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BHIM UPI to offer financial products

The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

From credit cards, loans, investments and over time insurance, a bouquet of financial products is planned to be offered on BHIM payments app, NPCI BHIM Services (NBSL) MD-CEO Lalitha Nataraj said.

“We have partnered with multiple banks to distribute credit cards and working with some of the NBFCs [for loans]. Also working with banks for national pension schemes. Insurance and investments [offerings] will follow little later,” she told the media.

Since its introduction in 2016 the app has undergone revamps and sported new features, BHIM 3.0 roll out in 2025 being the last, Ms.Nataraj said.

NBSL is also actively evaluating integrating its

The platform had processed transactions worth ₹26,952 crore in May 2026

app in the mobile apps of banks. It has made a beginning with Canara Bank and is in talks with at least one more public sector lender as well as a private bank, she said. Banks stood to benefit from new features, updated infrastructure and technology via the integration while users get to experience faster UPI payments, she added.

The monthly transaction volumes via BHIM rose from 79.64 million in June 2025 to 244 million in May 2026.

The platform processed transactions worth ₹26,952 crore in May 2026.

Which one of the following statements about Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Central Bank Digital Currency (Digital Rupee) is *not* correct ?

- (a) UPI is a real-time payment system but Digital Rupee is akin to sovereign paper currency.
- (b) In case of UPI, settlement for end users happens instantly as the money gets immediately debited or credited but in case of Digital Rupee, there is no settlement as the wallet balance gets transferred to another wallet.
- (c) UPI transactions are recorded by banks and reflected in bank statements but in case of Digital Rupee, no data is captured in bank statements as transactions are from one wallet to another.
- (d) In both the cases (UPI and Digital Rupee), the liability lies with the users and their respective banks.

Which of the following is a most likely consequence of implementing the 'Unified Payments Interface (UPI)'?

- (a) Mobile wallets will not be necessary for online payments.
- (b) Digital currency will totally replace the physical currency in about two decades.
- (c) FDI inflows will drastically increase.
- (d) Direct transfer of subsidies to poor people will become very effective.

With reference to digital payments, consider the following statements :

1. BHIM app allows the user to transfer money to anyone with a UPI-enabled bank account.
2. While a chip-pin debit card has four factors of authentication, BHIM app has only two factors of authentication.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Consider the following countries :

- I. United Arab Emirates**
- II. France**
- III. Germany**
- IV. Singapore**
- V. Bangladesh**

How many countries amongst the above are there other than India where international merchant payments are accepted under UPI?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| (a) Only two | (b) Only three |
| (c) Only four | (d) All the five |

1. **Context** : National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) through NPCI BHIM Services Ltd. (NBSL) will expand the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app beyond payments by offering credit cards, loans, National Pension System (NPS), investments and insurance through banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).

2. **Unified Payments Interface (UPI) & National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**

* **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**: Real-time bank-to-bank payment system.

* **Launched**: 2016 | **Developed by**: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) | **Regulated by**: Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

* **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**: Non-profit umbrella organisation for retail payments, established in 2008 by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA); not a statutory body.

* **Uses**: Virtual Payment Address (VPA), QR code or mobile number.

* **Features**: 24x7 settlement • Interoperability • Two-factor authentication • Person-to-Person (P2P) & Person-to-Merchant (P2M) payments.

3. **PYQ Integration**

1. UPI is a payment system, not a digital currency; it strengthens Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

2. BHIM enables transfers to any UPI-enabled bank account using two-factor authentication.

3. Unified Payments Interface (UPI) ≠ Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)/Digital Rupee: UPI transfers bank deposits, whereas the Digital Rupee (₹) is digital legal tender issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

4. Digital Rupee (₹) is a direct liability of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), while money transferred through UPI remains a commercial bank liability.

5. Differentiate: UPI • Digital Rupee (CBDC) • Mobile Wallets • Bank Deposits (important conceptual theme).

Behind Venezuela's quake devastation: Rare 'seismic doublet', vulnerable location

Anagha Jayakumar
New Delhi, June 25

THE TWIN earthquakes near Venezuela capital Caracas are feared to have killed tens of thousands. The first quake, with a magnitude of 7.2, hit about 160 km west of Caracas late on Wednesday night. Just 39 seconds later, it was followed by a magnitude 7.5 quake. The US Geological Survey (USGS) described the disaster as a "seismic doublet". The second quake was the largest to strike Venezuela or just off its coast since 1900, according to the USGS.

