

## ● POLITY

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## INDIAN POLITY

## 72-MEMBER NDA MINISTRY TAKES CHARGE

**CONTEXT:** Narendra Modi was sworn in for his third term as Prime Minister on Sunday, alongside 71 members of his Council of Ministers, at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

**BACKGROUND:** The new Ministry includes 30 Cabinet Ministers, 5 Ministers of State with Independent Charge, and 36 Ministers of State, totalling 72 members. The team comprises 61 BJP members and 11 from NDA partners, with significant representation from various castes and communities: 27 OBC, 10 SC, 5 ST, and 5 minority members.



### Experienced Leaders and Community Representation in New NDA Government

- **Experienced Ministers:** At least 10 seasoned Ministers, including Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari, re-enter the government, emphasizing continuity.
- **Former Chief Ministers:** Leaders like Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Manohar Lal Khattar, along with others, have been sworn in.
- **Community and Polls Consideration:** Upcoming Assembly polls in Maharashtra, Haryana, and Jharkhand influenced ministerial picks, ensuring diverse community representation.
- **New Minister Harsh Malhotra:** Harsh Malhotra, a first-time MP from East Delhi, was chosen for his ground connect and organizational mindset.



- **Ministerial Discussions:** Other MPs like Kamaljeet Sehrawat and Manoj Tiwari were considered, with Malhotra selected due to his media-friendly image and local experience.

### Strategic Ministerial Inductions for Kerala and New Entrants in Modi's Cabinet

- **Suresh Gopi's Induction:** Actor-politician Suresh Gopi, BJP's first Lok Sabha MP from Kerala, was sworn in as a Minister of State.
- **George Kurian's Induction:** Long-time BJP functionary George Kurian, not an MP, joined as Minister of State, signaling BJP's outreach to Kerala's Christian community.
- **Youngest Minister:** At 36, Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, with his third consecutive win, became the youngest Cabinet member.
- **Political Debutants:** Dr. Pemmasani Chandrashekhar and Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma, both new to politics, were sworn in as Union Ministers.
- **Educational Backgrounds:** Naidu has degrees in Electrical Engineering and Business Administration; Chandrashekhar is a medical doctor; Varma holds degrees in law and library science.

### Provisions of the Indian Constitution Regarding the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers

- **Appointment of Prime Minister:** The President appoints the Prime Minister, who must be the leader of the majority party in Lok Sabha or have its confidence.
- **Appointment of Other Ministers:** Ministers, including the Prime Minister, are appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- **Limit on Number of Ministers:** The total number of ministers cannot exceed 15% of the total Lok Sabha strength, as per the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act of 2003.
- **Disqualification on Grounds of Defection:** A member disqualified due to defection cannot be appointed as a minister, as per the same amendment.
- **Tenure and Oaths of Ministers:** Ministers serve at the pleasure of the President, take oaths of office and secrecy from the President, and must be members of Parliament.
- **Responsibility and Compensation:** The Union Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha, and Parliament determines their salaries and allowances.

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## ECONOMICS

## RECALCITRANT JUMBO - ANCHORING INFLATION WILL BE THE BASE FOR LONG-TERM GROWTH

**CONTEXT:** RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das highlighted food price inflation risks, justifying the MPC's decision to keep the repo rate unchanged despite earlier optimism about inflation easing.

**BACKGROUND:** The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee has kept the benchmark repo rate at 6.50% for the eighth consecutive meeting, citing concerns over high food inflation disrupting price stability. Governor Shaktikanta Das highlighted persistent food price increases as a key risk to overall disinflation efforts.



### Rising Food Inflation and Its Impact on India's Economic Outlook

- **Food Inflation Increase:** Food inflation surged to 8.7% in April, driven by higher prices of tomatoes, onions, and potatoes.
- **Headline Retail Inflation:** CMIE forecasted a 31 basis points rise in headline retail inflation to 5.14% in May, due to food price acceleration.
- **MPC's Inflation Challenge:** The MPC struggles to meet its 4% inflation target due to adverse climate events causing unpredictable food price shocks.
- **Rising Industrial Metal Prices:** Besides food costs, rising prices of industrial metals and uncertain crude oil prices pose additional inflation threats.
- **Consumer Confidence Decline:** Surveys show households expect inflation to rise, with consumer confidence moderating and most respondents anticipating higher prices in one year.

