



GE+STRATA

VIKAS VIDHI VISHWAS

*78 Years of Policy
Driven Nation Building*



August 2025

WWW.THEGEOSTRATA.COM

Issued by Geostrata's Sub-Entity Covering the Prime Minister's Office. The Vikas, Vidhi, Vishwas report is the property of The Geostrata. Republishing in any shape, form, or format without the express consent of The Geostrata is strictly prohibited.





GEOSTRATA

ABOUT US

GEOSTRATA

For a Distinctly Indian Take on World Affairs

The Geostrata is an independent Indian think tank standing for a distinctly Indian take on world affairs. The organisation engages with a spectrum of issues including domestic and international policies, strategic affairs, high technology, cyber studies, public affairs, sustainability, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) concerns. The Geostrata is committed to fostering engagement, enlightenment, and empowerment among Indian youth, contributing to a more informed and progressive society.

The Geostrata is a diverse team of 350 members drawn from various socio-economic backgrounds and prestigious institutions within India and internationally, including Delhi University, IIMs, IITs, NLUs, Ashoka University, the University of Glasgow, and the University of Alberta. This diverse mix enriches the think tank's intellectual capacity.

The Geostrata impacts approximately 20 million individuals monthly through its platforms, which feature opinion pieces by young contributors, creative content on social media, podcasts, and events. The organisation also focuses on enhancing the capacities of its members through regular workshops on a variety of topics, including stakeholder management, design, writing, and policy analysis.

The Geostrata welcomes collaborations with like-minded organisations that share our vision for impactful policy research and advocacy on a global scale. We value partnerships that can enhance our initiatives and expand our reach within and beyond national borders, fostering a more interconnected and informed world. Whether through joint research projects, co-hosting events, or other collaborative efforts, we are committed to working together to advance our mutual interests and objectives in strategic affairs, sustainability, and educational endeavours. If your organisation is aligned with our goals and is interested in exploring potential partnerships, we encourage you to reach out to us to discuss how we can jointly make a significant difference.

TEAM STRATA

VISION OF STRATA

For a Distinctly Indian Take on World Affairs

The Geostrata stands as the bastion of intellectual vigour, embodying a distinctly Indian perspective on global affairs. Our vision transcends geographical and intellectual boundaries, aimed at weaving a narrative that resonates with youth constituencies and policy stakeholders across the globe. We are committed to projecting a vivid and insightful portrait of Global South priorities, one that is intricately woven with the threads of empathy, understanding, and a shared commitment to fostering a world marked by harmony, progress, and inclusive development.

In an era marked by unprecedented challenges and opportunities, The Geostrata embraces its role as a thought leader and a harbinger of positive change. Our ambition fuels our journey, guiding our efforts to illuminate the pathways that lead to a better tomorrow. We approach each endeavour with a spirit of inventiveness, continuously seeking innovative solutions to the world's most pressing challenges. Our imagination knows no bounds, and it is this boundless imagination that empowers us to envision a world marked by equity, sustainability, and shared prosperity.

As we stand at the cusp of a new era, The Geostrata is steadfast in its commitment to be a beacon of enlightenment, empowering the youth to engage with the world in a manner that is informed, thoughtful, and constructive. We are not merely observers of the world; we are active participants, committed to shaping the discourse, influencing policies, and ultimately contributing to the creation of a world that reflects our shared values and aspirations.

Together, we are The Geostrata, united by a shared vision, a shared purpose, and a shared commitment to making a meaningful and lasting impact on the world. Through our collective efforts, we will continue to engage, enlighten, and empower the youth, thereby paving the way for a brighter, more informed, and more prosperous future for all.

GE+STRATA

STRATAVERSE

For a Distinctly Indian Take on World Affairs

GE+STRATA

GE+STRATA
FOUNDATION

ENGAGE
GE+STRATA

GE+STRATA
ASIA



GE+STRATA
AFRICA

GE+STRATA
OCEANIA

GE+STRATA
EUROPA

GE+STRATA
AMERICAS



ABOUT US

COVERING PM

A Strata Foundation Entity

Covering PM, a keystone initiative by The Geostrata, is an endeavour conceived with a profound sense of interest in public policy and governance. This project is singularly focused on dissecting the myriad roles and functions undertaken by the paramount executive of the world's largest democracy, the Government of India — the Prime Minister.

At the bedrock of Indian democracy, the Prime Minister is tasked with monumental responsibilities from the moment of swearing-in. It is upon this platform that the most ambitious visions of the nation are actualized, powering the engine of our expansive democracy. At The Geostrata, we fully recognize the intrinsic value harboured within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in unlocking the potential of our nation. Therefore, Covering PM is dedicated to building a comprehensive analysis of the dual implications of the Prime Minister's fundamental traits in both domestic and international contexts. This initiative meticulously explores the PM's realm, encompassing parliamentary legislation, public policy research, budgetary oversight, public relations, and international representation whilst adeptly managing the labyrinth of uncertainties that accompany the role. Covering PM has been meticulously designed to articulate our analysis of the PM's endeavours and their alignment with the government's public delivery mechanisms. As India navigates its trajectory towards global prominence, the role of the PMO becomes quintessential in empowering a staggering 1.4 billion people, who form 18% of the world's population. Through our publications, we aim to demystify the intricate endeavours that fall under the ambit of the PM, rendering a multifaceted narrative accessible and comprehensible to all.

In our relentless pursuit of projecting a stronger and united India on the global stage, Covering PM aspires to provide much-needed clarity to our readers in a world mired in complexity. This initiative stands as a beacon in public policy research and analysis, shining a light on the intricate workings of the office of the Prime Minister of India in the world's largest democracy.

TEAM COVERING PM

CONTENTS

09

A Word from the Director

10

*Meet team Covering
The Prime Minister's Office*

11-12

Introduction

13-18

*Industrial Policy
Resolution, 1948*

19-22

The Green Revolution

23-28

*The Nationalization
of Banks*

29-31

*The Right to
Information Act*



CONTENTS

35-41

The National Food Security Act

42-47

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna

48-54

The Goods and Services Tax

55-60

The Gati-Shakti

61-65

Sarvam AI

66-72

The National Education Policy

73-82

The Atmanirbhar Bharat - Defence

83-92

50 years of Emergency

93

Conclusion



India's story is deeply personal to each one of us. It is a story our grandparents have told us, of freedom and hard-fought dreams. It is a story we live each day in metros, classrooms, and voting booths. And it is a story we carry forward with every choice we make and every life we seek to better.

Vikas, Vidhi, Vishwas is more than a chronicle of public policy. It is a quiet tribute to the enduring spirit of nation building — the belief that the arc of progress must bend towards dignity, equity, and justice for all. It invites us to reflect not just on what policies were passed, but on the lives they impacted: a farmer empowered by minimum support price guarantees, a child accessing education for the first time, and a voter reclaiming the right to know through the RTI Act.

This report is our way of honouring that journey. It has been written with deep respect for the architects of policy, known and unsung, and with hope for the rising leaders of tomorrow.

As we look towards 2047, I carry with me a simple conviction — that our democracy holds unmatched promise. But it will require policy that listens before it leads. Institutions that protect as much as they perform. And above all, public trust that is not demanded, but earned day by day, reform by reform. May this report spark questions, conversations, and action. Because the work of nation building is never finished, and the responsibility to shape its future belongs to all of us.

A WORD *from*
Director
of **COVERINGPM**

Aryaveer Sharma



AUTHORS

At COVERINGPM

Agrima Kushwaha

Research Associate at The Geostrata and leads the Covering PM Research Wing. She is pursuing Bachelors in Political Science from Gargi College, New Delhi.

Alina Jacob

Postgraduate student in Applied economics. Her interest lies in subjects like international relations, economics and policy research.

Ameya Gupta

Has a keen interest in economics and public policy, looking to pursue a career in those fields. Currently, he is an Under-Graduate student at Hindu College, University of Delhi, studying Economics.

Himanshu Golhani

A second-year law student at the National Law University, Jodhpur, has consistently pursued his interest in law and public policy through multiple articles, research internships and moot court competitions.

Jaypal Kalra

A keen observer of international relations, national politics, diplomacy, and space policy. His interests lie at the confluence of media, governance, global affairs, and strategic communication and geopolitical shifts.

Khushi Joon

An International Relations post graduate student at Amity University, Noida is passionate about diplomacy, global governance, and public policy.

Poshika Mukku

A FYJC Commerce student, is passionate about Public Policy, Political Science, International Affairs and Business Studies.

Rishav Saha

A Financial Economics post graduate student at The University of Glasgow with a strong foundation in International Business, Climate Finance and Current Affairs.

Sanskriti Gaur

A Political Science graduate from Delhi University with an intrigue for public policy and the shifting contours of India's political landscape.

S. Priti Chhanda

An Economics postgraduation student from Utkal University with a strong academic and practical interest in international relations, public policy, and diplomacy

Tanu Nagar

A highly passionate and dedicated individual with deep interest in diplomacy, international relations and public policy. With an undergraduate degree from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi

Vaibhav Pandey

Is currently pursuing a BBA LL.B (Hons.) at Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus. With a keen interest in law, geopolitics, and startups, he actively explores the intersection of legal research, global affairs, and innovation.

Introduction

Seventy-eight years ago, Bharat's tryst with destiny was anchored in an experiment, an experiment of forging a sovereign, democratic republic from the embers of colonial rule and the traumas of Partition. This journey since 1947 is not just the story of a nation, but of a living policy state, where rules, reforms, and relentless innovations have shaped the world's largest democracy and continually remade institutions to meet the challenges of history and stand the test of time. Each era brought with it new challenges from feeding a young population, to opening up closed economic doors, responding to external threats, and most recently, keeping pace with the velocity of a fast-digitising and globalised world. In each of these moments, it was this policy state through law (*vidhi*), development (*vikas*), and public trust (*vishwas*) that held the centre.

This report, *Vikas, Vidhi, Vishwas*, traces India's policy journey across four pivotal arcs. From the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 to the Green Revolution and the nationalisation of banks, Part A examines the formative years (1947–1991), when policies established the framework for a welfare state and independent economy. Part B explores the revolutionary upheaval in liberalised India, where the citizen–state contract was redefined by rights-based laws such as the National Food Security Act and the Right to Information Act. Part C analyses the Modi-era paradigm (2014–2025), which has placed a premium on infrastructure, scale, and strategic autonomy. Examples include the Gati Shakti plan, the GST, the Atmanirbhar Bharat defence initiative, and the recent introduction of Sarvam AI as a turning point towards technological sovereignty. Part D concludes with a reflection on institutional resilience the capacity of India's democratic system to adapt and persevere in the face of political challenges such as the Emergency.





All of these policies emphasised a common vision of a prosperous country, while some brought about immediate change and others sowed the seeds for generational change. When combined, they not only show a series of reforms but also an ongoing dialogue based on trust between Bharat and its citizens, tested during uncertain times and revived over years of adaptation.

As we approach 2047, the centenary of our independence, the task ahead is to ensure that our policy architecture remains agile and attuned to the needs of a young, aspirational janta, responsive to global geopolitical shifts, and bold enough to lead in emerging frontiers of artificial intelligence and digital governance. After all, nation-building is not a destination but a process, and policy is its sincere instrument.

*Part A: Foundations of The
Indian Policy state (1947–1991)*

INDUSTRIAL POLICY RESOLUTION, 1948



*B*harat gained independence in 1947 and welcomed the freedom with aspiration for a prosperous economy. It kindled the hope of 340 million dreams after facing a lot of hardships and devastation across the nation. The heydays of Indian independence were dedicated to rejuvenating its economy from a completely dilapidated state, caused by massive exploitation during the colonial era. India's leaders had to devise a strategy to lay the foundation of India's developmental roadmap that would place the nation on the path of economic development, social justice, and self-reliance.

While the British were leaving the land, the leaders of newly independent India were relentlessly trying to make policies to address the lack of infrastructure, industry, science and technology, and higher education. During that period, the economy was a highly agrarian one, contributing 70% of the income generated from agriculture, with nearly 85% of the population living in villages and deriving their livelihood from low-productivity work like agriculture and related activities.

The harsh zamindari system, low financial aid, lack of alternate working opportunities, and usage of primitive technology contributed to heavy dependency on low-productivity work. Even though the country was widely known for handicrafts, industries declined during the British Raj as the colonial government deindustrialised the Indian handicraft market by limiting Indian exports and flooding the domestic market with cheap, industrially mass-produced finished products. This crippled the native Indian handicraft industries.





The unbalanced occupational structure—with 70% of the population dependent on agricultural activity, a high illiteracy rate of 84%, and nearly no industrial development to boost India's economic activity—had pushed the country into mass poverty and widespread disease, with both a high birth rate and a high death rate. Additionally, in the first half of the 20th century, India faced a growth rate of less than 2% in aggregate real output, and its growth in per capita output was only 0.5%.

Thus, at the end of the colonial era, the British left the Indian economy in a state of underdevelopment and in a "vicious cycle of poverty," where an economy tends to remain in a loop of low productivity, low income, and low consumption—hence keeping it stagnant. These circumstances have been witnessed by many low-income and underdeveloped countries, and without proper policy implementation, such cycles are difficult to break.

When Jawaharlal Nehru took the oath as the country's first Prime Minister, India transitioned from the rule of the British Crown to becoming an independent Swaraj nation. The entire nation and its leaders were influenced by the Gandhian philosophy of self-reliance and by the USSR's planning structure and socialist approach. Nehru believed that India could achieve economic independence through a mixed economy, balancing state control with private enterprise. He recognised the urgent need to strengthen the country's economic backbone and understood that heavy capital investments were essential for faster economic growth.

Consequently, India's leaders had to devise a strategy that would place the nation on the path of economic development, social justice, and self-reliance. One of the earliest and most significant steps taken in this direction was the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948. This policy was not just an economic blueprint; it was a reflection of India's vision for an inclusive, self-sufficient, and thriving economy, breaking free from colonial underdevelopment.



The first industrial policy statement of independent India was announced on 8 April 1948, less than one year after independence, presented by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his government. This attempt gave a direction for future industrial policies.

The division of responsibility between the Central Government and the State Governments in regard to industries was set out in the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act.

The major highlights were to make the Indian economy a mixed economy, emphasising the importance of securing a continuous increase in production and ensuring its equitable distribution by providing a limited area of operation for the State in the industrial sector. The mixed economy envisaged the establishment of a structure in which both public and private sectors would operate in the economy, with the State's role being to guide industrial development and establish public sector enterprises in strategic industries. Meanwhile, the policy allowed room for private enterprise to flourish under government oversight, which was to ensure balanced development driven by the idea of reducing regional inequalities. This resolution was aimed at creating job opportunities to tackle poverty and ensure inclusive economic growth with equal opportunities and social justice for all.

The policymakers of the Industrial Policy of 1948 classified industries into four distinct categories based on the level of government and private sector involvement:



1

Strategic Industries or Exclusive Government Monopoly

Here, the industries fell under the exclusive control of the State. These industries were considered essential for national interest and security, and therefore, it was crucial to protect them from a strategic and national security point of view. Industries such as arms and ammunition, railway transport, and atomic energy came under the exclusive monopoly of the central government, with no private player intervention.