The agency's preliminary death toll estimate ranges from 10,000 to 100,000. Officials warned this could become one of the country's deadliest natural disasters.

What do we know about the quakes?

The first earthquake struck about 24 km from San Felipe in Yaracuy state. The second hit near Morón in neighbouring Carabobo state, about 168 km west of Caracas, according to the USGS.

The shocks from the disaster were felt as far away as neighbouring Colombia, with residents in the capital, Bogotá, reporting

feeling the tremors. *Associated Press* also reported that buildings were evacuated in Manaus, Belem and Macapa in Brazil's Amazon region. Venezuela President Delcy Rodríguez said the worst-affected areas included Caracas and the north-central states of Miranda, La Guaira, Aragua, Carabobo and Falcón. Despite the widespread damage, Venezuela's oil infrastructure did not appear to be affected, according to *Reuters*.

Why was it called a doublet?

Given that both earthquakes occurred within a short time and distance from each other, the USGS classified the event as a doublet. In a typical sequence, the larger quake is followed by a series of smaller aftershocks. Doublets, however, are generally defined as earthquakes of similar magnitude that originate from distinct but closely related ruptures and occur in quick succession.

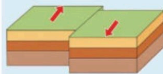
What caused the earthquakes?

Venezuela sits in one of the most seismically active regions in northern South America, along the boundary between the Caribbean and South American tectonic

What is a fault?

A fault is a fracture or zone of fractures between two blocks of rock. When these blocks move rapidly, they cause quakes.

WHAT HAPPENED IN VENEZUELA?

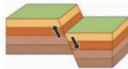


STRIKE-SLIP FAULT:
Two blocks slide past one another

Some other types of faults

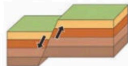
Normal fault:

The block above the fault moves downward relative to the block below.



Reverse fault:

Upper block, above the fault plane, moves up and over the lower block



plates. These two plates can slide horizontally past each other along faults, in a phenomenon called a strike-slip fault, causing earthquakes.

The country has witnessed about a thousand earthquakes of magnitude 4.0 and higher over the past decade.

According to the USGS, Wednesday night's second, stronger earthquake re-

sulted from shallow strike-slip faulting near the boundary between the two plates.

The USGS classified the magnitude 7.2 earthquake as a foreshock, or a smaller earthquake that occurs before a larger one, and the magnitude 7.5 event as the mainshock, the largest earthquake in a sequence. The agency said the sequence "likely indicates a complex rupture interaction pro-

cess" that formed a seismic doublet. The USGS said quakes of this size should not be viewed as a single point on a map but as the rupture of a much larger section of fault.

Why were they so destructive?

The mainshock occurred at a relatively shallow depth of about 10 km. This meant that the shockwaves reached the surface with high intensity. Worsening the situation was the fact that this was a doublet, distinct from routine aftershocks.

"Aftershocks are largely a result of disturbances or ruptures caused by the main earthquake. Some stress is already present, and it is then amplified by the main earthquake, resulting in another quake. Aftershocks are usually one or more magnitude smaller than the main earthquake, although these are not very tight definitions, and have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis," Vineet Gehlot, director of Dehradun-based Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, told *The Indian Express*.

"Doublets are two independent events happening within a very short span of time, a few seconds or a few minutes, or maybe a couple of hours. They are roughly of the

same magnitude and happen in close proximity to each other," he said.

Doublets can also be especially destructive because they prolong the strong ground shaking. A 2016 study in *Nature Geoscience* analysing Pakistan's 1997 Harnai earthquake found that a second major shock, which struck 19 seconds after the first, doubled both the duration of ground shaking and the area affected by the strongest shaking. Thus, buildings weakened by the first quake remain exposed to another major shock almost immediately, increasing the risk of collapse and complicating rescue efforts.

