



J&K Assembly condemns terror strike unanimously

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

In a special Assembly session, political parties across Jammu and Kashmir united to strongly condemn the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah delivered an emotional speech, emphasizing that the people of J&K reject terrorism and mourn with the victims' families. The Assembly observed a two-minute silence and unanimously passed a resolution denouncing the attack as a "heinous, cowardly act" and a violation of the values of Kashmiriyat. Abdullah called the incident a national tragedy, stressing the need for unity and support for peace and governance.

Display of unity

The J&K Assembly resolution praised the people of the state for their unity, compassion, and resilience following the Pahalgam attack. It supported the Union Government's diplomatic response and urged the media to act responsibly and not incite public emotions. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah acknowledged his personal responsibility for the safety of the victims as both CM and Tourism Minister, expressing deep regret and helplessness. He also emphasized the widespread, spontaneous public condemnation of the attack across J&K, highlighting symbolic acts like the two-minute silence at Srinagar's



Jamia Masjid as powerful rejections of terrorism by ordinary citizens.

'True spirit of Kashmiri hospitality'

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah highlighted acts of bravery and compassion by ordinary Kashmiris—such as a ponywala rescuing tourists and locals providing food and shelter to visitors—as examples of Kashmiri hospitality amid tragedy. He also referenced past terrorist attacks that affected lawmakers' families, emphasizing the Assembly's deep understanding of such grief. BJP leader Sunil Sharma supported the resolution after adding a reference to Pakistan, noting the Assembly's unified stance with the nation. Congress leader Ghulam Ahmad Mir backed the resolution and the Centre's response but pointed to a possible intelligence failure and urged stronger preventive measures against faith-based terror attacks.

India, France finalises deal for 26 Rafale-M aircraft

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India and France have signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement worth around ₹64,000 crore for the purchase of 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy, with deliveries scheduled from mid-2028 to 2030. The deal includes training, simulators, weapons, associated equipment, and performance-based logistics, along with additional gear for the Indian Air Force's existing Rafale fleet. It also features technology transfer for integrating indigenous weapons like the Astra air-to-air missile. Training for the crew will take place both in France and India.

'Thousands of jobs'

The India-France Rafale-M deal includes setting up a production facility for fuselage components and Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities for engines, sensors, and weapons in India, aiming to create thousands of jobs and benefit numerous MSMEs. Although the French Defence Minister could not attend in person due to personal reasons, the agreement was signed remotely by both defence ministers. Signed documents, including aircraft and weapons supply protocols, were exchanged at a ceremony in New Delhi attended by senior Indian and French officials. Several related Government-to-Business agreements were also finalized alongside the IGA.

The Indian Navy, currently operating MiG-29K jets on its two aircraft carriers—INS Vikramaditya and INS

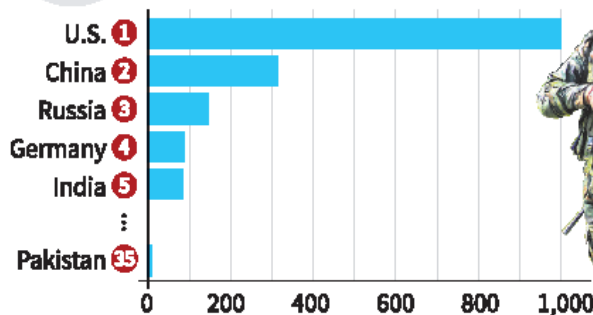
Vikrant—sought a replacement due to the MiGs' low availability and nearing retirement. Initially planning to procure 54 jets, the Navy shortlisted Dassault's Rafale-M over Boeing's F-18 in July 2023. The order was later reduced to 26 jets after DRDO proposed developing the indigenous Twin Engine Deck-Based Fighter (TEDBF). The new deal includes 22 single-seater carrier-capable Rafale-M jets and 4 twin-seater trainer jets, with deliveries set to begin 37 months after contract signing and conclude in 66 months. The IAF already operates 36 Rafales from a 2016 deal.

In 2024, India's military expenditure was 9 times that of Pakistan: SIPRI

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Arms full

The chart shows the top military spenders (in \$ billion) in the world in 2024. Pakistan was ranked 35 among the spenders



Source : SIPRI



India's military spending in 2024 was nearly nine times that of Pakistan's expenditure, according to a study released on Monday by a leading Swedish think tank that comes amid growing tensions between the two countries over the Pahalgam terror attack.

