship seeking to pick up the slack in supply.

In some tribal regions, it is reported that extralegal outfits have even dispensed rudimentary medical aid where clinics are absent – an act that blurs the line between care and coercion. Research by Alpa Shah (2018) and Human Rights Watch (2009) notes that the Naxalite presence in villages often includes some health services and welfare activities, though always underwritten by the threat of violence. As scholar Zachariah



**Pavan Mamidi**  
is Director, Centre for Social and Behavior Change (CSBC), Ashoka University

Mampilly (2011) observed in other insurgent contexts, such services are not charitable – they are strategic. The aim is not just survival but legitimacy.

Legitimacy cannot rest on coercion alone. Extralegal governance, while sometimes filling the gaps left by the state, is not bound by constitutional safeguards or democratic principles. Its forms of justice are often opaque, arbitrary, and punitive. In several Maoist-affected areas, there are reports of kangaroo courts (*jan adalats*) that have issued summary punishments, including executions, without due process. This is justice without appeal, correction, or accountability – more terror than tribunal.

This is why infrastructure matters. It is the physical precondition for the presence of lawful authority. Jain and Biswas (2023) have shown that road connectivity correlates with a decline in crime and increased service access in rural India. Internationally, Rafael Prieto-Curiel and Ronaldo Menezes (2020) demonstrate that violence is higher in poorly connected areas, whether in cities or rural zones. Infrastructure, they argue, is not merely functional; it is political.

Formal state institutions, though imperfect, operate within a framework of laws shaped by democratic consensus. These laws are debated, refined, and subject to public scrutiny. When schools, police stations, clinics and courts are introduced in conflict-prone areas through road development, they bring not only services but a system that is, at least in principle, accountable to citizens. It is the rule of law, not rule by fiat.

This contrast is critical. While formal institutions are subject to electoral oversight, bureaucratic accountability, and legal restraint, informal justice systems are not. They more often reflect entrenched power hierarchies and patriarchal norms, leading to practices such as vigilante justice

and collective punishment. In the absence of courts, entire communities can be targeted. Accusations of collaboration with security forces have, in some cases, led to mob reprisals under the guise of justice.

The Indian state has recognised this. In Chhattisgarh, former top official and current NITI Aayog CEO B.V.R. Subrahmanyam led a thoughtful strategy that placed infrastructure at the heart of governance renewal. Roads came first, followed by schools, clinics, and law enforcement. Each road had a message: that the state has come in, and is here to stay.

#### **Safeguards are needed too**

But infrastructure alone cannot resolve conflict. Roads can carry relief or repression. Without institutional safeguards such as justice mechanisms, health-care access, and community consultation, they risk becoming symbols of control rather than inclusion. A road should not simply be laid through a village but built with the village as this is essential to legitimacy. Moreover, we must be mindful that informal social norms, even outside insurgent control, can be just as exclusionary. It is said that in some parts of rural India, *khat* panchayats and caste councils operate alongside or in place of formal institutions. These bodies often enforced rigid social codes through shame or violence. While they may have provided swift resolution, they did so without the protections of equity or legality. Development, therefore, must aim not only to replace insurgent authority but also to integrate pluralistic, rights-based governance rooted in India's constitutional values.

As India invests in its tribal heartlands, especially in regions like southern Chhattisgarh, road development must be part of a broader effort to extend justice, dignity, and opportunity. The goal is not merely movement but belonging. To build roads, then, is to build peace.

Roads help reclaim governance from non-state actors who thrive in isolation





## 9. Why does peace seem so elusive to eastern DRC?

# Why does peace seem so elusive to eastern DRC?

Why is the U.S. interested in entering the region? Why did the ceasefire deal fail?

**Anu Maria Joseph**

### The story so far:

Over the past eight weeks, the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has seen two major developments. On June 27, Rwanda and the DRC signed a U.S.-brokered peace agreement in Washington, DC. On July 19, the Congolese government and M23 rebel group signed a ceasefire deal in Doha, mediated by Qatar. However, days after the U.S.-led peace agreement and Doha ceasefire, M23 resumed its offensive, undermining the peace objectives.