Have doublets occurred in the past?

● **IN 2023**, a doublet quake struck Turkey and Syria, measuring at magnitudes of 7.8 and 7.7. These happened just 95 km and nine hours apart, affecting 14 million people and causing widespread damage.

● **IN 2021**, a major doublet-like event occurred when quakes of magnitudes 8.6 and 8.2 struck the Indian Ocean, near Malaysia.

● **IN 1988**, a "triplet" — a series of three earthquakes just half an hour apart from each other — occurred in Australia.

- WITH INPUTS FROM AMITABH SINHA

Consider the following statements :

1. In a seismograph, P waves are recorded earlier than S waves.
2. In P waves, the individual particles vibrate to and fro in the direction of wave propagation whereas in S waves, the particles vibrate up and down at right angles to the direction of wave propagation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

1. **Context** : Two powerful earthquakes (M 7.2 & 7.5) struck near Caracas, Venezuela, only 39 seconds apart, creating a rare seismic doublet. The shallow depth and strike-slip faulting amplified destruction.

2. Earthquake Basics (How an Earthquake Occurs)

- * **Fault**: A fracture in the Earth's crust where tectonic plates move.
- * Sudden release of accumulated stress along a fault generates seismic waves.
- * **P (Primary) Waves**: Fastest • Longitudinal • Travel through solids, liquids & gases • Reach first.
- * **S (Secondary) Waves**: Slower • Transverse • Travel through solids only • Cause stronger shaking.
- * **Surface (L) Waves**: Travel along the Earth's surface • Most destructive due to maximum ground movement.

3. Seismic Doublet

- * **Definition**: Two independent earthquakes of similar magnitude occurring within minutes to a few hours and close to each other, caused by closely related fault ruptures.
- * **Difference from Aftershocks**:
 - * **Seismic Doublet**: Two major earthquakes of nearly equal magnitude.
 - * **Aftershocks**: Smaller earthquakes triggered by the main shock as the crust readjusts.
- * **Impact**: The first earthquake weakens buildings and infrastructure; the second strikes before recovery, prolonging ground shaking, increasing building collapse, casualties and hampering rescue operations.

If passport is not proof of citizenship, what is



DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Wednesday clarified that a passport is primarily a travel document and not a standalone proof of citizenship. The statement, made on Passport Seva Divas, triggered confusion. For most Indians, the passport is the most authoritative document issued by the state — carrying the Republic's name, accepted everywhere and issued only after verification by government authorities.

The MEA's clarification, however, reflects a longstanding position: a passport is issued because the government is satisfied a person is an Indian citizen, but it does not create citizenship, nor is it conclusive proof of citizenship if challenged in law.

Citizenship a legal status

Articles 5 to 11 of the Constitution and the Citizenship Act, 1955 define who is an Indian citizen. Significantly, neither identifies any single document as proof of citizenship.

Instead, citizenship is treated as a legal status arising from facts such as birth, parentage, domicile, or naturalisation. Documents serve as evidence of those facts. For a person born in India, citizenship depends on when they were born and, in certain cases, the citizenship status of their parents. For someone naturalised, it depends on compliance with statutory conditions.

This distinction is reflected in an answer given by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Parliament in February 2020. Asked whether Aadhaar, passport, voter ID, PAN card or birth certificate constitute valid proof of citizenship, the government said: "Acquisition of Indian Citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act, 1955 and rules made thereunder. Citizenship of India can be acquired by birth or descent or registration or naturalisation or incorporation of territory. The eligibility criteria for acquisition and determination of citizenship is as per the provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955."

Notably, it did not identify any of the documents as citizenship documents. Yet, under the Citizenship Rules, 2003, those seeking Indian citizenship under certain provisions produce a copy of their parents'

• WHO IS AN INDIAN CITIZEN?

