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• NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Why jurist Navi Pillay's work matters for a world facing 'existential challenges'

Rishika Singh
New Delhi, October 9

THE 2026 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded on Friday to South African jurist Navanethem Pillay, 85, whose work—from the apartheid regime in her home country to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza—has helped shape legal precedents on key global issues.

Her Indian Tamil grandparents reached Africa as indentured labourers, and she grew up in a period when racial discrimination was ingrained in the law. Pillay went on to become the first South African to earn a doctorate in law from Harvard University and would later defend compatriot Nelson Mandela, the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, in court.

The Nobel Committee highlighted her "exceptional courage and integrity". It is not often that the committee rewards jurists. But the citation said it wanted to "remind the

world that the rule of law—national and international—underpins the system we have set up to ensure peace and resolve conflicts non-violently. Peace requires justice."

Career of firsts, landmark cases

The committee noted that Pillay "has been instrumental in ensuring that war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are prosecuted". Early in her career, though, her very presence in institutions marked many firsts—she became the first Black woman to start a law practice in Natal Province, South Africa, and the first to serve in the High Court. Mandela nominated her.

She had fought for the rights of anti-apartheid prisoners, such as access to lawyers. Pillay recalled that when he was first charged, he refused to plead in an apartheid court. "The magistrate responded that it was a white man's court and that it would remain that way... We were taught that apartheid law even if immoral, could never

• 'For her efforts to promote peace, international law'

"...has been instrumental in ensuring that war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are prosecuted."



NAVANETHEM
"NAVI" PILLAY, 85
South Africa



ON MONDAY: PRIZE FOR ECONOMICS

be questioned," she said.

Reading about the Nuremberg Trials after World War 2 gave her a framework for how the law could tackle state-sponsored violence. Nuremberg marked a historic first where "judicial power backed by punishment was exercised by the international community to achieve justice and accountability," she said.

Pillay was a judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for eight years. The Rwandan genocide of 1994 is considered among the most brutal in modern history, in which 800,000 people were killed over 100 days. It marked the first time that an international tribunal entered a judgment for genocide and interpreted it under the Geneva Conventions against war crimes. Crucially, it also defined the crime of rape in international law and recognised it as a means of perpetrating genocide.

A UN News report said: "As the Rwandan women sat behind a curtain in a tiny court...

and recounted in painful detail the brutal and violent sexual assaults they endured... they had no idea they would make history. And that by doing so, they would give hope to survivors like them." Additionally, the tribunal was the first to recognise the role of propaganda in aiding genocide, and held members of the media responsible.

International law today

Today, Pillay is an ad hoc judge on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in a case where Myanmar is accused of genocide against Rohingya Muslims. She also chaired the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory from 2021 to 2025. It found that "Israeli authorities and security forces have deliberately targeted Palestinian children resulting in genocide... in the Gaza Strip."

While recognising her work, the Nobel announcement noted that the prize comes amid "existential challenges—including

more wars and conflicts than the world has seen in a long time". Despite criticism of bodies like the UN and the ICJ for having little power to stop acts of violence, it said that recent events show international law is an "absolute necessity" for peace and security.

Pillay earlier said: "Justice as integral to the peace process in the aftermath of great conflicts is still a relatively new development. It needs nurturing and greater support from states." She held out hope for it. In 2023, she said: "I'm 82. Many people asked me: 'When are you going to stop?' As long as there are human rights violations and someone is suffering, why wouldn't you care? We have to continually recite the principles... That's what keeps me optimistic, that we have a duty."

She added: "As Nelson Mandela said when he thanked the world for helping end apartheid: 'Thank you, you chose to care'. So that's my call upon all states: they should care and act collectively."

1. Why Navi Pillay's Work Matters for World Peace

GS-2: International Relations, International Law, Human Rights

Context: South African jurist Navanethem “Navi” Pillay was awarded the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to international justice, prosecution of war crimes and genocide, and protection of human rights.