According to the SIPRI report Trends in World Military Expenditure 2024, India ranked as the fifth-largest military spender globally, with its defence budget rising by 1.6 % to \$ 86.1 billion, while Pakistan spent \$ 10.2 billion. The top five spenders—the U.S., China, Russia, Germany, and India—accounted for 60% of global military expenditure, totalling \$1,635 billion. China's defence spending rose by 7 % to \$ 314 billion, continuing its 30-year growth trend and comprising half of all military spending in Asia and Oceania. European military spending, including Russia, surged 17 % to \$ 693 billion, being the major driver of the global increase in 2024.

The SIPRI report highlights a continued rise in European military spending due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, surpassing levels seen at the end of the Cold War. Russia's military expenditure surged by 38% in 2024 to an estimated \$149 billion, representing 7.1% of its GDP and 19% of government spending—double its 2015 levels. Ukraine's military spending rose by 2.9% to \$64.7 billion, amounting to 34% of its GDP, the highest military burden globally, and approximately 43% of Russia's spending.

SC declines ED's plea to bar former T.N. Minister from holding any office

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

What would happen to my client if you [the ED] extend the trial by another 15 years? Should he be out of politics for 15 years then?

KAPIL SIBAL

Senior advocate appearing for V. Senthilbalaji



If there is no bar on him from assuming any powerful position, the trial into the predicate offences will never be over. Whereas, on the other hand, a bar would only work to expedite the trial

SOLICITOR-GENERAL TUSHAR MEHTA
Representing the ED



The Supreme Court declined the Enforcement Directorate's plea to bar DMK MLA V. Senthilbalaji from holding any ministerial or influential position in Tamil Nadu until his money laundering trial concludes. The Bench found no merit in concerns that he would soon return to power. The court acknowledged the Tamil Nadu Governor's confirmation of Senthilbalaji's resignation. Earlier, the Supreme Court had granted him bail and warned him to choose between his ministerial post or freedom. Senthilbalaji had been reappointed as Minister for Electricity, Prohibition, and Excise shortly after receiving bail.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) approached the Supreme Court seeking to bar DMK leader V. Senthilbalaji from holding any position of power in Tamil Nadu until his money laundering trial ends, citing concerns about potential influence on witnesses and future political reappointment. The court, while agreeing to examine the implications of his ministerial role on the trial, had earlier refused to revoke his bail. Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta warned of the risk of Senthilbalaji regaining power after the 2026 elections. In response,

Senthilbalaji's lawyers questioned the fairness of sidelining him from politics if the trial is prolonged for years.

In the Supreme Court hearing, Kapil Sibal, representing V. Senthilbalaji, highlighted that the trial for the predicate offences, including corruption, was in its early stages, with over 2,200 accused and 500 witnesses, and the money laundering trial could not begin until it was completed. Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta argued that barring Senthilbalaji from holding any position of power would pressure Tamil Nadu to expedite the predicate trial, which would allow the ED to begin its case. Mehta also claimed Senthilbalaji had significant influence and was delaying the trial. Gopal Sankaranarayanan, representing the complainant, suggested that Senthilbalaji be asked to leave Tamil Nadu during the trial, citing precedents. Justice Oka suggested the ED should file a separate application to cancel bail if it had concerns. Mehta, however, expressed urgency, fearing Senthilbalaji might regain power if no restrictions were imposed.

SC notice to govt. on plea to regulate sexually explicit content on OTT platforms

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court addressed a petition regarding "obscene, indecent, and objectionable" content on OTT platforms, emphasizing the concern that mobile phones are now accessible to children, even those under 10 years old. Justice B.R. Gavai noted that parents often give phones to young children to keep them occupied. Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta highlighted that while children are technologically savvy, some OTT content is inappropriate, displaying vulgar and perverse material that is unsuitable for family viewing.

Some measures

The Supreme Court acknowledged that the government already has some regulations in place to address inappropriate content on OTT platforms and is working on more. Justice Gavai noted that it was the responsibility of the legislature or executive to act, as the judiciary is facing allegations of overreach. Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta emphasized the need to balance freedom of speech with decency in these regulations. The court issued a notice to the Union government regarding the petition filed by Uday Mahurkar, which requested the establishment of a 'National Content Control Authority' to regulate explicit content on OTT and social media platforms.