Under the Citizenship Act of 1955, there are four ways to obtain citizenship:

- 1. Citizenship by birth:** For birthright citizenship, those born in India between 1950 and 1987 are citizens.
 - For those born between 1987 and 2003, citizenship is accorded only if either parent is a citizen of India at the time of their birth.
 - For those born after 2003, citizenship is accorded if only if either parent is a citizen at the time of their birth and the other is not an illegal immigrant.
- 2. Citizenship by descent:** A person born outside India and who has at least one Indian parent will be granted citizenship, provided that the birth is registered within one year with the Indian consulate in the jurisdiction.
- 3. Citizenship by registration:** This is for persons related to an Indian citizen through marriage or ancestry.



- 4. Citizenship by naturalisation:** Naturalisation certificate can be granted to a person who isn't an illegal immigrant and has lived in India for 12 months continuously before applying.
 - In the 14 years before the 12-month period, the person must have lived in India for at least 11 years. This is relaxed for some categories.

- Citizenship is treated as a legal status arising from facts such as birth, parentage, domicile or naturalisation.
- Documents serve as evidence of those facts. A passport is issued because the government is satisfied a person is a citizen. It does not create citizenship.

Waiver clause: If the Centre believes the applicant has rendered distinguished service to science, philosophy, art, literature, world peace or human progress, it may waive all or any of the conditions in the Act. This is how the Dalai Lama or Adnan Sami, the Pakistani singer, got Indian citizenship.

— BY APURVA VISHWANATH

passports to prove they are Indian citizens.

Eligibility for passport

Section 20 of the Act empowers the Centre to issue a passport or travel document even to non-Indian citizen if it considers such issuance necessary in public interest.

MEA sources said the provision is used in special cases. "Largely, cases where say an Indian origin person becomes stateless due to geo-political developments, or someone stateless is in India and must travel abroad," an official said. Historically, Tibetan refugees and Sri Lankan Tamils in India have been issued special travel documents when visiting other countries, sources said. In 2023, the Madras High Court asked the Centre to grant a passport to a Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee under Section 20 of the Passport Act.

What courts have held

During hearings on the Special Interest Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar last year, a Supreme Court bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi observed: "We would like you to clarify, we have repeatedly passed orders that the list illustratively indicates 11 documents...if you see those 11, apart from passport and birth certificates, none are conclusive proof of citizenship."

The observation appeared to place pas-

Common principle

In the UK and US, too, passports are issued because the state has determined that a person is a citizen; they do not themselves create citizenship.

The difference is that both countries have more robust civil registration systems and, for naturalised citizens, formal citizenship certificates.

ports and birth certificates in a higher evidentiary category than other documents accepted by the Election Commission for voter verification. Yet, in cases dealing directly with citizenship disputes, courts have often looked beyond passports.

In 2013, the Bombay High Court refused relief to four persons accused of being illegal immigrants despite their producing passports (which were later terminated), Aadhaar cards and birth certificates.

In the 2005 *Sarbananda Sonowal v Union of India* judgment, the Supreme Court underscored that the burden of proving citizenship rests on the person claiming it. "There is good and sound reason for placing the burden of proof upon the person concerned who asserts to be a citizen of a particular country," the court said.

In *State of Andhra Pradesh v Abdul Khader* (1962), the SC treated a passport as evidential criteria such as birth, domicile and migration history for citizenship.

The bigger problem

Unlike many countries, India does not issue a universal citizenship certificate for all citizens. Certificates of citizenship are for a limited category of people — those who acquire citizenship through registration or

Articles 5 to 11 of the Constitution and the Citizenship Act, 1955 define who is an Indian citizen. Neither identifies any single document as citizenship proof

naturalisation under the Sections 5 and 6 of the Citizenship Act. But the overwhelming majority of Indians are citizens by birth.

India's civil registration system evolved unevenly, and universal birth registration is a relatively recent phenomenon. For millions of older Indians, citizenship has traditionally been inferred from a combination of records — electoral rolls, school certificates, land records, birth certificates, passports and other government documents — rather than through a single definitive credential.

The closest India came to creating such a document was through the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The legal architecture was put in place under the Vajpayee government through the Citizenship Rules, 2003. The rules envisaged a National Register of Indian Citizens, along with local and state-level registers, and contemplated the issuance of identity cards linked to citizenship. The idea resurfaced during the UPA years in a tussle between the Home Ministry and the UIDAI over whether identity verification should precede citizenship verification.