1. Contribution to International Law

Anti-Apartheid Struggle: Defended anti-apartheid prisoners and advocated equal access to justice in South Africa.

Rwanda Genocide: As a judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), contributed to landmark proceedings concerning the 1994 genocide.

Akayesu Judgment (1998): Helped establish that rape and sexual violence can constitute acts of genocide under specific circumstances.

Media Accountability: The ICTR’s Media Case established that media propaganda inciting genocide could attract criminal liability.

Human Rights Leadership: Served as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2008 to 2014.

2. Contemporary Relevance to World Peace

Accountability in Conflicts: Investigating alleged violations of international humanitarian law, including in Gaza, helps reinforce civilian protection and accountability.

Preventing Genocide: The Rwanda tribunal’s precedents demonstrate the importance of prosecuting genocide and conflict-related sexual violence.

Rule-Based International Order: International law and institutions provide mechanisms to address serious crimes and resolve disputes through legal processes rather than force alone.

Sustainable Peace: Protecting human rights, ensuring justice for victims and holding perpetrators accountable can reduce impunity and support lasting peace.

• WILDLIFE

Survival, habitat: Challenges in rewilding great Indian bustard

Nikhil Ghanekar
New Delhi, October 9

OCTOBER 4 marked a significant milestone in the efforts to conserve the critically endangered great Indian bustard (GIB). Two captive-bred male GIBs were released into the wild for the first time in Rajasthan's Desert National Park near Jaisalmer town.

The pilot release marks the first step in "rewilding" bustards that have been bred and raised in captivity. This is part of Project GIB which the Centre is running along with the Wildlife Institute of India and the governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Why has GIB population declined?

The great Indian bustard is a large, ground-dwelling bird found in savannahs, grasslands and deserts in India. Till the late 19th and early 20th century, it was spread across 11 states — from Haryana in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south, and from Rajasthan in the west to Odisha in the east.

But a range of issues resulted in its decline — hunting, poaching of eggs, gradual conversion of open habitats into croplands and mining areas and, more recently, deaths due to collisions with renewable energy power lines. GIBs' poor frontal vision, combined with their heavy body,

makes it difficult for them to detect or avoid such infrastructure.

From an estimated 1,260-1,400 in the early 1970s, the wild GIB population has now plummeted to only around 150, of which around 130 (+/-20) are in Rajasthan. The rest are in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh — facing the risk of local extinction.

To check this decline, the Centre and the Rajasthan government launched a long-term bustard and lesser florican project in 2012-13. This project was expanded from 2014 with funding support to start a conservation and breeding program.

Beginning 2019, wild GIB eggs were collected from Desert National Park and surrounding areas, incubated artificially at two centres (in Rajasthan's Sam and Ramdevra) and hand-reared. These hand-reared birds mated at these centres, giving birth to 98 birds as of now. Of these 98, two were released Sunday and 11 more have been earmarked for wild release. The others remain at the centres for captive reproduction.

What does rewilding entail?

Before initiating the rewilding process, a rewilding aviary was set up at the Ramdevra centre while a soft release facility was developed by the Wildlife Institute of India

Threat to grasslands

- Great Indian bustards live in savannahs, deserts and grasslands.

- Unlike forests, grasslands are not seen as areas to be protected in public perception, making them vulnerable to degradation.

- Restoration and protection of grasslands is crucial for revival of bustards outside Rajasthan.

inside Desert National Park.

Unlike the hand-reared birds that were used to humans, chicks aged between three and four months were released in these facilities so that they could move freely and adapt to the natural environment without human imprinting. Scientists associated with the project said the birds have been fitted with transmitters. These devices will send alerts thrice a day on their coordinates and movement pattern. Teams will monitor them from afar.

Challenges in long-term recovery

The beginning of the rewilding phase, while crucial, is a challenging experiment. The released birds will face a challenge to their survival. Enclosures within Desert National Park were picked because they comprised grasslands as well as stretches free of either human or technological interruptions.