The Mixed Sector, where the State played a dominant role and had the major stake, allowed private enterprises only under government regulation to ensure sufficient investment and production capacity in these essential industries. This category included industries such as essential mineral industries of iron and steel, coal, aircraft manufacturing, shipbuilding, and telecommunications.

2

3

The Primarily Private Sector, where industries were primarily left to the private sector, had the government as the supervisory organ with the right to intervene if and when required. This category encouraged private initiative, investment, and expansion in these sectors. Examples included textiles, chemicals, minerals, sugar, cement, pharmaceuticals and drugs, heavy machinery, machine tools, and food processing industries.

Private Sector with Limited Government Control

The government allowed private enterprises to operate with minimal intervention, as these industries were less crucial from a strategic viewpoint and were essential for creating employment opportunities, economic development, and a steady supply of consumer goods. This category mainly comprised consumer goods industries such as shoes, garments, and household goods.

4



The 1948 policy marked the beginning of India's reliance on Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to drive industrialisation. The policy also recognised the employment potential of small and cottage industries. The policy gave significant importance to their promotion to preserve traditional crafts, reduced rural unemployment, and promoted local self-reliance. It emphasised fair wages, better working conditions, and housing for industrial workers, laying a foundation for future labor laws.

Although the 1948 Industrial Policy was a visionary one, because of the uncertainty over the level of government intervention, it created unease among private investors. As the policy leaned further towards the bureaucracy for regulating industries, over time, bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption became barriers to effective implementation. The focus on licensing and state control resulted in the rise of the License Raj, which eventually suppressed private enterprise and innovation. In addition to this, the limited access to huge capital inventory with the newly independent nation led to a slowdown in capital investment, resulting in a slower growth of some public sector industries than anticipated.

Nevertheless, the Industrial Policy of 1948 laid a strong institutional and ideological foundation for India's industrial development. It guided the country's economic planning for decades and influenced subsequent policies, including the more socialist-leaning Industrial Policy of 1956. The pivotal role of the policy in shaping post-independence India's economic trajectory reflected the aspirations of a newly sovereign nation striving for self-sufficiency, equitable growth, and national pride.



The
**GREEN
REVOLUTION**

*The foundation of
the Food Security
Framework*



Agriculture, not just a source of food, but describes the journey of a civilization across the world.

The story describes a shift from the plough used in the Indus Valley Civilization to tractors and harvesters used in modern-day farming. It can be called a combination of traditional methodology with modern technology in it. The growth in the Indian agricultural sector has had its moments of glory. The Green Revolution has been the major success story of free India. The nation that was frequently plagued by — The Agriculture Sector occupies centre stage in the Indian economy, embodying three thrust areas: to promote inclusive growth, to enhance rural income, and to sustain food security. It accounts for nearly 14% of GDP and exports and supports half of the country's population as its principal source of income.

The shift from the age-old fields of the past to the innovative farms of the future reflects not just a change in tools, but a transformation in our approach to food production, resource management, and rural livelihoods. This journey highlights how agriculture is adapting to new challenges while building on the strengths of its rich heritage.

For centuries, Indian agriculture was based on age-old methods that depended on natural rainfall, seasonal cycles, and manual labor. Farmers used wooden ploughs, desi seeds, and organic manure. While these practices were eco-friendly and aligned with local conditions, they often led to low productivity, making it difficult to meet growing food needs. The focus was mainly on growing enough to survive, not to sell. In the latter half of the 20th century, India witnessed a major transformation with the Green Revolution. The introduction of high-yielding seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and improved irrigation systems led to a dramatic increase in food grain production especially wheat and rice. It helped India achieve food self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on imports. However, this success was not without consequences: environmental degradation, and overuse of groundwater became long-term concerns.





Today, agriculture is rapidly evolving with the support of scientific innovations and digital tools. Farmers are using GPS-enabled machines, drones for crop monitoring, and mobile apps for weather updates and market prices. Technologies like drip irrigation, soil sensors, and AI-based forecasting are helping to use resources more efficiently. This marks a transformation from generic practices to need-based farming. Unlike the past, when farming was purely for survival, modern agriculture is increasingly linked to the market. Farmers now grow crops based on demand, pricing, and profitability. Government initiatives like e-NAM and contract farming have opened up new avenues for farmers to sell their produce directly. This marketisation has brought economic opportunities but also exposed farmers to price fluctuations and financial risks.

Modern agriculture has changed significantly with the introduction of improved seed varieties. These high-yielding seeds are specially developed to produce more crops, resist diseases, and survive in tough weather conditions. As a result, farmers can now grow more food on the same land, reducing the risk of crop failure and increasing food security. Another major shift has been the use of machines in farming. Tools like tractors, harvesters, and seed drills have replaced age-old manual methods. These machines not only save time but also reduce the physical strain on farmers, allowing even small families to manage large plots of land efficiently. Water use has also become more efficient in today's farming practices. Instead of depending only on rainfall or flood irrigation, many farmers now use drip and sprinkler systems. These methods deliver water directly to the roots, helping conserve water while ensuring that crops receive the right amount of moisture.

To improve soil fertility and protect plants, a mix of chemical and organic inputs is now being used. While fertilizers and pesticides boost growth and control pests, there is a growing shift toward organic options that are safer for both health and the environment. Many farmers are learning to balance productivity with sustainability. The rise of precision farming has brought advanced technology into the field. Farmers now use GPS tools, soil sensors, and drones to monitor crop health and soil conditions. This helps in making better decisions about watering, fertilizing, and harvesting, resulting in higher efficiency and better crop quality. Agriculture is also becoming more market-driven. Unlike earlier times when farmers grew crops just for their families, many now focus on what is in demand. This shift towards commercial farming allows them to earn more income and be part of the larger supply chain.

Digital tools and mobile apps have made farming smarter and more connected. Farmers can now get weather forecasts, government scheme updates, expert tips, and market prices on their smartphones, helping them plan their work and sell their crops wisely. Climate-smart farming has gained importance as well. With climate change affecting rainfall patterns and temperatures, farmers are adopting practices that reduce carbon emissions and help their crops survive under unpredictable conditions. These include growing climate-resilient crops, using less water, and protecting the soil.



The Indian government has launched several schemes, subsidies, and policy reforms to modernize agriculture and improve the welfare of farmers. These initiatives aim to enhance productivity, ensure fair prices, promote sustainable practices, and connect farmers to better infrastructure and markets. One such important initiative is the Soil Health Card Scheme, which was introduced during the 12th Five-Year Plan. Under this scheme, farmers receive personalized soil health cards that provide information about the nutrient status of their land and suggest the right type and amount of fertilizers. This helps in improving soil fertility and crop yield. The scheme was allocated a budget of ₹568.54 crore and targeted every farmer across the country between 2014–15 and 2016–17. Another key program is the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), which focuses on expanding irrigation coverage. Its goal is to ensure that every farm in India has access to water through efficient irrigation systems, improving water use and reducing dependency on monsoons.

To address the issue of price fluctuations in perishable crops, the government introduced the Price Stabilization Fund, with an initial corpus of ₹500 crore. This fund helps manage price volatility in essential commodities like onions, potatoes, and tomatoes, protecting both farmers and consumers. The National Agri-Tech Infrastructure Fund is another major step towards agricultural modernization. It supports the creation of a digital e-marketing platform in state-level Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs). This is part of a broader plan to build a unified national market where farmers can sell their produce directly and transparently, reducing middlemen and improving profits.

Historically, the Indian agricultural administration has evolved significantly. The Department of Revenue and Agriculture and Commerce was set up in June 1871 to oversee the development of agriculture. Before that, agricultural matters were handled by the Home Department. In 1945, this department was split into three separate branches: Agriculture, Education, and Health. Later in August 1947, the Department of Agriculture was officially elevated and renamed as the Ministry of Agriculture, reflecting its critical role in the nation's development. These efforts collectively show how the government has not only supported farmers through financial aid and policy reforms but has also laid down a structured path for long-term agricultural growth in the country.

THE 1969
NATIONALIZATION *of*
BANKS

Imagine India in the late sixties, a young country struggling with poverty and policy neglecting the rural areas, and a banking system that catered to the elite in the urban areas. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reversed this on 19 July 1969, when she nationalised 14 of the biggest banks, and 6 others in 1980. This was not only a policy, but a pronouncement that banking is meant to be of service to the common man, not the privileged few. The decision paved the way for such initiatives as Jan Dhan Yojana or Mudra Yojana, which provided millions of people with access to finance. The four aims of the paper are to review bank nationalisation as a branded policy, evaluate its capacity to withstand challenges, discover the models of governance at its basis, and propose how it can guide the Honourable Vision 2047 of India.





The banks prior to 1969 were urban biased where *only 22 percent of the branches were located in the villages* (RBI, 1969). Large businesses obtained most loans and the farmers and small-time entrepreneurs were left behind in the dust. The nationalization was the reversal of this script, and the government forced banks to assist the agriculture business, small industries, and rural areas- the action based on the socialist ideals of India.

The statistics are very telling. Branch numbers increased dramatically to 60,220 by 1990, of which 58 percent are located in the countryside (RBI, 1990). The agricultural credit had leaped by a pathetic 2 percent of the total loan in 1969 to 15 percent by 1985 (Government of India, 1985). These were not just numbers; they made it possible to purchase better seeds, small enterprises build up and rural India flourish. The Green Revolution, which properly supported food security and the economy, was also caused by the policy.

Banking was no longer elitist due to nationalization. As per 1980, 40 percent of bank credit was advanced to the so-called priority sectors such as agriculture and small businesses (RBI, 1980). In the 21st century, such an infrastructure enabled the likes of the Jan Dhan Yojana that created more than 500 million bank accounts by 2023, and the Mudra Yojana that boosted 400 million micro-entrepreneurs (Ministry of Finance, 2023). These plans introduced bank services to individuals that had never entered a bank branch, and reduced the distance between the rich and poor.

The true power of the nationalization of the banks is its staying capacity, which even survives through the upheaval of politics, economic topsy-turvy, and hitches in operations. There has been an extreme transformation of Indian politics since 1969, whether it is the socialism of Indira Gandhi or the liberalization wave of the 1990s. However, nationalized banks did not give up. With the advent of private banks after the year 1991, the share of deposits and loans remained in the hands of the public sector banks (PSBs), who continued to hold 70 percent even in the year 2000 (RBI, 2000), as the interest of the common good in the policy found favor even amongst partisan lines.

In contrast to other privately owned banks that tightened their credit in the year 2008, PSBs continued to lend to priority sectors, and this factor made India recover faster (RBI, 2009). Inefficiencies were a result of political interference in the sanction of loans and the red tape experienced in the bureaucracy. By 2018, the percentage of non-performing assets (NPAs) of PSBs reached 11.2 percent of loans (RBI, 2018). However, with other reforms, such as the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (2016) or a ₹2.11 trillion recapitalization plan (2017–2020), things were brought back on track, and it was proven that the system could adjust (Ministry of Finance, 2020).



The expansion of banking infrastructure in India laid a critical foundation for a new generation of welfare programs anchored in last-mile financial connectivity. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), launched in 2014, aimed to ensure universal access to banking by enabling every household to have at least one basic banking account. As of March 2023, the scheme had facilitated the opening of over 50 crore bank accounts with deposits exceeding ₹6 lakh crore, leveraging the pre-existing network of nationalized banks and banking correspondents (Ministry of Finance, 2023). Building on this financial inclusion, the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), introduced in 2015, extended collateral-free loans of up to ₹10 lakhs to micro and small enterprises. By 2023, the scheme had sanctioned over ₹23 lakh crore in loans, benefiting more than 40 crore borrowers, many of whom are first-time entrepreneurs from marginalized communities (PMMY Annual Report, 2023).

Banking on ***INCLUSION***

Complementing these efforts, the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, initiated in 2013, was designed to channel subsidies and welfare payments directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts, significantly enhancing transparency and reducing leakages. To date, more than ₹31 lakh crore have been transferred through DBT, saving the exchequer over ₹2.7 lakh crore by curbing ghost beneficiaries (DBT Mission, 2023). Flagship programs like the PAHAL LPG subsidy scheme stand as testimony to the transformative impact of this robust banking network (Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, 2023).



The nationalization of banks in the year 1969 was not a mere policy but a revolution that took banking to the heart of Bharat. What can be achieved when politics, economic turmoil, and a challenge like no one thought possible are overcome through good governance and a focus on people is possible through its survival. While the decision was politically endorsed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, it was significantly influenced by a circle of strategic bureaucrats. Notably, P. N. Haksar, then Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, envisioned bank nationalization as a mechanism to democratize financial access and empower the developmental state. D. P. Dhar, another close advisor and policymaker, stressed the alignment of banking with the nation's planned economic objectives. Their combined policy foresight and administrative coordination ensured that the move was not merely ideological but institutionally grounded and economically purposeful, to ensure that financial institutions serve national development rather than narrow commercial interests. For India, as it eyes 2047, the takeaways of the nationalization era—namely, to focus on inclusion, embrace change, and use technology—may help give the nation a vision of the future in which all can prosper through growth.