## GOVERNANCE

## A NEET MESS - MORE EFFORTS TO PREVENT EGREGIOUS VIOLATIONS ARE NEEDED

**CONTEXT:** The National Testing Agency has appointed a four-member committee to investigate allegations regarding the conduct of the 2024 NEET medical entrance exam.

**BACKGROUND:** In just over a decade, NEET has faced numerous issues, culminating in the National Testing Agency appointing a four-member committee to investigate recent allegations. Around 1,500 students from six centers reported insufficient exam time due to errors like wrong question papers, torn OMR sheets, technical glitches, and delays.



### Addressing Issues and Enhancing Integrity in NEET Examinations

- **Grace Marks Controversy:** Grace marks led to students scoring 718/719 out of 720, causing suspicion due to the existing evaluation pattern.
- **Paper Leak and Evaluation Errors:** Reports of NEET UG question paper leaks and inaccuracies in official answer keys highlighted inconsistent evaluation practices.
- **Calls for Investigation:** Political parties and students demanded a third-party probe and a retest due to the various irregularities.
- **Persistent Exam Management Issues:** Annual complaints of poorly managed exam centres and stringent dress codes, alongside exposed cheating scams, undermine exam integrity.
- **Recommendations for Improvement:** Experts suggest rigorous preparation, technical glitch prevention, single window counselling, and re-evaluation of admission benchmarks to ensure fairness.



**NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY**

*Excellence in Assessment*



*"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence." - Robert Frost*



### National Testing Agency (NTA)

- **Establishment and Purpose:** NTA, established under the Indian Societies Registration Act, conducts entrance exams for higher education.
- **Structure and Leadership:** Chaired by an eminent educationist, NTA has a CEO who serves as the Director-General appointed by the government.
- **Role and Responsibilities:** NTA conducts various competitive exams like NEET, JEE, CAT, etc., relieving CBSE, AICTE from these responsibilities.
- **Exam Conduct:** Exams are conducted online at least twice a year to provide ample opportunities and enhance performance.
- **Accessibility Initiatives:** NTA aims to increase accessibility by locating exam centres at sub-district and district levels and has launched a mobile app and Test Practice Centres (TPCs).

### INDIAN POLITY

## THE BAREILLY CASE AND A FLAWED CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

**CONTEXT:** Recently, a court in Bareilly sentenced a woman who had filed a rape case, sparking debate about false accusations versus systemic issues in law enforcement and society.

**BACKGROUND:** In 2019, a case involving Pooja, initially reported missing, later unfolded with allegations of abduction and rape against Ramesh. However, inconsistencies and lack of evidence led to Ramesh's acquittal in 2024, while Pooja faced conviction for perjury. This case underscores systemic deficiencies in investigation and prosecution.



### Issues of Arbitrary Detention and Judicial Delays in India's Criminal Justice System

- **Arbitrary Detention:** Arbitrary and prolonged undertrial detention is pervasive in India's criminal justice system, eroding public trust.
- **Coercion and Inconsistencies:** Pooja's statements varied due

to alleged coercion by adults, but the court didn't consider her circumstances.

- **Judicial Delays:** Ramesh's trial, meant to be fast-tracked, lasted 1,559 days with frequent adjournments, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Impact of Delays:** Despite a straightforward case, Ramesh remained in jail during the trial, highlighting systemic inefficiencies.
- **Culture of Impunity:** Lack of accountability for wrongful detentions perpetuates impunity and undermines judicial integrity and public confidence.

### Challenges in Fast-Track Courts and Bail System in India

- **Fast-Track Court Challenges:** Existing courts are designated as fast-track courts without adequate infrastructure or dedicated judges.
- **Bail System Issues:** Ramesh's bail application was rejected due to the serious offence, despite economic constraints preventing an appeal.
- **COVID-19 Impact:** Even during the pandemic, Ramesh was not granted bail, highlighting systemic issues and poverty-related indifference.
- **Undertrial Detention:** Indifference and poverty often lead to prolonged undertrial detention, despite directives to decongest prisons.
- **Reforms Needed:** The case emphasizes the need for police investigation, prosecutorial autonomy, and judicial reforms in criminal justice systems.