While this is an experiment in Rajasthan, similar experiments would have to be carried out in range states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, albeit only after habitat improvements. "We can learn from the Rajasthan experience, and if this is successful, then Gujarat may do a similar pilot. However, restoration and protection of grasslands is crucial for the revival of bustards outside Ra-

jasthan," said Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, Director, Wildlife Institute of India. Unlike forests, grasslands are not traditionally considered protected areas in public perception.

Asad Rahmani, one of India's foremost bustard experts, has red-flagged "afforestation" of grasslands in the past. He has said that forest officers try to "improve habitats" by planting trees or creating waterholes in bustard habitats.

Threats to GIB revival

At the conclusion of a landmark case seeking protection of GIBs, the Supreme Court had, accepting the recommendations of an expert panel, ordered some broad protection measures for GIBs and their habitats in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

It demarcated "priority areas" for the bird and ordered that 80 km of power lines in Rajasthan should be buried underground. It also ordered the creation of "powerline corridors" that will accommodate re-routed overhead lines.

Experts have warned that rewilding will not be sustainable if these power lines cannot be buried underground soon. Limestone mining is yet another issue that threatens to affect the open and flat areas that bustards need. The Supreme Court did not order specific measures against mining.

2. Great Indian Bustard: Rewilding and Habitat Conservation

GS-3: Environment, Biodiversity, Wildlife Conservation

Context: On 4 October 2026, two captive-bred male Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) were released into Rajasthan's Desert National Park, marking a major step towards rewilding the critically endangered species under Project GIB.

1. Great Indian Bustard: Key Facts

Scientific Name: *Ardeotis nigriceps*; locally known as Godawan and the state bird of Rajasthan.

IUCN Status: Critically Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List; protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Habitat: Open grasslands, arid and semi-arid regions, deserts and scrublands. Rajasthan's Thar Desert, particularly Desert National Park, is its principal stronghold.

Population Decline: Estimated at 1,260–1,400 birds in the 1970s, the population has fallen to roughly 150, with the majority surviving in Rajasthan.

Ecological Significance: As a large grassland bird, it highlights the conservation value of India's threatened grassland ecosystems.

2. Why Has the Population Declined?

Habitat Loss: Conversion of grasslands into agricultural land, infrastructure and mining areas reduces breeding and feeding grounds.

Power-Line Collisions: The bird's large body and limited frontal vision make it particularly vulnerable to collisions with overhead transmission lines.

Hunting and Egg Poaching: Historical hunting and disturbance at nesting sites have contributed to its decline.

Grassland Mismanagement: Grasslands are often treated as wastelands or planted with trees, despite supporting specialised wildlife such as the bustard.

3. Project GIB and Rewilding

Institutional Collaboration: The Centre, Rajasthan Government, Gujarat Government and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) are involved in conservation efforts.

Captive-Breeding Programme: Eggs collected from the wild are artificially incubated and chicks hand-reared at breeding centres in Sam and Ramdevra, Rajasthan. The programme has produced nearly 100 chicks, according to the report.

First Rewilding Release: Two captive-bred males were released into Desert National Park on 4 October 2026; additional birds remain at breeding centres.

Post-Release Monitoring: Birds carry transmitters that help conservation teams track their location, movement and adaptation to natural conditions.

Soft-Release Approach: Acclimatisation facilities and gradual adaptation help birds transition from captivity to the wild while reducing dependence on humans.

4. Challenges in Rewilding

Survival Skills: Captive-bred birds must adapt to natural feeding, predators, weather and other environmental pressures.

Habitat Quality: Releasing birds without protecting feeding, nesting and breeding areas will limit long-term recovery.

Infrastructure Threats: Overhead power lines and other human-made structures continue to threaten the species.

Limited Distribution: Establishing additional populations in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh would require suitable habitat, threat reduction and careful scientific planning.

5. Conservation Measures and Way Forward

Project GIB: Continue captive breeding, habitat restoration, scientific monitoring and community participation.

Supreme Court Intervention: In *M.K. Ranjitsinh v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court addressed power-line threats to the bustard and adopted an expert-led approach to identifying priority areas for undergrounding or other mitigation.