### What happened in the U.S. and Doha?

Washington brought the DRC and Rwanda to sign a peace agreement, committing to a cessation of hostilities, respect for territorial integrity, and an end to support for armed groups, including the M23. Both signatories agreed to establish a joint

Security Coordination Mechanism (JSCM) within 30 days to oversee conflict settlement and an Economic Integration Framework within 90 days to promote licit mineral trade and economic cooperation. The accord also calls for disengagement, disarmament, and conditional integration of armed groups into the Congolese forces. For the DRC, the U.S. entry meant an end to illicit mineral trade; security assistance; and U.S. investment. Rwanda has been accused by the UN and other Western countries of supporting the M23 rebels. The international pressure left Rwanda with no option but to sign the agreement.

Doha mediated directly between the DRC and the non-state armed group, M23. The DRC and M23 rebels signed a Declaration of Principles, agreeing to an immediate ceasefire and commitment to reach a comprehensive peace agreement by August 18. The M23 promised to withdraw from the regions it seized, and

the DRC agreed to release M23 prisoners.

### What are the interests of the U.S.?

For the U.S., the deal would give them access to the DRC's \$24 trillion worth of critical mineral reserves. The country possesses 70% of global cobalt reserves, making it the world's largest producer. The region is also popular for its coltan, copper, diamond, gold and tin reserves. Further, U.S. entry into the region would mean an end to Chinese companies' monopoly in the DRC's mineral sector.

### Did the peace agreement last?

The Doha ceasefire did not hold for long. M23 continued its offensives in North and South Kivu provinces. The Human Rights Watch reported that the group killed more than 140 people in July. The ceasefire was violated when M23 and DRC failed to adhere to the terms of the agreement. M23 has not withdrawn from the regions it seized, nor has the DRC

released M23 prisoners.

### What does it mean for the conflict?

The U.S.'s direct involvement and Qatar's mediation with armed groups have brought hope and opened a gateway toward trust and a lasting peace in eastern DRC. Although the ceasefire was violated, Qatar resumed re-negotiating with the warring sides on August 26. However, DRC's record of previously failed ceasefires and peace efforts signal that commitment and compliance from all actors can never be guaranteed.

Unlike previous peace initiatives, the U.S.-led peace agreement served the security, political and economic interests of the warring parties. The signing of the agreement conveyed an impression of a return to peace in the region, which is far from happening. The conflict in eastern DRC is rooted in unresolved history stemming from the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the subsequent Congo wars, and the tensions between more than a hundred ethnic armed groups, persisting over decades. Although the peace agreement successfully brought Rwanda and DRC to the bargaining table, the root causes of the conflict remain unaddressed. Therefore, for the agreement to succeed, it requires a comprehensive peace process and continued efforts.

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### THE GIST

Washington brought the DRC and Rwanda to sign a peace agreement, committing to a cessation of hostilities, respect for territorial integrity, and an end to support for armed groups, including the M23.

Doha mediated directly between the DRC and the non-state armed group, M23.

The U.S.'s direct involvement and Qatar's mediation with armed groups have brought hope and opened a gateway toward trust and a lasting peace in eastern DRC.

## Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. About three-fourths of the world's cobalt, a metal required for the manufacture of batteries for electric motor vehicles, is produced by

- Argentina
- Botswana
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Kazakhstan

## 10. SC flags Governors sitting on Bills as Centre terms dispute a "false alarm"

### SC flags Governors sitting on Bills as Centre terms dispute a 'false alarm'

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, heading a five-judge Presidential Reference Bench, on Wednesday pointed to Governors sitting on Bills for years together even as the Union government referred to disputes raised by non-BJP-ruled States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala over inexplicable gubernatorial delay as a "false alarm".

"How can you say that when Governors are sitting over Bills for years together even as the Union government referred to disputes raised by non-BJP-ruled States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala over inexplicable gubernatorial delay as a 'false alarm'?" Chief Justice Gavai asked the Centre, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

The Reference had followed on April 8 judgment of the court in the *Tamil Nadu Governor* case, which prescribed a three-month timeline for the President and the Governor to decide Bills.

Tamil Nadu had approached the court after the Governor sat on 10 Bills for four years, since 2020. Mr. Mehta reasoned the Centre was not justifying Governors delaying assent to Bills "endlessly". He had only meant to say that a State and its Governor must act "collaboratively" to ensure the smooth



working of the Constitution.

"We are proud of our Constitution, considering what is happening in the neighbouring countries. Like what happened in Nepal yesterday..." Chief Justice Gavai remarked. Justice Vikram Nath mentioned Bangladesh in the same context. Mr. Mehta said "collaboration" was possible only if both parties (State and Governor) had powers. He argued there was no room for collaboration if the Governor was expected to toe the line of the State Cabinet and mechanically sign Bills put before him for assent.

