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# International Booker Prize at 10: Taking stories across borders

Paromita Chakrabarti  
New Delhi, May 24

"...TRANSLATION ALLOWS writing to transcend the limits of time and space. I believe in literature's power because, in the life of the mind, literature has never ceded ground nor given up on the dialogue between people," Ying Shuang-zi, one-half of the winner of this year's International Booker Prize for her novel *Tiruvaz Travogue* — translated into English from Mandarin Chinese by Lin King — said at the award ceremony on May 19. What the 41-year-old writer was articulating was not merely literature's ability to forge connections, but also the fact that to be multicultural is to hear, at best, half the conversation the world is having with itself.

One of the world's most influential awards for fiction in English translation, the International Booker Prize, that marks a decade in its current form, has worked to reward writers who write against the grain of the global literary market, of translators who carry stories across the distance of languages, and of readers who refuse to be circumscribed by familiarity.

## Road to reinvention

Launched in 2005 as the Man Booker International Prize, it was a biennial honour awarded to a writer for their entire body of work. Its early recipients, Ismail Kadare, Chimua Achebe, Alice Munro, Philip Roth and László Krasznahorkai, were already literary behemoths and the Prize only served to confirm their stature.



Ying Shuang-zi and Lin King at the prize ceremony. BOOKER PRIZE FOUNDATION

When the original Booker Prize expanded its eligibility in 2015 to admit writers of any nationality writing in English and published in the UK — it was earlier open only to writers from the Commonwealth, Zimbabwe and Ireland — the International Prize, too, changed purpose. It committed to fiction that had crossed over from another language into English. It also became an annual award for a single work of fiction, in any language, available in translation to English-speaking readers.

## Why it matters

This change made room for a long-overdue

transformation: the £50,000 prize would be shared equally between author and translator. It acknowledged, formally, that translation is not a mechanical service but a creative act. The translator, for long the invisible figure in world literature, was finally given a seat at the table. Before that, their names would often be missing from the book jacket.

The first winner under the new rules was Han Kang's unsettling and luminous *The Vegetarian*, translated from Korean by Deborah Smith. In the decade since, the Prize has honoured works from Arabic, Dutch, Polish, Bulgarian, Kannada and more. Last year, Indian writer Banu Mushtaq and translator Deepa Bhashti won the award for a collection of short stories, *Fears Lamp*. In 2022, Greetanjal Shree and Daisy Rockwell won for the novel *Tomb of Sand*.

## A decade of winners

The International Booker Prize has also won politics on its sleeves, showing a preference for fiction that grapples with the weight of history — Olga Tokarczuk's associative, nomadic *Flights* (2018); Jokha Alharthi's *Celestial Bodies* (2019), a tapestry of Omani life across generations; David Diop's *At Night All Blood Is Black* (2021), a harrowing meditation on colonial violence. It has championed formally daring, structurally restless books that reflect some of the world's anxieties — war, displacement, memory, gender and the weight of the past.

## The Nobel connection

No measure of the Prize's impact is more striking than the fact that four authors recognised by the International Booker Prize have gone on to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature: Kang, Tokarczuk, Annie Ernaux and Jon Fosse.

## Indie publishing boom

Since 2016, sales of translated fiction in the UK have doubled. Independent publishers, those risk-taking imprints guided by passion and a growing appetite for world literature, form the backbone of the Prize, by drawing attention to fiction from literary cultures marginal to mainstream Anglophone publishing.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Monolingualism vs. Multilingualism:** Monolingualism refers to the condition of using or knowing only one language. In a global context, relying strictly on a single dominant language like English restricts cultural exposure, causing a society to effectively "hear only half the conversation it is having with itself." Conversely, multilingualism fosters a pluralistic worldview, enabling a deeper understanding of diverse human experiences.
- **Literary Translation as a Creative Act:** Historically viewed as a mere mechanical or clerical service—simply swapping words from language A to language B—modern literary theory recognizes translation as a profound creative act. The translator must recreate the emotional nuance, cultural idiom, historical context, and stylistic texture of the original text, effectively serving as a co-author of the new work.
- **Independent Publishers (Indie Presses):** These are publishing houses that operate independently of major global publishing conglomerates (often referred to as the "Big Five"). Independent publishers typically take greater financial and artistic risks, championing translated fiction, avant-garde poetry, and voices from marginalized or non-mainstream literary cultures that larger houses might deem commercially unviable.
- **Anglophone Hegemony:** This term describes the cultural, economic, and political dominance of the English language and English-speaking nations in global discourse, media, and literature. This hegemony often creates a structural barrier, requiring non-English writers to be translated into English to achieve global visibility and financial viability.
- **Cultural Marginalization:** This occurs when the literary, historical, or social narratives of peripheral or non-Western societies are sidelined by mainstream global media. Translation acts as a counter-strategy, bringing these marginal narratives into central global focus.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis centers on how institutional recognition and deliberate structural changes can elevate translated literature from a marginalized sub-genre to a vital driver of global empathy and publishing growth.
- **Translation as a Tool for Transcending Borders:** The primary argument posits that literature in translation possesses an inherent power to transcend the boundaries of time, geography, and distinct cultural spaces. It fosters a global dialogue, allowing societies to resist the intellectual insularity of being closed off within their own linguistic silos.
- **The Structural Shift in Recognition:** A crucial turning point occurred when global prize structures shifted from honoring an author's lifetime achievement to celebrating a specific, single work of translated fiction annually. Crucially, splitting prize money equally between the author and the translator institutionalized the recognition of translators as creative peers rather than invisible assistants.
- **The Symbiotic Rise of Independent Publishing:** The expansion of translated literature is not merely an academic trend; it is sustained by an economic boom driven by independent publishers. These risk-taking imprints serve as the primary pipeline for bringing diverse, formally daring, and politically charged narratives to the global market, breaking the monotony of mainstream publishing.
- **Literature as a Mirror to Global Politics:** The narratives gaining international traction are deeply political, grappling with the weight of history, colonial violence, war, displacement, and gender anxieties. The global reader demonstrates a growing appetite for structurally restless books that confront uncomfortable global realities rather than seeking escapist prose.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of translated literature's global status reveals a clear transition from colonial-era linguistic hierarchies to a more democratized, multipolar literary space:
- **The Colonial Hierarchy:** Historically, global literature was heavily gatekept by imperial capitals. Works from Asian, African, or Latin American contexts were either ignored or translated through an orientalist lens that stripped them of their radical contemporary relevance, treating them merely as ethnographic artifacts.
- **The Mid-20th Century Commonwealth Bias:** For decades, international accolades for writing outside the Euro-American core were heavily skewed toward authors writing directly in English within the Commonwealth framework. This structural bias systematically excluded the rich internal literary traditions of non-English vernacular languages.
- **The 2015 Structural Paradigm Shift:** The decision to change the mechanics of global literary prizes—focusing on a single book and elevating the translator to an equal stakeholder—marked a major institutional break. This structural change reshaped publishing economics, incentivizing publishers to look beyond the safe, familiar confines of domestic writing.
- **The Nobel Convergence:** In recent years, a powerful correlation has emerged between the curation provided by translated fiction prizes and the Nobel Prize for Literature. Authors who achieved global breakthroughs via translation have frequently gone on to secure the Nobel, confirming that translation is now the primary gateway to definitive global canonization.

- **Way Forward**

- **Establishment of a National Translation Mission (NTM) Endowment:** Governments, particularly in highly multilingual nations like India, should create dedicated financial endowments under the Ministry of Culture. This fund should provide direct grants to independent publishers to offset the high costs of translating regional bhasha literature into global and other Indian languages.
- **Institutionalizing Academic and Professional Rewards:** Universities and literary academies must elevate the status of translation studies. Translating a complex work of literature should be recognized as a valid, high-impact research output for academic promotions, encouraging bilingual scholars to enter the field.
- **Digital Platforms and Open-Access Curation:** Leveraging digital public infrastructure to create open-access repositories for translated works can democratize access. Collaborative online platforms can connect regional writers directly with global translators, bypassing traditional corporate gatekeepers.
- **Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Creative Labor:** Intellectual property laws should be updated to provide clear, standardized contracts that guarantee translators co-author status, mandatory front-cover credit, and a fair share of digital and audiobook royalties, protecting their livelihood from technological disruption.

# TRANSLATED LITERATURE: BRIDGING WORLDS, BUILDING FUTURES

HOW INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION AND INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING ARE DRIVING A GLOBAL LITERARY RENAISSANCE

“ Literature in translation possesses the power to transcend the boundaries of time, geography, and culture, creating empathy in an interconnected world. ”

## 1. KEY TERMS & EXPLANATIONS



### MONOLINGUALISM vs. MULTILINGUALISM

Monolingualism limits cultural exposure and makes us “hear only half the conversation we are having with ourselves.” Multilingualism fosters a pluralistic worldview and deeper human understanding.



### LITERARY TRANSLATION AS A CREATIVE ACT

Translation is not mere word substitution; it is a creative act that recreates emotion, cultural idiom, historical context, and stylistic texture. The translator is a co-author of the new work.



### INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS (INDIE PRESSES)

Independent publishers take financial and artistic risks to champion translated fiction, avant-garde writing, and marginalized voices overlooked by mainstream publishing giants.



### ANGLOPHONE HEGEMONY

The dominance of English in global discourse and publishing creates structural barriers, requiring non-English writers to be translated into English to gain global visibility.



### CULTURAL MARGINALIZATION

When non-Western narratives are sidelined by mainstream media, translation counteracts this by bringing peripheral stories to the center stage of global literature.

## 2. MAIN ARGUMENTS & SUBSTANTIVE POINTS



### TRANSLATION TRANSCENDS BORDERS

It breaks linguistic and cultural silos, enabling global dialogue and resisting intellectual insularity.



### STRUCTURAL SHIFT IN RECOGNITION

From lifetime achievement to a single work of translated fiction annually, with equal prize money for author and translator—recognizing translators as creative peers.



### THE RISE OF INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING

Indie presses are the economic engine behind the surge in translated literature, introducing diverse, daring, and politically charged narratives to the world.



### LITERATURE AS A MIRROR TO GLOBAL POLITICS

Today's celebrated works confront history, colonial violence, war, displacement, and gender anxieties. Readers seek stories that reflect uncomfortable realities, not escapism.

**TRANSLATION**  
is not just about words,  
IT'S ABOUT WORLDS.



## 3. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE ISSUE



### PRE-INDEPENDENCE / COLONIAL ERA

Dominance of imperial languages; translation used for administration or orientalist study, reinforcing colonial hierarchies.



### POST-WWII & EARLY POST-COLONIAL ERA

Rise of global bodies (like UNESCO) promoting cultural exchange; Commonwealth literature gains traction, but remains anchored to English.



### 2005: INSTITUTIONAL MILESTONES

International prizes focus on lifetime achievement; high visibility for global literary titans, but limited space for emerging languages.



### 2015: STRUCTURAL DEMOCRATIZATION

Prizes shift to single works and equal split between author and translator—ending the “invisible translator” paradigm.



### PRESENT DAY (2020s)

Explosion of independent publishing; direct correlation between translated masterpieces and ultimate recognition by the Nobel Committee.

## 4. IMPACT ON LITERATURE & SOCIETY



### BUILDS EMPATHY

Readers experience the world through multiple cultural lenses.



### ENRICHES IDEAS

Diverse narratives expand imagination, ethics, and worldviews.



### DRIVES GROWTH

A booming global market for translated literature fuels cultural and economic growth.



### PRESERVES VOICES

Protects endangered languages and marginalized stories from erasure.



### STRENGTHENS DEMOCRACY

Plural stories create more inclusive and informed societies.

## 5. KEY TAKEAWAY

“ When we translate, we don't just change words—we change worlds. ”

Institutional recognition + Independent publishing + Translation as a creative act = A more empathetic, just, and interconnected world.



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KNOWLEDGE HAS NO BORDERS.  
TRANSLATION GIVES IT A VOICE.

Let's read beyond language. Let's rise together.



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# When does purposeful writing evolve in children?

At what age should a child start writing? Can early writing become a burden for children?

M. Emmanuel Bhaskar

## The story so far:

**M**ost of us have seen a two-year-old child hold a crayon and scribble. In most cases, school educators see that a kindergarten child can grip a pencil and therefore encourage them to write. But we need to assess if the child writes without pain and fatigue. Most importantly, does the child enjoy writing at this age?

## In what stages does purposeful writing evolve?

At 1-2 years, the palmar grasp is established, and the child uses the entire arm movement to scribble. At 2-3 years, the child can rotate the forearm. The child can now hold the pencil with fingers, but the shoulder still dominates when writing. Between 3 and 4 years, the four-finger grasp is established. The child uses all fingers except the little finger and can draw a fairly straight line, an incomplete circle, and may colour within

a picture outline.

At 4-5 years, the grasp improves and becomes a three-finger grip. The pencil is held between the thumb and index finger, while the middle finger supports it from below. The ring and little fingers rest on the writing paper. However, the movement depends on the wrist since the finger muscles are weak. At this age, a child can write, but doing so for a long period will result in pain in the hand, elbow, or shoulder.