In a conversation with *The Indian Express*, former Union Home Secretary R K Singh recalled that senior Home Ministry officials repeatedly argued that Aadhaar could not serve as proof of citizenship. "At that time, we said it would enable large number of infiltrators to get documents. The PM held a meeting on this. Nandan Nilekani was there. We put our point. It was very clear it cannot be a proof of citizenship. Nilekani agreed that his verification was peripheral."

"As far as passport is concerned, its verification levels are stronger. But passport was not designed to be a document of citizenship. It was always imagined as a travel document. The idea of NRC was tied to providing a proof of citizenship," he added.

However, the NRC was never rolled out nationwide. The exercise became politically contentious and was eventually overtaken by the controversy surrounding the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and fears of a nationwide citizenship verification exercise.

The only large-scale implementation occurred in Assam between 2015 and 2019, where applicants had to establish links to legacy records predating March 24, 1971. Nearly 19 lakh people were left out of the final list, many because of documentary inconsistencies, spelling variations, missing records and difficulties in proving family linkages.

Consider the following statements :

1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.
2. Once issued, Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

1. **Context** :The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) clarified that a passport is primarily a travel document, not conclusive proof of Indian citizenship. Citizenship is determined under the Constitution and the Citizenship Act, 1955, not by any single document.

2. Citizenship & Proof of Citizenship

- * **Articles 5–11** provide the constitutional framework; the Citizenship Act, 1955 governs acquisition and termination of citizenship.
- * **Citizenship is a legal status; documents are evidence, not the source, of that status.**
- * **No single document** (Passport, Aadhaar, Voter ID, PAN, etc.) conclusively proves Indian citizenship.
- * **In case of a dispute**, authorities/courts determine citizenship using a combination of legal evidence (birth, parentage, domicile and other official records).
- * **Citizenship Certificate** is issued only to persons acquiring citizenship through Registration or Naturalisation, not to citizens by birth.

3. Passport in Perspective

- * **Passport**: Issued under the Passports Act, 1967 for international travel; not a citizenship certificate.
- * **India**, like the United States and the United Kingdom, does not issue a universal citizenship document to every citizen.
- * Some countries with **mandatory national identity systems**, such as Pakistan (Computerised National Identity Card – CNIC) and Bangladesh (National Identity Card – NID), issue identity cards that serve as the primary evidence of citizenship for most citizens.

Conclusion

Citizenship flows from law, not from documents. In India, documents help establish citizenship, but no single document is legally conclusive.

NOW INTO HIS FOURTH EXTENSION, THE 61-YR-OLD HAS BEEN GOVT'S MAIN LINE OF DEFENCE IN COURT ON CONSEQUENTIAL ISSUES — FROM KASHMIR TO RAM TEMPLE

Being Tushar Mehta: The 'fierce fighter' for Modi govt has redefined SG role

Vineet Bhalla
New Delhi, June 25

A FOURTH extension on June 20 reaffirms the role of **Tushar Mehta**, already the second-longest serving **Solicitor General** of India, as the Union government's principal courtroom strategist.

Since he was appointed first as Additional SG in 2014, and promoted in 2018 to SG, Mehta, 61, has been the Narendra Modi government's main line of defence in court on many consequential political decisions – from Kashmir to Ram temple, citizenship issues to electoral funding. Under him, the post of the SG – officially the second-highest law officer in the country, aiding and assisting the Attorney General of India – has emerged as the government's primary voice in courts.

Mehta, who earlier worked under Modi as the Additional Advocate General of Gujarat, has been consistent in his arguments: that courts should give

precedence to decisions taken by elected governments, particularly where questions of governance, security or public policy are involved.

Peers and opposing counsel alike speak of Mehta's "relentlessness". Senior Advocate Sanjay Hegde, who has appeared on the opposite side of Mehta in several Constitutional matters, told *The Indian Express* that the SG is a "fierce fighter" for the government. He also notes that Mehta is not averse to course-correcting when necessary. "Where mistakes have been made, he uses his good offices to rectify them before any adverse orders get passed."