Protect Grasslands: Prevent inappropriate afforestation, mining and land conversion in important habitats; restore native grassland vegetation.

Reduce Power-Line Mortality: Underground priority transmission lines where technically feasible and install bird diverters on overhead lines where appropriate.

Landscape-Level Recovery: Protect connected habitats, coordinate action across States and establish additional wild populations only where ecological conditions permit.

India's share of global greenfield investments more than double China's during 2020-25

A report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development says greenfield investments are increasingly taking place in strategic sectors. It added that India remains the fastest-growing major economy, even though domestic consumption is starting to show signs of strain due to higher prices

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India's share in global greenfield investments during 2020-25, at 5.7%, is more than double China's share in such investments during the same period, according to the latest report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

However, it also said investment in strategic sectors still remains concentrated in Europe and North America, highlighting the integration challenges for the Global South.

The latest Trade and Development Report 2026 report by UNCTAD, released on Friday, said that greenfield investments were increasingly being made in strategic sectors. Greenfield investments refer to those made by companies in new ventures in another country.

Strategic investments

According to the data in the report, India accounted for 5.7% of global greenfield investments during 2020 to 2025, followed by Malaysia (4%), Indonesia (3.8%), and China (2.8%).

"From 2020 to 2025,



Lion's share: Among these strategic sectors, AI infrastructure and related technologies attracted the largest share. REUTERS

strategic sectors grew from 16% to 44% of global greenfield investment, which captures both their rapid progression and current importance," UNCTAD said

in the report.

Among these strategic sectors, artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure and related technologies attracted the largest share

of 12.4% of the \$845.7 billion of overall global greenfield investment that took place within this period. AI infrastructure was followed by the semiconductor value chain (8.1%) and energy transition technologies and services (7.8%).

"The geographic disparity in strategic investment underscores the growing integration challenges for the Global South, especially for the least developed countries," the UNCTAD report said.

It pointed out that Europe accounted for 28.4% of strategic investment and North America captured

another 28%.

"Even among developing economies, capital is primarily funnelled into developing Asia (26.5%), with China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore as leading jurisdictions for new investments," the report said.

The report also shows that India ranks high in terms of the number of industrial policies it has implemented over the last two decades or so. During 2008-21, India implemented 1,416 industrial policies, behind only China (4,201) and the U.S. (4,025).

3. India's Share of Global Greenfield Investment More Than Doubles China's

GS-3: Indian Economy, Foreign Direct Investment, Industrial Growth, Global Value Chains

Context: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in its World Investment Report 2026, reported that India accounted for 5.7% of global greenfield investment during 2020–2025, compared with China's 2.8%, reflecting India's growing importance as an investment destination.

1. Key Findings of the Report

1. Investment Share: India accounted for 5.7% of global greenfield investment, followed by Malaysia (4%), Indonesia (3.8%) and China (2.8%).

2. Greenfield Investment: Refers to establishing new businesses, factories or facilities in another country, creating fresh productive capacity, employment and infrastructure.

3. Strategic Sectors: The share of strategic sectors in global greenfield investment increased from 16% to 44% between 2020 and 2025.

4. Leading Investment Sectors: Artificial Intelligence (AI) infrastructure and related technologies accounted for 12.4% of global greenfield investment, followed by semiconductors (8.1%) and energy-transition technologies and services (7.8%).

5. Geographical Concentration: Europe accounted for 28.4% of strategic investment, North America 28% and developing Asia 26.5%, highlighting unequal access to investment.

2. Significance for India

1. Manufacturing and Employment: New factories and facilities can create jobs, expand production and strengthen industrial development.

2. Technology Transfer: Investment in AI, semiconductors and clean energy can improve technological capabilities, innovation and domestic value addition.

3. Global Supply Chains: India can benefit as companies diversify production across countries, reducing excessive dependence on concentrated manufacturing hubs.

4. Export Competitiveness: Greater investment can strengthen infrastructure, exports and integration into global value chains.