The middle finger may hurt since it supports the pencil. The thumb or index finger can hurt due to the pressure of holding the pencil firmly for a long time. The elbow may hurt because of constant bending and pressure on the writing surface. The shoulder may be painful because the muscles around it must continuously contract to keep the elbow in position.

## What are the mechanics of writing?

Writing requires coordination of many nerves, muscles, and joints. We can start with shoulder stability. You will notice

that your shoulder barely moves while writing.

The elbow moves only sideways, helping the hand move across the page. This movement often happens in the air and sometimes with support from the table or another surface. The wrist, too, holds its position and does not bend sideways as the hand moves from left to right. Only the thumb and index finger actively move. The other fingers move along without any movement in and of themselves. This is just what happens in the upper limb.

Writing is controlled by the brain. Here enters the hand-eye coordination, the child's memory of the shape of letters, the sequence of letters, and, more importantly, attention and patience.

## What is the difference between circle and alphabet drawing?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the U.S. lists that a three-year-old "draws a circle when you show the child how to do it". When drawing a circle, the shoulder rotates

freely, so shoulder stability is less important. The wrist and the finger grip move as a whole when drawing a circle. In other words, the child holds the crayon or a pencil between the thumb and index finger or even with the whole palm and rotates the shoulder with decent accuracy to complete the circle.

Writing requires precise motor planning. When a child switches between complex letters, direction changes along with the curve, size of deflections, stopping and turning, spacing and many more.

## What should be the norm?

A kindergarten child can use a crayon to colour designs with large spaces. A pencil grip should be avoided at this age. In upper kindergarten, a child may try to write alphabets like A, C, E, F, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, T, V, W, X, Y and Z which have straight lines or circles with no complex curves as in B, D, G, J, P, Q, R, S and U.

By the age of five, the child can be assessed for a proper hand grip, and if found capable, more complex writing can be attempted. We should remember that each child may have variations in their ability to do all that is required for writing. This is where parents' and teachers' efforts in the kindergarten and pre-school phase at home determine if the child starts to love writing or considers it a burden.

*(M. Emmanuel Bhaskar, MD, is Professor of Medicine, Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute, Chennai)*

## THE GIST

Writing in young children develops in stages from scribbling with whole-arm movement to controlled finger movement, and early pencil grip or long writing can cause pain in the hand, elbow, or shoulder due to muscle strain and poor coordination.

Purposeful writing requires coordination of shoulder stability, wrist control, finger movement, and brain functions like memory and attention, so it should be introduced gradually based on the child's age and ability.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Palmar Grasp**

- The initial developmental stage of gripping where a child uses their entire hand, including the palm and all fingers, to clutch an object (like a thick crayon). The movement originates entirely from the shoulder and elbow joints rather than the wrist or fingers.

- **Four-Finger Grasp**

- A transitional grip where the child utilizes the thumb and three fingers (excluding the pinky finger) to hold a writing tool. This stage marks the beginning of localized control, moving away from full-arm movements to more localized wrist movements.

- **Three-Finger Grip (Tripod Grasp)**

- The mature, efficient form of pencil grasp where the writing instrument is held between the thumb and index finger, while resting comfortably on the middle finger. This allows for precise, micro-movements of the fingers without strain on the larger joints.

- **Purposeful Writing**

- The intentional, cognitive act of translating internal thoughts, spoken language, or abstract concepts into symbolic visual forms (like alphabets and words). It differs fundamentally from motor-driven scribbling as it requires working memory, attention, and executive brain functioning.

- **Motor Planning**

- The ability of the central nervous system to conceive, organize, and execute a sequence of unfamiliar physical actions. In writing, this involves calculating pencil pressure, anticipating curves, and executing sudden directional shifts.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Developmental Mismatch in Early Pedagogy**

- The core thesis revolves around the growing mismatch between natural biological readiness and institutionalized educational expectations. There is an accelerating trend among pre-schools to introduce structured writing far too early, driven by competitive parental expectations and commercialized curricula. This creates a scenario where children are forced to perform precise motor tasks before their musculoskeletal frameworks have fully ossified.

- **Physiological Hazards of Premature Writing**

- Forcing a child to engage in prolonged, structured writing before the age of five induces chronic physiological strain. Because the small muscles of the hand and the bones of the wrist (carpal bones) are unossified and weak, the child compensates by over-contracting the muscles of the forearm, elbow, and shoulder. This systemic over-exertion leads to:

- Early-onset fatigue, localized muscular pain, and joint strain.

- Long-term poor posture and repetitive strain injuries.

- Decline in fine motor coordination due to learned, unnatural gripping patterns.

- **Cognitive and Emotional Toll**

- Writing is not merely a mechanical act; it is an intense cognitive process requiring simultaneous hand-eye coordination, working memory of letter shapes, attention regulation, and spatial awareness. When introduced prematurely, the sheer physical discomfort combines with cognitive overload. This transforms a potentially creative learning experience into an exhausting chore, fostering a deep-seated aversion to formal education and writing-based tasks.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence Era (Traditional Frameworks)**

- In traditional Indian indigenous education (such as the Gurukul system or village pathshalas), formal education began around the age of five or six with the *Upanayana* or *Vidyarambham* ceremony. Early learning was predominantly oral, focusing on rote memorization, recitation, and auditory discrimination. Writing was introduced only after the child had achieved physical maturity, often practiced by tracing letters in clean sand, which offered tactile feedback and low physical resistance.

- **Post-Independence to Late 20th Century**

- With the expansion of the formal schooling system based on colonial models, structured textbooks took center stage. The Kothari Commission (1964–66) emphasized early childhood education but focused primarily on health and nutrition. However, as urban formal employment became tied to competitive academic performance, the pressure slowly trickled down, leading to the commercial expansion of private "kindergartens" that prioritized early reading and writing as a sign of academic rigor.

- **The "Learning Without Burden" Milestone (1993)**

- The Yash Pal Committee Report (1993), titled "*Learning Without Burden*," marked a profound shift in Indian educational discourse. The report highlighted the alarming textbook load and the psychological stress imposed on young children. It explicitly warned against turning pre-schools into formal academic boot camps and recommended that admissions should not be based on interviews or writing tests, arguing that early education must be play-based.

- **The Modern Regulatory Era (NEP 2020)**

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 restructured Indian education by introducing the 5+3+3+4 curricular design, which formally integrates early childhood education into the foundational stage (Ages 3 to 8). This is operationalized by the **National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS)** and the **NIPUN Bharat Mission**. These frameworks explicitly mandate play-based, activity-centric, and discovery-driven learning for the first three years (ages 3–6), strongly discouraging formal, repetitive paper-and-pencil writing tasks during this stage.

- **Way Forward**

- **Restructuring Early Curricula (Play-Centric Transition)**

- Educational institutions must strictly redesign nursery and kindergarten programs to align with the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS). The primary focus under the age of five must shift entirely to activities that build hand strength and motor planning without structural stress.

- **Mandatory Legislative Regulation of Pre-Schools**

- The Ministry of Education, in coordination with state governments, must enact a comprehensive **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Regulatory Act**. This legislation should:

- Mandate a strict registration process for all private play schools.

- Prohibit formal writing-based admission tests, interviews, or heavy homework assignments for children below the age of six.

- Impose strict penalties on institutions utilizing unscientific, worksheet-heavy academic curricula for toddlers.

- **Massive Public Awareness and Parental Counseling**

- Schools and local governance bodies (like Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies) must conduct regular interactive workshops for parents. De-escalating parental anxiety involves demonstrating the benefits of play-based learning and educating communities on pediatric physical milestones. This shifts the social definition of an "intelligent child" away from early writing toward holistic cognitive and physical curiosity.

- **Upgrading Anganwadis into Holistic Care Hubs**

- Under the **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0** initiative, the public daycare infrastructure must be systematically upgraded. Anganwadi workers should be extensively trained in identifying motor developmental delays and conducting scientific, zero-cost, play-based activities using local materials. This bridges the socio-economic gap in early childhood development.



# COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: THE BIOMECHANICS OF WRITING & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

## Biomechanical Grasp Evolution



Gross Motor Control

Early Scribbles

Transitional Skill

Basic Lines

Fine Motor Skill

Controlled Maturity --onateiv as requisite)

Finn I-requisition

Controlled Letters

Structural Maturity (ossification)



- NCERT & UPSC Linkages**  
NCERT Book book/Class 7-clas-4  
UPSC GS paper/topic/topic:
- UPSC GS: Paper A-Book (Bae Syllabus Code)
  - UPSC GS: Paper B/ Topic (S Paper)
  - UPSC GS: Paper B, Syllabus Code!)
  - UPSC GS: Paper R; Topic Syllabus Code )
  - UPSC GS: Paper/Topic
  - UPSC GS: Paper/Conture (Syllabus Code!)

### Model Answer points

#### Introduction

1. Introduction: healthv straining inopuerness in the intrustruction.
2. Covsideralization of competitions of the 23rd Academy within s development.
3. Sample question.

#### Main Body

1. Savoid and-programming.
2. Main throw/understardote content
3. Conclusion: A nurvant, proponients reading question.

#### Conclusion

1. Combiencing iation ascents of studies.
2. Improvement of phevmaticity speed, datarevominations.



### Way Forward

**1-Step**  
Pedagogical and regulatory strategy

**2-Step Strategy**  
Dicvelop enrantants of omorging era disemetics and points drawing

**3-Step Asking Strategy**  
Develops ononomiourse engages counted senial coree oxeconomt strategy

**4-Step Regulatory**  
Regulating developments and Early Childloring developments

## Logical & Philosophical Base



Constructivist  
"Pedagogy in Harmony with Biology"



Piagetian

## New Features & Unique Ideas

- Distinguish Circle vs. Alphabet Drawing
- Pedagogical Threshold for Character Types

## Multidimensional Analysis

An elaborate infographic spectrum



- Key phrases from the analysis
- Social:** Brief lee phrases from the political
  - Political:** Pedagogical threshold for sunnor
  - Legal:** Brief to cheville ethical
  - Ethical:** Key pivase ponvees the anctivism
  - International:** Key phrases from mond common monusment
  - Economic:** Key phrases from mond common monusment

## Challenges & Sustainability



Stakeholder Anxiety



Commercialized Pre-Schools



Legal Consistency

• DEFENCE

# DRDO's new missile offers precision strikes, anti-drone combat

Sushant Kulkarni

Pune, May 24

THE DEFENCE Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) last week carried out final development trials of the UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3. This will be followed by user trials by the armed forces.

## Significant upgrade

A DRDO scientist said that compared with the V1 and V2 variants, the ULPGM-V3 represents a significant advancement in India's indigenous drone-launched missile capability.

The V1 was a basic free-fall precision missile and the V2 introduced propulsion, longer range, and mid-course target updates. The V3 adds the ability to engage both ground and aerial targets, including drones and helicopters. It also features



Development trials of ULPGM-V3 at DRDO's test range in Kurnool. PHOTO: DRDO

more advanced target-seeking systems, improved day-and-night combat capability, and multiple warhead options for different battlefield roles, making it a far more versatile weapon for modern drone warfare.

The ULPGM-V3 is fitted with an ad-

## The new battlefield

- Development of drone-launched weapons will be one of the DRDO's focus areas
- Drones are important for both conventional conflicts and asymmetric warfare involving smaller, highly mobile threats

vanced guidance system using multiple sensors to accurately track targets, allowing it to strike a wide range of threats. It can be deployed in both plains and high-altitude regions in the day or night. It is equipped with a two-way data link, enabling operators to change or update the target even after the missile has been launched.

Depending on the mission, the missile can be fitted with three types of warheads. These include an anti-armour warhead designed to destroy heavily protected tanks and armoured vehicles, even those fitted with special layers of protection used in modern battle tanks. It also has a penetration-cum-blast warhead meant to pierce and destroy bunkers and fortified structures, and a pre-fragmentation warhead that disperses high-speed metal fragments over a large area to maximise damage. The missile can engage both stationary and moving targets in all weather conditions.

## Network-centric warfare

DRDO has partnered with Bharat Dynamics Limited and Adani Defence Systems and Technologies Limited for development and production. The Ministry of Defence said that the missile has been produced entirely through the Indian defence ecosystem, involving DRDO laboratories and several Indian companies.

Officials said that the ULPGM-V3 has been developed primarily for the Army, with the air-to-ground mode for anti-tank roles and air-to-air modes for drone, helicopters, and other airborne targets.