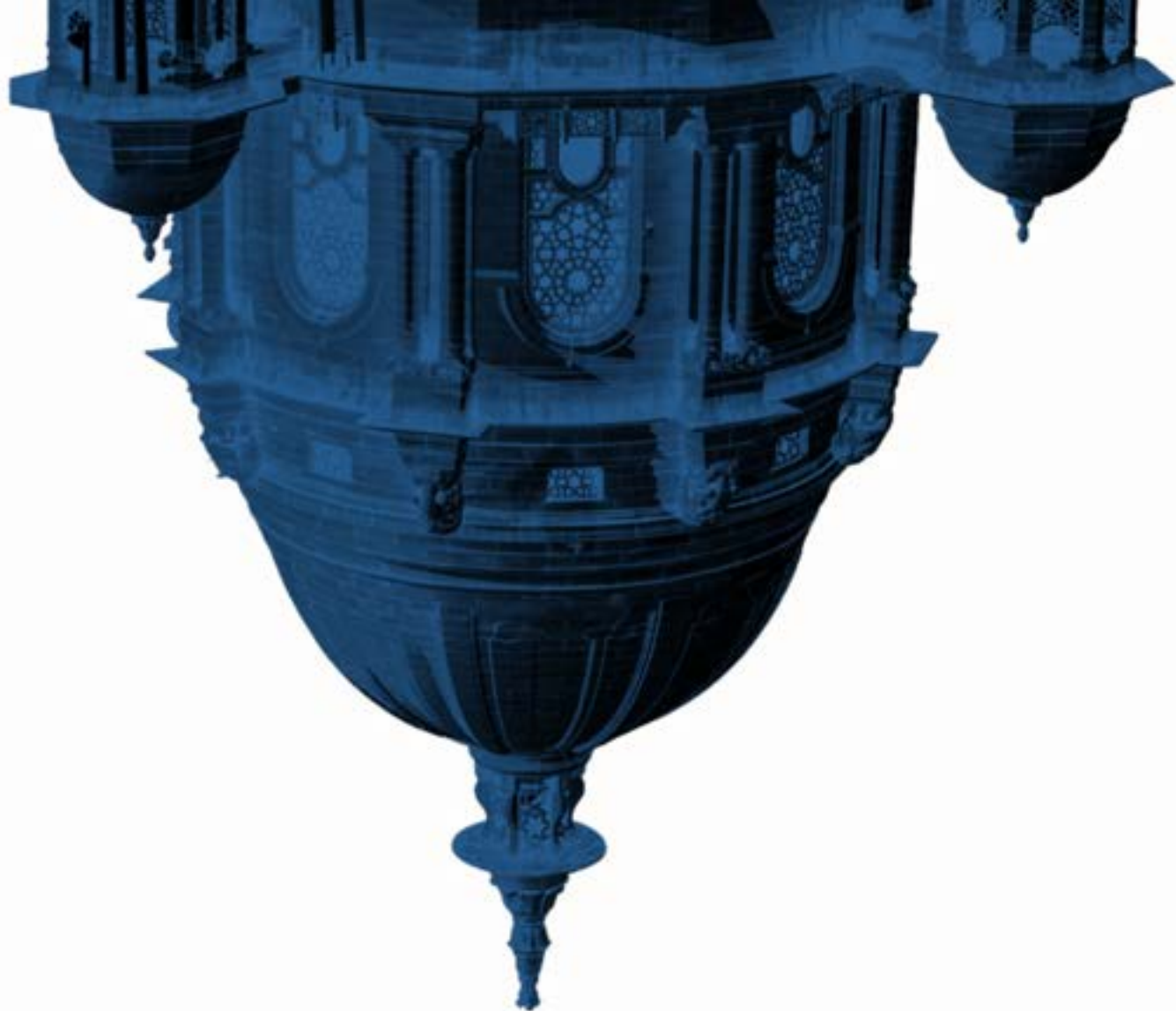


THE RIGHT *to* INFORMATION ACT

PART B

*The Policy Transformations
in a Liberalised Era*





The year 2025 will mark the completion of 20 years of the historical Right to Information Act, 2005. By reforming the British Official Secrets Act of 1923, the RTI Act paved the way for a more informed citizenry. The Constitution of India has established a democratic republic, and an informed and empowered citizenry is of utmost importance to preserve the paramountcy of the democratic principle. The Act creates a foundation for accountability and openness in India's administrative system by institutionalising citizens' right to access information. It serves as a corrective mechanism against structural inefficiencies like excessive proceduralism and a lack of administrative responsiveness, by formalising transparency and facilitating information-seeking.

Imagine a world where the government controls all the information and acts under a veil of secrecy, the citizens are forbidden to question the state, and there is no transparency in the government's actions and decision-making. While thinking of such a world, George Orwell's magnum opus, '1984', surely comes to mind. It showcases how secrecy and information control can enslave minds. It paints a chilling portrait of a society in which the state monopolises information, historical records are falsified by entities like the "Ministry of Truth," and tools like "memory holes" are employed to banish public memory. This dystopian future illustrates the threat of total government control and information privilege. In the absence of the possibility to struggle, citizens lose the opportunity for democratic participation. To the contrary, RTI Act has made verifiable information accessible and provides objectivity to the citizens.

The Right to Information Act has turned into a powerful weapon for nurturing and consolidating participative democracy and a weapon against authoritarianism and totalitarianism. The legislation empowers the citizenry to ask for information from any public authority, promoting open government and accountability. It has made 'transparency a rule and secrecy an exception.'

The RTI Act is rooted in grassroots movements and people's ardent desire for a transparency framework amidst the rampant corruption that plagued India's rural development projects. In Rajasthan, together with political players, government officials embezzled money intended for public works projects, depriving rural labourers of their due pay. The Official Secrets Act, 1923 safeguarded these fraudulent actions, preventing the public from accessing official data.



हम जानेंगे, हम जिएंगे

In response, the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), led by Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey, and Shankar Singh, organised rural workers and peasants who were not paid the minimum wage. In one of its meetings, a worker expressed, *"There is some magic in these official records and until we get these records, we won't get our legitimate wages."* This struck a chord with those present at the meeting. They started calling for openness in how the government operated.

This led to the establishment of "Jan Sunwais" (public hearings), which gave villages the opportunity to review government documents and provide testimony regarding the fulfilment of promised infrastructure and wages. It was one of MKSS's most significant innovations. Deep-seated corruption was made clear by these hearings; infrastructure projects were either badly constructed or fabricated, and wages were not paid. Despite resistance, MKSS persisted by holding protests and sit-ins (dharnas), demanding access to public records. A key moment came with a massive sit-in at Beawar (Rajasthan), timed with national elections. It powerfully linked access to information with survival and dignity, under the slogan: "HUM JANENGE, HUM JIYENGE"

After years of activism, the Rajasthan government was compelled to amend laws (like the Panchayati Raj Act) and eventually pass the *statewide Right to Information law* in Rajasthan in 2000. This grassroots movement laid the foundation for India's national RTI Act of 2005, empowering citizens to demand transparency and accountability in governance. RTI Act helped unearth many scams like the 2G scam and the Commonwealth scam. It was through RTI that the public was made aware that demonetisation was announced without the RBI's nod.



Foucault famously argued, "Knowledge is power" which means that those who control discourse also have the power to shape reality. RTI yielded some of this power into the hands of the citizenry. Due to this very nature of RTI, almost all governments in power have attempted to dilute the act.

The most recent amendment to the act was passed in 2019, generating a lot of controversy. The Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019, received presidential assent on August 1, 2019, modifying the terms, remunerations, and conditions of Information Officers. Section 2 (j) of the RTI Act defines the "right to information" as the right to access information held by public authorities. The act designates Public Information Officers (PIOs) to operationalise this right, who are in charge of answering information requests. To guarantee a systematic redressal process, the applicant may appeal information that is rejected or inadequate, first to the First Appellate Authority (FAA) and then to the Central or State Information Commission.

As per the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019, the Central and State Information Officers' tenures are now set by the central government rather than being fixed at five years. It also empowers the central government to make rules for its implementation. Further, Rule 21 appropriates to the central government the authority to establish any allowances or service conditions not covered by the 2019 Rules, making its resolutions binding and designating it as the final authority for interpreting these rules.

The government asserted that the emoluments and allowances for the Chief Election Commissioner, Election Commissioner, and Information Commissioners were analogous. However, the Election Commission is mentioned in the constitution, whereas Information Commissions are statutory bodies; their authorisations differ, warranting a rationalisation of their status and service conditions.

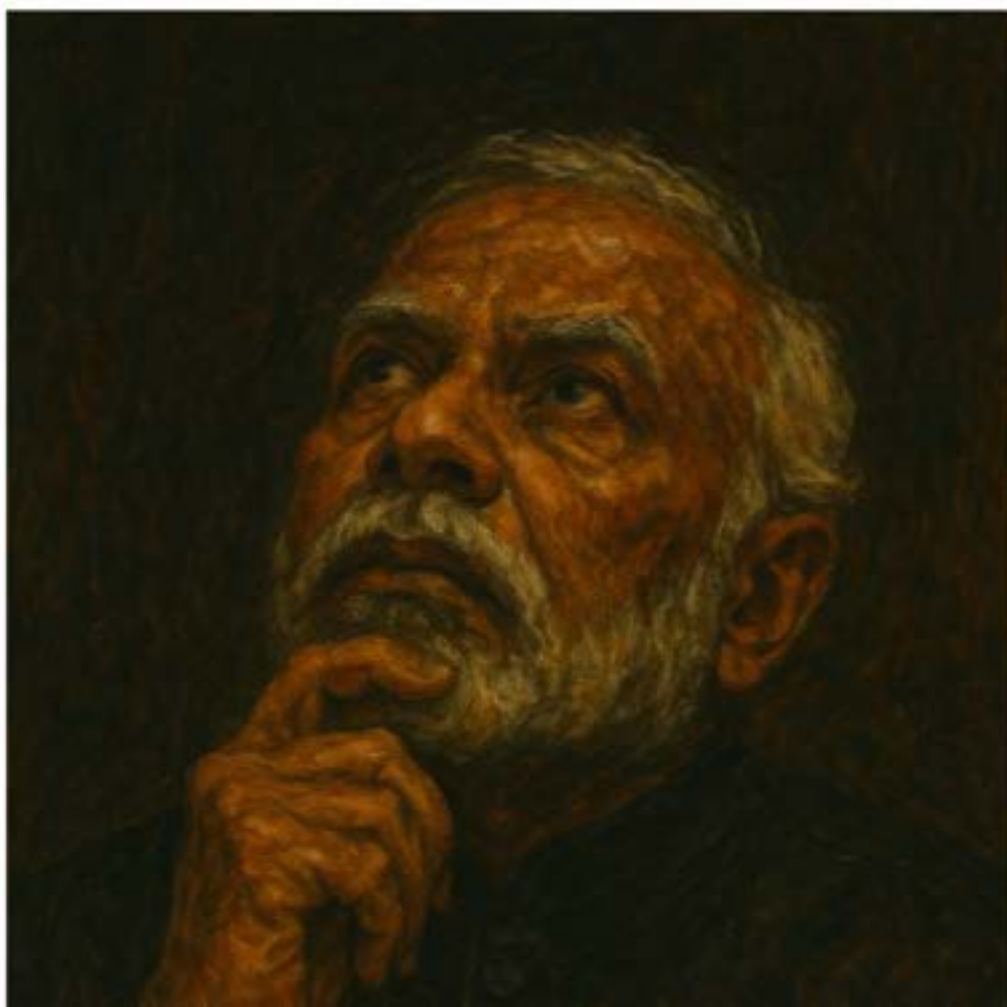
Critics contend that these amendments weaken the fundamental right to information guaranteed by Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution, which the Supreme Court has reiterated is necessary for the right to free speech and expression, as demonstrated in 'The State of U.P. vs. Raj Narain' case. The amendments also give the Centre the authority to set the terms of service and tenure for Information Commissioners. This raises concerns that their independence may be eroding. Furthermore, the modifications threaten cooperative federalism and violate Section 29 of the RTI Act by centralising authority over a framework that was previously handled by the states. It has also been argued that the absence of public consultation prior to the implementation of these amendments violates transparency and contradicts the spirit of the law.

Additionally, the ICs have also been dealing with backlogs and holdups. As per Satark Nagrik Sangthan Report 2023-24, nearly 4 lakh petitions and complaints were pending, and 42 percent of them, received by the CIC, were returned.



From a normative point of view, strengthening the RTI Act is vital to achieve Viksit Bharat@2047. To do so, the Information Commission must serve autonomously, and private entities performing public functions should also fall under the RTI's ambit. The government should recognize RTI as a fundamental right rather than viewing it as an administrative accommodation. The issue of backlogs also needs to be addressed. Enforcing the recommendations of the 2nd Administrative Reform Commission is vital for bettering the RTI Act and so is boosting public consciousness and promoting collaboration between the government and civil society.

To conclude, the implementation of the RTI Act has been momentous in fostering transparent governance and strengthening democracy over the past two decades. It not only revolutionised the interaction between the state and its citizens but also continues to serve as a democratic safeguard, making sure that governance is open to public scrutiny. Its fundamental essence remains unaltered despite issues of bureaucratic opposition, slow replies, and recent revisions that raise questions about its dilution. It upholds the idea that the state must answer to the people and not the other way around.



THE 2013 NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT

Largest of its kind GLOBALLY





India has a long history of recurring food security emergencies. As of 2011–13, approximately 21.38 crore (213.8 million) people suffered from chronic hunger. To counter this, the National Food Security Act (NFSA) of 2013 was passed to give a statutory guarantee of subsidised food grains to a vast section of the population. Besides Brazil and South Africa, India was the third country in the world to enact laws making the Right to Food a legal right. The NFSA entitles 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population (about two-thirds of the country's 1.4 billion population) to receive subsidised food grains through the Targeted Public Distribution System. NFSA covers approximately 81 crore (810 million) beneficiaries across India. Quoting the then Congress Party Chief and Chairperson of the National Advisory Council (NAC), Mrs Sonia Gandhi: "Our goal for the foreseeable future must be to wipe out hunger and malnutrition from our country."

The NFSA, therefore, emerged as a landmark in the welfare policies of India — not just the largest food security legislation in the country, but in the entire world. This legislation expanded previous schemes into law, e.g., the Public Distribution System (PDS), Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDM), and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) into life-cycle entitlements. According to researchers, India's PDS is the world's largest food transfer programme and its most far-reaching social safety net, serving approximately 800 million people and accounting for 60% of India's social assistance budget in 2019–2020.

NFSA entitles up to 75% of the rural and 50% of the urban population to subsidised food grains. Beneficiaries under PDS are entitled to 5 kg of cereals per person per month as follows: rice at ₹3 per kg, wheat at ₹2 per kg, and coarse grains (millets or Shri Anna) at ₹1 per kg. This statute also provides further benefits, e.g., cash maternity benefits and 35 kg per month to Antyodaya card holders (poorest households) at the above-mentioned prices. It mandates universal mid-day meals for school children and universal ICDS (Anganwadi) feeding for young children and pregnant women. India's previous milestones, like the Green Revolution of the 1960s and the MDM scheme that fed approximately 300 million children per day, laid the foundations, but NFSA brought the legal entitlement of food that became binding. The 2001 Supreme Court ruling to include the right to food into a legal framework prompted the 2009 election pledge, which later became the NFSA 2013. Thus, NFSA emerged as a collaborative fruit of a series of landmark efforts for food security in India, acting as a turning point in India's trajectory in welfare policies.

NFSA has endured changes in government and emergencies. The Act was passed under a Congress-led government in 2013, but in 2014, when political power shifted towards the BJP-led government, there were speculations that the government might dilute or replace this legislation with some cash transfer schemes. But in practice, not only does this statute remain, but the government also introduced some substantial rectifications and new layers of relief. For example, during the COVID-19 crisis in 2020–22, the government implemented the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY), which provided an extra 5 kg of free grains per person per month to all NFSA beneficiaries. Recent press reports and government releases note that approximately 81 crore (810 million) beneficiaries received these free rations.



On November 23, this scheme got a 5-year extension, ensuring free ration till 2028. Such an expansion in times of crisis has underscored the law's resilience. Rather than scrapping these subsidies, policymakers rectified and expanded them as per the needs of the time.

Alongside the development in the main enactment, the government had introduced some other schemes as well to further strengthen this PDS system. Notably, the ONORC scheme, being implemented since 1st January 2020, allows all the beneficiaries of NFSA to get their subsidised rations from fair-price ration shops in any State and U.T. of the country. It is specifically beneficial for migrant labourers, sugarcane workers, tribals, etc. The government also achieved complete digitisation of ration cards and introduced point-of-sale (e-POS) machines linked to Aadhaar to mitigate fraudulent activities and enhance transparency. These digital reforms have strengthened the PDS infrastructure, helping to sustain NFSA entitlements even under strain.