"The Governor cannot be reduced to an ornamental head of State. We may have had some aberrations, but for the past 55 years, every Governor has acted in a way expected of them, in a collaborative

manner," Mr. Mehta submitted.

He objected to the argument by non-BJP-ruled States that instances of Governors delaying Bills had increased after the NDA government came to power in 2014 at the Centre.

Justice Vikram Nath observed that the Reference Bench was not tracing what happened before or after 2014. The court was answering the questions of law raised by the President in the Reference.

Justice P.S. Narasimha tested the Centre's submission that the moment a Governor withheld assent to a Bill in the first instance under Article 200, the proposed law would fall. The judge asked how a Bill passed by both Houses of the State legislature, after due consultation, could be felled by the solitary action of the Governor withholding assent.

"Should there not be a consultative process by which the Bill is returned to the State legislature for reconsideration. This way, both the State Assembly and the Governor get a role to play," Justice Narasimha said.

Appearing for both Tamil Nadu and its ruling party, DMK, senior advocate P.

Wilson argued that a Bill was an "expression of political will".

"A Governor cannot act like a constitutional court, adjudicate on the constitutionality of a Bill and unilaterally withhold it... If it timelines are not set for gubernatorial assent to Bill, States will be left to wander the corridors of the court," he submitted.

### 'Sitting ducks'

Advocate Anant Bansal, appearing for Tiruvallur MLA Sasikanth Senthil, said citizens could not be made "sitting ducks" by a Governor who sits on, for example, a health care Bill for years together.

"If the Governor sits indefinitely on a Bill, Article 200 would be made unworkable and superfluous," Advocate-General of Meghalaya Amit Kumar submitted.

The State of Telangana, represented by senior advocate S. Niranjan Reddy, submitted that a Governor's action must be judicially reviewed for discrimination if a law assented to in one State ruled by the same party as in the Centre was disapproved by a Governor in a State governed by a party in the Opposition.



## 11. ISRO inks agreement with HAL for transfer of SSLV technology

### ISRO inks agreement with HAL for transfer of SSLV technology

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Space Research Organisation signed a formal agreement with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. on Wednesday for the transfer of technology for production of small satellite launch vehicles (SSLV), marking a significant step in industry participation in the space sector.

The agreement, the 100th transfer of technology agreement facilitated by the space sector promoter INSPACe, was inked in Bengaluru by the ISRO, NewSpace India Ltd., and INSPACe with HAL, which outbid a consortium led by Adani Group-backed Alpha Design Technologies.

The aim is to complete the entire technology transfer process within 24 months from the date of

signing the agreement, a statement from INSPACe said. During this period, the ISRO will provide training and technical support to the HAL for acquiring the know-how of the SSLV, it added.

ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan said the agreement would allow the HAL to independently build the SSLV for both domestic and international markets.

"We are honoured to be in this league to scale India's next big frontiers with the SSLV technology, by partnering with ISRO and NSIL and IN-SPACE to implement it," D.K. Sunil, Chairman and Managing Director of HAL, said.

Mr. Sunil said HAL would build SSLVs so that India could offer regular, cost-competitive small-satellite launches to domestic and global customers.

## 12. Udyam Portal

**INBRIEF**



**PhonePe partners with SIDBI, MSME Ministry on Udyam**

PhonePe will work with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and the Small Industries Development Bank of India, to register more small merchants with the Udyam facility, thereby opening up more avenues for credit and availing government schemes, the company said. Udyam is a platform to formalise more MSMEs, and SIDBI has already worked on an "assist platform" to make it easier for merchants to register for an Udyam number.



### 13. Digital platform to preserve tribal art, culture launched



## Digital platform to preserve tribal art, culture launched

The Union Tribal Affairs Ministry on Wednesday launched the beta version of “Adi Sanskriti”, a digital platform for “tribal artforms and heritage”. Officials said it had been envisioned to become the “world’s first Digital University to preserve and promote the culture and knowledge of tribal communities”. The digital platform will have an online marketplace, opening up a digital market for products made by tribal artisans in India. The platform consists of three components: Adi Vishwavidyalaya (Digital Tribal Art Academy), Adi Sampada (Socio-Cultural Repository), and Adi Haat (digital marketplace).