Mehta's firefighting ability is also acknowledged by Senior Advocate Atmaram N S Nadkarni, who worked alongside Mehta when both were Additional Solicitors General. Calling him a "formidable counsel", Nadkarni highlights Mehta's ubiquitous presence across courtrooms. "He appears even in the Delhi High Court and

other courts; it is marvellous how he manages to be at so many places," Nadkarni says.

The only other person to have a longer tenure than Mehta in the post was C K Daphtary, who served as SG in the first government after Independence, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, from 1950 to 1963.

Set to remain as SG till 2029, Mehta will be appearing for the government in several critical cases in the next few years, including challenges to the Waqf (Amendment) Act, anti-conversion laws, and the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act.

His court wins

RAFALE DEAL: One of the earliest high-profile matters to come to Mehta's table was the challenge to the Rafale fighter aircraft deal, alleging irregularities in the procurement process and seeking an investigation into the purchase. Mehta said that courts should not enter questions of defence procurement and military preparedness



Mehta is India's second-longest serving Solicitor General

unless there was clear evidence of illegality. The Supreme Court ultimately declined to interfere with the deal, in an order in December 2018.

RAM TEMPLE: Another defining case where Mehta appeared was the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute. In November 2019, the Supreme Court ruled that the 2.77-acre disputed land be handed over to a government-run trust for a Ram Mandir, while mandating a 5-acre alternative plot in

Ayodhya for a mosque – bringing to an end a dispute that had long been part of the BJP's core agenda.

ARTICLE 370: The abrogation of the legislation by the Modi government on August 5, 2019, was the fulfilment of another ideological agenda of the BJP, removing Jammu and Kashmir's special status. Appearing before a five-judge Constitution Bench, Mehta argued that Article 370 had been a temporary provision, and that Parliament could validly exercise legislative powers during President's Rule, which J&K was under in 2019.

In December 2023, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the government's decision.

CITIZENSHIP ISSUES: During litigation relating to challenges to Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, Mehta defended the government's efforts to address illegal migration.

The government's approach to citizenship also came under scrutiny after Parliament enacted the Citizenship

(Amendment) Act. While the law remains under challenge before the Supreme Court, Mehta has consistently argued that Parliament is entitled to create special citizenship pathways for persecuted minorities from neighbouring countries.

COVID: As thousands of migrant workers attempted to return home during the nationwide pandemic lockdown, petitions reached the Supreme Court seeking immediate relief for them. Mehta defended the administration's response.

Similar arguments were advanced in litigation concerning the PM CARES Fund. The petitions demanding that PM CARES be brought under RTI were ultimately dismissed by the apex court in August 2020.

PMLA: In 2022, the Supreme Court heard challenges to key provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, which gives extensive investigative powers to the Enforcement Directorate and restricts bail to those accused under the Act,

against claims of due process and personal liberty. Mehta argued that money laundering is a serious economic crime with international dimensions, requiring specialised powers to investigate effectively. The SC largely upheld the law, reinforcing the ED's powers, in July 2022.

EWS: Mehta also prevailed in the challenge to the 10% reservation for economically weaker sections. In November 2022, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the amendment creating the quota, accepting the government's argument that economic disadvantage could be an independent basis for affirmative action.

UAPA: In prosecutions and bail applications under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the principal anti-terror law, the SG has argued that judges should take into account the gravity of allegations and wider security implications when considering bail.

SEDITION: During the Constitutional challenge to the law of

sedition under the erstwhile IPC, the Centre adopted a different strategy. Rather than defending the law in its existing form, Mehta informed the Court that the government was reconsidering the provision. The proceedings led to a pause on new sedition prosecutions.

His court setbacks

The Supreme Court did not accept the government's argument of institutional deference during the Pegasus spyware litigation. Faced with allegations that government agencies had used surveillance software against journalists, activists and politicians, Mehta argued that questions involving national security could not always be answered in open court. In October 2021, the Supreme Court appointed an expert committee to examine the allegations, declining to accept the government's position at face value.

The electoral bonds case was another major defeat for the government.