### ECONOMICS - EXTERNAL TRADE

## SETTLING TRADE DISPUTES THROUGH 'LITIGOTIATION'

**CONTEXT:** In late March this year, India and the U.S. resolved their final trade dispute on poultry products at the WTO, marking significant progress following earlier settlements.

**BACKGROUND:** In under a year, India and the U.S. have resolved seven longstanding trade disputes at the WTO, including the recent settlement on poultry products in March. These agreements mark significant progress, notably following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the U.S., reflecting a constructive approach to bilateral trade relations.



WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

### Resolution of Long-Standing WTO Dispute Between India and the U.S.

- **Long-Standing Dispute:** This WTO dispute over India's import restrictions on U.S. poultry products has persisted for over a decade.

- **Initiation and Grounds:** The U.S. challenged India's avian influenza-related import restrictions, citing the WTO's SPS Agreement.
- **WTO Rulings:** Both the panel and Appellate Body ruled in favor of the U.S., directing India to revise its measures.
- **Retaliation Claims:** The U.S. filed a retaliation claim when India allegedly did not comply with WTO obligations.
- **Settlement Efforts:** Recent efforts have led to a settlement where India avoids a \$450 million claim by reducing tariffs.
- **Trade-Off Agreement:** India agreed to lower tariffs on products like cranberries and frozen turkey in exchange for settling the dispute.
- **Diplomatic Significance:** Although not the most economically significant, the resolution is a diplomatic breakthrough.
- **Broader Implications:** Resolution of these disputes highlights effective use of diplomatic channels in international trade matters.

The settlement of seven WTO disputes between India and the U.S., including the recent resolution on poultry products, showcases the efficacy of bilateral diplomacy in resolving complex trade issues. This approach emphasizes amicable solutions over litigation, reflecting a positive trend in international trade relations.

#### Understanding the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism

- **Process Overview:** The WTO settles trade disputes through a multi-step process outlined in the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) agreed by member nations in 1994.
- **Stages of Dispute Resolution:** The process involves consultation, formation of a Dispute Settlement Panel, examination of member nations and third parties, issuance of a panel report, and potential compensatory or retaliatory measures.
- **Purpose of the Mechanism:** The WTO dispute settlement mechanism aims to preserve rights, provide predictability, and ensure uniformity in resolving trade disputes among member nations.
- **Enforcement of Decisions:** WTO decisions are enforced through consensus among member nations. The WTO itself has no enforcement authority and relies on members to enforce sanctions and measures.
- **Implementation of Trade Agreements:** Allegations of violations of WTO trade agreements are heard by the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), and decisions must be enforced by member nations multilaterally.
- **Steps of the WTO Dispute Process:** The process starts with consultation, followed by adjudication by a dispute resolution panel, submission of an implementation report, and potential authorization of retaliatory measures for non-compliance.

#### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## ISRAEL WAR CABINET MINISTER GANTZ QUILTS NETANYAHU GOVT.

**CONTEXT:** Israeli war Cabinet Minister Benny Gantz announced on Sunday that his party would withdraw from the government due to the absence of a post-war strategy for Gaza.

**BACKGROUND:** Benny Gantz announced his departure from Israel's emergency government, citing Benjamin Netanyahu's failure to achieve victory against Hamas militants in Gaza. Gantz called for early elections to establish a new government that can earn public trust. However, Gantz's resignation is not expected to collapse the coalition government, which includes religious and ultra-nationalist parties.

#### Political Turmoil and Military Resignations in Israel

- **Proposal to Dissolve Knesset:** Mr. Gantz's National Union Party submitted a bill to dissolve Israel's Parliament and call early elections.
- **Netanyahu's Appeal to Gantz:** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged Gantz not to "abandon the battle" and to join forces.
- **Resignation of Brigadier General Avi Rosenfeld:** The commander of Israel's 143rd Division resigned over his failure to prevent an attack by Palestinian militants.
- **Reason for Resignation:** Rosenfeld cited his responsibility for failing to protect southern Israeli communities from the October 7 attack.
- **Previous Resignation in April:** Major General Aharon Haliva resigned earlier for failing to prevent the same attack.