A senior Army officer said systems like ULPGM-V3 are key, as drones are increasingly becoming central to modern warfare worldwide. It also reflects the growing shift towards network-centric warfare, where drones, sensors, and command systems work together in real time to detect and strike targets with precision.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM):** A specialized class of lightweight munitions specifically engineered to be deployed from Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). Unlike gravity bombs, these possess onboard guidance systems that allow them to alter their flight path in real-time to hit a specific target. *Example:* A drone patrolling a mountainous border spots a concealed insurgent vehicle and fires a ULPGM, which uses laser guidance to hit the exact windshield of the moving vehicle, minimizing collateral damage.
- **Network-Centric Warfare (NCF):** A military doctrine that turns information superiority into combat power by effectively linking command structures, sensors, and shooters. By connecting these elements via high-speed data networks, forces achieve real-time situational awareness and rapid coordination. *Example:* A reconnaissance drone spots an enemy tank platoon; instead of a lengthy radio chain, the data instantly populates on the digital maps of nearby attack helicopters, artillery batteries, and ground commanders, allowing the optimal weapon to strike immediately.
- **Two-Way Data Link:** A continuous, bidirectional communication channel between a weapon system (like a missile) and its launch platform or ground operator. This allows the missile to send telemetry and video back to the operator, while the operator can send mid-course corrections or target updates back to the missile.
- **Penetration-Cum-Blast Warhead:** A dual-stage munition designed to defeat hardened structures. The initial phase utilizes kinetic energy or a shaped charge to pierce through thick concrete, steel plating, or soil layers. Once inside the structure, the main explosive charge detonates, maximizing internal destruction. *Example:* Neutralizing underground command bunkers or heavily fortified concrete pillboxes along a contested border without destroying the surrounding civilian infrastructure.
- **Pre-Fragmentation Warhead:** A warhead designed with a pre-scored casing or embedded metallic spheres (like steel ball bearings). Upon detonation, the explosive force scatters high-velocity fragments over a wide, calculated radius. It is primarily used as an anti-personnel and anti-material weapon to clear soft-skinned vehicles and open enemy formations.
- **Asymmetric Warfare:** A conflict where the relative military power, strategies, and tactics of the opposing combatants differ significantly. It typically involves a conventional standing army fighting non-state actors, insurgents, or violent extremists who leverage guerrilla tactics, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and commercial off-the-shelf drones.
- **Defence Ecosystem & Indigenization:** The collective network of national research laboratories, public sector undertakings, private industries, and academic institutions collaborating to design, test, and manufacture military hardware within the country. This reduces reliance on foreign original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**
  - The contemporary security landscape is undergoing a paradigm shift, where localized, technological self-reliance intersects with changing battlefield dynamics. The strategic discourse centers on several core assertions regarding modern defense capabilities.
- **The Shift to Drone-Centric Tactics**
  - Traditional air superiority depended heavily on expensive, manned fighter jets. Modern doctrines argue that the future of tactical combat belongs to armed drones and precision-guided aerial munitions. This evolution democratizes precision air support, allowing smaller ground units to deploy organic, airborne strike capabilities without waiting for traditional air force intervention.
- **Dual-Domain Versatility as a Necessity**
  - Historically, missiles were specialized for either air-to-ground or air-to-air engagements. The argument presented by modern operational requirements emphasizes that new-age munitions must be multi-role. Developing a single platform capable of neutralizing a main battle tank on the ground while possessing the agility to track and destroy an enemy loitering munition or helicopter in mid-air provides immense tactical flexibility and streamlines supply chains.
- **Mitigating the Multi-Front Security Challenge**
  - National security strategy must account for diverse operational terrains—from the high-altitude, sub-zero plateaus of the Himalayas to the plains and desert tracts of the western borders. The core thesis argues that modern defense acquisitions must feature environmental resilience, meaning a weapon system must perform uniformly across extreme temperature variances and altitudes without requiring specialized hardware modifications.
- **Private-Public Defense Integration**
  - Achieving true strategic autonomy requires breaking the monopoly of state-run defense laboratories. The current push emphasizes a tri-partite collaboration model involving state research bodies like the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Defense Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), and private defense enterprises. This synergy combines public-sector research stability with private-sector manufacturing efficiency and agility.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of India's guided missile development and aerial combat doctrine reflects a steady transition from complete import dependence to strategic indigenization.

- **The Post-Independence and Cold War Era (1950s–1970s)**

- During the early decades after independence, India relied heavily on foreign acquisitions, primarily from the Soviet Union and Western European nations, for its tactical missile and aerial defense requirements. The 1962, 1965, and 1971 conflicts highlighted the vulnerabilities of relying on external supply chains, which were subject to sudden embargoes and political pressures.

- **The Launch of the IGMDP (1983)**

- The turning point in India's missile technology occurred with the conception of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) in 1983, spearheaded by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. This program focused on building indigenous capabilities across a spectrum of strategic and tactical missiles, leading to the development of the Prithvi, Agni, Trishul, Akash, and Nag systems. This established the foundational expertise in propulsion, guidance, and warhead technologies.

- **The Counter-Insurgency and Kargil Milestone (1990s–2000s)**

- The 1999 Kargil Conflict underscored the critical need for precision-guided munitions (PGMs) in high-altitude environments. Air operations faced severe challenges targeting entrenched enemy positions on razor-sharp ridges. This period accelerated the import of laser-guided bomb kits and triggered the realization that tactical precision was vital for localized conflicts. Concurrently, the rise of sub-conventional warfare in Jammu & Kashmir and the Northeast shifted focus toward localized, low-collateral strike options.

- **The Rise of Unmanned Systems and Indigenization (2010s–Present)**

- Over the last decade, global conflicts (such as the Nagorno-Karabakh clash and the Russia-Ukraine war) demonstrated that low-cost drones could neutralize multi-million dollar armor and air defense installations. Recognizing this, Indian defense policy shifted heavily toward unmanned platforms. Landmark policy reforms, including the Defense Acquisition Procedure (DAP) and the introduction of Positive Indigenization Lists, banned the import of certain drone systems and components, driving the indigenous development of specialized drone-launched precision weapons.



- **Way Forward**

- **1. Expanding the Semiconductor and Electronics Ecosystem**

- The immediate policy focus must move beyond structural mechanics to foundational components. India must leverage the semiconductor fabrication incentives (under the India Semiconductor Mission) to prioritize the domestic design and fabrication of military-grade microprocessors and sensor arrays. This will insulate our precision systems from external geopolitical supply shocks.

- **2. Streamlining Bureaucracy and Fast-Tracking Trials**

- The Ministry of Defence should establish dedicated, agile testing corridors and fast-track single-window clearances for indigenous platforms. Creating permanent, multi-terrain operational testing ranges will significantly cut down the time between prototype design and final user adoption by the armed forces.

- **3. Strengthening Private Sector and Startup Integration**

- The defense procurement framework should transition toward a venture-capital style model for early-stage defense startups. By providing assured procurement contracts for systems that meet strict bench testing standards, the state can incentivize private capital to flow into deep-tech defense R&D, reducing the financial burden on the public exchequer.

- **4. Enhancing Electronic Counter-Countermeasures (ECCM)**

- As the battlefield shifts further toward electronic disruption, future R&D must focus on anti-jamming architectures. This involves developing indigenous satellite-independent inertial navigation systems (INS) and AI-driven edge computing processors that allow missiles to navigate and recognize targets visually even if all external data links are completely cut.





**AXIA**  
IAS ACADEMY

# AXIA IAS ACADEMY PREMIER ANALYSIS: DRDO'S ULPGM-V3 & THE NEW DEFENSE BATTLEFIELD

## THE NEW BATTLEFIELD

### MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHALLENGES & IMPACTS



**SOCIAL:**  
Skill & Jobs; Pride



**POLITICAL:**  
Strategic Autonomy;  
Policy Continuity



**LEGAL:**  
IPR Ownership;  
Procurement Compliance



**ETHICAL:**  
Minimizing Collateral  
Damage; Just War



**INTERNATIONAL:**  
Regional Deterrence;  
Net Exporter



**ECONOMIC:**  
Plugging Forex Outflow;  
Defense Multiplier

UAV-LAUNCHED  
PRECISION  
GUIDED MISSILE  
(ULPGM-V3)

DEVELOPED  
ENTIRELY IN THE  
INDIAN DEFENSE  
ECOSYSTEM



MULTIPLE  
SENSORS &  
TWO-WAY  
DATA LINK

## ULPGM EVOLUTION

V1	V2	V3
FREE-FALL PRECISION	PROPULSION, LONG RANGE, MID-COURSE UPDATES	GROUND & AERIAL TARGET ENGAGEMENT (DRONES, HELOS)
		MULTI-MODE SEEKER
		ALL-WEATHER DAY/NIGHT

## CRITICAL COMPONENT FOCUS: WARHEAD MODULARITY



THREE  
WARHEAD  
OPTIONS



**1. ANTI-ARMOUR**  
Defeats modern tanks  
& special protection

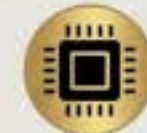


**2. PENETRATION-CUM-BLAST**  
Pierces & destroys  
bunkers/fortified  
structures.



**PRE-FRAGMENTATION**  
Maximizes damage with  
high-speed fragments  
over large area.

## WAY FORWARD: SECURING SELF-RELIANCE



**1. ELECTRONICS & SENSOR ECOSYSTEM:**  
Focus on indigenization



**2. STRENGTHEN PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION**



**3. FAST-TRACK USER TRIALS & ADOPTION**

# Amid tighter Green Card rules in the US, why Indians could be uniquely affected

Vidheesha Kuntamalla  
New Delhi, May 24

THE US on Friday moved to significantly restrict those eligible for permanent residency in the country, rattling the lakhs of Indians on temporary visas who are awaiting a Green Card.

The US Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), announced that those applying for Green Cards must return to their home countries to do so — a sweeping reversal of a practice in place for over half a century.

People can apply for Green Cards in two ways — going to a US consulate abroad, or applying while already in the US, which is called an “adjustment of status”. The new

USCIS policy memo targets the second, more popular route, used by Indian workers on H-1B visas, students transitioning from F-1 visas, and spouses on H4 dependent visas. Indians also dominate the decades-long backlog in employment-based Green Card categories such as Employment-Based Second Preference (EB-2) and EB-3.

## What has changed?

Immigration lawyers say the USCIS memorandum makes adjustment of status significantly more discretionary. Until now, eligible professionals could file Form I-485 and continue living and working in the US while the application was processed. But the memo now instructs officers to treat “adjustment of status” as “an extraordinary act of administrative grace”.

“Applicants must now demonstrate what the memo calls ‘unusual or even outstanding equities,’” Rajiv Khanna, an immigration attorney based in Washington DC, told *The Indian Express*. “A clean record and full eligibility are no longer sufficient on their own. You must affirmatively show why you deserve this ‘grace.’”

## What happens to Indians?

Indians are uniquely trapped in America’s employment-based immigration backlog. They overwhelmingly dominate the EB-2 and EB-3 employment backlog categories for securing permanent residency. “The wait for many of them exceeds 20 years,” said Khanna. During those years, many would have built entire lives in America — buying homes, paying taxes

and building careers — with the expectation that if they followed the rules, a Green Card would follow.

Now, lawyers say, the very fact that they stayed in the US for years while waiting could become something immigration officers scrutinise negatively.

According to Asel Williams, founding immigration attorney at the New York-based firm Williams Law firm, any push to have Indians return home to apply for the cards could create “enormous” appointment backlogs. “USCIS is currently adjudicating millions of ‘adjustment of status’ applications for foreign nationals physically present in the US. Redirecting even a fraction of those, potentially hundreds of thousands of Indian cases, to consular posts would overwhelm a State Department that

simply does not have the resources to absorb that volume,” Williams said.

Khanna said, “Consular officers in India have, over the past several years, placed a significant number of employment-based immigrant visa applicants into administrative processing... There is no transparency about what triggers it or when it will end.”

These delays are likely by design, in line with the Donald Trump administration’s push to restrict immigration. Khanna added that an applicant who leaves the US for a visa interview could suddenly find themselves stranded in India indefinitely, “sometimes without the ability to continue their employment at all.”

Williams also warned that delays in consular processing could cause employers to pull back on job offers.

## What are lawyers advising?

“My recommendation is to hold off on filing an adjustment of status application and wait for clarity on how USCIS will implement this policy,” Williams said. “Indian clients cannot afford even a single immigration violation.” She warned Indians who already filed adjustment of status applications not to travel without legal consultation.

Khanna said eligible Indians should file if their priority dates are current. “The memo does not prohibit approvals,” he said. But he emphasised that applicants now need to proactively tell their story: “Your application may now need to state your length of residence, your tax compliance, your community ties, your employer’s reliance on your work, your family circumstances, and your clean record.”

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Adjustment of Status (Form I-485):** This is an administrative process used by foreign nationals physically present in the United States to apply for lawful permanent resident status (a Green Card) without having to return to their home country.
- **Consular Processing:** The alternative pathway to a Green Card where an applicant undergoes an interview and receives their immigrant visa at a US Embassy or Consulate abroad.
- **Administrative Grace vs. Statutory Right:** A statutory right is guaranteed by law, whereas administrative grace means the benefit is granted at the complete discretion of immigration officials. Treating an application as an "extraordinary act of administrative grace" elevates the burden of proof, making approval a privilege rather than a standard bureaucratic step.
- **Unusual or Extraordinary Equities:** A high evidentiary standard where applicants must prove exceptional circumstances—such as deep community ties, impeccable tax compliance, unique economic contributions, or severe family dependency—to justify why they deserve to stay.
- **Employment-Based Green Card Preferences (EB-2 and EB-3):** Categories for foreign workers seeking permanent residency. **EB-2** targets professionals holding advanced degrees or exceptional ability, while **EB-3** caters to skilled workers and professionals.
- **Priority Date and Backlog:** A "priority date" is an applicant's place in the immigration queue. Because US law caps the number of Green Cards allocated to any single country at **7%** annually, high-demand nations face massive backlogs. For Indians, this queue stretches for decades.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core discourse centers on a profound shift in US immigration administration that reinterprets long-standing domestic processing rules.
- **The Shift in Discretionary Power**
- The central argument highlights a move toward restricting domestic permanent residency applications. By instructing immigration officers to treat the "Adjustment of Status" as an extraordinary discretionary act rather than a routine procedural step, the threshold for approval rises significantly. A clean legal record and meeting basic eligibility criteria are no longer sufficient.
- **The Vulnerability of Indian Professionals**
- The policy disproportionately impacts Indian nationals. Due to the **7%** per-country statutory cap, hundreds of thousands of Indian tech professionals, researchers, and their families are caught in multi-decadal backlogs within the EB-2 and EB-3 categories. This policy changes the rules midway for individuals who have already spent decades building lives, buying homes, and paying taxes in the US.
- **Potential Institutional Bottlenecks**
- Forcing applicants out of the country to pursue Consular Processing triggers a cascade of administrative challenges:
- **Consular Overwhelm:** Foreign consular posts lack the logistical infrastructure to manage hundreds of thousands of returning applicants suddenly requiring visa interviews.
- **Administrative Processing Delays:** Applicants face prolonged, opaque security clearances, leaving them stranded abroad without the ability to return to their jobs.
- **Economic and Employer Fallback**
- A critical counter-effect is the risk posed to US employers. Faced with the prospect of key employees being stranded indefinitely overseas, corporate entities may pull back on job offers, cancel sponsorships, or relocate operations internationally. This threatens the predictable talent pipeline that fuels innovation sectors.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The tension between domestic adjustment of status and consular processing has evolved alongside shifts in economic priorities and geopolitical alignments.

- **The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965:** This landmark legislation abolished old national-origin quotas and established the framework for family-reunification and employment-based immigration, introducing the concept of per-country ceilings to ensure diversity.

- **The Immigration Act of 1990:** This act structured the modern employment-based preference system (EB-1 to EB-5) and created the **H-1B visa** program. While it intended to bring in high-skilled talent, it retained the **7%** per-country cap, failing to anticipate the massive volume of applications from a single country like India during the digital revolution.

- **The Post-2000 Tech Boom:** As US tech companies turned to Indian engineers to fuel growth, the mismatch between the high volume of H-1B visas and the fixed number of annual Green Cards created a massive backlog. Over the next two decades, the practice of allowing applicants to live and work in the US via "Adjustment of Status" while waiting for their priority date became standard practice.

- **The Shift Toward Restriction:** Recent administrative philosophies have increasingly leveraged executive memos and revised policy interpretations to tighten immigration criteria without needing congressional legislative changes, culminating in stricter scrutiny of domestic applications.

- Way Forward

- **For the Indian Diaspora and Legal Practitioners**

- **Proactive Document Alignment:** Applicants should meticulously maintain records that prove deep community integration, continuous tax compliance, and their employer's reliance on their skills.

- **Strategic Contingency Planning:** Diversifying professional pathways—such as exploring international corporate transfers or remote work options—can help mitigate the risk of sudden administrative disruptions.

- **For Corporate and Institutional Stakeholders**

- **Lobbying for Structural Reform:** US tech companies and academic institutions should advocate for legislative changes, such as eliminating the **7%** per-country cap and decoupling permanent residency queues from temporary work visas.

- **For the Government of India**

- **High-Level Diplomatic Engagement:** India can leverage bilateral platforms like the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue and iCET to emphasize that predictable, fair talent mobility is essential for mutual technology and defense collaboration.

- **Strengthening the Domestic Innovation Ecosystem:** India can expand initiatives like the vaibhav fellowships and create attractive research and business ecosystems at home. This turns external restrictions into an opportunity to welcome back highly skilled talent to fuel India's own economic growth.

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# AXIA IAS ACADEMY

## RISE ABOVE THE REST



### WAY FORWARD: Axia IAS's Comprehensive Strategy

**Bilateral Policy Focus**

- Bilateral policy focus roas thecins meentions and conrection to diplomatic meetings.
- Resertal fodocent of diplomatic meetings.

**Building Domestic Research Capacities**

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- Building our search to a meant a nademic research labs.

### Multi-Dimensional Impact Analysis

Social	Political	Legal	Economic	International
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**UPSC Prep Tip:**

Key to GS Paper 2 (Diaspora), GS 3 (Brain Drain), and Ethics (Migration Sovereignty)

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- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- Understanding the scientific and administrative nomenclature is crucial for analyzing urban ambient air quality dynamics.
- **Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>):** PM<sub>10</sub> refers to coarse inhalable particles with diameters generally 10 micrometers and smaller. PM<sub>2.5</sub> represents fine inhalable particles with diameters 2.5 micrometers and smaller. While PM<sub>10</sub> is primarily deposited in the upper respiratory tract, PM<sub>2.5</sub> can penetrate deep into the lung alveoli and enter the bloodstream, causing systemic health anomalies.
- **Road Dust (Resuspended Dust):** A heterogeneous mixture comprising mineral dust from soil, broken pavement material, accumulated traffic emissions, tire-wear debris, brake pad linings, and deposited construction material. It becomes airborne through the mechanical action of vehicle tires and wind turbulence.
- **Primary Emission vs. Non-Exhaust Emissions:** Primary emissions refer to pollutants discharged directly from a source, such as tailpipe exhaust. Non-exhaust emissions encompass particles released into the air from brake wear, tire wear, road surface wear, and the resuspension of road dust during vehicle transit.
- **Road Silt Load (g/m<sup>2</sup>):** A metric measuring the mass of loose, fine particulate matter present per unit area of a road surface. Higher silt loads indicate a greater potential for dust resuspension under traffic conditions.
- **Mechanical Road Sweeping Machines (MRSMs):** Specialized municipal vehicles equipped with vacuums and mechanical brooms designed to lift and collect road silt. If poorly maintained or operated without proper filtration, they can inadvertently exacerbate fine dust resuspension.
- **Anti-Smog Guns (ASGs):** Devices that spray atomized water droplets into the atmosphere. The water droplets attach to airborne dust particles, increasing their weight and forcing them to settle on the ground through gravitational settling.
- **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM):** A statutory body established through parliamentary legislation for better coordination, research, identification, and resolution of problems surrounding air quality in the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The contemporary discourse on urban air pollution reveals a critical shift from exhaust emissions to non-exhaust mechanical sources.

- **The Shift in Pollution Dynamics**

- As vehicle emission norms tighten (e.g., Bharat Stage VI) and electric vehicle adoption rises, tailpipe exhaust is steadily declining. However, non-exhaust emissions—specifically road dust—are emerging as dominant contributors to urban ambient PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> levels. Road dust acts simultaneously as a primary emission source and a persistent sink that traps and recycles pollutants.

- **Limitations of Current Mitigation Strategies**

- Traditional municipal responses rely heavily on mechanical sweeping, water sprinkling, and anti-smog guns. Evidence indicates these measures offer localized, temporary relief rather than structural solutions:

- **Water Sprinkling and Mist Guns:** These do not eliminate dust; they merely alter its state. Once the water evaporates, the bound dust dries up and resuspends under traffic volume. Furthermore, improper irrigation of roadside plantations leads to soil runoff onto the tarmac, adding to the silt load.

- **Mechanical Sweeping Constraints:** MRSMs are often deployed without standardized operating procedures, varying frequency, or particle-size analysis. This can leave edges, medians, and narrow secondary roads unaddressed, allowing substantial dust pockets to persist.

- **The Landscape-Level Ecological Catalyst**

- The problem is aggravated by regional ecological degradation. The historical destruction and fragmentation of the Aravalli hill range have compromised a vital natural topographical barrier. Consequently, transboundary wind-blown dust from arid western regions enters urban plains unobstructed, compounding local anthropogenic silt.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of air pollution management highlights how policy focus has shifted over the decades.
- **The Early Legal and Industrial Era (1980s–1990s)**
  - Following the enactment of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act in 1981, early policy targeted point-source industrial emissions and gross vehicular polluters. The historic Supreme Court interventions in the late 1990s forced public transport fleets to transition from diesel to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and mandated the relocation of hazardous industries outside municipal limits.
- **The Fuel and Vehicular Technology Paradigm (2000s–2010s)**
  - Policy during this era focused on tightening tailpipe emission standards, leading to the progressive rollout of Bharat Stage (BS) vehicular norms. Attention expanded to include regional agricultural crop residue burning, leading to the creation of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to manage seasonal pollution spikes.
- **The Institutional and Non-Exhaust Recognition Phase (2020s–Present)**
  - With the launch of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and the establishment of the statutory Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), focus expanded beyond exhaust pipes. Source apportionment studies by institutions like IIT Kanpur and IIT Delhi revealed that road dust and construction debris contribute significantly to the urban coarse and fine particulate load, prompting a shift toward structural dust management.

- **Way Forward**

- Engineering and Infrastructure Overhaul
- **Complete Street Protocols:** Urban roads should be designed with end-to-end paving, ensuring no unpaved soil is left exposed between the main tarmac and roadside properties.
- **Advanced Curb Engineering:** Incorporate a deliberate 8 to 12-inch vertical drop between soil beds and curbs to prevent wind and rain from washing loose earth onto roads.
- Nature-Based Solutions and Regional Restoration
- **Three-Tier Eco-Buffering:** Plant multi-layered rows of native, drought-resistant trees (e.g., Neem, Peepal) along transit corridors to capture coarse particles and reduce ground-level wind speeds.
- **Aravalli Ecological Corridor:** Launch a coordinated program across states to restore the Aravalli range, halting mining and encroachment to rebuild the natural buffer against western dust.



# U.S. and India call for 'unimpeded' sea trade

'Tactical' ties with other countries not at India's 'expense': U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio

Trump speaks over the telephone at an event, says India can 100% count on the U.S. President

In day-long meeting with Jaishankar, the top U.S. diplomat discusses energy, trade, and visa issues

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

The United States works with many countries at a "tactical" level, but those relations will not disturb the strategic partnership with India, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said here on Sunday.

Addressing a joint press conference at the Hyderabad House lawns, Mr. Rubio said the idea of a "free and open Indo-Pacific" went beyond the Indo-Pacific to other "international waters" and accused Iran of blocking the Strait of Hormuz while sponsoring proxy terror groups.

Speaking on the occasion, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar acknowledged the disruption to supply chains because of the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, and said that both India and the U.S. had "very



**Pivotal talks:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio address the press at Hyderabad House in New Delhi after their meeting on Sunday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

all over the world. So does India. That's what responsible nation states do but I don't view our relation with any country in the world as coming at the expense of our strategic alliance with India..." Mr. Rubio said.

in India for a four-day visit on Saturday, held a day-long meeting with Mr. Jaishankar and other officials of the Indian side including Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, in which energy, bilateral trade, and visa issues for skilled In-

"count on me 100%". In a telephone call with U.S. Ambassador Sergio Gor, which was played out loud during an event at the Bharat Mandapam celebrating 250 years of U.S. independence, where both Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Rubio

## Congress targets Modi over Rubio's trade claim

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi over U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's statement that India has committed to purchasing \$500 billion worth of U.S. goods over five years, the Congress on Sunday alleged the "compromised PM" was going the extra mile to

help, they know where to call," Mr. Trump said.

Mr. Rubio's visit to India is the first by a senior official from Washington since the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Iran on February 28. He claimed that the war had

appease his "good friend".

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh questioned why key announcements over India's foreign policy were emanating from U.S. Noting imports from the U.S. stood at \$52.9 billion, he said this would have to be doubled to honour the commitment by Mr. Rubio.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
» PAGE 4

tained on the Strait of Hormuz. "And look what they're doing now. They are holding hostage civilian vessels, including ships that have now been stuck in the Persian Gulf. They have laid mines in an international waterway.

that have emerged before the energy market in recent months and sought an end to the stalemate. "We are working on having an open Strait of Hormuz without tolls," Mr. Rubio said, contradicting Iranian officials who had claimed in Delhi that Iran would start charging money from the transiting ships for the services that it provides in the Strait.

India is among "very few countries" that have "very strong relations" with the U.S., Israel, Iran and the Gulf countries, Mr. Jaishankar said. However, he cited the "current situation in Hormuz and said that to deal with the prevailing risks, it is necessary to diversify India's energy supplies.

Responding to a question on the Trump administration taking a tough line on trade relations with India, Mr. Rubio said it was

- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **Free and Open Indo-Pacific:** A strategic and conceptual framework aimed at ensuring the Indo-Pacific region remains accessible, transparent, governed by international law, and free from hegemony. For example, ensuring that commercial vessels can navigate the South China Sea without encountering illegal territorial assertions or aggressive maritime blockades.
- **Tactical vs. Strategic Ties:** **Tactical ties** are transactional, short-term arrangements between nations based on immediate, shared convenience or specific issues (e.g., intelligence sharing on a localized threat). Conversely, **Strategic ties** are deep, long-term partnerships rooted in shared values, comprehensive defense pacts, and structural economic interdependencies designed to shape the global order over decades.
- **Chokehold/Maritime Choke Point:** Narrow channels along widely used global sea routes that are critical for international trade and transit. If disrupted, they can trigger global supply chain crises. A classic example is the **Strait of Hormuz**, which connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and serves as the primary conduit for the world's crude oil shipments.
- **Unimpeded Sea Trade / Freedom of Navigation (FON):** A principle of international law asserting that ships flying the flag of any sovereign state shall not suffer interference from other states, save for exceptions provided for in international law. This is codified primarily under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
- **Outsourcing-Based Economy:** An economic system reliant on moving manufacturing, technical support, or operational business processes abroad to exploit lower labor and operational costs. The shift away from this model highlights a policy pivot toward protectionism, domestic manufacturing resilience, and re-shoring.
- **Proxy Terror Groups / Non-State Actors:** Organizations that carry out hostile actions or warfare on behalf of or supported by a sovereign state, allowing the sponsoring nation to achieve strategic objectives while maintaining a degree of plausible deniability.
  
- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**
- The discourse surrounding contemporary Indo-U.S. maritime and trade relations centers on a complex web of shared security interests and underlying economic frictions.
- **Core Thesis**
- The baseline argument asserts that while global maritime stability—particularly the preservation of open sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East—demands a robust strategic partnership between India and the United States, this convergence is consistently tested by divergent bilateral economic policies, domestic political pushback, and India's commitment to strategic autonomy.
- **Key Points and Supporting Evidence**
- **The Indispensability of Choke Point Security:** Maintaining an open Strait of Hormuz is vital for global energy security. Accusations of maritime mining, regional proxy warfare, and the hijacking of civilian vessels underscore the vulnerability of global trade. The disruption of these trade arteries directly threatens India's domestic energy stability, necessitating a collaborative maritime security posture with international partners.
- **The Insulation of Strategic Partnerships:** Modern diplomacy attempts to decouple high-stakes strategic alliances from transactional ties with third countries. Major global powers assert that localized, tactical alignments (such as engagement with regional adversaries) should not degrade or dilute the core integrity of the comprehensive bilateral partnership.
- **Domestic Political Frictions over Trade Demands:** Massive, top-down bilateral procurement targets—such as multi-billion dollar trade commitments—frequently become flashpoints for domestic political contention. In democratic systems, opposition factions often scrutinize these grand commitments, viewing them as potential compromises of national economic sovereignty or as asymmetrical concessions to foreign powers.
- **Countering the Legacy of Outsourcing:** A systemic policy shift is underway toward domestic re-shoring and securing supply chains. This structural transition aims to reverse the "outsourcing-based" economic model of previous decades, replacing it with a framework that prioritizes domestic industrial resilience, though it introduces friction with long-term trading partners.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- The relationship between India and the United States, particularly regarding maritime security and trade, has undergone a dramatic transformation from the Cold War era to the present day.
- **The Cold War Era (1947–1991)**
- During this period, the relationship was characterized by geopolitical estrangement. India's choice of **Strategic Non-Alignment** and its subsequent closeness to the Soviet Union clashed with the U.S. system of military alliances. Maritime relations hit an all-time low during the **1971 Bangladesh Liberation War**, when the U.S. deployed the USS *Enterprise* (Task Force 74) into the Bay of Bengal in a show of force against India, embedding deep-seated maritime mistrust that took decades to overcome.
- **Post-Cold War Re-alignment (1991–2000)**
- The collapse of the Soviet Union and India's landmark **1991 Economic Liberalization** created a natural bridge for dialogue. Naval cooperation began incrementally with the inception of the **Malabar Exercise in 1992**. Although momentarily disrupted by India's 1998 Pokhran-II nuclear tests, this era laid the groundwork for viewing the Indian Ocean as a space for mutual maritime safety rather than ideological conflict.
- **Institutionalization of Strategic Ties (2000–2010)**
- The turning point arrived with the signing of the **2005 Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP)** and the landmark **Next Steps in Strategic Partnership**, followed by the **2008 Civil Nuclear Deal**. This effectively decoupled India's nuclear status from global sanctions. The U.S. began viewing India as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean, shifting the relationship from transactional diplomacy to a structural partnership.
- **The Indo-Pacific Paradigm and Modern Friction (2010–Present)**
- The renaming of the U.S. Pacific Command to the **Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)** signified a profound conceptual shift that placed India at the center of the global maritime strategy. The revival of the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)** and the signing of the four foundational defense agreements (**GSOMIA, LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA**) institutionalized military interoperability.
- However, this strategic alignment runs parallel to a more transactional, protectionist economic posture from Washington, creating a complex, dual-track relationship where defense and trade policies frequently operate in tension.
- **Way Forward**
- **Institutionalize an "Asymmetric Trade-Strategic Partnership"**: New Delhi should work to convince Washington that a militarily capable and economically resilient India is a vital counterweight in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. should be encouraged to look past short-term trade imbalances and instead prioritize long-term technology sharing, defense co-production, and joint innovation through initiatives like **iCET** (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology).
- **Accelerate Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and Capacity Building**: India must continue to strengthen its role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This can be achieved by expanding the reach of the **Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)**, increasing joint naval patrolling with partner nations, and upgrading strategic infrastructure in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to secure critical maritime entry points.
- **Implement a Targeted Energy and Supply Chain Diversification Strategy**: To reduce vulnerability to Middle Eastern choke points like the Strait of Hormuz, India should rapidly diversify its energy imports. This involves increasing supplies from Africa, North America, and Latin America, while simultaneously expanding domestic **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs)** to provide a larger buffer against sudden geopolitical disruptions.
- **Adopt a Flexible Trade Framework Built on "Reciprocal Self-Reliance"**: While continuing to support domestic programs like *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, India should engage in pragmatic trade negotiations. This means being open to reducing tariffs on high-technology imports and critical raw materials in exchange for firmer commitments on labor mobility, service-sector access, and inclusion in secure global supply chains.



# INDO-U.S. MARITIME STRATEGY & TRADE DYNAMICS

## CHOKEPOINT SECURITY, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP & ECONOMIC REALIGNMENT

### FOR UPSC CSE – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY



# AXIA

## IAS ACADEMY

RISE ABOVE THE REST

#### 1. KEY TERMS & EXPLANATIONS



**Free and Open Indo-Pacific:**  
A framework ensuring the region remains accessible, transparent, governed by international law, and free from hegemony.



**Tactical vs. Strategic Ties:**  
Tactical ties are short-term, issue-based arrangements; Strategic ties are long-term partnerships rooted in shared values, defense pacts & structural interdependence.



**Chokehold / Maritime Choke Point:**  
Narrow sea lanes vital for global trade. Disruption can trigger global supply chain & energy crises.  
Example: Strait of Hormuz.



**Unimpeded Sea Trade / FON:**  
Principle of international law that ships of any sovereign state shall not face interference.  
Codified under UNCLOS.



**Outsourcing-Based Economy:**  
Economic model reliant on moving manufacturing/operations abroad for lower costs; shift now toward re-shoring, protectionism & domestic resilience.



**Proxy Terror Groups / Non-State Actors:**  
Organizations that carry out hostile acts on behalf of or supported by a sovereign state.

#### 2. CORE THESIS

While global maritime stability—particularly the preservation of open sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East—demands a robust strategic partnership between India and the United States, this convergence is consistently tested by divergent bilateral economic policies, domestic political pushback, and India's commitment to strategic autonomy.



#### 3. KEY POINTS & SUPPORTING EVIDENCE



**Indispensability of Choke Point Security**  
Open Strait of Hormuz is vital for global energy security. Maritime mining, grey warfare & hijacking of vessels threaten global trade & India's energy stability.



**Insulation of Strategic Partnerships**  
Diplomacy aims to decouple strategic alliances from tactical ties with third countries. Localised alignments should not dilute core bilateral partnership.



**Domestic Political Frictions**  
Top-down trade & procurement targets often face political pushback in democracies, viewed as risks to economic sovereignty or asymmetric concessions.



**Countering the Legacy of Outsourcing**  
Shift toward re-shoring, domestic manufacturing & resilient supply chains to move away from the outsourcing-based model of past decades.

#### 4. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION



**1947-1991**  
COLD WAR ESTRANGEMENT

India's Non-Alignment vs. U.S. alliances; 1971 Task Force 74 deployment creates deep maritime mistrust.



**1991-2000**  
POST-COLD WAR THAW

Economic liberalization opens Indian markets; Malabar Exercise begins in 1992, initiating naval cooperation.



**2000-2010**  
STRUCTURAL INSTITUTIONALIZATION

2005 Civil Nuclear Deal; designation of India as "Major Defense Partner" alters strategic equations.



**2010-PRESENT**  
THE INDO-PACIFIC ERA & PUSHBACK

Resurgent China, QUAD partnership, Supply Chain realignments, & domestic political scrutiny of trade demands.

#### 5. WAY FORWARD

- Deepen maritime domain awareness & joint patrolling.
- Strengthen QUAD & like-minded partnerships.
- Balance strategic convergence with economic sensitivities.
- Promote resilient, diversified & trusted supply chains.
- Uphold international law, UNCLOS & freedom of navigation.
- Engage in constructive dialogue to manage trade frictions.

#### 6. UPSC RELEVANCE



**GS Paper II**  
International Relations  
Bilateral, regional & global groupings  
Indo-Pacific dynamics



**GS Paper III**  
Security  
Maritime security, threats & challenges



**GS Paper III**  
Economy  
Trade, globalization, supply chains, re-shoring & protectionism



**Essay & Ethics**  
India's role in a multipolar world & global commons

“ Maritime security is not just about trade; it is about the stability of nations, the security of citizens and the future of generations. ”



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RISE ABOVE THE REST

# Quad grouping remains a 'vital framework', says Japan's Foreign Minister

Sahasini Haider  
NEW DELHI

Responding to concerns that the Quad has lost its relevance, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi has said that the four-nation grouping remains a "vital framework". In a written interview with *The Hindu* ahead of the Quadrilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday, Mr. Motegi indicated that "cooperation over critical minerals" needed for green energy and high technology would be at the top of the meeting agenda.

Japan is working on critical minerals' projects in India, he said while calling for improved infrastructure, more tax subsidies, and protection for intellectual property rights.

The Quad meeting, which will see External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar host Mr. Motegi, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, is expected to take stock of the conflict in West Asia, the Strait of Hormuz blockade, and U.S. President Donald Trump's visit this month to China. It will also set the agenda for the Quad Summit that has not taken place since 2024 amid India-U.S. tensions on a number of issues.

"The Quad remains a vital framework among countries that share funda-



Toshimitsu Motegi

mental values and strategic interests. It has delivered concrete results across a wide range of areas, including maritime security, economic security, and cybersecurity," Mr. Motegi said, but side-stepped queries on why the mechanism finds little mention in strategy documents of member countries.

He declined to respond to a question on whether the U.S.'s torpedoing of the Iranian ship *IRIS Dena* in the Indian Ocean on March 4 would be raised by fellow Quad members, given their agenda of ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

#### Free and open Pacific

Although the Quad Foreign Ministers met twice in 2025, setting a new agenda, the grouping has found little or no mention in recent strategic documents issued by the U.S., Australian, and Japanese governments. The U.S. National Security Strategy, released in November 2025, says

the country will "encourage New Delhi to contribute to Indo-Pacific security", including through the Quad, but did not detail its plans for the grouping any further. On May 2, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi announced Japan's 'Updated Free and Open Indo-Pacific' policy during a visit to Vietnam, a document that mentions the Quad just once, in the context of the critical minerals initiative.

The Japanese Foreign Minister said Tuesday's meeting would discuss "regional and global situations" and send "an unwavering message that the Quad would continue to robustly advance practical cooperation toward the realisation of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)".

In April, Ms. Takaichi had also proposed a "Partnership On Wide Energy and Resources Resilience (POWER Asia)", at an event attended virtually by Mr. Jaishankar that will coordinate on oil, gas and renewables procurement, financing and storage mechanisms to deal with the energy crisis as a result of the Iran conflict. "The countries most affected by disruptions in the supply of energy and resources passing through the Strait of Hormuz are those in Asia, and these impacts extend to all countries closely connected through supply chains," Mr. Motegi said.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad):** An informal strategic forum comprising four major democracies: India, Japan, the United States, and Australia. The grouping is maintained by semi-regular summits, information exchanges, and joint military drills (such as the Malabar Exercises).
- **Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP):** A strategic concept aimed at ensuring an ocean ecosystem that is free, open, inclusive, and governed by international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It opposes coercive economic or military actions that disrupt freedom of navigation.
- **Critical Minerals:** Mineral commodities that are vital to the economic and national security of modern industrial nations, yet face supply chains that are highly vulnerable to disruption. These include lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements (REEs).
- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow, strategically vital waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It acts as the world's most critical oil transit chokepoint, through which a significant portion of global petroleum passes daily.
- **Economic Security:** A doctrine that integrates national security with economic policy. It focuses on safeguarding a nation's supply chains, critical infrastructure, intellectual property, and technological edges from foreign coercion or systemic vulnerabilities.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The contemporary debate surrounding the Quad revolves around its evolving functional relevance, shifting priorities, and the underlying tensions among its member states.

- **Core Thesis**

- While critics suggest the Quad is losing its structural momentum due to bilateral frictions and its omissions from major national security strategy documents, the grouping is actively pivoting toward a functional, techno-economic framework. Its long-term relevance is being sustained through tangible, high-stakes cooperation in critical mineral supply chains, green technology, and maritime economic security.

- **Key Points and Supporting Evidence**

- **Functional Shift to Techno-Economic Domains:** The partnership is moving beyond purely military alignment. Top diplomatic agendas now focus heavily on securing critical mineral projects, boosting infrastructure, providing tax subsidies, and protecting intellectual property rights to power the global green transition.
- **The Geopolitical Urgency of Energy Chokepoints:** Recent maritime conflicts in West Asia and threats to chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz underscore the vulnerability of Asian energy supply chains. This reality forces member nations to collaborate on initiatives like the *Partnership On Wide Energy and Resources Resilience* (POWERR Asia) to secure oil, gas, and renewable storage infrastructure.
- **Maritime Security Integration:** The group maintains a resolute focus on advancing practical maritime domain awareness. It acts as a defensive and monitoring counterweight to unilateral territorial assertions, ensuring stable sea lines of communication (SLOCs).

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue reflects the shifting geopolitical dynamics of the 21st century, moving from a temporary humanitarian response to a core pillar of Indo-Pacific architecture.

- **Phase 1: The Tsunami Core Group (2004)**

- The genesis of the Quad was entirely functional and non-military. Following the devastating Indian Ocean Tsunami in December 2004, the navies of India, the US, Japan, and Australia rapidly coordinated to deliver humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). This successful ad-hoc cooperation demonstrated the high interoperability of their maritime forces.

- **Phase 2: Quad 1.0 and Institutional Collapse (2007–2008)**

- In 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe conceptualized the "Confluence of the Two Seas" during his historic address to the Indian Parliament. This led to the first formal meeting of the four nations alongside the Malabar military exercises. However, this initial iteration quickly collapsed in 2008 due to intense diplomatic protests from China. Australia, under leadership changes, withdrew to protect its bilateral trade ties, while India maintained its traditional posture of strategic non-alignment.

- **Phase 3: Dormancy and Shifting Realities (2008–2016)**

- For nearly a decade, the Quad remained dormant. During this period, the regional balance of power shifted dramatically. Rapid island-building activities in the South China Sea, growing assertions in the East China Sea, and the launch of massive trans-continental infrastructure networks like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) altered the strategic status quo, convincing all four nations to re-evaluate their positions.

- **Phase 4: Quad 2.0 and Resurgence (2017–2020)**

- On the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Manila in 2017, official-level talks revived the grouping as "Quad 2.0." The convergence of India's Act East Policy, Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision, Australia's Pacific Step-up, and the US Indo-Pacific Strategy provided a unified strategic foundation. In 2019, the dialogue was elevated to the Foreign Ministers' level, signaling a deepening commitment.

- **Phase 5: Summits and Functional Diversification (2021–Present)**

- The year 2021 marked a major milestone with the first-ever virtual Leaders' Summit hosted by the US, followed by in-person summits in Washington and Tokyo. The grouping expanded its agenda far beyond defense, setting up dedicated working groups on critical and emerging technologies, climate action, clean energy supply chains, cybersecurity, and global health.

- Today, the framework balances traditional maritime security with economic resilience, navigating internal bilateral challenges while solidifying its role as a permanent fixture of regional governance.

- **Way Forward**

- To ensure regional stability and advance India's long-term interests, a balanced, practical strategy should focus on several key areas.

- **Operationalizing Techno-Economic Pledges**

- The alignment must move past high-level joint statements and deliver on its economic promises. Members should quickly establish a joint venture capital fund dedicated to financing critical mineral exploration, refining facilities, and semiconductor supply chains.

- By pulling together American and Japanese private capital alongside India's skilled workforce and domestic manufacturing capacity, the grouping can create viable alternatives to single-source manufacturing dependencies.

- **Institutionalizing Energy Resilience Architecture**

- Advancing proposals like POWER Asia is a critical next step. Member states should invest in building out interconnected strategic petroleum reserves and regional green energy grids across the Indo-Pacific.

- Establishing clear, pre-arranged mutual-aid protocols ensures that if a critical trade chokepoint like the Strait of Hormuz faces an unexpected blockade, energy supplies can be efficiently rerouted to minimize economic shocks to vulnerable regional partners.

- **Strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)**

- The partnership should continue to expand its Information Fusion Centre networks, such as the Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) based in India.

- By sharing real-time satellite tracking data and commercial shipping analytics with smaller littoral nations across South and Southeast Asia, the group provides a valuable public asset that improves disaster response, counters illegal fishing, and maintains stable, open sea lanes.

- **Balancing Strategic Alliances with ASEAN Centrality**

- It is essential to actively engage with Southeast Asian partners. The group must ensure its initiatives run parallel to and support ASEAN-led frameworks, focusing on practical areas like infrastructure development, climate adaptation, and digital literacy.

- By framing its work as an inclusive effort to provide regional public goods, the partnership can defuse anxieties about major-power competition and build broader, more durable regional consensus.

# THE QUAD: FUNCTIONAL RESILIENCE — IN AN UNCERTAIN INDO-PACIFIC —

*From Military Alignment to Techno-Economic Powerhouse*



## KEY TERMS

- 
**The Quad**  
 Informal strategic forum of India, Japan, U.S. & Australia.
- 
**Free & Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)**  
 Ensures a free, open, inclusive Indo-Pacific governed by international law (UNCLOS).
- 
**Critical Minerals**  
 Vital minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, rare earths for green energy & defence.
- 
**Strait of Hormuz**  
 World's most critical oil chokepoint linking Persian Gulf to Arabian Sea.
- 
**Economic Security**  
 Safeguarding supply chains, tech, IP & infrastructure from coercion & vulnerabilities.

## WHY THE QUAD MATTERS NOW?



## STRATEGIC CHALLENGES & SILENCES

- 
**Policy Omission Paradox**  
 Quad gets minimal mentions in formal national security strategy documents.
- 
**Bilateral Friction Points**  
 Trade & diplomatic tensions (India-US issues) delay top-tier leader summits.
- 
**Strategic Distractions**  
 Major powers soft-pedal West Asian conflicts to avoid drawing China's ire.
- 
**Flexible vs Institutional Dilemma**  
 Critics see Quad as auxiliary alignment, not a core institutional pillar.

## DIAGRAM: QUAD PILLARS



## THE WAY FORWARD

- ✓ Deepen critical mineral exploration & refining partnerships.
- ✓ Accelerate joint infrastructure & clean energy investments.
- ✓ Strengthen maritime domain awareness & UNCLOS adherence.
- ✓ Institutionalise Quad projects with measurable outcomes.
- ✓ Balance strategic autonomy with functional cooperation.



## THE BIG PICTURE

“The Quad is not losing steam; it is evolving into a functional, techno-economic framework that secures prosperity, stability & resilience in the Indo-Pacific.”

# Supreme Court's revival of Section 124A triggers concerns over a colonial law the country did not want

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court's May 21 revival of Section 124A (sedition) proceedings against consenting accused persons exposes them to an admittedly oppressive provision both the court and the Union government agreed was "not in tune with the current social milieu, and was intended for a time when this country was under the colonial regime".

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court had frozen all proceedings under Section 124A of the now-repealed Indian Penal

Code on May 11, 2022, virtually casting a shadow of doubt over every sedition case at the time.

The Bench, of which Surya Kant, then a judge of the Supreme Court, was a member, had recorded the rampant misuse of the provision, which dates back to 1898 and predates the Constitution.

### Colonial baggage

The interim order of May 11 had taken excerpts from a Union government affidavit, filed just two days earlier, quoting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's firm belief during 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' that "we need to, as a nation, work even harder to shed colonial baggage that has



passed its utility, which includes outdated colonial laws and practices".

### 'Chilling effect'

The court had concurred with the Union government that colonial laws such as Section 124A, punishable with life imprison-

ment and having a "chilling effect" on free speech, caused "mindless hindrances to people" and "reeked of a colonial mindset that has no place in today's India".

The Supreme Court's position on Section 124A in May 2022 was in consonance with its judgment in *I.R. Coelho versus State of Tamil Nadu* that law must be in step with the "march of time".

However, the court's May 21, 2026 clarification has unlatched Section 124A, ostensibly to protect the right to a speedy trial for accused persons seeking closure.

The order, passed last week, recorded that there would be no "impediment

for the courts to decide such matters [under Section 124A] on merits and in accordance with law".

### Constitutionality case

However, the challenge to the very constitutionality of Section 124A remains alive and pending in the top court.

Multiple writ petitions, titled *S.G. Vombatkere versus Union of India*, have challenged Section 124A for violating the Fundamental Rights to free speech and expression, personal liberty, life, and equality before the law.

The pendency of the Vombatkere petitions raises the question of whether lower courts should pronounce judgments on guilt

when the constitutionality of the provision itself is under challenge in the Supreme Court.

Besides, the May 21 clarification was passed in an unconnected case, *Kamran versus State of Madhya Pradesh*, without hearing the petitioners in the Vombatkere group of matters.

While the top court's clarification may bring relief to some accused persons, it also creates practical problems on the ground.

For one, the May 21 clarification did not explicitly deal with a situation in which one accused agrees to be subjected to proceedings under Section 124A while co-accused persons may refuse to do so.

## • **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Sedition (Section 124A):** Originally housed in the now-repealed Indian Penal Code (IPC), this provision defines sedition as any action—by words, signs, or visible representation—that brings or attempts to bring hatred, contempt, or disaffection toward the Government established by law. The offense is non-bailable and can carry a punishment of life imprisonment.
- **Chilling Effect:** A legal and social phenomenon where individuals self-censor or suppress their legitimate exercise of free speech out of fear of state sanction, prosecution, or legal harassment.
- **Colonial Baggage:** Laws, institutions, and administrative practices introduced by the British colonial regime designed to subjugate citizens rather than empower them, which continue to persist in post-independence democratic India.
- **Interim Order:** A temporary direction passed by a court during the pendency of a case, meant to stabilize a situation or protect rights until a final judgment is delivered.
- **Writ Petition:** A formal written order issued by a higher court (Supreme Court under Article 32 or High Courts under Article 226) to command an authority to act or cease acting, heavily used to enforce fundamental rights.
- **Doctrine of the "March of Time":** A judicial philosophy holding that laws and constitutional interpretations must evolve alongside societal progress, technological advancement, and shifting moral standards, rather than remaining static.

## • **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The ongoing discourse surrounding Section 124A highlights a deep tension between state security and individual liberty. The core arguments focus on the validity of maintaining a colonial-era restriction on speech within a modern democracy.
- **The Core Thesis**
  - The central argument posits that a law designed by a colonial regime to suppress freedom struggles is fundamentally incompatible with a democratic republic built on fundamental freedoms. While the state requires mechanisms to combat existential threats, using sweeping sedition laws creates systemic misuse and erodes democratic dissent.
- **Arguments for Striking Down or Restricting the Law**
  - **Anachronistic Nature:** The law dates back to the late 19th century. Both the judiciary and the executive have acknowledged that it does not align with contemporary democratic values.
  - **Systemic Misuse:** Empirical evidence indicates that the law is frequently weaponized by law enforcement agencies against political dissidents, journalists, and activists to stifle peaceful protest.
  - **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** Critics argue that the sweeping language of Section 124A creates an unreasonable restriction on the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression (Article 19(1)(a)) and compromises the Right to Life and Personal Liberty (Article 21).

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of sedition law in India reveals a shift from a tool of imperial suppression to a highly contested mechanism of state power in the post-independence era.
- **1837:** Thomas Babington Macaulay drafts the penal code, including a version of the sedition clause, which is inexplicably omitted when the IPC is formally enacted in 1860.
- **1870:** Section 124A is formally introduced into the IPC via an amendment managed by Sir James Fitzjames Stephen to tackle increasing anti-colonial activities.
- **Late Colonial Era (1890s–1940s):** The British regime uses the law to target nationalist leaders. Notable trials include Bal Gangadhar Tilak (for writings in *Kesari*) and Mahatma Gandhi (for articles in *Young India*), who famously termed Section 124A the "prince among the political sections of the IPC designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen."
- **1951:** The newly independent nation encounters challenges to free speech, leading to the First Constitutional Amendment. This introduces "public order" as a reasonable restriction under Article 19(2) to balance national security with personal liberty.
- **1962 (*Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar*):** A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court upholds the constitutionality of Section 124A but severely limits its scope. The Court rules that the law can only apply when there is a direct incitement to violence or an intention to create public disorder.
- **2022 (*S.G. Vombatkere v. Union of India*):** In a historic interim order, the Supreme Court puts Section 124A into abeyance, ordering federal and state governments to refrain from registering new cases, investigating ongoing ones, or taking coercive steps under the provision.
- **Present Context (2024–2026):** While the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) replaced the old penal code and introduced updated terms for offenses against the state, the constitutional validity of past sedition actions and pending cases under Section 124A remains active before the Supreme Court. Recent judicial clarifications permitting trials for consenting individuals seeking closure have added fresh procedural layers to the debate.