3. Challenges

1. Implementation Bottlenecks: Land acquisition, regulatory uncertainty, delayed approvals and Centre–State coordination can slow projects.

2. Infrastructure and Skills: Logistics constraints, power requirements and shortages of specialised skills can limit investment in advanced industries.

3. Unequal Investment Distribution: Strategic investment remains concentrated in developed economies, creating challenges for developing countries in attracting technology-intensive projects.

4. Investment-to-Production Gap: Announced commitments do not automatically translate into operational facilities, jobs or technology transfer.

4. Way Forward

1. **Improve the Business Environment:** Simplify approvals, ensure predictable regulations and strengthen contract enforcement and dispute resolution.
2. **Build Industrial Capabilities:** Invest in logistics, reliable power, skilled workers, research and development, and domestic supplier networks.
3. **Strengthen Centre–State Coordination:** Establish time-bound clearances and effective monitoring of investment projects.
4. **Target Strategic Sectors:** Encourage investment in semiconductors, AI infrastructure, renewable energy and advanced manufacturing while building domestic capabilities.

• LEGAL

The rights & restrictions around holding protests



AMAAAL SHEIKH

THE DELHI Police has formally denied permission to the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) to hold a protest at Jantar Mantar on October 10, citing short notice. Police said the pressure group sought permission on October 7, three days before the march, but should have done so at least 10 days before a gathering. The protests are part of demonstrations demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

What does the law say about the right to protest? And what recourse do organisers have when permission is denied?

Right to protest

Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution protects the right to free speech and expression. Clause (b) guarantees the right to assemble peacefully and without arms. These provisions protect a citizen's ability to gather and express dissent. But neither right is absolute. Article 19(2) permits restrictions on speech on specific grounds, including public order, while 19(3) allows "reasonable restrictions" on peaceful assembly in the interest of public order.

The Supreme Court, in its 2018 ruling in *Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan*, set out how the two fit together. The matter pertained to a challenge to repeated Delhi police orders restricting public meetings, processions, and demonstrations in Central Delhi under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (now Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, or BNSS) without written permission. The court heard the matter alongside an appeal against a National Green Tribunal Order that had directed a halt to protests on Jantar Mantar Road after residents complained of noise, litter and occupation of public space.

A bench comprising Justices A K Sikri and Ashok Bhushan said: "Undoubtedly, holding peaceful demonstrations by the citizenry in order to air its grievances and to ensure that these grievances are heard in the relevant quarters is its fundamental right."

The court held that the authorities had



failed to adequately regulate demonstrations and that this had contributed to the problems flagged by residents. It said that a provision for prior permission can be made, seeking permission from the Police Commissioner or his delegated authority for holding such demonstrations. Senior Advocate Shadan Farasat told *The Indian Express* that the Constitutional right to protest must guide the interpretation and application of police rules and regulations.

What the guidelines say

The Delhi Police guidelines set out a procedure for seeking permission to hold demonstrations at Jantar Mantar.

Applications must ordinarily be submitted to the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) at least 10 days before the proposed event. Applications submitted later "may also be considered depending on the availability of the space" and whether there is "sufficient time for arrangements".

The 10-day requirement should not by itself be treated or read as an absolute bar on considering applications submitted at shorter notice. The guidelines expressly contemplate late applications and that they may be considered, subject to circumstances.

Applications are assessed on a "first-come, first-serve" basis, subject to review by the Special Branch, traffic police and New Delhi district police. The DCP has to consider whether the demonstration is likely to obstruct traffic, endanger human safety or public tranquillity.

The DCP may also revoke permission in the event of unforeseen developments, including VIP security requirements or intel-

Police barricades at Ashoka Road in New Delhi on Friday.
PRAVEEN KHANNA

Permission requirement

In a 2018 ruling, the Supreme Court said the requirement for permission must not become a way to reject every protest.

Such protests can be effectively regulated by adopting various measures instead of banning them altogether, it said.

intelligence inputs. In such cases, the order states "the reasons for revocation shall be duly recorded and conveyed to the organisers".

The order also sets conditions for the protest itself. The gathering cannot exceed 1,000 people at Jantar Mantar. "Beyond this threshold, venue of the protest can be at Ramliya Ground, which can accommodate up to 50,000 persons."

When permission is denied

The immediate option is to approach the police again. The organisers can seek reconsideration, respond to the reasons for refusal or propose a smaller gathering, a shorter duration or an alternative venue.

The standing order does not set out a separate appeal against a refusal. It says the DCP's decision "shall be final and binding on the organiser(s)".

The order treats revocation and refusal differently. When police first grant permission and then cancel it, clause 3(v) says that the reasons "shall be duly recorded and conveyed to the organiser(s)". Refusal, however, is when police reject the application in the first place.

If an organiser believes that the refusal is arbitrary or unsupported by the guidelines or inconsistent with the right to peaceful assembly, they can approach the Delhi High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution.

If the protest continues despite denial or in violation of the prohibitory order, anyone violating it could be booked under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (formerly Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code), which deals with knowingly disobeying a lawful order issued by a public

The Constitution guarantees the right to assemble peacefully. Police have powers to deny or revoke permission. What recourse do organisers have?

servant. The punishment can include imprisonment or a fine. "But this also has to be looked at in the context of a Constitutional right to protest," Farasat said. "Those being charged could then argue that without giving any alternative space, any indication, and any genuine mechanism to protest, this is a complete blockage. The exercise of power under Section 163 is in the teeth of the Constitutional right to protest."

The guidelines say that the conduct of organisers may also be considered in future applications. The Delhi Police Standing Order states that protests and organisers may be videographed.

Farasat said that the restriction on protests without an alternative venue is a Constitutional error. "The law also is that the place of protest has to be in the vicinity of the powers that be, where those you are asking certain measures from are in a position to hear you," he said.

In case of a prohibitory order

A prohibitory order is a magistrate's written order that bars certain activity in an area, such as the assembly of five or more people. Section 163 of BNSS provides for it.

A separate remedy is available against such an order. Under Section 163(5), an aggrieved person can apply to the issuing magistrate to rescind or alter it. Section 163(7) requires the magistrate to give the applicant an early opportunity to appear and show cause. If the application is rejected wholly or partly, reasons must be recorded in writing.

The Supreme Court has recognised this right even where the order was passed without hearing anyone. In *Babulal Parate v State of Maharashtra* (1961) the Constitution Bench said affected persons "have a right to challenge the order of the Magistrate".

The court has said what a prohibitory order can't do. In *Ramlila Maidan Incident* (2012), it said preventive steps "should be founded on actual and prominent threat endangering public order and tranquillity as it may disturb social order". The power, it said, "has to be exercised with great caution and free from arbitrariness". In the 2018 ruling, the court applied this to permission. It said requirement for permission must not become a way to reject every protest. Such demonstrations can be "effectively regulated by adopting various measures instead of banning them altogether".

FULL VERSION ON
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4. The Rights and Restrictions Around Holding Protests

GS Paper II: Fundamental Rights, Judiciary and Governance

Context: Delhi Police denied permission for a proposed protest at Jantar Mantar on 10 October 2026, organised by the Campaign for Judicial and Political Accountability (CJP) and student groups demanding Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's resignation over alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

1. Reasons for Denial

1. **Short Notice:** The application was reportedly submitted on 7 October, only three days before the protest, whereas police guidelines ordinarily require around 10 days' notice.
2. **Previous Non-Compliance:** Police cited alleged violations of earlier protest conditions, including exceeding permitted hours and alleged misconduct.
3. **Public Safety and Traffic:** Authorities raised concerns about overcrowding, traffic disruption, inconvenience to residents and possible law-and-order problems.
4. **Section 163, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023:** Police cited prohibitory restrictions intended to prevent threats to public order and safety. These are police-stated grounds, not judicial findings.