Consider the following statements :

1. Attorney General of India and Solicitor General of India are the only officers of the Government who are allowed to participate in the meetings of the Parliament of India.
2. According to the Constitution of India, the Attorney General of India submits his resignation when the Government which appointed him resigns.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2



1. **Context** :The Union Government granted a fourth extension to Solicitor General (SG) **Tushar Mehta**. Appointed as Solicitor General in 2018, he has completed 8 years in office and, with the fresh 3-year extension, will complete 11 years by 2029, making him the **second-longest serving Solicitor General of India** after **C. K. Daphtary**, the first Solicitor General (1950–1963).

2. Attorney General (AG) & Solicitor General (SG)

- * **Attorney General of India (AG)**: Constitutional office (Article 76); highest law officer of India.
- * **Solicitor General (SG)**: Second-highest law officer; non-constitutional, non-statutory post appointed by the Central Government.
- * **Role**: SG assists the AG and represents the Union before the Supreme Court and High Courts.
- * **Parliament**: Only the AG can participate (without voting) under Article 88; the SG has no such constitutional right.
- * **Tenure**: Both hold office during the pleasure of the Central Government.

3. UPSC Value Addition

- * **AG**: Article 76 • Constitutional office • Parliamentary participation (Article 88) • No voting right.
- * **SG**: Executive appointment • Not mentioned in the Constitution • Governed by the Law Officers (Conditions of Service) Rules, 1987.

Netra, India's airborne surveillance platform, gets final operational nod

Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU

The indigenous Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system, which played a pivotal role as a force multiplier for the Indian Air Force in the 2019 Balakot strikes and Operation Sindoor last year, was accorded final operational clearance (FOC) on Thursday.

Developed indigenously by the Bengaluru-based Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS), the Netra AEW&C is integrated on the Brazilian Embraer EMB-145I aircraft platform.

The system encompasses a sophisticated suite of mission equipment, including an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AE-SA) radar, Identification Friend or Foe (IFF), mission computer, secure communication networks, electronic support measures (ESM) and communi-



Air Marshal Awadhesh Kumar Bharti and others, pose during a ceremony marking the FOC of NETRA on Thursday. MURALI KUMAR K

cation support measures. India is the fifth country in the world to develop this capability, as Netra can detect, track, identify and monitor airborne and maritime targets enhancing the network-centric operations capabilities of the IAF.

Dedication

At an event to mark the occasion, scientists and IAF officers dedicated the

achievement to colleagues killed in a tragic air crash in 1999. The seeds of India's airborne warning and control system (AWACS) were sown in the early 1980s.

However, the tragic crash of a modified HS-748 Avro aircraft near Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu, with eight people aboard, including four IAF personnel and four scientists, on January 11, 1999 resulted in the programme being

abandoned temporarily.

The programme took off again after being sanctioned afresh in 2004. During this intervening period, scientists kept their perseverance and hoped for the best.

"On January 11, 1999, the ill-fated aircraft had a crash. I salute personnel who were on board, who made their supreme sacrifice. Today we have shown that their sacrifice has not gone in vain. This FOC is dedicated to them," Director-General of Aeronautics Cluster of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), K. Rajalakshmi Menon said.

The Initial Operational Clearance (IOC) for the Netra was accorded in 2015 and it was inducted into the IAF in 2017.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has approved the development of six more AEW&C Mk-1A systems by the CABS.

1. **Context** : The **indigenous Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system**, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), received Final Operational Clearance (FOC). The Indian Air Force (IAF) currently operates 2 Netra AEW&C aircraft, while the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has approved 6 Netra Mk-1A systems.

2. **Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) vs Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS)**

- * **AEW&C**: Medium-range • Tactical surveillance • Smaller platform.
- * **AWACS**: Long-range • Strategic surveillance & command and control • Larger platform.
- * **Indian Examples**: Netra (AEW&C) • Phalcon on IL-76 (AWACS).

3. **Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C)**

- * **Developer**: Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- * **Platform**: Embraer EMB-145I aircraft.
- * **Role**: Early warning • Airspace surveillance • Battle management • Command & Control.
- * **Capability**: Detects, tracks and identifies aircraft, drones, missiles and maritime targets beyond ground-based radar using Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar.