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Institute Of Civil Services

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## Karki is Nepal's first woman PM

# Karki is Nepal's first woman PM

73-year-old former Chief Justice, who backed the protesters, has to appoint Cabinet, oversee polls

President Ram Chandra Poudel dissolves Nepal's Parliament, accepting a key Gen Z demand

**Sanjeev Satgainya**  
KATHMANDU

Nepal President Ram Chandra Poudel appointed former Chief Justice Sushila Karki as the country's new Prime Minister and dissolved Parliament on Friday, as days of political turmoil showed signs of abating in the Himalayan nation. He also announced fresh elections on March 5, 2026.

Mr. Poudel administered the oath of office and secrecy to Ms. Karki at a brief ceremony. According to the Office of the President, Mr. Poudel dissolved the House and set the election date at the recommendation of the newly appointed Prime Minister.

Ms. Karki, 73, the first woman Chief Justice of Nepal, is now the country's first woman Prime Minister.

Following hectic meet-

ings that began late on Thursday, Mr. Poudel on Friday evening agreed to dissolve Parliament, a key demand of Gen Z protesters who brought down the government of K.P. Sharma Oli on September 9. Ms. Karki will soon form a Cabinet that will oversee the elections.

Even after Gen Z campaigners agreed on Ms. Karki's name as the leader of the next government, a dispute over the dissolution of Parliament had delayed the process of her appointment.

Mr. Poudel has held several rounds of consultations with Ms. Karki and other legal experts, facilitated by the Army, since Thursday night.

According to sources and experts he consulted, the President was extremely concerned that dissolving Parliament before appointing the head of



**Regime change:** Ram Chandra Poudel administers oath of office to Sushila Karki as Prime Minister, in Kathmandu on Friday. AFP

government could give a free rein to the new Cabinet, with nobody to hold it accountable. Ms. Karki, however, backed the protesters' demand that the House be dissolved. Protesters argued that if Parliament was not dissolved, the same old parties would retain their control and influence.

Sudan Gurung, a prominent Gen Z campaigner,

said on Thursday that House dissolution was non-negotiable, echoing Kathmandu Mayor Balendra Shah, a leading figure in the movement. Protesters had agreed on the choice of Ms. Karki only after Mr. Shah endorsed her.

As young campaigners waited in front of the President's Office throughout Friday, party insiders said Mr. Poudel had also con-

sulted major political leaders, who told him that any action he took should remain within constitutional limits.

The Army, the key facilitator whose presence on the streets has ensured a semblance of calm, was waiting for the process to move ahead as soon as possible and was getting exasperated as the hours passed, sources said.

Though some expressed concerns that the process of appointing Ms. Karki fell outside constitutional bounds, constitutional expert Bipin Adhikari said it was "unlikely" to be challenged in court.

"Given that her appointment is a remedial measure taken at a time of crisis, its legitimacy is not likely to be questioned," Mr. Adhikari said.

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## India's manuscripts reflect the journey of humanity

### India's manuscripts reflect the journey of humanity, says Modi

PM says digitisation will curb intellectual piracy; he bats for creation of database and highlights collaboration with Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday batted for digitisation of India's ancient manuscripts and creation of a database to share the knowledge in them.

Mr. Modi, who was addressing an International Conference on "Reclaiming India's Knowledge Legacy through Manuscript Heritage" as part of the launch of the Gyan Bharat Mission, said digitisation would help in curbing "intellectual piracy", as the information sourced from the country's traditional knowledge system had been copied and patented many a time by others.

He said the exercise would be an extension of the country's resolve to forge ahead with the concept of *swadeshi* (made in India) and *atmanirbhar* (self-reliant) Bharat.

The Prime Minister said India had the world's largest collection of about one crore manuscripts, of



**Digitising legacy:** PM Narendra Modi visits an exhibition during the international conference on manuscripts in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

which over 10 lakh had been digitised so far. He commended private organisations for working with the government to achieve this goal.

**'Presenting heritage'**  
India is now proudly presenting before the world its heritage of ancient knowledge preserved in its manuscripts for centuries, he said, adding that India was also working with other countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Mongolia, with whom it has enjoyed cultural ties and which are home to such

manuscripts. "Throughout history, crores of manuscripts were destroyed, but the ones that remain show how devoted our ancestors were to knowledge, science, and learning," Mr. Modi said. "India's manuscripts contain footprints of the development journey of the entire humanity."