2. Constitutional Provisions

1. **Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees freedom of speech and expression, enabling citizens to criticise government policies and express political dissent.
2. **Article 19(1)(b):** Protects the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, forming the constitutional basis for public demonstrations.
3. **Articles 19(2) and 19(3):** Allow reasonable restrictions on speech and peaceful assembly, respectively, including on grounds of public order.
4. **Article 21:** Protects life and personal liberty, requiring the State to safeguard citizens while respecting their freedoms.

3. Important Supreme Court Judgments

1. **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v. Union of India (2018):** The Court emphasised balancing the right to protest with residents' rights and public order. Restrictions must be reasonable rather than automatically prohibiting demonstrations.

2. Ramlila Maidan Incident v. Union of India (2012): Established that police action against protesters must respect fundamental rights and satisfy the requirement of proportionality.

3. Amit Sahni v. Commissioner of Police (2020): Held that public roads cannot be occupied indefinitely for demonstrations because other citizens also have rights to movement and access.

4. Legal Restrictions and Remedies

1. Preventive Powers under Section 163, BNSS: An Executive Magistrate may issue written orders in urgent cases involving danger, obstruction or threatened public tranquillity. An order ordinarily lasts up to two months, subject to a lawful extension by the State Government.

2. Judicial Review under Article 226: Organisers can approach the High Court if permission is denied arbitrarily or restrictions are disproportionate to the actual threat.

3. Alternative Arrangements: Authorities can consider a different venue, revised timings, crowd limits and traffic diversions to facilitate peaceful protests while maintaining public order.

5. Way Forward

1. Transparent Procedures: Publish clear permission timelines and provide specific reasons for refusing applications.

2. Proportionate Restrictions: Base restrictions on credible safety assessments and use the least restrictive measures necessary.

3. Administrative Accountability: Apply rules consistently, while requiring organisers to comply with lawful conditions.

4. Protection of Democratic Dissent: Facilitate peaceful demonstrations while protecting residents, commuters and other citizens from avoidable disruption.

INDIA REMAINS VULNERABLE TO SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS

Critical minerals stockpiling policy likely in a month

Pratyush Deep

New Delhi, October 9

THE CENTRE is planning to come up with a new policy on stockpiling of critical minerals within a month amid increasing concerns around supply chain disruptions, and to cut import dependency. “We are making very elaborate plans for the stockpiles,” said Keshav Chandra, Secretary, Ministry of Mines, speaking at India Mines and Minerals Conclave 2026 organised by Industry body ASSOCHAM.

The policy is likely to be finalised within a month, he added.

A stockpile is a strategic reserve maintained to ensure an uninterrupted supply of critical minerals. Notably, critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earth elements are essential raw materials required to fuel the growth of clean energy technologies and their expanding uses across wind turbines, electricity networks, electric vehicles and battery manufacturing.

However, India has little processing capacity for these critical minerals and is 100% import-dependent for most of these minerals. India’s efforts to secure critical mineral assets overseas are also facing a series of hurdles.

The government’s flagship



A stockpile is a strategic reserve maintained to ensure an uninterrupted supply of critical minerals. REUTERS

often uses it as leverage during times of trade tensions.

To safeguard the country from any supply disruptions, India’s National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM) has proposed to develop a National Critical Mineral Stockpile Programme for stockpiling critical and strategic minerals. For the development of such a reserve, the government also commits to allocate Rs 500 crore for the mission period of seven years, from 2024-25 to 2030-31.

The National Critical Minerals Stockpile will have at least 5 critical minerals, designed to mitigate risks from global supply chain disruptions and ensure

Push for critical mineral processing

Given India’s limited critical mineral processing capacity and China’s dominance in the sector, the country remains vulnerable to supply disruptions. To address this strategic vulnerability, India is stepping up policy measures to expand domestic processing capacity and reduce its dependence on China.

To boost domestic processing capacity, the government has identified four states — Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat and Maharashtra — to promote the setting up of critical mineral processing plants.