UN statement a 'strong win' despite 'dilution': officials

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Days after China reportedly helped Pakistan in diluting the UN Security Council statement on the Pahalgam terror attack, Beijing on Monday said it "welcomed" any steps to "cool down" the situation between India and Pakistan. India has blamed Pakistan for a recent terror attack, citing cross-border links, and briefed over 20 foreign envoys, including China's, on evidence such as digital communications. In response, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed support for Pakistan's actions against terrorism, emphasizing China's backing of Pakistan's sovereignty and security. China also endorsed an impartial investigation. Regarding Pakistan's request for an international probe, Chinese officials stated they welcome any efforts that could help de-escalate the situation.

China's statements followed a UNSC condemnation of the Pahalgam attack, which did not mention the TRF or cross-border links. Diplomats noted that objections from China and Pakistan regarding the Kashmir conflict led to differences in the statement's language. However, government sources viewed the UNSC statement as a "strong victory" since it was issued despite Pakistan's membership and China's support for amending the statement drafted by the US. 'Strongly condemned'

Rajnath meets PM Modi; Pak. continues violation of ceasefire along the LoC

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Amid rising tensions along the Line of Control (LoC) following the Pahalgam attack, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to review security and preparedness. Ceasefire violations with small arms continued for the fourth night, while Pakistan redeployed heavy equipment to the LoC. Additionally, Pakistan issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM), closing air traffic routes between Islamabad and Lahore from April 28 to April 30.

On the night of April 27-28, Pakistan Army posts initiated unprovoked small arms fire across the LoC in Kupwara and Poonch districts, to which Indian troops responded swiftly. By the end of March, there were only two ceasefire violations (CFVs), but since the April 22 terror attack, the number has increased to 14. Following a February 2021 agreement, guns had fallen silent until this escalation. Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif stated that the country's forces had been reinforced, implying that strategic decisions had been made in response to the situation.

The Indian Army has received the Saab AT4 anti-armour weapon system and the MBDA Starstreak very short range air defence (VSHORAD) systems, which were contracted earlier. Both systems are critical for India's defence capabilities and arrive at a crucial time. Saab India announced the successful delivery of the AT4, describing it as a trusted single-shot solution for short-range combat.

Murmu presents the Padma awards to 71 personalities

PERSONALITY IN NEWS

President Droupadi Murmu conferred Padma awards to 71 out of the 139 distinguished recipients at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. Among the honorees were Osamu Suzuki, Pankaj Udhas, Sushil Kumar Modi, Shekhar Kapur, and Lakshminarayanan Ramasubbaier. The awards, including Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri, were announced on the eve of the 76th Republic Day. The ceremony was attended by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Among the awardees, four received Padma Vibhushan, the second-highest civilian honour in the country. While Suzuki and M.T. Vasudevan Nair, Malayalam writer and film director, were given the award posthumously, D. Nageshwar Reddy, chairman of Asian Institute of Gastroenterology and AIG Hospitals, and violinist Lakshminarayanan Subramaniam received their awards in person.

Mr. Kapur, Telugu actor Nandamuri Balakrishna, Pankaj Udhas, Sushil Kumar Modi, former hockey player P.R. Sreejesh, Tamil actor S. Ajith Kumar, chairperson of Zydu Lifesciences Pankaj Patel, and Vinod Dham, an Indian-American engineer widely known as the 'Father of the Pentium', were the 10 distinguished personalities given the Padma Bhushan.

As many as 57 prominent personalities were given the Padma Shri. These include Mr. Ramasubbaier; former chairperson of the State Bank of India Arundhati Bhattacharya; industrialist Pawan Kumar Goenka; wildlife researcher and Marathi author Maruti Bhujangrao Chitampalli, who gave unique dictionaries on birds, animals and trees; and master puppeteer Bhimavva Doddabalappa Shillekyathara, who was one of the first women to practise Togalu Gombeyaata (leather puppetry). Former AIIMS and SGPGI Director A.K. Mahapatra and Punjabi singer Jaspinder Narula Kaul were also awarded the Padma Shri.