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*"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."*

—Benjamin Franklin

INDIAN POLITY/ GOVERNANCE

# IS IT TIME FOR PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION?

**CONTEXT:** In its 170th report titled 'Reform of the electoral laws' (1999), the Law Commission recommended introducing the MMPR system experimentally.

**BACKGROUND:** Last week, the Lok Sabha election results were announced, with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) winning

293 seats, securing a 43.3% vote share. The opposition bloc INDIA, including the Trinamool Congress, won 234 seats with a 41.6% vote share. Other regional parties and independents garnered approximately 15% of the vote but secured only 16 seats in total.

## An alternative seat-sharing mechanism

A Proportional Representation (PR) system ensures representation of all parties based on their vote share. The most commonly used PR system is the 'party list PR' where voters vote for the party, and the parties get seats in proportion to their vote share

**Table 1 : The results of the 2014 and 2019 general elections**

Political party (predominant State)	2014		2019	
	% of votes	No. of seats	% of votes	No. of seats
Bharatiya Janata Party (All India)	31%	282	37.3%	303
Indian National Congress (All India)	19.3%	44	19.5%	52
Bahujan Samaj Party [BSP] (Uttar Pradesh)	4.1%	0	3.6%	10
Samajwadi Party (Uttar Pradesh)	3.4%	5	2.6%	5
Trinamool Congress (West Bengal)	3.8%	34	4.1%	22
All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam [AIADMK] (Tamil Nadu)	3.3%	37	1.4%	1
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam [DMK] (Tamil Nadu)	1.7%	0	2.3%	24
Telugu Desam Party (Andhra Pradesh)	2.6%	16	2%	3
YSR Congress Party (Andhra Pradesh)	2.6%	9	2.5%	22
Shiv Sena (Maharashtra)	1.9%	18	2.1%	18
Biju Janata Dal [BJD] (Odisha)	1.7%	20	1.7%	12
All other parties/independents	24.6%	78	20.9%	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>543</b>



**Election fervour:** Supporters of the Samajwadi party celebrate after the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha elections, in Lucknow on June 4. GETTY IMAGES

**Table 2: If the PR system is applied for the 2024 election**

Political formation	% of votes	Actual number of seats	Seats as per PR
National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	43.3%	293*	243
INDIA bloc	41.6%	234	225
Others/independents	15.1%	16	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>543</b>

Note: The conversion of vote share to seats is calculated at each State/UT level and aggregated. It is an overall calculation without the exclusion of smaller parties based on any threshold. \*SKM has been added to the NDA.

### First Past the Post System in Indian Elections

- **System Overview:** India follows the First Past the Post System (FPTP) for Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.
- **Advantages:** FPTP is simple and provides stability to the executive in a diverse country like India.
- **Disadvantages:** It can lead to over or under representation of political parties compared to their vote share.
- **Historical Context:** The Congress party historically won a large number of seats with a lower vote share.

### Understanding Proportional Representation (PR) and Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR)

- **Definition of Proportional Representation (PR):** PR ensures representation of parties based on their vote share, not individual candidates.
- **Common PR System:** The party list PR system allocates

- seats proportionally based on party vote shares.
- **Threshold Requirement:** Parties typically need a minimum threshold of 3-5% vote share to qualify for seats.
- **Application in India:** PR would ideally operate at each State/Union Territory level in India.
- **Impact of PR:** It would provide proportional representation, as shown in the example of 2024 election results.
- **Criticism of PR:** Concerns include potential instability and proliferation of regional, caste, and religious parties.
- **Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR):** MMPR combines FPTP with proportional representation to balance stability and proportionate representation.

### Proportional Representation Systems in Different Democracies

- **Party List PR in Presidential Democracies:** Brazil and Argentina use the party list PR system for elections.



- **PR in Parliamentary Democracies:** South Africa, Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain also employ the party list PR system.
- **Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR) in Germany:** 50% of seats in the Bundestag are filled by FPTP from constituencies, and 50% are allocated proportionally based on party vote shares.
- **PR in New Zealand:** 60% of seats in the House of Representatives are filled by FPTP, and 40% are allocated proportionally based on party vote shares.