Despite all these efforts, along with the then Commerce & Industry Minister Shri Anand Sharma's firm address to the G-33 nations assuring food security for the poor and vulnerable sections of society, NFSA has faced challenges. Critics point out that its coverage is still not universal, as it excludes certain sections, e.g., homeless, destitute, or disabled persons living outside households. It also limits the food basket to cereals (rice/wheat) and salt, leaving out pulses and oils — a significant nutritional gap. In practical terms, states differ in their operability; some, like Tamil Nadu or Odisha, historically ran universal PDS and had to realign with NFSA's targeted quotas. Limited resources, an exponentially increasing population, lack of infrastructure, operational inefficiencies, and poor performance of the PDS are the major hurdles in the successful implementation of the proposed Act.

The NFSA falls short of realising its objective due to the lack of universalised coverage, non-inclusion of pulses and edible oils in the food basket, inadequate quantity of food grains provided in it, and non-inclusion of entitlements for the homeless, destitute, and disabled persons. With a change in government and its overriding thrust on reducing the fiscal deficit, there are apprehensions of entitlements and coverage being reduced, and food grain entitlements being replaced with cash transfers. Such critiques have encouraged policy tweaks like rice fortification programmes and strengthening awareness initiatives, but the core entitlement law endures.



NFSA provides a multi-tiered institutional structure to monitor its programmes. As per the Act, Section 15 states that District Grievance Redressal Officers (DGROs) must be appointed in every district to hear and resolve complaints about ration distribution. Beneficiaries can approach a DGRO if they are denied entitled grains or face quality issues, and as per S. 15.6, DGRO's decisions can be appealed to the State Food Commission. As per S. 16, each state is required to constitute a State Food Commission (SFC), headed by a senior official having experience in the field of food security. As per S. 16.6, monitoring and evaluating NFSA implementation, hearing suo motu or complaint-driven inquiries into entitlement violations, advising the government, its agencies, autonomous bodies as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on effective implementation, and hearing appeals against the orders of the DGRO are some of the duties of the SFC. In NFSA, Chapter VII (S. 14–21) is specially dedicated to the grievance redressal mechanisms, as some of them have already been discussed above. As per S. 14, states must establish internal grievance redressal arrangements, e.g., toll-free call centres, helplines, and designation of nodal officers to facilitate quick consumer complaints. The DGROs handle written applications and can summon errant officials. If a DGRO fails to deliver, aggrieved persons can appeal to the SFC. All of this is backed by penalties, which means officials who wilfully ignore commission orders can be fined.

As per Section 29(1) of the NFSA, for ensuring transparency and proper functioning of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and accountability of the functionaries in such system, every State Government was to set up Vigilance Committees (VCs) at the State, District, Block, and FPS levels. Further, this has also been mentioned in Sub-clause (6) under Clause 11 of TPDS (Control) Order 2015. The State Governments had to send a report annually to the Central Government on the functioning of vigilance committees.

As per Clause 8 of the TPDS (Control) Order, 2001 read with paragraph 6 of the annexure, the State Governments have to ensure regular inspections of fair price shops at least once in six months by the designated authority. Under Clause 11 of TPDS (Control) Order, 2015, the Ministry also monitored the grievance redressal mechanism by requiring the States/UTs to report the number of unsettled or outstanding grievances at the level of call centres, State portal, and DGROs at the end of each quarter.

Hence, the governance model is multi-tiered and rights-based. In sum, NFSA is not merely policy guidance but a statute with obligations. It enlists enforced entitlements, statutory commissions, grievance officers, and mandated reporting to ensure apt functioning of the Act. This comprehensive drafting underpins the scheme's resilience.



As India is approaching its centenary of independence, marked by economic prosperity and social well-being, it is substantially important that its food security policies keep evolving and adapting. Though the NFSA provides a coherent structure, a forward-looking approach can strengthen it for the future.

India's policies, like the Green Revolution, have tremendously enriched its food reserves. In recent times, India's rice stocks in government warehouses rose 18% from a year ago to a record high for the start of June, while wheat stocks have hit their highest level in four years on higher procurement from farmers. Consequently, Indian food reserves hold approximately 59.5 million metric tonnes of rice and approximately 37 million tonnes of wheat. Hence, while the quantity is sufficient, much emphasis should be given to filling the nutrition gaps. Several steps have been taken by the government to not just provide quantity but also quality—for instance, rolling out fortified rice through the PDS (about 406 lakh tonnes distributed by March 2024)—but more needs to be done. A nutrition-rich diet must entail pulses and edible oils, which critics have urged for so long. Vision 2047 demands not just “calorie security” but “nutritional security.” Future policy could include micronutrient-rich foods or voucher systems for fruits and vegetables.

While this policy covers about two-thirds of the Indian population, as poverty falls and administrative capacity improves, India may choose to either narrow down the targeted group or move towards universalisation. But such moves require greater deliberation, as there is evidence showing that NFSA expansion does improve child nutrition. For instance, a recent study finds that PDS expansion sharply cut stunting rates from 36% to 28.8% on average.



विकसित भारत



Further steps must be taken to make this policy more resilient to climate shocks and price volatility. This means focusing on providing more climate-resilient crops like millets in the PDS. The government has taken some steps, like creating large onion buffers (approx. 7 lakh metric tonnes by 2023–24) and new schemes like “Bharat Atta” and “Bharat Dal” to stabilise prices. These initiatives should be expanded under a cohesive Food Security Vision, integrating agricultural policy with the NFSA.

“Viksit Bharat” must be “Shikshit Bharat”, which means that merely passing and implementing such policies will not allow them to reach their full potential. Food security policy should dovetail with health, education, and livelihood awareness programmes. For example, the interconnection between nutrition and learning could be strengthened by ensuring mid-day meals supplied from local produce meet dietary standards. Maternal and child health programmes can be integrated with entitlements; i.e., pregnant women enrolled in health services could automatically receive NFSA nutrition benefits. Cross-sector committees at national and state levels can guide such integration. Breaking the isolation between the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Women & Child Development, and Food & Public Distribution could be a prosperous move.

In conclusion, the National Food Security Act, 2013, is a landmark enactment for India. The NFSA strengthens India’s commitment to ensuring food security for more than two-thirds of its population.

Its resilience through political transitions and global crises, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, is an undefeated evidence to its foundational character in developing India’s food resilience. Governance innovations like digital ration cards, ONORC, fortified grains, and multi-tiered grievance mechanisms have added transparency and accountability in this policy. Nevertheless, to realize the aspirations of Vision 2047, the NFSA needs to induce changes in its variety of crops, interconnection between health and education systems, and synergy in the extended social protection system. With India on its way to becoming a developed country, securing and reinforcing food entitlements will be the key to closing inequality, enhancing human capital, and securing the dignity of all citizens. Here, the NFSA provides not merely a legal framework, but a policy vision that needs to be creatively redirected to make the constitutional promise of food, dignity, and justice a reality for all.



PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA *YOJNA*

*Fueling Capacity, Equity
and Energy Access*



PART C: MODI'S INDIA PARADIGM

P

radhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), launched on 1 May 2016, aims to ensure "Smoke-free Rural India" by extending liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) connections to five crore below-poverty-line (BPL) households, with the beneficiary's name registered in that of a woman member of the household. This design allowed energy access with women's agency, tackling the twin burdens of indoor air pollution and gender inequity. After the initial phase, PMUY was expanded under Ujjwala 2.0 and, by mid-2025, had delivered over 10.3 crore connections, becoming a global exemplar for inclusive energy policy.

PMUY has been highly cost-effective in well-being terms, generating three times the benefits compared to its expenditure. Every rupee invested yields three rupees in societal well-being, accounting for health gains, time savings, and environmental externalities. Per-household LPG consumption rose from approximately 3.01 cylinders in 2019 to 4.43 cylinders in early 2025, indicating sustained adoption and steady revenue for domestic LPG manufacturers and distributors. This surge in demand catalyzed an 83 percent increase in LPG distributors between 2016 and 2024, reaching over 25,000, 93 percent of which serve rural areas, thus driving rural employment in logistics and retail.



Crucial to cost-containment has been the integration of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) via PAHAL, which de-duplicated 4.49 crore bogus LPG connections and saved the exchequer approximately ₹71,301 crore. Such fiscal savings not only improved subsidy targeting but also strengthened the programme's long-term fiscal sustainability. Viewed holistically, PMUY exemplifies a high-multiplying public investment that bolsters energy industry growth while generating net economic gains for society.

Beyond economic calculus, PMUY has markedly improved household well-being. By substituting firewood and dung-based fuels with LPG, the scheme has sharply reduced indoor particulate pollution, a leading cause of respiratory illnesses in women and young children. Official health assessments document declines in chronic bronchitis, eye irritation, and other pollution-related diseases among beneficiaries, aligning with World Health Organization endorsements that PMUY's early rollout protected over 37 million women from hazardous household air pollution.

Equally significant are the "time-use benefits": women formerly allocating several hours weekly to firewood collection have recouped millions of person-hours across rural India. Time-saving studies reveal that beneficiaries spend up to four fewer hours per week on fuel gathering, time which is now repurposed for education, income-generating activities, or rest. Nutritional outcomes have likewise improved as LPG's convenience allows for more varied and nutritious meal preparation, contributing indirectly to better health and cognitive development among children.





By diverting households away from biomass and kerosene, PMUY contributes directly to India's climate commitments. Traditional cooking fuels are a major source of black carbon and CO₂ emissions; replacing them with LPG reduces particulate output and lessens deforestation pressures. This dual benefit aligns PMUY with multiple Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 3 (Good Health), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Importantly, Ujjwala embodies climate justice by prioritising the energy needs of marginalized women, those most exposed to indoor pollution and least able to afford clean fuels. The International Energy Agency has lauded PMUY as a policy that transcends mere energy access to address social equity and environmental stewardship. However, recognizing LPG's fossil-fuel status, long-term sustainability will hinge on complementing PMUY with renewable and low-carbon cooking solutions—such as biogas, solar cookers, or green hydrogen technologies, to fully transition rural India toward net-zero emissions.



Despite its successes, PMUY faces ongoing challenges. First, recurring LPG refill costs occasionally dissuade the poorest beneficiaries, particularly when subsidy levels fluctuate. To mitigate this, Ujjwala 2.0 introduced incentives—such as a free first refill and stove to reinforce sustained use. Continued expansion of rural distribution remains essential; though distributor numbers have grown, remote hamlets still report access gaps that inhibit regular LPG supply.

Second, while LPG adoption curtails biomass use, empirical studies indicate some reversion to traditional fuels, driven by affordability concerns or cultural cooking preferences. Policymakers must therefore blend subsidy design with behaviour-change communication, educating beneficiaries on the health and environmental costs of mixed-fuel usage.

Third, robust impact evaluation mechanisms are needed to capture long-term outcomes, including women's economic empowerment and local air quality improvements. Current data are strong on LPG uptake and immediate health gains, but sparser on entrepreneurial and environmental metrics.



Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana stands as a paradigm of integrated policymaking, delivering economic growth, social upliftment, gender empowerment, and environmental benefits in a single programme. Its design, targeting women with asset ownership, leveraging subsidy reform, and scaling distribution networks, has generated threefold returns in societal well-being for each rupee spent. Yet to sustain and deepen these gains, policymakers must address refill affordability, ensure last-mile distribution, and plan for a gradual pivot to renewable cooking energies. As India advances its Sustainable Development Goals and climate commitments, PMUY's legacy offers vital lessons on how bold, inclusive welfare measures can catalyse transformative change for the most vulnerable.



GST

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF
THE GOODS AND SERVICES TAX.
Evolution, Structure, Challenges,
& the Road Ahead

The Goods and Services Tax started on July 1, 2017, also known as the Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, in India. It is a wide-based indirect tax on the supply of goods and services, replacing numerous taxes, both central and state, such as Value Added Tax, Service Tax, Excise Duty, and the like. GST is a multi-stage, destination-based tax collected by the government at each point of value addition. The previous regime of indirect taxation was cumbersome, with multiplicity of taxes in layers and hardly any uniformity in rates of tax among different states, which hindered trade and made compliance more complex. GST sought to create a uniform tax regime in India and envisioned the "One Nation, One Tax" doctrine. This chapter will evaluate the journey of GST, its historical genesis with respect to indirect tax, statutory framework and structure under GST, compliances, challenges and difficulties, judicial interpretation, global perspective, and the way forward.



THE EVOLUTION

After years of deliberation using mop-ups of joint federal-state taxes and clubbing them together through constitutional amendments, at least as a first step, India made a coordinated leap toward a single indirect tax system composed of a collection of multiple taxes such as Excise Duty (1944), Customs duty, sales tax, octroi, and service tax, each of which was levied by both the Centre and State Governments. These taxes/fiscal devices created a cascade of counterproductive flow in interstate commerce and spurts of compliance costs. VAT was established in the early 2000s in an initial effort to stop the flow. Yet, it was insufficient due to mixed use, and the nature of the enactment from state to state made the regimes ineffective; so without GST, the future paradigm shift was being tapped with VAT. India proceeded with the implementation of GST as a destination-based multi-stage tax regime based on accounting rules, after endless deliberations involving multiple expert committees such as the Raja Chelliah Committee and the pre-GST Arvind Subramanian Committee.

The system received its legal support when the 122nd Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2014, was passed by both Houses and ratified by nearly 15 states. In practical terms, this resulted in the formation of the Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016, where concurrent taxes were allowed between the Union and States. Concurrently, Article 279A in the Constitution made provisions for the GST Council to govern the new system as an inter-state body with the Union Minister presiding, and with States having roles authorized to advise Parliament on relevant GST rates, exemptions, model laws, and consequent legislative approval.

The decisions of the GST Council, taken by consensus or through weighted voting, reflect India's model of cooperative federalism. It performs an essential role in developing tax policy-making, simplifying compliance, and resolving disputes. For these reasons, GST is not only a tax reform but also represents a constitutional and institutional reform to enable a single national market.





The Goods and Services Tax in India has a dual model of taxation consisting of Central GST (CGST), State GST (SGST), Union Territory GST (UTGST), and Integrated GST (IGST). Intra-state supplies incur both CGST and SGST/UTGST. Inter-state goods and services transactions are subject to IGST, which is collected by the Centre but shared with the state of destination. GST is also destination-based, like other State Value Added Taxes in India. Being multi-stage means that tax is collected at each point of value addition in the supply chain, starting from manufacture to final consumption. Tax credits are received throughout the supply chain, allowing for seamless Input Tax Credit (ITC) of taxes on goods and services consumed in the manufacture of goods and services. Many small businesses in India carry a significant compliance burden due to the indirect tax environment. The Compounding scheme allows eligible taxpayers to pay tax at a specified rate on turnover, rather than the normal GST rate applied. Finally, anti-profiteering measures have been established to protect consumers from businesses taking advantage of tax benefits by increasing prices of goods and services. Structural features of GST should eventually lead to a less complicated, transparent, unified, and more efficient tax regime, improve the ease of doing business in India, and promote cooperative fiscal federalism across the country.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India consists of five tax slabs at 0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%, as determined by the GST Council. The 0% slab includes essential goods like milk, eggs, health, and education, while the 28% slab includes luxury and sin goods such as cigarettes and ultra-luxury cars; a cess is also applied. All slabs are subject to change, and they have changed over time, including recent changes in the 2024–25 Union Budget (February 2024) and a GST Council meeting in June 2024. One notable change included the decrease in GST for the cancer drug Keytruda from the existing 12% slab to 5%. Definitions for goods and services fall under the Harmonized System of Nomenclature and Service Accounting Codes, so with regard to classification, there is standardization and clarity.

In certain circumstances, reverse charge provisions will apply. While the implementation of GST has simplified how we handle indirect taxes, disputes about classification of goods or the structure of fees continue to arise. All of this underscores the ongoing need to rationalize GST, especially concerning some industries and access rights, which have serious consequences due to confusion about how rates work and which sections fall under specific classifications.

GST compliance in India rests heavily on the technology sector. Below a certain turnover, businesses do not have to register under GST; registration is required only when their turnover crosses the relevant thresholds, which are ₹40 lakh for goods and ₹20 lakh for services (although states may have slightly different thresholds). In terms of filing returns, in most cases, they must be filed monthly or quarterly. The key returns include GSTR-1 (details of outward supplies), GSTR-3B (summary return), and the annual return (GSTR-9). The QRMP scheme offers small taxpayers the option to file quarterly returns with monthly tax payments through the GST portal. The E-way bill improves mechanisms for real-time tracking of the movement of goods, eliminates tax fraud, and enhances monitoring capabilities.

Under GST, deemed Input Tax Credit (ITC) means you can claim credit on your inputs as long as you have matched and reconciled your data with your suppliers. The e-invoice is mandatory for businesses crossing a specified turnover; it assists with the authentication of invoices as they relate to GST and helps prevent fraud. It is an electronic counterpart of each invoice. GST provides valid data through the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN), which manages everything from registration to returns, payments, and compliance on a single portal. This formerly fragmented electronic process—registering online, filing returns, making payments, applying for refunds, etc.—creates transparency, compliance, and efficiency.





India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) is structured as a dual model with multiple rates (0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%), while jurisdictions like New Zealand simply use a single tax rate. The rationale for the complexity of India's multi-rate GST structure is due to its federal system, which requires simultaneous sales levies between the Central (CGST) and State governments (SGST), with the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) serving as the intermediary tax. The provincial Canadian model harmonizes GST-HST provisions. In the case of the EU, VAT and directives are imposed by the central governing body of the EU member states. Regarding the U.S., it does not implement a national sales tax; rather, each state imposes its own sales tax provisions, which may vary within the state. Despite India's digital compliance achieving some progress through e-invoicing and e-way bills, higher compliance and rate structures have meant businesses are shouldering an even higher compliance burden. The way forward is to rationalize rates consistent with best practices, which means bringing petroleum, real estate, and alcohol into the ambit of GST. Moreover, cooperation in the operation of the GST Council has to be enhanced. Compliance burdens can be reduced and harmonized with better practices and advanced technology, including AI, while maximizing revenues collected and increasing efficiencies.

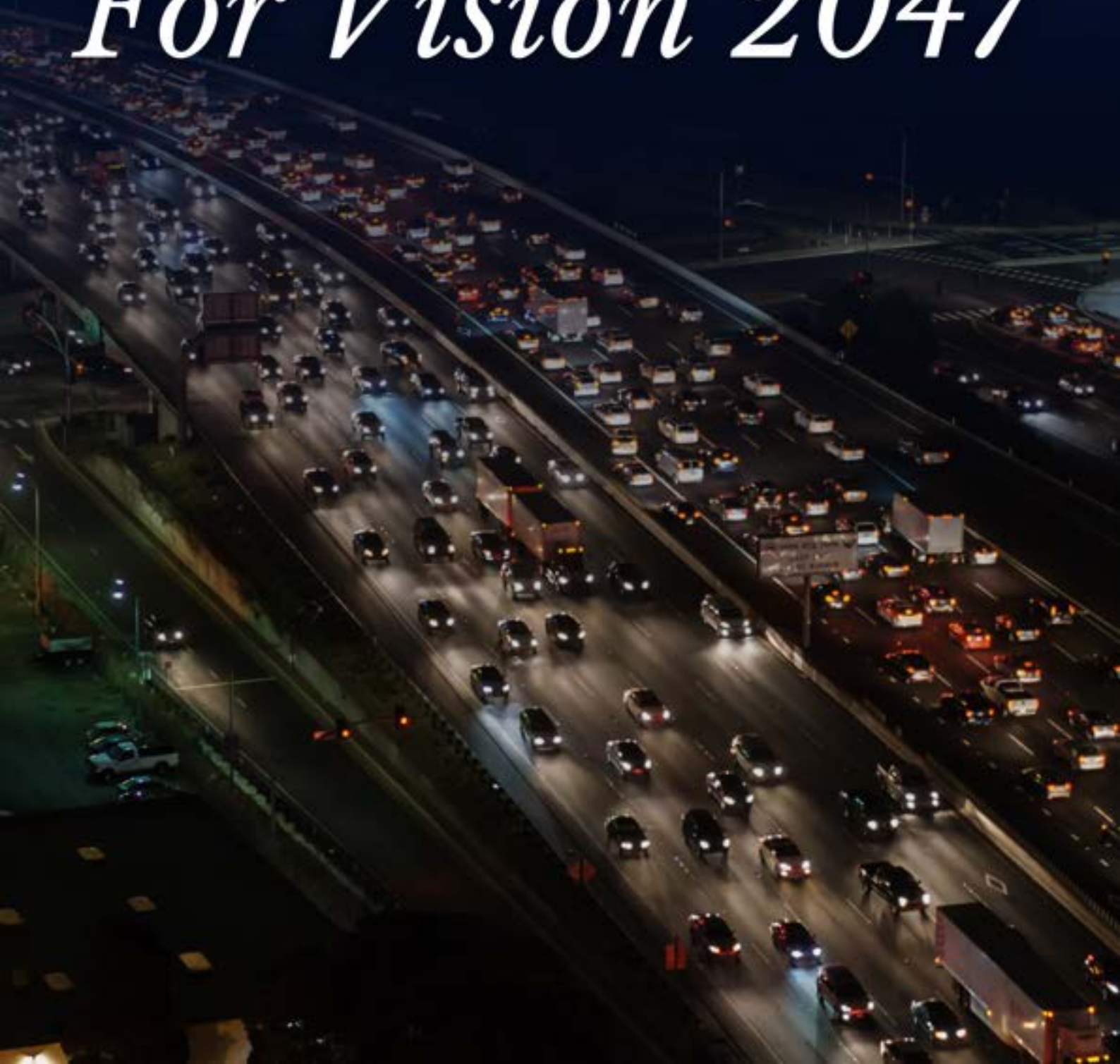


The Goods and Services Tax (GST), 2017, demonstrates a historic reform in the indirect tax landscape of India, with the objective of bringing the whole nation under a single market. It has provided greater transparency, increased compliance, and enhanced inter-state trade. However, there are procedural issues related to multiple rates and compliance burdens, as well as challenges in maintaining regularity and consistency of federal cooperation. Continuing judicial review is also providing clarity on the provisions of GST and revealing a need for clearer procedural norms. In the future, we will need to rationalize GST rates, include sectors that were excluded, and strengthen the Centre-State relationship, especially through the GST Council. Improving digital infrastructure and studying best practices seen globally will serve India well if and when the GST regime is fully streamlined.

PM NATIONAL MASTER PLAN

GATI SHAKTI

SYNCHRONISED INFRASTRUCTURE
For Vision 2047





India, a country that aspires to become a 10 trillion economy by the year 2047, does not have the luxury to be constrained by the bottlenecks of infrastructure development. Therefore, in October 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi rolled out the Gati Shakti National Master Plan (NMP) – a groundbreaking multimodal connectivity plan to be implemented in India that aims to harmonise infrastructure development by connecting 16 ministries and departments. Although this master plan is an infrastructure policy, it also serves as a strategic enabler of logistical competitiveness, economic integration, and nation-building. Moreover, as part of the Gati Shakti framework, the Bharatmala Pariyojana serves as India's flagship highway development project and stands out as a lifeline in the path of the ambitious Vision 2047 – a vision of 25 years that envisions the creation of developed India.

Gati Shakti National Master Plan is an online interface of all economic corridors, transport, utility systems, and social infrastructure to make planning and execution coordinated and seamless. The plan aims to make India's logistics sector globally competitive by reducing logistics costs from 13–14% to 8–11%, streamlining cargo handling through shorter wait times, and fast-tracking infrastructure projects using real-time digital monitoring. It also seeks to enhance the business environment by offering better infrastructure to investors. This vision integrates key ongoing and future initiatives like Sagarmala, UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik), dedicated freight corridors, Inland Waterways, and Bharatmala.

While Gati Shakti focuses on integrated planning and coordination across various infrastructure sectors, Bharatmala Pariyojana complements it by specifically targeting the expansion and improvement of road and highway networks across the country. Launched in 2017 and centrally sponsored, Bharatmala aims to construct over 83,677 km of highways by 2027 with an estimated budget of over ₹10 lakh crore. The project focuses on developing economic corridors, inter-corridor and feeder routes, as well as improving border, international, and port connectivity. In its ongoing Phase I, 34,800 km of highways are being built at an estimated cost of ₹5.35 lakh crore. The proposed Phase II will add another 48,877 km to address critical infrastructure gaps and strengthen India's logistics and economic backbone.

Importantly, Bharatmala determines the way high freight traffic flows based on the information obtained by satellite and uses Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, as well as Origin-Destination (OD) surveys. Through these scientific methods, it aims to achieve optimum economic and logistic influence.





HOW BHARATMALA *ADVANCES* VISION 2047

Bharatmala Pariyojana significantly advances the vision of 2047 as it strengthens the ground by developing high-speed road corridors. Moreover, multi-modal logistic parks located along Bharatmala corridors become major logistic nodes to reduce last-mile congestion and enable modal shifts to rail and inland waterways. Digital coordination through Gati Shakti's GIS-based platform avoids duplication of projects, highlights delays in real time, and enables smoother land acquisition. Bharatmala, as a part of Gati Shakti, also ensures that Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns are more connected, which serves as a mechanism to evolve more metro towns and drive economic prosperity.

Moreover, the program plays a vital role in strengthening India's strategic preparedness by improving military logistics and road connectivity to border areas like Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. It ensures seamless linkages between industrial clusters, SEZs, and agri-zones by developing economically viable transport corridors. Vision 2047, which aims to build a developed, self-reliant, and geopolitically strong India — through Bharatmala — is reducing logistics costs and transit time by 20%–25%, boosting competitiveness, improving the manufacturing ecosystem, and making India export-ready under Make in India 2.0. Thus, Bharatmala's penetration into the heart of India — Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, and the North-East — ensures that these regions are not left behind and are integrated into global value chains.



Importantly, these corridors play a key role in connecting agri-belts to mandis and ports, and energy sources, both traditional and renewable, to consumption centres; this enhances supply chain efficiency, enabling more cost-effective movement of agricultural produce and energy resources to key markets and consumption centres. As India moves towards 2047, the ability to defend and project power will depend on these strategic assets. This has already generated employment in the construction sector and is likely to create a multiplier effect by developing roadside services, logistics-based MSEs, and warehousing hubs — potentially tripling infrastructure-related jobs by 2047. This growth is not just building jobs; it's creating a stronger, reliable ecosystem that gives foreign investors confidence to invest in India's expanding infrastructure economy.

Although the scheme is not without challenges, delays in land acquisition, funding constraints, environmental clearance issues, and post-IL&FS risk aversion in PPP models can potentially slow down the pace of development.

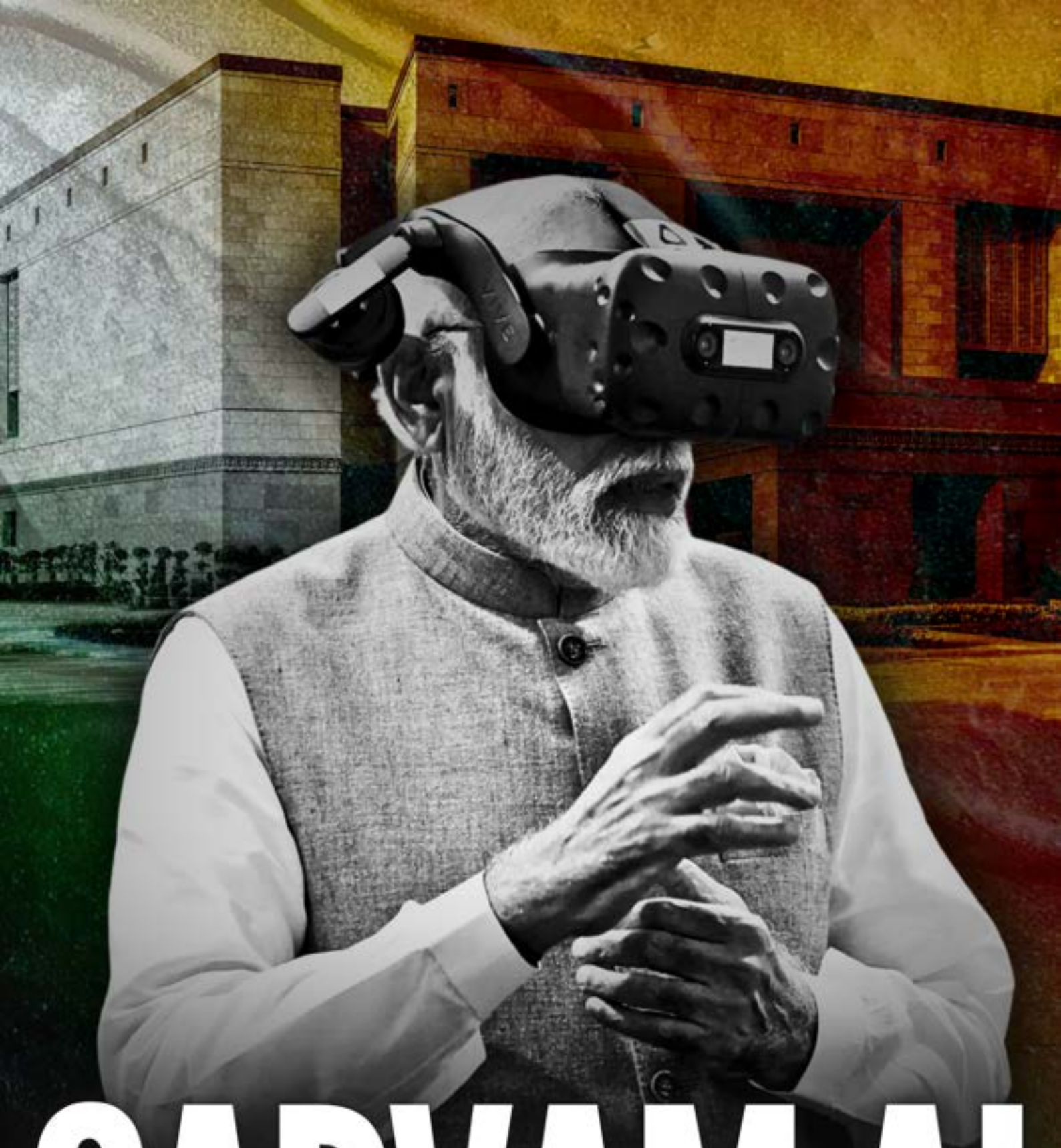
In its alignment with Vision 2047, India needs to monetise its road networks, increase hybrid annuity models, and implement sustainable strategies such as EV charging and solar lighting. While Gati Shakti mandates real-time monitoring and provides states with performance-based funding and technical upgrades, more effective models of states ought to be institutionalised in the country. Once fully integrated, Bharatmala will not just connect India physically but also weave together the economic, cultural, and strategic fabric of a rising India.