30 unsung heroes

This year, the Padma awards were given to 30 unsung heroes, including 100-year-old Libia Lobo Sardesai, who played an important role in Goa's freedom movement.

War is not an option and it is the right time to restore statehood to J&K, says A.S. Dulat

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Amarjit Singh Dulat, former chief of India's RAW and an expert on Kashmir, stated that war is not a viable option in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, emphasizing that neither India nor Pakistan can afford a war. He suggested that deterrence could be built through increased security and ensuring the local Kashmiri population's support. Dulat supported Prime Minister Modi's call to find and punish the perpetrators of the attack.

On restoring statehood

Amarjit Singh Dulat emphasized the importance of maintaining local Kashmiri support and expressed concerns over actions by the Union government in Kashmir after the terror attack. He warned against targeting locals and raised concerns over house demolitions. Dulat suggested that restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood could serve as a confidence-building measure and urged that the local Kashmiri population should be included in future actions. He also dismissed the notion that tourism in Kashmir signifies normalcy, pointing out that terrorism remains a persistent issue.

Amarjit Singh Dulat noted that while violence in Kashmir had decreased, it often spiked again, citing increasing attacks on armed forces in the Poonch Rajouri region and other areas like Jammu, Kathua, and near Udhampur. He highlighted that terrorist appeared to have established bases in these regions, indicating that terrorism had not been eradicated.

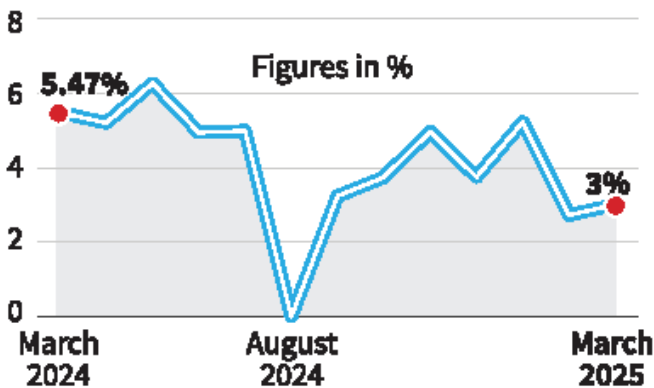
IIP grows 3% as electricity, manufacturing output surge

Economics & Development

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Soft gain

India's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew 3% in March, a gain from its six-month low of 2.7% recorded last month



Source: CMIE

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew by 3% in March 2025, driven by strong performance in the electricity and manufacturing sectors. Electricity production increased by 6.3%, while manufacturing output rose by 3%. The mining sector's growth slowed to 0.4%. Notably, consumer durables and construction sectors saw significant growth of 6.6% and 8.8%, respectively. However, consumer non-durables continued to contract, shrinking by 4.7%. Year-on-year, IIP growth stood at 4%, marking the slowest pace in four years. Experts anticipate domestic growth but also expect global challenges.

China and Philippines defend their claims over disputed reef

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

China and the Philippines both defended their claims to the disputed Sandy Cay reef in the South China Sea after Manila accused Beijing of attempting to intimidate with a state media report suggesting the reef had been seized. The reef is near Thitu Island, where the Philippines has a military presence. Chinese state media reported that China's coast guard took control of Tiexian Reef, part of Sandy Cay, in mid-April. The Philippines denied the claim, asserting that the reef had not been seized, while China reiterated its territorial rights and described its actions as part of law enforcement.

The post of Deputy Speaker is not symbolic or optional

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Office of the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha is a crucial constitutional role, mandated by Article 93 of the Indian Constitution, and essential for the smooth functioning of Parliament. Unlike a ceremonial position, the Deputy Speaker's role is vital and must be filled promptly, as indicated by the constitutional wording "as soon as may be." The Deputy Speaker's tenure continues until resignation, removal, or disqualification from Parliament, as per Article 94. However, the position has been neglected in recent years, raising concerns about its importance in the parliamentary structure.

The position of Deputy Speaker in the Lok Sabha is a crucial safeguard for ensuring continuity, stability, and balance in parliamentary operations. Originating during British colonial rule as the Deputy President in the Central Legislative Assembly, the role became an institutional fixture by India's independence in 1947. After independence, the role was retained by the Constituent Assembly, and M.A. Ayyangar became the first elected Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha. His appointment during a crisis in 1956 highlighted the importance of the Deputy Speaker as a capable replacement for the Speaker.

Relevance in parliamentary practice

The Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha plays a vital role in ensuring the uninterrupted functioning of the House, stepping in during the Speaker's absence to chair proceedings and handle sensitive debates. Beyond filling in, the Deputy Speaker presides over key sessions and committees, maintaining impartiality. Traditionally, the Deputy Speaker's position has been offered to the Opposition to foster bipartisan respect and cooperation, reinforcing the non-partisan ethos of the Speaker's office.

A growing constitutional vacuum

The Deputy Speaker's post in the Lok Sabha has remained vacant throughout the 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024) and into the current 18th Lok Sabha, marking an unprecedented constitutional anomaly. Though the Constitution mandates the election of a Deputy Speaker "as soon as may be," the prolonged delay undermines institutional safeguards, concentrates power with the ruling party, and risks a leadership vacuum during emergencies. The vacancy reflects a disregard for parliamentary norms, including the convention of offering the post to the Opposition, which fosters balance and inclusivity. Appointing a Deputy Speaker from the Opposition could restore democratic credibility and counter rising political polarisation.

Need for legislative reform?

The continued vacancy of the Deputy Speaker's post in the Lok Sabha highlights the need to tighten constitutional language by setting a mandatory deadline, such as 60 days after the first sitting, to ensure timely appointment. Alternatively, a statutory mechanism empowering the President to initiate the process could be considered. The Deputy Speaker's role is vital, not symbolic, and its neglect undermines constitutional principles and democratic balance. Parliament must act to restore institutional integrity, as electing a Deputy Speaker is a critical test of its commitment to rule-based governance.

Reflections on Pahalgam, the fight against terror

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The recent terrorist ambush in Pahalgam underscores that terrorism is not merely a border issue but often rooted in deeper social problems. It reflects how factors like unemployment, lack of education, poverty, and community neglect can push vulnerable youth toward violence. The tragedy calls for addressing these underlying causes, not just external threats.

Where the focus must be

To effectively combat terrorism, the focus must shift from political rhetoric to education and community engagement. The author advocates for reimagining school curricula to include moral values, empathy, peace-building, and media literacy. Peace studies and community service should begin in middle school. Beyond schools, the government should establish district-level youth outreach councils involving educators, police, mental health professionals, and reformed offenders to detect and address early signs of radicalisation through guidance and intervention.

To prevent youth radicalisation, the author stresses the need for rehabilitative, not punitive, intervention camps with activities like sports, vocational training, and therapy. Successful state-level models in Telangana and Kerala — such as empathy workshops and mental health tracking — should be scaled to conflict-sensitive areas like Kashmir. Governments must invest in digital de-radicalisation through education, offering mobile platforms for media literacy and verified information. Funding and training should empower those closest to youth — principals, coaches, and NGOs — to intervene early. The focus must shift from reacting to terror to preventing youth from being drawn into it.

Having a good teacher, mentor

Combating extremism requires emotional education, community support, and proactive governance—not just military action. It calls for investing in teachers, mentors, and youth-focused policies, highlighting that true peace is built through education, not force. The message: give children pens, not guns; classrooms, not commandos—because peace begins with what we teach.

Better sense prevails

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The resignations of Tamil Nadu Ministers V. Senthilbalaji and K. Ponmudy, following adverse court remarks, have been welcomed as a move towards moral integrity in public life. Their continued presence in the Cabinet could have embarrassed the DMK government. Senthilbalaji resigned ahead of a court-imposed deadline related to ongoing corruption and money laundering cases, while Ponmudy stepped down after the Madras High Court criticized him for a derogatory speech despite his conviction being stayed. The episode underscores the need for public officials to uphold the dignity of their office. Despite public indifference and political success of corrupt leaders, courts must continue to act against corruption. The Supreme Court rightly affirmed in 2022 that corruption by public servant's harms both the state and society. It reinstated a case against Senthilbalaji for allegedly taking bribes for jobs. While anti-corruption efforts exist, courts remain the most effective check on power. Though judicial action may sometimes seem like overreach, the resignations of Senthilbalaji and Ponmudy highlight the need for political leaders to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to corruption.