He launched the "Gyan Bharatam" portal, a dedicated digital repository platform to digitalise and preserve ancient Indian manuscripts, and enhance sharing traditional knowledge embedded in them.

## India votes in favour of the UNGA resolution on Palestine state

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### Press Trust of India

UNITED NATIONS

India on Friday voted in favour of a resolution in the UN General Assembly that endorses the 'New York Declaration' on peaceful settlement of the Palestine issue and implementation of the two-state solution.

The resolution, introduced by France, was adopted with an overwhelming 142 nations voting in favour, 10 against and 12 abstentions. Those voting against included Ar-

gentina, Hungary, Israel and the U.S.

India was among the 142 nations that voted in favour of the resolution titled 'Endorsement of the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution'.

The declaration was circulated at a high-level international conference held in July at the UN headquarters and co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia.

In the declaration, the

leaders "agreed to take collective action to end the war in Gaza, to achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the effective implementation of the two-state solution, and to build a better future for Palestinians, Israelis and all peoples of the region".

It called on the Israeli leadership to issue a clear public commitment to the two-state solution, including a sovereign, and viable Palestinian State.







## Denying upward mobility to candidates with disabilities defeats the purpose of the quota: SC

# Denying upward mobility to candidates with disabilities defeats purpose of quota: SC

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in a judgment on Friday asked the Centre to clarify whether talented candidates with disabilities whose performance allows them to qualify for the unreserved category are pushed up to make room for more people with disabilities to avail reservation benefits.

The top court asked the Union government to detail the steps taken so far to ensure the "upward movement" of such candidates.

"We consider it appropriate to require the Union of India to explain whether appropriate measures have been taken to provide the upward movement of meritorious candidates applying against the post/s reserved for persons with disabilities, in case such candidates secure more than the cut-off for the unreserved category. The same principle must also be applied to promotions," a Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said, directing the Union government to respond by October 14.

The judgment, authored by Justice Mehta, said that candidates with disabilities



continue to be restricted to seats or jobs allotted for the disabled category, instead of allowing them upward mobility.

"The direct consequence of not providing upward movement to meritorious candidates applying under the category of persons with disabilities would be that even when a candidate with disability scores higher than the cut-off for the unreserved category, such a candidate would invariably occupy the reserved seat, thereby denying the opportunity to a lower scoring candidate with disability to make a claim on the seat/post," Justice Mehta reasoned.

Such stagnation of a candidate with disabilities defeats the very purpose of reservation under Section 34 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and "constituted a glaring example of hostile discrimination against persons with disabilities", the court said. Justice Mehta pointed out that meritorious candidates who belong to backward classes are automatically moved up to the unreserved category, leaving reserved seats vacant for the less advantaged among them. However, the same measures are not taken in the case of persons with disabilities, who have been deprived by providence as against persons who face societal discrimination, he said.

The court said the government ought to see the larger objective of reservation, which is to open a window for people with disabilities to join the mainstream and equally share opportunities.

"Rather than viewing disability as a deficit requiring correction, the law must recognise it as a lens that reveals the true nature of legal, social, and institutional frameworks, illuminating whether they embrace human diversity or create barriers that exclude certain members of society, i.e., those who have been discriminated against by providence or who have suffered the disability factor in their lifetime," Justice Mehta noted.

## Kerala Capital to host two-day blue economy conclave

# Kerala capital to host two-day blue economy conclave

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Representatives from 29 European countries are expected to attend a two-day blue economy conclave in the State capital on September 18 and 19, Minister for Fisheries Saji Cherian has said.

The conclave 'Blue Tides: Two Shores One Vision' is being organised by the State's Fisheries department in collaboration with the Union government and the European Union (EU).

Representatives from 17 European countries have confirmed participation in



Saji Cherian

the event, which will be attended by EU Ambassador to India and Bhutan, Hervé Delphin, Mr. Cherian said on Friday.

The event, to be held at The Leela Kovalam, will see experts and stakeholders from India and Europe share their thoughts

on a range of blue economy themes and forge partnerships.

### Sustainable model

The event will come out with a road map for developing Kerala as a sustainable and resilient blue economy model, leveraging the EU's expertise and the strategic advantages of the State's blue economy.

The countries that have confirmed participation in the event are Finland, France, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Denmark, Bulgaria, Austria, Malta, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Romania and Germany.



## Scam space

### Scam space

Social media platforms should proactively remove fraudulent content

Policing the digital economy requires what might seem disproportionate resources, and a recent case in Hyderabad illustrates why. A retired doctor was persuaded to invest more than ₹20 lakh after viewing a video on Instagram, in which Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman appeared to endorse an investment scheme. The video was a deepfake. Similar videos have been in circulation, featuring other public figures, to lend credibility to fraudulent cryptocurrency platforms. Such scams exploit the limited technical literacy of the wider population, regulatory gaps in cryptocurrency trading, the new use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated deepfakes, and the limited response of social media platforms. Despite wide smartphone penetration, many users are still unable to identify online manipulation, and are further motivated by the promise of rapid profits and fabricated evidence of gains. Complaints often arise only after attempts to withdraw returns are blocked. Public awareness campaigns remain uneven and often general, leaving many people vulnerable to scams that use increasingly sophisticated forms of deception. Most countries, including India, also do not yet classify them with the same clarity as conventional securities, creating an environment where fraudsters operate with impunity. Many are hosted abroad, operate through complex chains of wallets, and can disappear overnight. While police units have developed capacity, their reach stops at national borders.

Social media platforms, which serve as the principal channel for these scams, often respond passively. While companies such as Instagram publish advisories on avoiding scams and offer reporting mechanisms, fraudulent videos and accounts remain accessible until removed. The policies of platforms emphasise user self-protection rather than proactive detection. This means that scams circulate long enough to entrap victims before takedown requests are processed. The scale of global content slows manual review while automated moderation systems remain limited in detecting manipulated videos. As they are private entities profiting from user engagement, platforms prefer to avoid sustained monitoring that would involve intrusive scrutiny of user uploads. The result is that deepfake scams are treated as individual incidents rather than systemic vulnerabilities. Three measures are necessary. First, governments must define standards for registration, disclosure, and cross-border cooperation to limit the space in which fraudulent schemes operate. Second, technical literacy must be treated as a public policy priority. Awareness efforts should be continuous and supported by educational institutions, rather than limited to periodic campaigns by police units. Third, social media platforms should be required to remove fraudulent content proactively. Without these, such scams will entail huge human and material costs.

## The RTI's shift to a 'right to deny information'

### The RTI's shift to a 'right to deny information'

The Right to Information (RTI) Act is founded on the principle that in a democracy, which is defined as "rule of the people, by the people, for the people", all information held by the government inherently belongs to the citizens. The government acts as a custodian of this information on behalf of the populace. Citizens legitimise their representatives by electing them, who in turn legitimise the bureaucracy. Therefore, the default mode under the RTI is that all information must be shared with citizens.

However, the Act always included specific exemptions to protect certain interests, such as national sovereignty. One crucial exemption is the Act's Section 80(j), which is on "personal information".

The original Section 80(j) was a detailed provision designed to balance the right to information with individual privacy. It stipulated that personal information could be denied if it had no connection to public activity or constituted an "unwarranted invasion on the privacy of an individual", unless there was a larger public interest in its disclosure.

A key aspect of this original provision was a proviso which is an acid test. It said: "provided that the information which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person". This meant that if information could not be denied to Parliament or a State Legislature it could also not be denied to an ordinary citizen.

The intent was to guide public information officers (PIOs) in discerning what constituted public activity, private activity, or an invasion of privacy, especially given the difficulty in definitively defining "privacy" (even *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) vs Union Of India* acknowledged that it would evolve on a case-to-case basis). The government routinely collects information from an individual in the normal course of its duties, and such information is generally not considered to be an invasion of privacy and should, therefore, be shared. However, if it invades his privacy, it must not be taken routinely. Restrictions on the fundamental right to information should be within the limits set by Article 19(2) of the Constitution. Here, there are only two words relating to privacy: 'decency' or 'morality'. If disclosure violates decency or morality, it should be denied to Parliament and citizens.

**The ambiguity of 'personal information'**  
The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act amends Section 80(j) of the RTI Act – a drastic alteration of Section 80(j) that reduces its length to six words. This significant abbreviation makes it easy for most information to be denied. The core concern revolves around the interpretation of "personal information" itself.



**Shailesh Gandhi**  
is a former Central Information Commissioner

One of the most pressing issues is the lack of a clear and consistent definition of "personal information" under the amended RTI Act, especially in its relationship with the new Data Protection Law. There are two conflicting views: the first is Natural Person Interpretation: One view holds that "person" should be understood in its general sense, referring to a "normal person" or natural person. The second is the DPDP Bill Definition. The other, equally valid view, interprets "person" as defined in the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill. The DPDP Bill's definition is expansive, including a "Hindu undivided family, a firm, a company, [and] any association of individuals and the State".

If the latter definition is adopted, "almost everything is personal information". A significant amount of information can be shown to be related to some person. Thus the law gives a handle to deny most information. The RTI is transformed into a Right to Deny information. It becomes an "RTD". This broad interpretation poses a fundamental threat to the spirit of transparency. Adding to the complexity, the DPDP Bill contains a provision that overrides all other laws in cases of conflict. This is alarming because the DPDP Bill specifies strong penalties for violations which can be as high as ₹250 crore. This creates an untenable situation for PIOs. As much of the government information is now digital, PIOs are apprehensive that a mistake in disclosing information could lead to severe financial penalties. This fear will incentivise PIOs to err on the side of information denial rather than disclosure, effectively creating a "right to deny information". The DPDP Act must not override the RTI Act, though it might be acceptable for it to override other Acts.

#### Facilitating corruption

The practical implications of these amendments are dire for public accountability and the fight against corruption. Transparency is a crucial tool in this battle, especially when other anti-corruption mechanisms have proven to be ineffective.

The first is the loss of public monitoring. Citizens are the best monitors against corruption. If information is denied, this vital monitoring mechanism is severely hampered. India's multilayered government agencies such as vigilance departments, anti-corruption bureaus and the Lokpal, have already failed to curb corruption.

The second is denial of essential information. The broadened scope of "personal information" means that even mundane yet crucial documents could be withheld – a citizen's own corrected marksheets could be denied as "personal". The example of Raju's sharing details of pension beneficiaries to combat "ghost employees" and "ghost cards" will cease. Even a simple order

signed by an official could be denied as "personal information". It can result in over 90% of information being denied.

The third is unfettered corruption. The amendment "makes it the easy thing to be corrupt". Information relating to ghost employees or corruption charges falls under "personal information". It will be hidden, allowing corruption to flourish and continue unhindered.

While the "larger public interest" clause still exists in the RTI Act (in Section 82), its practical application is extremely rare and difficult. Citizens should not have to demonstrate "larger public interest" to access information as it is their fundamental right. This requirement only applies if information is already exempt.

There will be less than 1% orders where an exemption is accepted, but disclosure is based on larger public interest. This is because it is an incredibly challenging decision for any officer to make, weighing potential harm to an individual against the broader public benefit of disclosure. Therefore, relying on this clause to ensure transparency after the amendment is largely futile.

#### Apathy and a call to action

Despite the gravity of these amendments, there has been a notable lack of public and media outcry when compared to previous RTI changes, such as those concerning Commissioner's salaries and tenures. This apathy may be due to the amendment being "under the guise of data protection", making it seem less threatening to the average citizen. There is also a common sentiment that an individual's own information should not be shared, regardless of its relevance, leading to an 'ego takes over' mentality.

Sections 82 and 44(3) of the DPDP Bill constitute a "very fundamental regression on our democracy" and a "very fundamental attack on our fundamental rights".

There needs to be a focus on four issues. First, media and citizen engagement – there must be widespread public discussion across the country. Second, political accountability – citizens should demand assurances from political parties in their election manifestos that these amendments will be reversed. Third, public opinion – it is crucial to build strong public opinion with the support of the media. Fourth, recognition of gravity – this issue deserves as much attention as any other critical national debate, as the fundamental right to information is being compromised.

If citizens continue to remain silent, they will imperil their freedom and democracy. Collective action can lead to these changes being reversed. The future of transparency and accountability in India hinges on whether citizens and media can push back and protect the integrity of the RTI Act.