As India becomes a global economic powerhouse, it requires infrastructure that is not just massive in its capacity but also visionary in its configurations and implementation. The structural as well as strategic core to bring this change is built upon the Gati Shakti National Master Plan and the Bharatmala Pariyojana, which promise to bring speed, fusion, and accuracy into the creation of infrastructure. The scientific approach to planning of the corridor, the usage of satellite and GIS facilities, as well as cross-alignment to the defence needs and trade proposed in Bharatmala, serve as a great revolutionary change in terms of national thinking and logistics. However, what truly makes it powerful is that it redefines connectivity—not only of cities, ports, and industrial centres, but also between aspiration and opportunity.

Expanding hinterlands, revving up Tier-2 and Tier-3 economies, and making logistics the core priority of India makes Bharatmala enhance India as a competitive power in a world dominated by resilient supply chains. More importantly, it marks a shift towards integrated national planning with clear timelines, data-driven monitoring, and evaluation linked to economic outcomes and an integrated national outlook. Such a strategy enables India to position itself on a development graph that is based on speed, sustainability, and self-sufficiency.

The key to unlocking the full potential of Bharatmala will be through improving institutional delays, adopting novel financing, and inculcating resilience into every metre of the new networks laid. When those challenges are tackled, India will not only construct roads but will construct paths of growth, strength, and impact that drive its ascendancy on its own all over the world. Bharatmala is not just an infrastructure project—it is the doctrine of Indian infrastructure for the century.



SARVAM AI

India's AI Strategy for the World



With the rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence, the world is witnessing a global competition in AI and technology. The focus on this industry has been initiated by the majority of countries and most private firms. But India is positioning itself by taking its own approach with government initiatives like the IndiaAI Mission, by promoting homegrown brands (Sarvam AI), and focusing on research, skill development, and creating a fully developed AI infrastructure for the country.

AI has the potential to drive growth and create value by enabling different tasks—from data analysis, customer service, and content creation to medical diagnosis, weather forecasting, and much more. Its ability to automate complex tasks helps boost productivity and reduce costs. Moreover, AI complements human capabilities, improves decision-making, and capital efficiency. As it works in the economy, it has the ability to foster innovation and economic growth.





A Bengaluru-based startup called SarvamAI, co-founded by Vivek Raghavan and Pratyush Kumar in 2023, is collaborating with the Government of India to develop the country's first Large Language Model (LLM) under the ambitious IndiaAI Mission for mass use. After a rigorous application process, SarvamAI was chosen for the collaboration. To build this homegrown model from scratch, they will receive extensive support through funds, including access to 4,000 high-end GPUs for six months.

Additionally, they have partnered with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to enhance the user experience for Aadhaar services. Ensuring complete security and following data and privacy rules, SarvamAI aims to create a sovereign model for its Indian users. Sarvam's model is expected to be closely managed and specifically adjusted for Indian use, unlike other models which are mostly open-sourced. Sarvam wants to create a strong foundational model that is accessible for Bharat, meaning making it available in Indian languages with constant feedback and services as required.



In India, the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being shaped significantly by both government initiatives and the expanding private sector. The government's vision for a seamless digital ecosystem is driven by ambitious programs like Digital India and Make in India, which set the foundation for AI's diverse applications across various sectors. In agriculture, AI aids in weather forecasting and adoption of alternative practices, thereby improving productivity and sustainability. In healthcare, AI assists in early disease detection and accurate diagnosis, enhancing the quality and efficiency of medical services. Governance benefits from AI through increased administrative efficiency and reduced wait times. However, a major challenge remains the service divide between urban and rural areas, which necessitates more inclusive government programs to ensure AI accessibility nationwide. Alongside these efforts, the vibrant private sector, with numerous entrepreneurs and startups, plays a critical role in advancing AI innovation aligned with India's goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

In the realm of research and talent development, efforts are underway to integrate AI-focused modules into school curricula to bridge educational gaps and nurture future AI professionals. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes digital literacy, coding, and computational thinking from early stages, while the CISCE board has introduced robotics and AI subjects from the 2025–26 academic session. Prestigious institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and Indian School of Business (ISB) have also included AI prominently in their courses. Collaborative initiatives between academia and industry, along with increased internships, research projects, and faculty exchanges, are expected to attract global talent and investment, further enhancing India's AI capabilities.





CRITICAL PRIORITY

On the investment front, India holds the 10th position globally, securing approximately \$1.4 billion in AI-related private investment in 2023, with a 39.9% increase in funding raised by AI startups in 2024. This reflects growing investor confidence in India's AI potential. The country is viewed as a leading hub for AI development among emerging economies, though it still lags behind leaders like the United States and China.

Responsible AI development remains a critical priority for India due to a lack of comprehensive AI-specific legislation addressing ethics, privacy, and data protection. While the Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023 lays an initial framework, stronger enforcement and precision in regulation are required. Investment in research institutions, including IITs and universities, is vital to develop safeguards against challenges like deep fakes, privacy violations, and cybersecurity threats. This balanced approach will help foster innovation while ensuring ethical AI deployment.

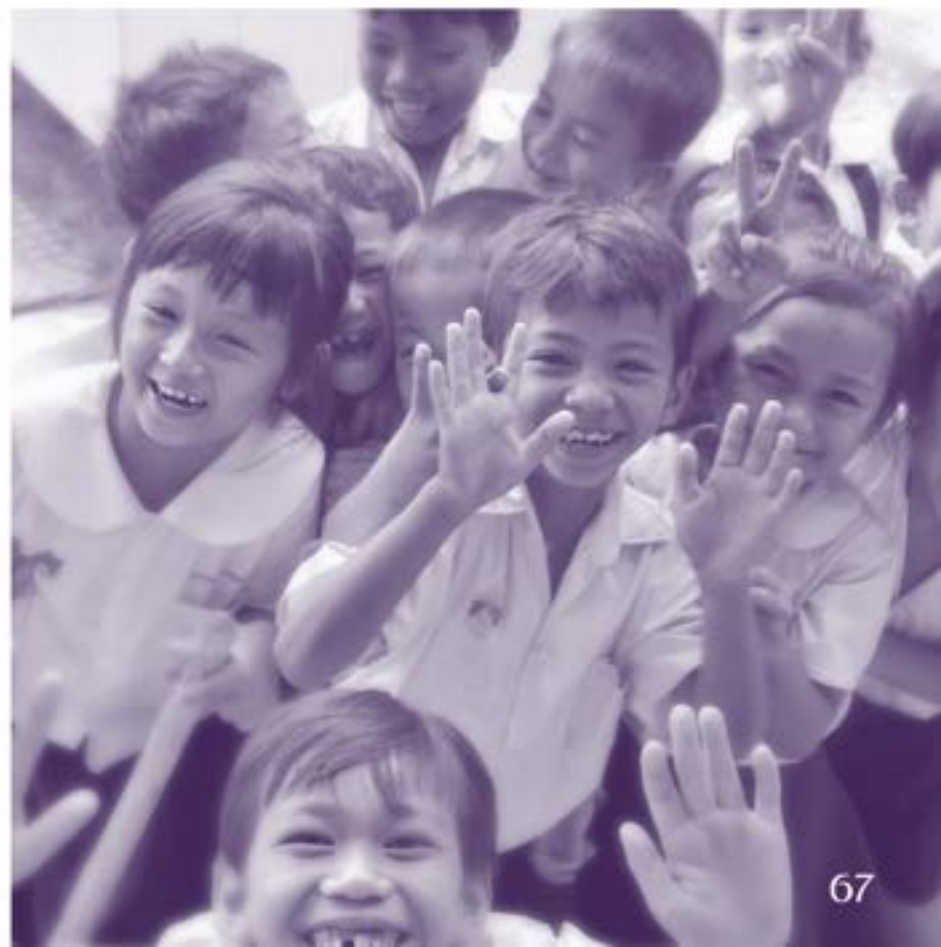
NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020





India has a rich history of education, which can be traced back to the Vedic era, ancient universities such as Nalanda and Takshashila, and the residential schooling system of the Gurukuls—centred around learning the Vedas. However, colonial rule stagnated this system and established a mechanistic form of education designed to produce Indians who could serve the then administration. Macaulay's Minute of 1835 established the primacy of the English language in the Indian education system and was an instrument of British imperialism to shape the minds of Indians to align with colonial interests, shaping the trajectory of modern education in India.

Under the leadership of then PM Jawaharlal Nehru, several efforts were made to rescue the collapsing education system immediately after independence. Some of the monumental achievements were the establishment of the University Education Commission (1948–49), the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1956, and the Kothari Commission (1964–66), which led to the first National Policy on Education in 1968. Since then, India's higher education system has expanded significantly over the decades; however, it still struggles with accessibility, competence, relevance, and equity. NEP 2020 steps in as a big step to reimagine the education system and align it to meet the needs of the status quo.



KEY FEATURES AND *Objectives of NEP 2020*

COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The NEP 2020 was formulated through an extensive consultative process across India. Over 2.5 lakh stakeholders, including teachers, academicians, students, state representatives, and civil society members, gave their insights. The policy draft was developed in 2016 under the leadership of eminent scientist Dr. K. Kasturirangan and finalized by the then Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), now the Ministry of Education (MoE).

NEP 2020 involves associations such as the MoE, UGC, NCERT, and bodies that have emerged fairly recently, like PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) and the NETF (National Educational Technology Forum) with respect to institution building. One of the strong points of the NEP has been its phased implementation plan and alignment with broader national goals like Skill India, the Digital India Mission, and Atmanirbhar Bharat. NEP 2020 aligns closely with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 by positioning education as a catalyst for economic growth, social equity, and innovation. Its focus on skill development, inclusivity, and research directly supports the long-term goal of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047.

OBJECTIVES AND VISION

NEP 2020 seeks to establish a holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, tech-driven education system that promotes reasoning, innovation, education in regional languages, and internationalization simultaneously. It seeks to promote equity and inclusion across all levels of education by facilitating universal access and eliminating disparities. The objectives also include vocational integration from the schooling level and strengthening teaching infrastructure, all with an emphasis on cultural rootedness. A core goal remains to develop an education system that supports constitutional values, environmental awareness, and digital fluency.

NEP 2020 reiterates India's legacy as a hub of knowledge and creativity, fostering a culture of learning and reasoning. Many monumental changes, like credit banks, multi-entry-exit programs with provision for credit transfer, multidisciplinary universities, and global engagement, were aimed at. It also aspires to significantly enhance research capabilities, promote entrepreneurial thinking, skill development, and integrate academic disciplines with problem-solving.



The NEP 2020 aims for a transformative and inclusive approach to school education, emphasizing universal access and aiming to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 100% from preschool to secondary level by 2030. A new model of 5+3+3+4 has been proposed to replace the old 10+2 model for a much more holistic, multilingual, and flexible system of schooling. It divides schooling into phases to focus on different aspects of a child's development at each stage, making the education system more aligned with their cognitive, emotional, and social needs. For the first time, the integration of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) into the formal schooling system, bringing the 3–6 age group under the curriculum, can also be seen. Emphasis is also placed on foundational literacy and numeracy, play-based modules, and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is designed to be learner-centric, with a focus on experiential learning, flexibility in subject choices, and removing hard separations between academic and vocational subjects. Multilingualism is promoted through the use of the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of education till at least Grade 5, along with a focus on learning foreign languages. PARAKH is established as the national assessment body for more competent evaluation.

The key initiative of the policy is the provision for inclusion and development of the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), with emphasis on dedicated funds, better infrastructure, recruitment of special educators, and support for children with disabilities through appropriate assistive technologies. A framework of State School Standards Authorities (SSSAs) is set up for a transparent accreditation process, applicable to both public and private schools. NEP has fundamentally focused on mainstreaming vocational education across Grades 6–12, with students exposed to practical skills during a designated 'bagless' period. By 2025, at least 50% of school and higher education students are expected to have vocational exposure to equip them with essential livelihood skills.



The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform India's higher education landscape, making it more multidisciplinary and globally aligned. A core objective is to raise the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 50% by 2035 in higher education, including vocational education. The new framework focuses not just on conventional degrees but also on training according to industrial requirements and vocational learning. For this vision to become a reality, a flexible and holistic framework has been introduced at the undergraduate level, offering students a chance to pursue combinations of disciplines with multiple exit and entry options ranging from a certificate after one year to a full four-year research degree.

The Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) is also set up to keep a record of students' academic progress and mobility between institutions. Holistic education involves disbanding the rigid streams, i.e., the sciences, arts, humanities, and professional fields, to foster critical thinking, enhance communication skills, ethical reasoning, and develop social responsibility. Financial aid through scholarships and incentives for marginalized groups is also promoted, along with strengthening online and open learning systems.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is set up to strengthen the research ecosystem, especially in state universities, by funding projects across disciplines and enhancing links between academia, industry, and government. Efforts have been made to internationalize Indian higher education by encouraging partnerships with global universities.

In a major move towards fulfilling the vision of NEP 2020, a Letter of Intent was issued to the University of Southampton, UK, to establish a campus in India. IIT Delhi opened a campus in Abu Dhabi, while IIT Madras is set to move to a permanent campus from a transit campus in Tanzania under the NEP mandate.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said, "The establishment of campuses of foreign universities in India and Indian Higher Education Institutions abroad is not just about expanding educational opportunities; it is about creating a vibrant ecosystem of research, knowledge exchange, and global collaboration." Educational institutions across countries have a responsibility to produce "global citizens" with a global ethos who can provide solutions to global challenges. With a student-centric approach, reforms also include professional counselling, supportive learning environments, and comprehensive assessments.



The road ahead for NEP 2020 demands a strong commitment to grassroots-level transformation and all-inclusive planning. One of the foremost challenges lies in resolving the centre–state dilemma, as the policy’s broad national vision often comes into a tussle with the autonomy of states in framing and executing education policies. Secondly, infrastructure and digital capabilities in deficit areas must be upgraded, without which the policy’s digital and tech-oriented goals cannot be accessible to the majority in this country. Effective cooperation among various ministries is essential for the successful implementation of complex and cross-cutting educational initiatives.

Consistent capacity building through digital mentoring and training is essential. Local bodies and states should also be empowered to adapt curricula as well as align with national standards, ensuring education is rooted in the region and cultural identity but does not lack the practicality or relevance needed in the modernized and globalized world. Financial support systems, especially scholarships, fellowships, and need-based aid, must be expanded to bridge the socio-economic gaps, as the policy itself identifies Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) as a priority. Funding research, facilitating international collaborations, and creating innovative pedagogy will help create a future-ready ecosystem.

India’s ancient tradition of academic excellence has witnessed disruption as well as efforts for its revival. NEP 2020 is a landmark attempt to bring back this legacy while also meeting the demands of a global, digital world. It reimagines education not merely as a tool for employment but as a catalyst for national development and social upliftment.





ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT DEFENCE MANUFACTURING



The Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative was launched in 2020 with the main objective of reducing import dependencies and bolstering domestic production of goods, ensuring self-sufficiency across various sectors. The initiative, however, was not the first call for self-sufficiency made since Independence, and there was always one particular sector averse to these calls: the defence sector.

While India remained one of the largest global importers of arms and weapons during the period 1984–2022, it is pertinent to study the structural changes brought by Atmanirbhar Bharat in the defence manufacturing industry, which led it to become one of the top 25 exporters of arms according to SIPRI Reports of 2025. Moreover, the chapter will further analyse the focused approach around co-development of arms, increased innovation, particular inflection points, and other restructured characteristics of the current state of India's defence sector.





Since the Sino-Indian war of 1962, India has constantly emerged as one of the strongest militaries in the world, consistently ranking on the leaderboards of the Global Firepower Index for more than a decade. However, the defence industry of India faced a fallacy of division; while it was undeniably strong, it had a weak structure and poor composition for a country striving towards self-sufficiency.

The biggest problem in the composition of India's defence sector has been the share held by defence imports. According to SIPRI reports,[3] India on average spent \$3 billion every year on defence imports; meanwhile, indigenous production of even basic commodities like special weather-condition uniforms was poor and not up to the mark. On the other hand, arms exports had reached a periodic low in 2019.

This fallacy of division was caused by many structural problems in the sector, such as dormant factories, sick foundries, and a lack of advanced research and production facilities. The defence sector, plagued by these issues, was in urgent need of structural reforms, especially in the aftermath of the Galwan clash. With these fallacies in mind, the ruling NDA Government rolled out the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative in defence manufacturing under the umbrella of the Atmanirbhar Bharat policies.

The core objective of the entire umbrella of Atmanirbhar Bharat was achieving self-sufficiency, which was also one of the founding objectives of India's economic planning and the Five Year Plans laid down by the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. The objective was to be achieved through policy changes around imports, export promotion, private sector involvement, and production boosting.

To focus on each individual objective and aspect of India's defence sector, three individual schemes were launched in the areas of arms procurement, production and export promotion, and research and development back in 2020. These policies were the Defence Acquisition Procedure (2020), Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy (2020), and Technology Development Fund Scheme.

These schemes and policies laid down the foundation of India's objective of becoming a global manufacturer and exporter of arms and weapons, with tangible progress already underway. In 2020, India's arms exports saw an exponential rise, growing sixfold. However, in 2020, production was not optimised due to the existence of Public Sector Undertakings in the defence industry and negligible private sector participation, but things were about to change as the implications and corollaries of the Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy were rolling out and trickling down.





MAKE IN INDIA *for* WORLD

With the assistance of the Make in India program launched in 2014, India rolled out its Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy, and the scheme brought fundamental and direct changes in the procedure under which weapons were being produced in the country. Under the policy, private participation was encouraged and incentivised. The defence sector immediately became a hotspot, with all existing and new players increasing their role and participation. Since the sector has been opened up to private players, 333 out of 539 total licenses have been granted to private players, of which at least one-third have begun the process of contributing to the indigenisation of their required goods.

Additionally, the Government of India has created two defence corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, which have collectively drawn more than ₹28,000 crores in investments and created 50,000 direct jobs. Besides contributing to the social and economic life of the citizens, these specialised economic zones contain advanced testing and manufacturing facilities with connectivity to ports and other forms of transportation. With key public players like Ordnance Factory Board, Bharat Electronics Limited, Bharat Dynamics Limited, BrahMos Aerospace Limited, and private players like TVS, Data Patterns, and Alpha Designs, these corridors have the potential to contribute immensely to aerospace, missile, and weapons manufacturing in India.

With the principle of 'competition creates innovation,' the entry of private players has greatly bolstered the research and development of the entire industry and has allowed India to be listed for the first time as one of the major exporters of arms globally. The reason for such an exponential jump in private involvement has been the Technological Development Fund scheme, or the TDF scheme. The scheme promotes innovation in defence technology and has contributed significantly to India's growth in the defence industry. The co-partnership of TDF and the iDEX scheme to start the iDEX fund has greatly involved startups in defence production. The iDEX fund, which has a budget of approximately ₹500 crore, grants funds up to ₹1.5 crore to startups for innovation. Moreover, with assistance from production grants and export subsidies, India's export jumped from ₹1,941 crore in FY 2014-15 to ₹21,083 crore in FY 2023-24, with a record 32.5% growth seen in the last year. India's exports are destined to reach more than 100 countries, with major items of export being radars, missiles, drones, and other equipment. The special uniform for soldiers of the Siachen Glacier, which was once imported, is now made domestically, and private players in the sector of drones and loitering munitions have created products demanded by the strongest armies. Such has been the growth curve of India's indigenous defence sector.





From the government's end, the defence budget was increased from ₹2.5 lakh crores to ₹6.8 lakh crores, and to ensure the fallacy of division does not continue, 75% of the capital procurement budget was moved towards domestic production, with approximately 4% of the total budget allocated to research and development. To further fund the indigenous sector, India liberalised its defence industry and allowed non-licensed equity ownership up to 74% for foreign investors. With this policy, India welcomed billions of dollars in the form of Foreign Direct Investment. When it comes to numbers, India's defence production was valued at ₹1.27 lakh crores, which is a 174% rise since the last decade, and the targeted turnover for this financial year has been ₹1.75 lakh crores. However, even with such a great scale of production, the problem of a dominant role played by imports still continues.



India's imports and domestic procurement of arms are dictated by the Defence Acquisition Procedure (2020). The policy was launched with the specific objective of working together with the Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Defence Manufacturing scheme to ensure transparent and non-corrupt procurement of resources and equipment for the Indian Armed Forces.

The scheme introduced provisions for leasing arms and weaponry instead of outright buying them from foreign dealers. While leasing does not provide a permanent solution and was looked down upon by policymakers in the past, it turns out to be a remarkable decision considering the dynamic growth and volatility of the defence economy. It can be considered extremely effective and efficient for two main reasons. First, it significantly reduces the budget allocated to imports and foreign purchases, filling defence gaps temporarily while allowing the domestic industry to cater to them permanently. By temporarily filling the gap, it gives breathing space to the domestic industry. Secondly, by allowing time, it makes it easier for the domestic industry to fill the gap permanently with more innovative and advanced technology.

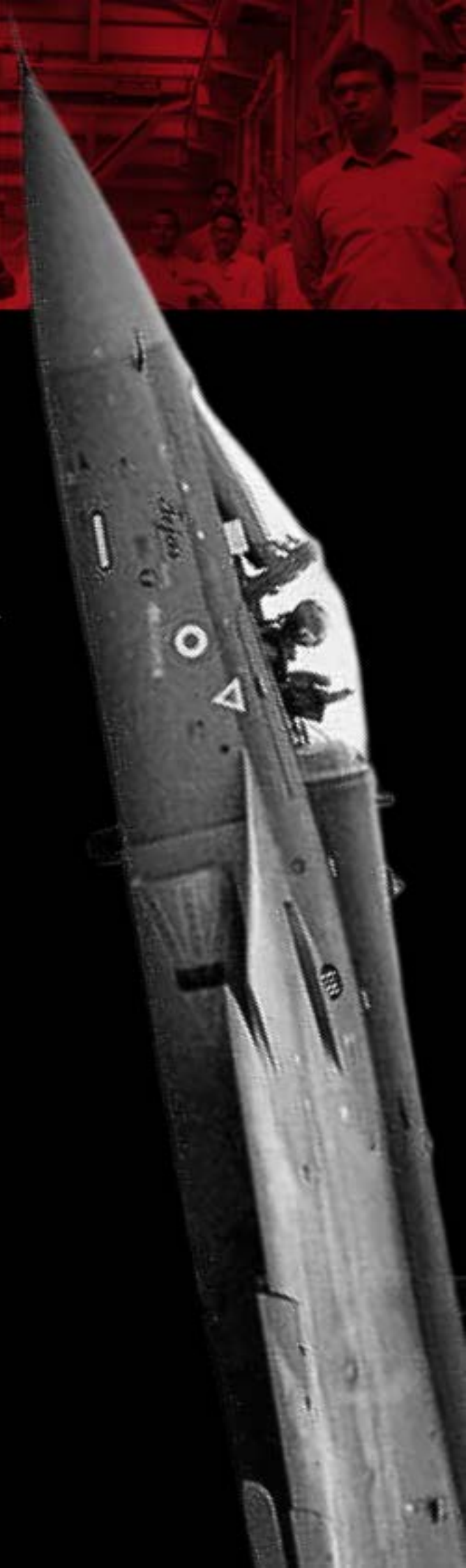
The scheme also introduced embargoes on defence trade. Such embargoes reduce domestic competition by allowing domestic industries to work and innovate. However, both provisions can fail, as seen in the precedent of pre-1992 economic policies, where PSUs failed to provide and cater to domestic demand, eventually leading to the 1992 crisis. The situation seems similar, but with private players' active participation, the gap can be filled and India can be positively pushed further on the track of self-sufficiency in defence. The policy also revamped the offset provisions of defence trade, where if a foreign vendor sells a product with 30% or more indigenous components, it will not face any offset obligations that other regular vendors may face.



With the large-scale boost to domestic defence production and reduced pressure from intense foreign competition, India's defence industry has begun contributing meaningfully to the development of critical defence technologies, positioning itself alongside global powers in the realm of unconventional weapons manufacturing. India has been working on stealth technology, and with the approval of projects like the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft, India shows its growing edge in comparison to other foreign powers.

Moreover, DRDO's sub-organisations like the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, and the Centre for Robotics and Unmanned Systems, along with India's National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications, and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), have advanced in their respective fields to provide the Indian Armed Forces with all forms of assistance in unconventional warfare. Development of such technology domestically speaks volumes about India's growth.

Indigenous production of equipment and material resources under Aatmanirbhar Bharat was also promoted by two initiatives. The first among them is SRIJAN, which connects India's defence needs with indigenous suppliers and makes visible the needs of the Indian Army. The portal is individually a hallmark of India's rising domestic capabilities, with a tremendous volume of responses. The second initiative is the four positive indigenisation lists, which consist of a total of 101 items used by the Indian Army that will soon be indigenised. Both initiatives allow the defence industry to actively participate in the defence procurement process of the Indian Armed Forces.



The Aatmanirbhar Bharat defence industry was tested during Operation Sindoor. From the air raids to the ensuing strikes launched by Pakistani artillery, drones, and missiles, the Indian Armed Forces—and indirectly India's defence industry—had an answer to everything. The short-term conflict was a perfect test for the progress made by the policies.

From Aakash and Aakashteer defence systems to the BrahMos missiles and loitering munitions, India's indigenous defence and attack systems stood out and reflected growth, tested by time and witnessed by India. The pursuit of self-reliance in defence technology is stronger than ever, bolstered by the momentum generated through the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative and the Defence Manufacturing Scheme.



DEMOCRACY'S DARKEST HOUR EMERGENCY

50 YEARS OF EMERGENCY IN INDIA: DEMOCRACY
INTERRUPTED, DEMOCRACY REBORN



PART D : BHARAT'S INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE



This section of the report aims to provide a critical 50-year reflection on the dramatic democratic breakdown, constitutional comeback, and the subsequent rise of democratic safeguards in India, despite the pursuit of political motivations. The comprehensive analysis that follows the historical and political aspects of the Emergency delves into the broader features of the Constitution of India, which enabled the President to declare a state of emergency in consultation with the then Prime Minister and the Union Council of Cabinet Ministers.

Throughout history, various governments have activated emergency powers, predominantly in response to wartime crises. In 1962, when the Indo-China war was fought on India's eastern borders, and again in 1971, when western and eastern borders were activated during the India-Pakistan war, which led to the creation of Bangladesh, all the above were declared as Emergencies under the provisions of "external aggression." In contrast, starting on June 25, 1975, citing the grounds of "internal disturbances" (a term that remained open to interpretation), the Emergency was issued by President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, subverting Article 352 of the Constitution. Therefore, the chapter revisits the extensive 21 months of severe censorship, followed by the worst excesses of power and policies, alongside tracing the political, administrative, and institutional rupture that ended with the comeback of coalition politics and bestowed the remarkably resilient democratic and federal consciousness.



Examining the historical context illustrates the state of political affairs and resistance in India in the 1970s, a time which witnessed the suspension of constitutional guarantees, including the abrogation of fundamental rights, the arbitrary detention of thousands, an unprecedented assault on freedom of the press, and the consolidation of powers in the executive. The background of political, social, and economic confluence arose from the aftermath of two wars; the economy faced turbulence from the 1973 global oil shock, compounded by consecutive poor monsoons. The opposition, under the unified umbrella of the revered Gandhian figure Jayprakash Narain, critiqued in favour of a "Total Revolution," advocating fundamental transformations. Altogether, these factors culminated in turmoil in the court of justice, where the Allahabad High Court's decisive and landmark judgment struck at the political legitimacy of India's supreme leader, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