The Law Commission's 170th report in 1999 recommended experimenting with the MMPR system, suggesting that 25% of Lok Sabha seats be filled through proportional representation. It emphasized the need to consider each State/UT as a unit due to India's federal structure. Delimitation based on the 2026 Census will address population disparities, crucial for upholding federal principles and maintaining regional balance.

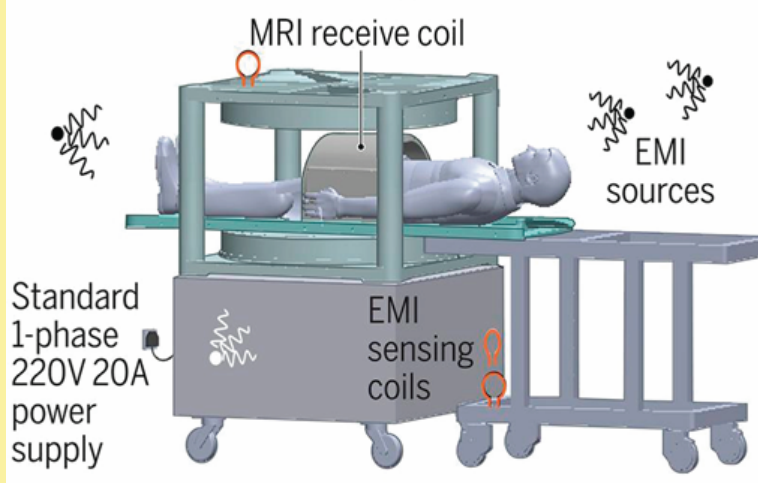
## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

# LOW-COST MRI MACHINE CAN IMPROVE ACCESS TO DIAGNOSTICS IN INDIA

**CONTEXT:** Scientists have developed a low-cost magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, offering potential to enhance access to this essential diagnostic technology.

**BACKGROUND:** Scientists have developed an affordable magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, significantly reducing costs compared to current models, which could enhance accessibility to this vital diagnostic tool. MRI machines utilize strong magnetic fields, measured in tesla (T), and radio waves to produce detailed images crucial for diagnosing brain disorders, heart conditions, cancers, and orthopaedic issues. Typical clinical MRI machines operate between 1.5 T and 3 T, much stronger than magnetic fields found in sunspots on the Sun.

### Low-power low-maintenance simplified 0.05 Tesla MRI scanner (No RF and magnet shielding)



## Affordable MRI Innovation Could Revolutionize Medical Imaging

- **Accessibility Issue:** High costs and infrastructure requirements make MRI technology inaccessible, especially in low- and middle-income countries like India.
- **Innovative Design:** Researchers led by Ed Wu developed an affordable MRI machine using low-strength magnets and store-bought hardware.
- **Cost and Operation:** The simplified machine costs around \$22,000 and operates using 0.05 T magnets, eliminating the need for a shielded room or helium coolant.
- **Performance:** Despite lower magnetic strength, a deep-learning algorithm compensates for detail, producing images comparable to those from a 3-T machine.
- **Testing and Results:** Tested with 30 volunteers, the machine successfully produced clear images of various organs, showing promise for medical diagnostics and potential use with children.

### Advantages and Applications of Low-Cost MRI Machines

- **Accessibility and Portability:** Low-cost MRI machines using ultra-low field magnets are more portable and can operate on standard wall sockets, making them accessible in remote or underserved areas.
- **Complementing High-Field MRI:** While they cannot replace high-field MRI machines due to lower resolution, they can complement them in radiology departments for specific uses.
- **Affordability and Use in Emergencies:** Affordable scans reduce waiting times and are beneficial in emergencies, aiding quick medical decisions for stroke and trauma patients.
- **Safety and Artifact Reduction:** Low-strength magnets reduce the risk of metal items being pulled into the machine and minimize artifacts from implants or prosthetics in final images.
- **Future Prospects and Testing:** Further testing is needed to evaluate their compatibility with devices like pacemakers, but they show potential for providing essential diagnostic services in smaller healthcare settings.



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