- **Way Forward**

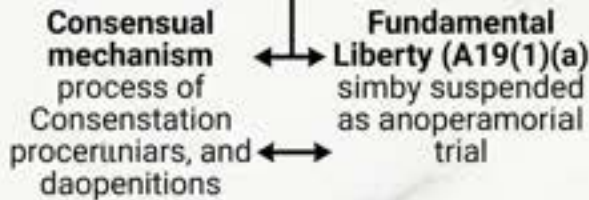
- **Narrow and Precise Codification:** If laws covering offenses against the state are maintained, they must be drafted with precise, unambiguous language. The law should explicitly state that harsh criticism, emotional rhetoric, or peaceful dissent against government policies do not constitute offenses unless they directly invite or cause imminent, widespread violence.
- **Implementing Procedural Safeguards:** To minimize the misuse of state-security laws, preliminary verifications should be mandatory before registering an official complaint. Requiring a reasoned review by a senior, independent police officer (such as a Superintendent of Police or higher) can reduce arbitrary filings by lower-level administrative personnel.
- **Judicial Accountability and Sensitization:** The lower judiciary needs clear, comprehensive guidelines to handle cases involving political speech. Trial court judges should be encouraged to apply the protective standards established by higher courts, ensuring that bail is granted promptly in cases lacking clear evidence of violence.
- **Strengthening Alternative Legal Frameworks:** Rather than relying on outdated, broad laws, the state can address genuine threats to sovereignty using specific, modern statutes designed for counter-terrorism, provided they contain sufficient oversight to prevent human rights violations.

### Section 124A Key Terms

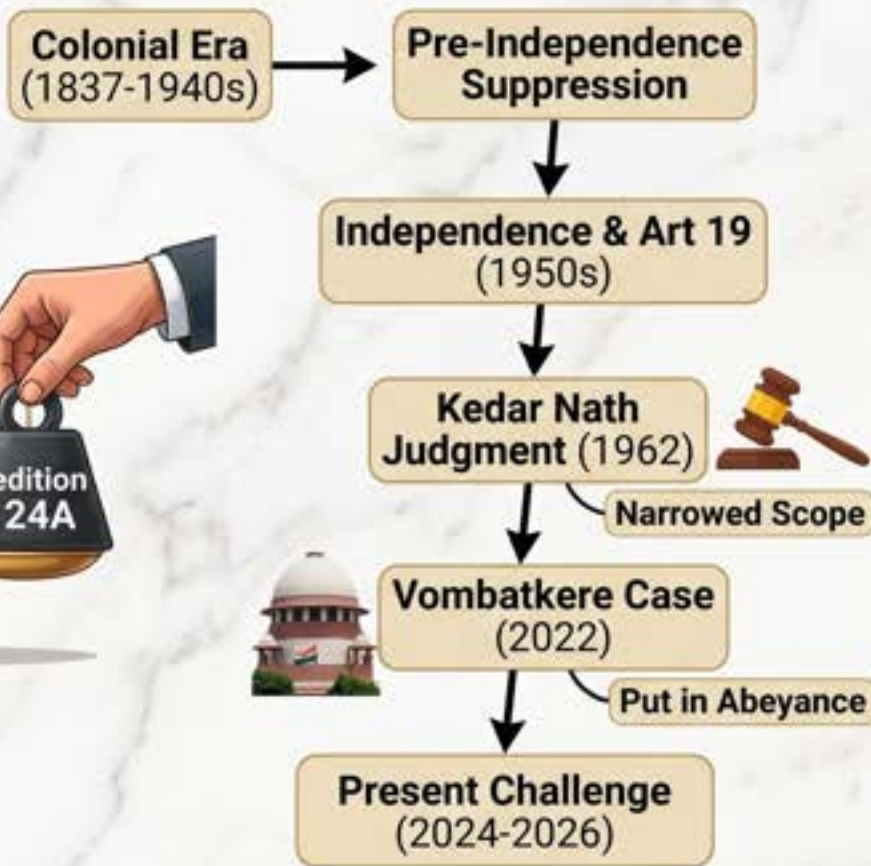
- **Sedition (Sec 124A):** Sedition preceeding the mulling consciences and coscerns of the sedition law.
- **Chilling Effect:** Chilling effect to ahove over sedonial law.
- **Colonial Baggage:** Coronial baggage soalties to colonial colonial baggage, procedissian and mies.
- **March of Time Doctrine:** March of Time Doctrine prove this trirh oution the catenal Ivolonal Doctrine.

### Complex Legal and procedural legal and procedural issues mechanism with to Consensual Trial

#### Consensual Trial



### Evolution of Sedition Law Timeline



### Challenges to Rule of Law

- **Institutional Inertia:** Authentic of Institutional Inertia, to ensure to tranism and hirross pronecuore local actors.
- **Judicial Overburdening:** Uduical overburdening, ganannics reeperent to judicial position and challetagies.

### Multidimensional Impact



### NCERT & Syllabus Linkages

**Class I/ Class:**  
Book/Book 7, 41-13,  
Book Less3 46.

**GS Paper:**  
Book/Book GS 25-8,  
International (G-S PRAK)

**UPSC  
Relevance  
Summary:**

UPSC. Social  
Release  
Summary

### Sedition Trial Dilemma



**WAY FORWARD:** Precisely defined state security laws and robust procedural safeguards.

# Development, tribal protection can coexist in Nicobar: Oram

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Responding to Congress leader Jairam Ramesh's allegations that the Great Nicobar Island project violates tribal communities' forest rights, Union Minister Jai Oram has said, "Development and tribal protection are not mutually exclusive and can coexist through robust measures."

In his response, Mr. Oram stressed that as a regional power, "India cannot afford to leave strategically decisive geographies underdeveloped." He said the Forest Rights Act operated in addition to existing laws such as the Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulations of 1956, which sufficiently "protects habitats, restricts external extrusion, and preserves abori-

ginal ways of life".

He also defended the move to obtain the consent of the Shompen community through the administration-run Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJVS), saying the body is specifically mandated to advise the administration on the protection and welfare of "aboriginal tribes" and that such a mechanism is "relevant for welfare, protection and informed administrative decision-making concerning vulnerable tribal groups".

## On displacement

Mr. Oram also added that as per the information provided by the Island administration, "no tribal habitation is proposed to be displaced as part of the project". In March, the administration, however, had



India cannot afford to leave strategically decisive geographies underdeveloped, the Union Minister said. AFP

published a draft plan for the "relocation" of tribal families affected by the ₹92,000-crore project.

Mr. Oram was responding to a detailed letter from Mr. Ramesh, in which he had called for the withdrawal of all clearances granted under the 2006 Forest Rights Act, arguing that

consent procedures under the law had been violated.

Mr. Ramesh's May 13 letter noted that the Gram Sabhas that were supposed to have consented to the diversion of forest land under the FRA consisted of settler families and not members of the Nicobarese and Shompen people,

who are the ones with an actual claim over the forest land in GNI under the FRA.

He asserted that the AAJVS, being an entity controlled by the administration, could not have consented on behalf of the Shompen community as per the law.

## Oversight mechanisms

Mr. Oram maintained that India cannot afford to leave strategically decisive geographies underdeveloped and argued that the protection of tribal rights and development can coexist through "continuous oversight mechanisms such as satellite monitoring, land mapping, and strict regulatory enforcement".

He emphasised the importance of the project's location in providing India

with a "critical vantage point over maritime security", strengthening the country's Indo-Pacific presence and strategic role, and enhancing regional trade and diplomatic integration.

He said that the Centre's project "represents an important shift in India's approach towards frontier infrastructure development by strengthening connectivity, logistics, and national presence in remote but strategically vital regions", and thus it is important to "position Great Nicobar Island as a model of strategic frontier governance, where national security priorities are pursued alongside ecological sustainability, legal compliance, and robust protection of the Shompen and other tribal communities".

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):** This is a classification created by the Government of India to identify tribal communities that display stagnant or declining populations, low levels of literacy, pre-agricultural technology, and economic backwardness. They require targeted, hyper-specific protection.
- **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** Officially known as the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. This landmark legislation recognizes and vests forest rights and occupation in forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and traditional forest dwellers who have resided in such forests for generations.
- **Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJVS):** A government-run, autonomous umbrella body established by the Andaman and Nicobar Administration. Its primary mandate is to advise the state on the welfare, protection, cultural preservation, and medical well-being of the primitive and vulnerable tribal groups inhabiting the archipelago.
- **Frontier Governance:** A strategic and administrative doctrine where an emphasis is placed on developing infrastructure, physical connectivity, and national security assets in remote, peripheral, or border regions. The goal is to assert sovereignty and deter external geopolitical threats, transitioning a region from a "neglected buffer zone" to an integrated strategic outpost.
- **Indo-Pacific Strategic Realism:** An international relations concept emphasizing that India must proactively project power, secure maritime choke points, and build defensive infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region to counter the expanding naval footprints of regional rivals, prioritizing national security and maritime dominance as prerequisites for economic growth.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The debate surrounding the development of strategically decisive islands like Great Nicobar revolves around a classic governance dilemma: balancing imperative national security and economic growth with ecological preservation and indigenous tribal rights.
- **The Imperative for Frontier Development and Security**
  - The core argument in favor of major infrastructure initiatives (such as a ₹92,000-crore mega-project encompassing an international transshipment terminal, power plants, and strategic townships) rests on India's role as a regional power. Geographically vital areas cannot be left underdeveloped without compromising India's maritime security. Positioned near the mouth of the Strait of Malacca—a global shipping choke point—the Great Nicobar Island serves as a critical vantage point for maritime surveillance, strengthening India's Indo-Pacific footprint, enhancing regional trade, and deepening diplomatic integration with Southeast Asian nations.
- **The Administrative Defense of Coexistence**
  - Proponents of development argue that economic progress and tribal protection are not mutually exclusive. This viewpoint maintains that the Forest Rights Act operates alongside legacy protections like the **Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulations (PATR) of 1956**. This legal framework restricts external intrusion, protects traditional hunting grounds, and preserves aboriginal ways of life. Furthermore, administrative bodies argue that no tribal habitations are slated for physical displacement under current development blueprints. Any administrative consent obtained through state-run bodies like the AAJVS is framed as a legitimate welfare mechanism meant to guide informed, protective decision-making for vulnerable groups.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The administrative and political approach toward India's island territories has transitioned through distinct phases, moving from colonial isolation to post-colonial assimilation, and finally to the modern era of strategic-ecological friction.

- **Colonial Era: Isolation and Penalty (Pre-1947)**

- During the British Raj, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were treated primarily as a penal colony (*Kala Pani*) and an isolated frontier. The indigenous tribal populations—including the Shompen, Jarawa, and Sentinelese—experienced minimal administrative interference, remaining isolated in dense, unexplored tropical rainforests. The colonial state viewed these islands through a lens of resource extraction (timber) and punitive isolation rather than integrated governance.

- **Post-Independence and Settler Policy (1947–1980s)**

- Following independence, the Government of India sought to integrate the islands demographically and economically. The promulgation of the *Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956* was a landmark effort to legally protect tribes from exploitation.

- However, simultaneously, the government initiated "settler schemes," encouraging ex-servicemen and refugee families from mainland India to settle in places like Little Andaman and Great Nicobar. This policy permanently altered the demographic profile of the islands, introducing a dual-society structure composed of indigenous tribal communities and mainland settlers.

- **Environmental Awakening and Tribal Advocacy (1990s–2010s)**

- With the rise of global and domestic environmental consciousness, the focus shifted toward conservation. The Supreme Court of India stepped in with landmark orders in the early 2000s (such as the Shekhar Singh Commission recommendations) to restrict commercial logging, phase out sand mining, and protect tribal reserves like the Jarawa Tribal Reserve. The enactment of the Forest Rights Act in 2006 added a powerful statutory layer, giving indigenous communities legal ownership over their traditional forest dwellings and requiring their explicit consent for developmental interventions.

- **The Era of Indo-Pacific Strategic Realism (2020s–Present)**

- In recent years, the geopolitical rise of competitive maritime maneuvers in the Indian Ocean has driven a major policy shift. The Union Government re-evaluated the islands not just as ecological sanctuaries, but as vital military and economic assets. This shift led to comprehensive infrastructure proposals, triggering the current debate where historical environmental and tribal safeguards face pressure from pressing national defense and global transshipment ambitions.

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- **Way Forward**
- **Strict Multi-Zonal Spatial Planning**
  - The island must be divided into strictly enforced, legally non-negotiable zones using advanced GIS and satellite geo-fencing. The deep interior biosphere reserves and tribal foraging grounds must be declared completely off-limits to external populations. Infrastructure should be concentrated exclusively within designated, ecologically less sensitive coastal corridors.
- **Reforming the Consent Architecture**
  - To ensure genuine legal compliance under the Forest Rights Act, the government should avoid relying solely on proxy administrative bodies like the AAJVS for consent. Instead, an independent commission—including anthropologists, judicial experts, and authentic tribal representatives—should be formed to facilitate direct, transparent, and culturally sensitive consultations with local communities.
- **Deploying a Low-Impact, Greener Infrastructure Model**
  - Any port or urban development on the island must adhere to the highest international green standards. This means implementing zero-liquid-discharge systems, strict regulations on ship emissions and ballast water, and utilizing green construction materials to minimize the project's carbon and physical footprint on the surrounding marine environment.
- **Regular, Independent Strategic-Ecological Audits**
  - Rather than depending entirely on internal project assessments, the Union Government should establish a permanent, multi-stakeholder oversight council. Composed of independent marine biologists, climate scientists, human rights specialists, and naval strategist, this council should conduct annual public audits of the project's social and ecological impact, with the authority to pause construction if environmental safety thresholds are breached.



## KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS (Defining the Landscape)



## FRONTIER GOVERNANCE MODEL (Unique Innovations)



## MAIN ARGUMENTS & COEXISTENCE DILEMMA (A comparative logic chart)



## CHALLENGES & WAY FORWARD (Roadmap to Success)

Key Challenges	Way Forward
Tribal Resistance	Strict Zonal Planning
Legal Violations	Reformed Consent via Independent Bodies
Environmental Risks	Green Ports

## UPSC SYLLABUS LINKAGES

- GS 1** Society & Geography (Vulnerable Groups, Resources)
- GS 2** Governance & Constitution (Eminent Domain, Statutory Bodies)
- GS 3** Economy, Security & Environment (Infrastructure, Maritime Strategy, Biodiversity, EIA)
- GS 4** Ethics & Case Studies (Ethical Dilemmas in Governance)

# 'Centre offering Ladakh unique governance model; demand for Statehood to continue'

Leh Apex Body co-convenor says Ladakh has been promised protection under Article 371 as the govt. is 'adamant on not giving Sixth Schedule status to the Union Territory'; on being offered the provision of U.T. with a legislature, he says there are many issues that are to be discussed with the govt.'

## INTERVIEW

### Cherring Dorjay Lakruk

Vijalita Singh  
NEW DELHI

Last Friday, the Union Home Ministry proposed a new mechanism to grant Ladakh greater legislative, financial, and administrative powers within the existing Union Territory framework. The proposal was made in a meeting with the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), the two major civil society bodies from Ladakh.

Cherring Dorjay Lakruk, co-convenor, LAB and the president of the influential Ladakh Buddhist Association, spoke on the proposed agreement. Edited excerpts:

**What were the issues discussed during the May 22 meeting with the Home Ministry?**

The Union government has reservations about Sixth Schedule status and also in

granting Statehood to Ladakh. They never agreed to these two demands in the talks held in the past.

During the last round of talks (February 4), they offered safeguards available under Article 371 A of the Constitution. On May 22, we did raise our existing demands. We said if you cannot give Statehood, then give us U.T. with legislature, even that was not acceptable to them as Ladakh would then have to generate its own revenue without Central assistance. The government has promised us legislature at U.T. level and protection under Article 371. If they do not concede to Sixth Schedule, Article 371 is acceptable.

**Since 2020, you have been demanding Statehood and the Sixth Schedule. Is this not a climbdown from your original demands?**

The government is adamant on not giving Sixth Schedule status to Ladakh. It said the entire State cannot be included under Sixth Schedule. It is not true; Meghalaya is an example. Under this provision, legislative powers are there with districts but un-



der Article 371, we will get safeguards for land, employment, environment at the U.T. level.

**Will you continue to demand Sixth Schedule or Statehood?**

The Centre has agreed broadly to the proposal and intense negotiations will go on to decide the nitty-gritty of it. We are not abandoning our demand for Statehood. Even if at present, Statehood is not possible, we will continue with the demand.

**So, what you are being offered is a unique arrangement by the Centre where the head of the elected representatives will not be referred to as a Chief Minister?**

This is a unique arrangement in the entire country. The government did not say that the elected head cannot be referred to as a Chief Minister. We are yet to get a clarity on what the elected members would be known as. There are many issues that are to be discussed with the government. They will come up with a proposal and we will also send ours.

**Is there a timeline?**

We have said that we will submit our proposal within a week, but the government has not fixed a deadline or a timeline. We insisted that it should be done as soon as possible. The problem is Home Ministry calls for a meeting and then they forget about it for the next four to five

months. It is being stretched and we want the issues to be resolved and finalised soon.

**Was the September 24, 2025, violence in Leh city, where four people were killed during protests, discussed in the meeting with the Ministry?**

We reiterated our demand for compensation to the next of kin of the deceased and those injured during the violence and also insisted on withdrawal of criminal cases against the locals. The government said when the final agreement is reached, then these issues can be looked into sympathetically.

**Does the government agree that the four persons were killed in police firing?**

It is beyond doubt that they were killed in police firing, nobody else fired other than the police that day. The judicial inquiry led by retired Supreme Court judge [Balbir Singh Chauhan] is yet to submit its report. Those who deposed before the commission have been cross-ex-

amined. We are waiting for the final report. There have been multiple breaks as the judge is in Delhi.

**The government had earlier detained climate activist Sonam Wangchuk under National Security Act and now he is participating in the talks. What is his role in the ongoing negotiations?**

He is like any other member of the Leh Apex Body. He attended the sub-committee meeting (May 22) and will participate in the high-powered committee meeting (led by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rao) next.

**Why are you protesting since 2020?**

When we were part of Jammu and Kashmir, we were protected by Article 370 of the Constitution. Our land was safe from outsiders. Since Article 370 was removed, we are without safeguards. There is a lot of barren land here, if outsiders come and settle here, we will be minorities in our own land. People feared this and that is why we hit the streets.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Union Territory (UT) with vs. without Legislature:** A Union Territory is an administrative unit governed directly by the Central Government through an Administrator or Lieutenant Governor (LG).
  - *Without Legislature (e.g., Ladakh, Andaman & Nicobar):* The executive power rests completely with the Centre; laws are made via Presidential regulations or Parliament.
  - *With Legislature (e.g., Puducherry, Delhi):* Features an elected Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers. However, its legislative powers are restricted compared to a full state, and the LG retains overriding discretionary powers on key subjects.
- **The Sixth Schedule (Article 244(2) & 275(1)):** A specialized constitutional provision designed to protect tribal cultures and autonomy. It allows for the creation of **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** and **Regional Councils**, which possess legislative, judicial, executive, and financial powers over matters like land, forests, water, agriculture, and local customs.
- **Article 371 and Article 371A to 371J:** These articles provide "asymmetric federalism" or special provisions for specific states to preserve their religious or social practices, customary laws, and land ownership patterns.
- **Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA):** These are umbrella civil society coalitions representing the socio-religious, political, and cultural interests of the Leh (predominantly Buddhist) and Kargil (predominantly Shia Muslim) districts. They have united under a shared four-point agenda.
- **National Security Act (NSA), 1980:** A stringent preventive detention law that allows the state to detain individuals for up to 12 months without formal charges if they are deemed a threat to national security or public order.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The ongoing dialogue between Ladakhi representatives and the Union Home Ministry revolves around a structural tug-of-war: local aspirations for complete political agency versus the Centre's focus on national security and tailored administrative models.
- **The Core Demands of Ladakh (The Four-Point Agenda)**
  - **Full Statehood:** Representatives argue that a bureaucratic, LG-led setup alienates local populations. Statehood would provide a sovereign legislative assembly, ensuring that the people of Ladakh govern themselves.
  - **Sixth Schedule Inclusion:** Given that over 90% of Ladakh's population is tribal, leaders insist on Sixth Schedule protections to shield their fragile ecosystem and distinct culture from external commercial exploitation.
  - **Job Reservation and Land Protection:** Local youth fear being outcompeted by non-locals in employment and land ownership, demanding strict exclusionary safeguards.
  - **Separate Parliamentary Seats:** They demand two distinct Lok Sabha seats (one each for Leh and Kargil) to ensure equitable democratic representation.
- **The Union Government's Perspective and Proposals**
  - **Reservation Over Sixth Schedule:** The Centre has shown deep reservations about extending the Sixth Schedule to Ladakh. Its counterargument is that the Sixth Schedule was constitutionally designed specifically for the distinct tribal settings of the Northeast and cannot be seamlessly transposed to a strategically sensitive trans-Himalayan region.
  - **The "Unique Governance Model" Offer:** The Centre has proposed a compromise framework: granting Ladakh enhanced legislative, financial, and administrative powers within the existing UT framework, paired with safeguards under **Article 371**.
  - **The Legislative Compromise:** While open to granting a legislature to the UT, the Centre aims to retain a unique designation where the elected leader may not hold the title or sweeping powers of a traditional "Chief Minister," maintaining a stronger federal oversight.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- The geopolitical identity of Ladakh has undergone radical shifts, moving from an independent kingdom to a contested frontier, and finally to a distinct administrative entity.
- **Pre-Independence and Dogra Rule (1842–1947):** Originally an independent Himalayan kingdom, Ladakh was conquered by General Zorawar Singh and integrated into the Dogra State of Jammu and Kashmir under Gulab Singh in 1842. This forced an amalgamation of regions with deeply divergent cultural, linguistic, and religious identities.
- **Post-Independence Isolation (1947–1990s):** Following the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India, Ladakh became a remote frontier district of J&K. Local leaders consistently complained of "political and economic marginalization" by the Kashmir-centric leadership in Srinagar.
- **The Genesis of Local Autonomy (1995):** Intense agitations in the early 1990s led to the creation of the **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC)** for Leh (1995) and later Kargil (2003). These councils possessed decentralized administrative powers but lacked legislative teeth.
- **The August 2019 Reorganization:** The abrogation of Article 370 bifurcated the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Ladakh fulfilled its decades-old dream of becoming a separate Union Territory. While initially celebrated in Leh, the realization soon set in that losing Article 370 stripped away their exclusive rights over land and jobs.
- **Post-2020 Unified Agitation:** Realizing their vulnerability as a UT without a legislature, former political rivals from Leh and Kargil formed the LAB and KDA. This united front launched massive public protests, hunger strikes, and high-level negotiations with the Ministry of Home Affairs to secure constitutional protections.



- **Way Forward**

- A balanced solution must address both the national security concerns of the Union Government and the democratic aspirations of the Ladakhi people.

- **Enacting a Customised "Article 371+" Framework:** If the Sixth Schedule is legally difficult to extend, the Centre should introduce a robust, non-dilutable clause under Article 371 specifically tailored for Ladakh. This clause must explicitly guarantee that no central or local law regarding land ownership, mineral extraction, or public employment can be passed without the consent of a locally elected body.

- **Empowering the LAHDCs Legislative Authority:** Rather than inventing entirely new legislative bodies that could trigger conflict between Leh and Kargil, the existing Leh and Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Councils should be constitutionally upgraded. Granting them the power to frame formal bylaws on local subjects would provide democratic accountability without requiring full statehood.

- **Establishing a Formal Institutional Timeline:** To rebuild trust, the Ministry of Home Affairs should issue a legally binding timeline to conclude negotiations and implement these safeguards, moving past vague or open-ended dialogues.

- **Adopting an Eco-Centric Development Policy:** The state must adopt a development model tailored to Ladakh's unique terrain, ensuring that all major infrastructure projects pass rigorous environmental impact assessments reviewed by local councils.

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## History & Current Demands



## Key Concepts Comparison - Diagram

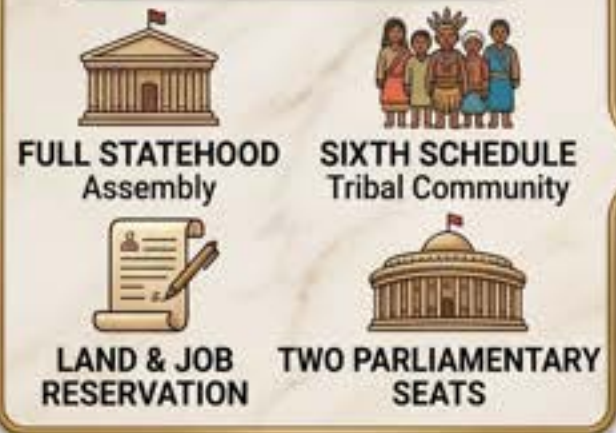
Concept	Main Features	Benefits	Drawbacks
<b>Union Territory (without Legislature)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union Territory Legislature</li> <li>Assembly legislature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Democratic aspirations</li> <li>Benefits concision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Border patrol in unneo base</li> <li>Military provisions</li> </ul>
<b>Union Territory (with Legislature)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union Territory Legislature</li> <li>Assembly legislature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police area and polilio stand</li> <li>National criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Border vvs. strategic constust</li> </ul>
<b>Sixth Schedule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tribal Community Assesment</li> <li>Ralibdien coroluctors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecmnsibity to developments</li> <li>and anti equivement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police patrols and national for sales</li> <li>Strategic forces</li> </ul>
<b>Article 371 Special Provisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal Territory of eetlis</li> <li>Special lized Provisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eco-centric Development &amp; sovehoted matord synatlis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Military tankies with eit maci:mrx base</li> </ul>

## Philosophical & Security Analysis

### Core Clash Diagram



## Four-Point Agenda



## Comprehensive Analysis: Ladakh's Federal Aspirations & Constitutional Safeguards



## Multidimensional View



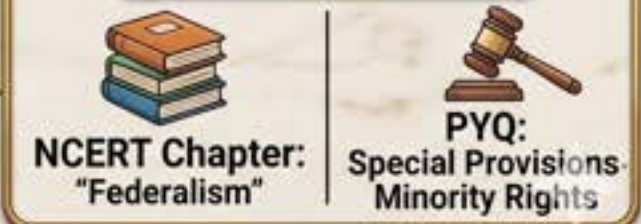
## KEY CHALLENGES

- Dilemma of Precedent
- Leh-Kargil Intra-Regional Divide
- Bureaucratic Friction
- Security-Democracy Balance

## THE WAY FORWARD: BALANCED REFORMS



## UPSC RELEVANCE





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