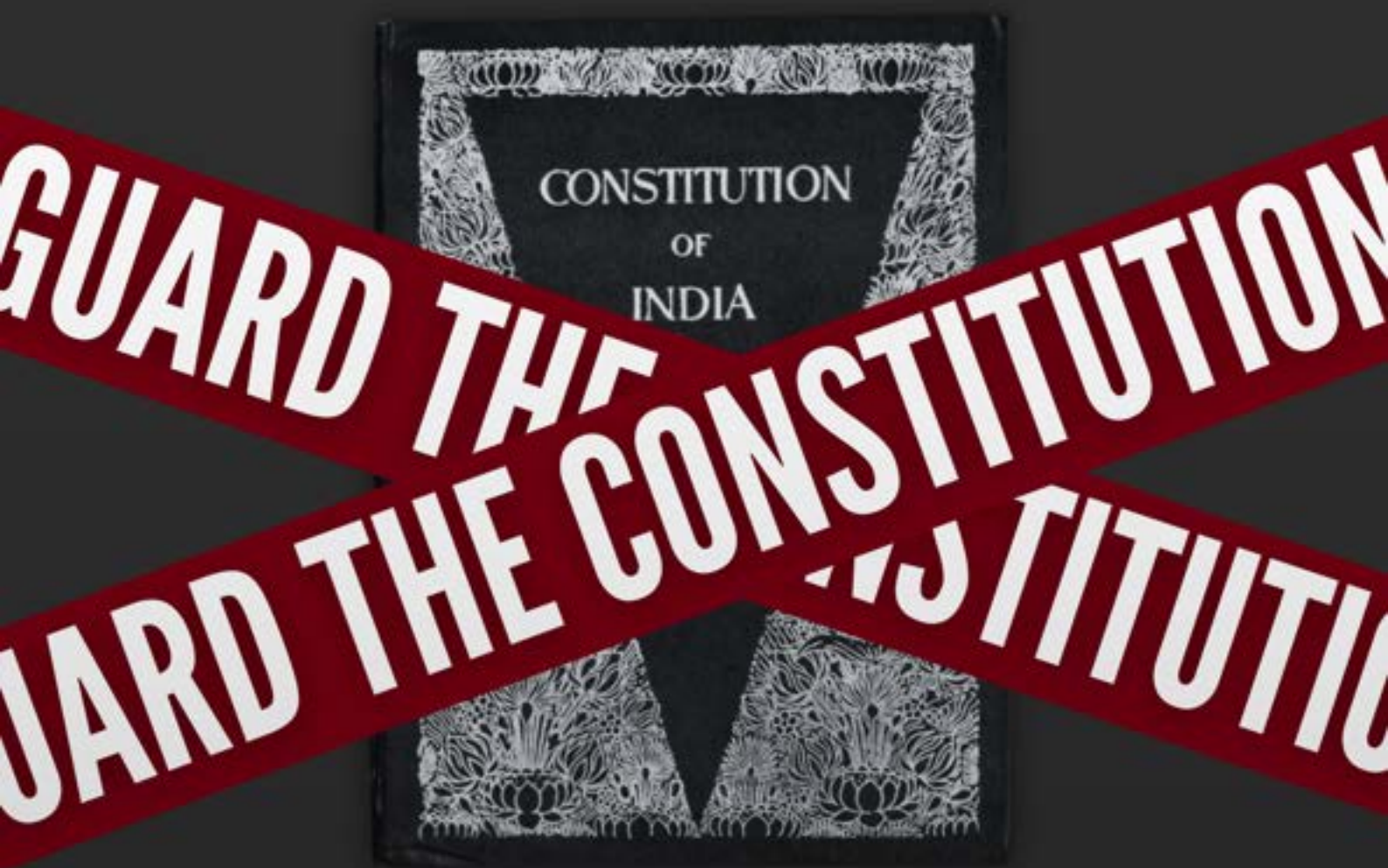
The court held PM Gandhi guilty of electoral malpractices in her 1971 election campaign. The bench, led by Justice Jagmohanlal Sinha, declared her election void—an unprecedented verdict—with immediate effect, disqualifying her from holding any elected office for a period of six years. At a time when the Indian National Congress (INC) was amidst heightened instability due to divisions, and opposition protests were mounting, unified demands for her resignation left PM Gandhi vulnerable. Fearing the collapse of her government, she asserted the implementation of Emergency. Critics and democratic stakeholders advocated the move as an act of political survival and an assault on democratic norms. Even the Union Council of Ministers, kept blindsided and deprived of prior consultation, quietly complied and uncomfortably submitted without a word. Watchdog groups referred to the Emergency as a night without end—a systematic assertion and deliberate subversion of democratic institutions in modern Indian history. Thus, the Emergency's eclipse was a catastrophe of systematic strains, all converging within a fragile constitutional order.



Democracy was suspended for a period of 21 months, and India was thrust into a convergence of crises. Justice J.C. Shah, former Chief Justice of India (CJI), led the Shah Commission inquiry, which probed concerning circumstances involving the unlawful utilisation of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), under which over 1,10,000 citizens were allegedly arrested and detained without due cause or trial. It reported that Indian jails housed 2,20,146 prisoners despite a capacity of only 1,83,369, and over 1.26 lakh were under-trial detainees, who later reported torture, physical violence, psychological distress, and sexual assault. Hundreds of thousands more were subjected to intimidation and harassment by police and extrajudicial actors working for PM Gandhi. In a bizarre targeted effort at population control, millions were sterilised. In addition to the deployment of a constitutional provision allowing for a state of exception to the rule of law, an extraconstitutional centre of power emerged around Sanjay Gandhi, the younger son of the PM.

It was Sanjay Gandhi and the coterie around him who were behind what came to be called the "excesses" of the Emergency. These included coercive methods of population control, including drives toward compulsory sterilisation in northern India, and forcible demolition of urban slums, notably in the Turkman Gate area of New Delhi. These assaults on the most vulnerable sections of society, including Dalits and Muslims, led "the wits to comment that having failed to get rid of poverty, the Congress had taken to getting rid of the poor." The national press was severely censored or co-opted, with nationwide pre-publication censorship, withdrawal of government advertising, and abusive intimidation, while the foreign press was substantially controlled and muzzled. New laws and amendments to existing laws were passed, which gave even more control of the media to the government to survey, censor, and disseminate its views. Opposition political leaders and activists, independent editors and reporters, as well as dissenting students and youth, were imprisoned during the Emergency. Fundamental rights, including the right to life and liberty enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution, were suspended, and courts could not entertain writs of habeas corpus.

Brutal pressure was imposed over the bureaucracy and judiciary, forcing them to cooperate with the executive, as later revealed by the Shah Commission. A series of constitutional amendments were bulldozed through Parliament, further restricting, among other things, judicial review of executive decisions.



With the onset of the Emergency in the initial days, then PM Gandhi came up with her first systematic attempt, covertly shielding her unlawful regime from judicial scrutiny: the 38th Amendment Act, 1975. Enacted on July 22, 1975, the amendment made Emergency declarations completely non-justiciable, altering the fundamental relationship between the executive and the judiciary, thus granting legal protection to the government in exercising its extraordinary powers. The amendment stated the President's assent as "final and conclusive," establishing executive supremacy in all ordinances, thus operating without constitutional and judicial constraints and making the Emergency virtually absolute.

The fiasco of the Emergency and derailment of the democratic order was directly linked to the decisive judgment by the Allahabad High Court, which had devastating implications for PM Gandhi's political ambitions. Therefore, the second constitutional amendment was drafted with the prospect of safeguarding PM Gandhi's government from potential political extinction, restoring her parliamentary privileges. The 39th Amendment Act, enacted on August 10, 1975, established Prime Ministerial elections within the purview of a "specially prescribed authority," thereby nullifying all pending proceedings and effectively establishing a parallel judicial system serving her individual interests.

Next in line stands the most controversial constitutional amendment in Indian history; it was also more closely linked to the INC's ideology. The 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, introduced 14 new articles, created 2 new parts, and fundamentally altered the balance of power between institutions, receiving the entitlement of "Mini-Constitution," as the amendment transformed India from a "sovereign, democratic republic" to a "sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic." The phrase "unity of the nation" was expanded to "unity and integrity of the nation." These constitutional amendments reshaped the national identity and political philosophy by embedding their political ideology in the constitutional text. The amendment further sought to prohibit judicial review of ordinary legislation and constitutional amendments themselves. Thus, at its core, the government endeavoured to establish the parliamentary supremacy doctrine and assert legislative authority over any matter related to constitutional interpretation, superseding the incumbent role of the judiciary.

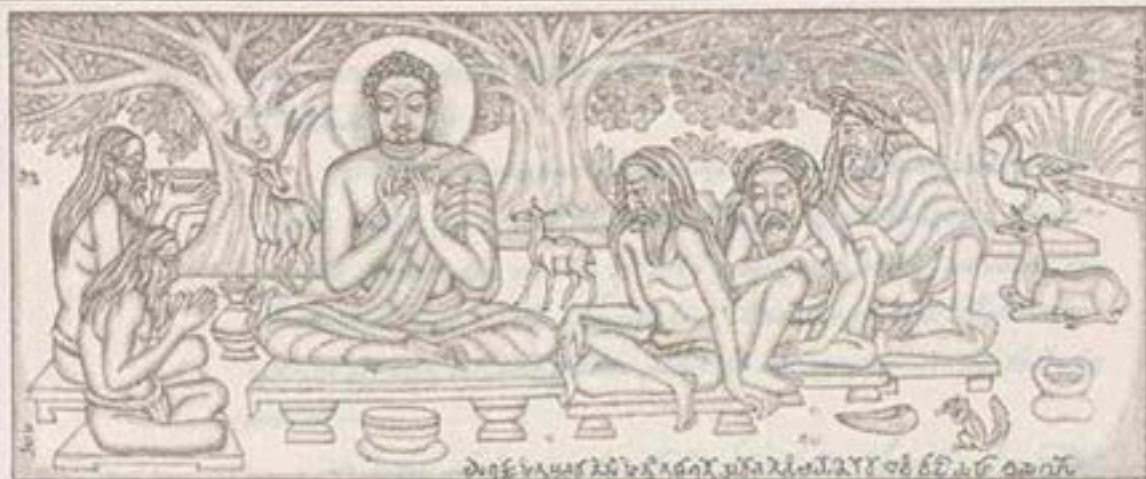
The 42nd Amendment Act not only created a rift between the judiciary and the legislature; the most evident aspect of the act was established in the modification of Article 368, whereby, by virtue of its amendment, Parliament was granted "unrestrained powers to amend any parts of the Constitution," while judicial review as constitutional guardians was already kept at bay, thus altering constitutional supremacy to be replaced with parliamentary sovereignty. This single measure granted a handful of parliamentarians the power to play with the federal structure, whose implications extended beyond constitutional philosophy to practical governance.

The ruptures began with the extension of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies' terms from five to six years, which favoured the ruling party by minimising electoral accountability. The pre-scheduled constituency delimitation was frozen at the 1971 census level until 2000, another politically favourable arrangement, as recorded demographic changes would have sent shockwaves through established power structures. Another provision was introduced with the amendments that authorised the Union Government to deploy armed forces in any state, irrespective of prior consent and acknowledgement from the state governments. There were various other provisional arrangements in the Emergency that effectively worked in the militarised centre-state affairs.

The Emergency government also introduced Part IV-A, the Fundamental Duties, which appeared mild at first; however, the constitutional obligations were made liable, with provisions of potential obligations and enforcement through legal mechanisms that criminalised political dissent. The move was later critiqued as a delusive disguise meant to be an act of harmony. Disputes appeared as various differentiative measures, unique in nature; each initiative served only a singular objective: the strengthening of executive authority and ideological penetration.



The Union Government's authoritarian powers to deploy armed forces in any state were critiqued as an extra-legal authority with potentially unjust military intervention intentions in state affairs. The President's Rule term was prolonged from six months to one year during the Emergency under Article 356, which augmented the Union Government with constitutional mechanisms for political power assertion over non-cooperative states. Alongside, the Governor's powers were systematically transferred to the President in the name of administrative and legislative oversight; however, at its core, all these measures eroded the existing balance of power and cooperative trust in centre-state relations. Evidently, among all the amendments, the 42nd Amendment Act represented a direct assault on India's federal structure, shrinking states into sub-ordinative units, instilling political ideology into the constitutional text, downplaying the judiciary in favor of the legislature, while establishing constitutional supremacy to be replaced with parliamentary sovereignty, turning the prestigious President into a figure bound to act on Cabinet advice, thus overarching a centralized paradigm that led to turbulence towards a fateful quasi-unitary regime — one which insulated the political class from all kinds of scrutiny, thus a perfectly maligned institutional arrangement that favoured the incumbent regime.



These amendments revealed how the Constitution itself granted powers to attain permanent institutional transformations—powers that should never be exercised under the guise of crisis. It was the Emergency that illustrated dangerous precedents of crisis-driven constitutional abuse. However, the amendments met their ultimate fate, which demonstrated the resilient strength of democratic institutions and judicial independence.

The beginning of the turning point came in January 1977, when PM Gandhi announced the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and called for fresh elections for the 6th Lok Sabha in March 1977. This move remains the subject of debate, as observers believe she sought electoral validation for the Emergency regime, while another set of observers attributes it to intelligence reports depicting a downward economy, marked by domestic and international criticisms, and the persistence of dissent.

However, the answer lies in the convergence of both observations, as by early 1977, the state of affairs during the Emergency had hit a political and social ceiling. Continuing the Emergency any longer would have damaged the INC's democratic legitimacy; therefore, elections were no longer an option but an inevitability.

Thus, the Emergency came to a formal end in March 1977; this collapse was dramatic, as widespread resentment had taken root among the Indian populace, yet the outrage was demonstrated not across the streets but at the ballot box, which many recount as the second "democratic revolution" in India.



The general elections took place from March 16 to 20, 1977, resulting in a decisive rejection of the Indira Gandhi-led INC government, marking the collapse of the Emergency regime and its repressive apparatus. March 21, 1977, was the date when the Emergency was officially withdrawn.

The Janata Party, led by Morarji Desai, assumed office. More importantly, the Indian electorate proved historic, as Indian democracy had not just survived but emerged more assertive than ever. The verdict remains one of the most humiliating for the INC, as for the first time since independence, the INC stronghold was pierced. Along with upholding the vows of the Constitution, the newly incumbent government established the Shah Commission of Inquiry, tasked with documenting and attributing responsibility for the Emergency excesses. The government also enacted the famous 44th Amendment Act (systematically reversing the 42nd Amendment Act enacted during the Emergency), which barred future misuse of emergency powers in 1978. The provisions for judicial review and legal safeguards were restored for future proclamations. The powers established in the amendments were limited by constitutional principles.

The experience of the 42nd Amendment thus serves both as a warning about the potential for constitutional abuse during emergency periods and as a testament to the ultimate strength of democratic institutions when supported by judicial independence and popular resistance. The Shah Commission reports confirmed that the proclamation and implementation of the Emergency were driven by personal and political considerations, not by any genuine external or internal threat to the state.

The Emergency (1975–1977), a defining episode in India's constitutional history, is a collective demonstration of the fragility and adaptability of democratic societies. As watchdog groups and public interest defenders emerge, they debate dissent, defence, diligence, deliberations, and dilemmas around constitutional checks and institutional balances. A powerful press, judicial freedom, and electoral integrity are fundamental. Democratic resilience is not guaranteed by statute; it is an ongoing project that demands vigilance, civic engagement, and robust institutions.



Conclusion

As Bharat marks its seventy-eighth Independence Day, it narrates a story of a living policy state marked by foundational institution-building, liberalisation-led recalibration, and the assertive paradigm of Modi's India, emphasising a deepening of state capacity and strategic intent.

This comprehensive report delves into the world's largest democracy which, even after meeting continuous challenges of history, stands the test of time. It reflects a deliberate recalibration of priorities, shifting from state-led industrialisation and food security to liberalisation-era transparency and welfare, and finally to a modern paradigm rooted in infrastructure acceleration, digital innovation, and institutional capacity-building—showcasing adaptability to changing political, economic, and technological landscapes in growing India.

As the nation takes the narrative of national self-reliance, it is met with a policy challenge that is twofold: to sustain momentum in infrastructure, innovation, and inclusion, while reinforcing the democratic ideals that ensure accountability, transparency, and citizen-centricity.

However, as India continues to position itself as a decisive global player in the changing geopolitical order, the future of its policy rests on three pillars: continuity in strategic policymaking, adaptability to evolving global and domestic challenges, and a commitment to democratic governance.



OUR SOCIALS



Subscribe to
our newsletter at
THEGEOSTRATA.COM

For a Distinctly Indian Take on World Affairs

@THEGEOSTRATA



ENGAGE
with Strata



@COVERINGGPM



@COVERINGCHINA



@COVERINGISRO



@COVERINGMEA

CONTACT NUMBER

+91 9797066235

M *Email us at*

ENGAGE@THEGEOSTRATA.COM

GEOSTRATA

GEOSTRATA

GEOSTRATA

VIKAS, VIDHI, VISHWAS

By Covering The Prime Minister's Office

CONNECT@THEGEOSTRATA.COM

+91 9797066235

GEOSTRATA

August 2025