Not strong enough

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The UN Security Council condemned the Pahalgam terror attack but issued a statement seen as weak and inadequate. While it reaffirmed opposition to terrorism and offered condolences to India and Nepal, it failed to name The Resistance Front (TRF), its links to Lashkar-e-Taiba, or acknowledge the targeting of non-Muslims. The omission of these details, along with the lack of explicit support for India, is attributed to Pakistan's current membership in the Council and backing from China. The diluted language, despite France leading the negotiations, also reflects insufficient assertiveness from key members like the U.S., Russia, and the U.K.

India is likely to pursue a multi-pronged international strategy following the Pahalgam terror attack. This could include pushing for a stronger statement at the UN General Assembly, seeking the UNSC designation of the attackers and The Resistance Front (TRF), and building its case at the Financial Action Task Force. India may also revive efforts to pass a global anti-terror convention. However, bilateral cooperation with Pakistan is seen as futile, given past failures and current strained ties. India's best path forward lies in persistent global diplomacy and coordinated international action to ensure justice and long-term peace.

India's urban future is at a crossroads

Indian cities are facing severe challenges from water shortages, rising electricity demand, and extreme temperatures due to climate change and rapid urbanization. Reports from Bengaluru and Hyderabad highlight increased water tanker bookings and power cuts caused by higher air-conditioning usage. A report by the Sustainable Futures Collective emphasizes the need for better long-term planning for climate change, with concerns about the urban heat island effect and its impact on the underprivileged. These issues highlight the difficulties in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to create sustainable, resilient, and inclusive urban environments by 2030.

Do indices capture reality?

India lacks comprehensive city-level tools for tracking SDG-11 indicators, with current indices like NITI Aayog's SDG Urban Index offering limited coverage. To fill this gap, new research has developed four distinct indices for each SDG-11 pillar (safety, inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability) based on 10 major cities. These indices use indicators sourced from various national datasets, such as the Census and National Crime Research Bureau, and employ the Shannon Entropy Weighting technique for objective weighting. This research aims to provide a more detailed and comprehensive assessment of urban performance in line with SDG-11.

The research reveals significant variations in SDG-11 performance across India's major cities. Ahmedabad ranked highest in inclusivity, Bengaluru in safety, Surat in sustainability, and Chennai in climate resilience, while Jaipur ranked lowest in several areas. A comparison with NITI Aayog's SDG-11 rankings showed discrepancies, with some top-ranked cities performing poorly in the new indices. The findings highlight disparities in social participation, crime prevention, environmental planning, and disaster preparedness. The lack of comprehensive city sustainability and resilience plans, as reported by Janaagraha, points to gaps in urban development necessary to achieve SDG-11 in India.

The road ahead

India's urban future requires improved tracking of SDG-11 at the urban local body (ULB) level, with real-time data collected through Integrated Command and Control Centres under the Smart Cities Mission. Addressing the needs of the urban poor, who are often underrepresented due to reliance on outdated Census 2011 data, is crucial. A periodic Urban Poor Quality of Living Survey at the State level is needed. Given the unique challenges of each city, localised governance, better planning, and city-specific strategies are essential for creating a more equitable urban future.

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Indians fear fake news but are less concerned about press freedom

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Dangerous dichotomy

The data for the charts were taken from Pew Research Center's 'Free Expression Seen as Important Globally, but Not Everyone Thinks Their Country Has Press, Speech and Internet Freedoms' released in April 2025



Chart 1: % who say made-up news and information is a very big problem in their country

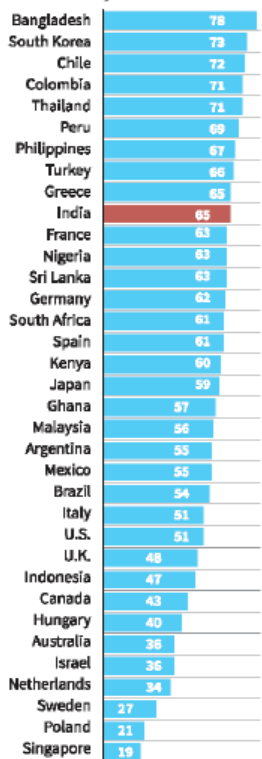


Chart 2: % who say it is very/somewhat important for the media to report without state censorship

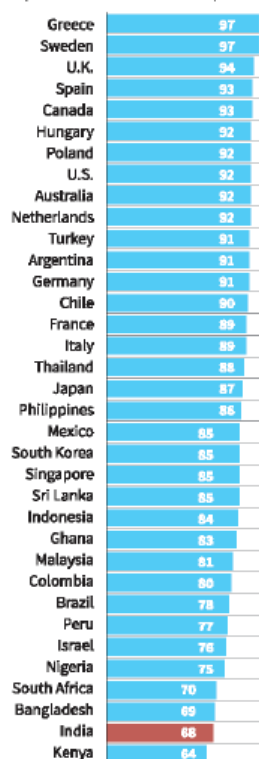
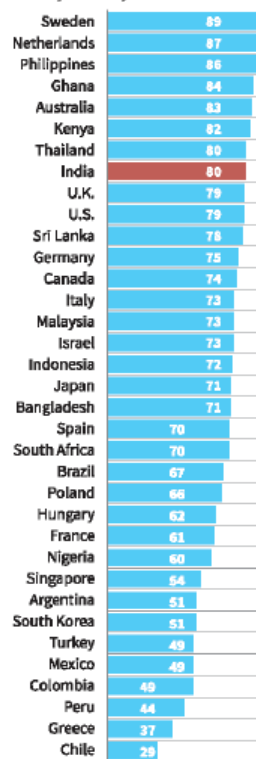


Chart 3: % who say the media is completely/somewhat free in their country currently



In India, while there is widespread anxiety about misinformation and fake news, people largely do not attribute it to government influence. Instead, a relatively large share do not mind greater state censorship, according to the latest survey by the Pew Research Center.

Survey data suggests that while distrust in fake news is high, confidence in systemic solutions such as a free press remains low. In fact, a relatively large share of respondents believes that the media is free from state censorship and supports greater state control over the press. In other words, the data indicates that many citizens view misinformation as stemming from sources such as social media, WhatsApp, or other non-governmental actors, rather than from state censorship or suppression.

In India, 65% of the respondents said that made-up news and information is a very big problem in the country. This is one of the highest rates among the 35 countries surveyed and places India among the top 10 nations where this concern is most strongly felt.

At the same time, only 68% of the respondents said that it is very or somewhat important for the media to report news without state or government censorship — the second-lowest rate among the 35 countries surveyed. In fact, 80% of the respondents believe that the media in India is currently somewhat free or completely free from state intervention. This is one of the highest rates among the countries surveyed and places India among the top 10 once again.

This dichotomy has serious implications for press freedom in India, which has been deteriorating rapidly. In 2024, India ranked 159 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders.

While India has consistently ranked below 100 since 2003, the situation has worsened significantly in recent years.

- **Chart 1** shows the share of respondents who said that made-up news and information is a very big problem in their country. In Bangladesh, South Korea, Chile, Colombia and Thailand, over 70% of the respondents felt this. In Peru, Philippines, Turkey, Greece and India, more than 65% or more of the respondents said so. The concern for fake news was lowest in Singapore, Poland, Sweden, Netherlands, and Israel.
- **Chart 2** shows the share of respondents who said that it is very or somewhat important for the media to report news without state or government censorship. The share was above 90% in Greece, Sweden, the U.K., and 11 other countries; between 80% and 90% in 13 countries; and between 70% and 80% in five countries. In India and Kenya, less than 70% of the respondents emphasised the need for a media free of state censorship.
- **Chart 3** shows the share of respondents who said that the media is currently completely/somewhat free in their country. India, Sweden, Netherlands, Philippines, Ghana, Australia, Kenya, and Thailand are the eight countries where 80% or more of the respondents said that the media is now completely or somewhat free. In Chile and Greece, less than 40% felt so.

India and Kenya are the only two countries where a larger share of respondents believe that the media is free (80% or more), while a smaller share (less than 70%) emphasise the importance of media freedom. In other words, in 33 of the 35 nations surveyed, there is a 'press freedom gap', which means the share of people who feel media freedom is important is greater than the share who believe it exists. In contrast, in India and Kenya, this gap is reversed.



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