5. Critical Minerals Stockpiling Policy Likely Within a Month

GSIII: Indian Economy, Energy Security, Infrastructure and Science & Technology

Context: The Union Government plans to finalise a policy for strategic stockpiling of critical minerals to protect India against global supply-chain disruptions, import dependence and China's dominance in mineral processing.

1. Critical Minerals: Meaning and Importance

1. **Meaning:** Minerals essential for economic development and national security whose supply is vulnerable to geopolitical tensions, import dependence or limited availability.

2. **Examples and uses:** Lithium and cobalt for batteries; nickel for batteries and alloys; copper for electricity networks; rare earth elements for wind turbines, electric vehicles, electronics and defence technologies.

3. **Strategic importance:** Essential for India's clean-energy transition, advanced manufacturing, electric mobility, electronics and defence production.

2. Key Data: India's Vulnerability

1. **China's dominance:** China controls around 90% of global critical mineral processing, according to the newspaper report.

2. **Import dependence:** India has limited processing capacity and relies heavily on imports for several critical minerals.

3. **Overseas sourcing:** Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) has acquired rights relating to five lithium brine blocks in Argentina, covering approximately 15,703 hectares, according to government information.

4. **Supply-chain risk:** Export restrictions, geopolitical tensions or disruptions in shipping can affect battery manufacturing, renewable energy and other strategic industries.

3. National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM)

The National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM) was approved by the Union Cabinet on 29 January 2025 to secure critical mineral supplies and strengthen India's domestic and international mineral value chains.

1. **Duration and outlay:** Seven years, from 2024–25 to 2030–31, with government expenditure of ₹16,300 crore and expected investment of ₹18,000 crore from public sector undertakings and other sources.

2. **Exploration and overseas acquisition:** Expand domestic exploration, accelerate mining projects and encourage Indian companies to acquire mineral assets abroad.

3. Recycling: A ₹1,500-crore incentive scheme supports recovery of critical minerals from lithium-ion battery scrap, electronic waste and other eligible waste streams.

4. Processing parks: ₹500 crore is earmarked for critical mineral processing parks to develop domestic refining and processing capabilities.

5. Research and technology: Promote indigenous extraction, mineral processing, recycling technologies and skilled manpower.

6. Strategic stockpile: ₹500 crore is allocated under the Mission for developing a National Critical Mineral Stockpile Programme to maintain reserves of at least five critical minerals and provide supplies during emergencies.

4. Proposed Stockpiling Policy

1. Strategic reserves: Maintain essential minerals for uninterrupted industrial use during global supply disruptions.

2. Public-private partnership: Central Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and private companies are expected to collaborate in establishing and managing the stockpile.

3. Supply management: The policy is expected to specify how reserves will be released, including eligible users and quantities, to ensure that scarce minerals reach priority industries.

4. Domestic processing: Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat and Maharashtra have been identified for developing critical mineral processing parks, with state-level focus areas including rare earth elements, nickel and lithium.

5. Challenges and Way Forward

1. Diversify imports: Build partnerships with resource-rich countries to reduce excessive dependence on China or any single supplier.

2. Develop domestic capacity: Invest in mining, refining, recycling and indigenous processing technologies rather than relying only on imported raw materials.

3. Improve stockpile management: Decide reserve quantities according to import dependence, industrial demand, storage costs and disruption risks.

4. Ensure sustainability: Promote responsible mining, environmental safeguards and recovery of valuable minerals from discarded batteries and electronic waste.

• ECONOMICS

How India's growth rate keeps beating forecasts



**GRAPHS,
DATA,
PERSPECTIVES**
BY UDIT MISRA

WEEKLY ECONOMIC AND POLICY INSIGHTS USING DATA

IN ITS latest monetary policy review this week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised this financial year's GDP growth forecast to 7.1%. At one level, this shows the economy's resilience to geopolitical challenges. Behind this upgrade is a story of yo-yoing forecasts. At the start of the financial year, RBI expected the GDP to grow at 6.9%. In June, it rolled it back to 6.6%, before moving it up to 6.7% in August and 7.1% now.

Over the past few years, the actual growth rate has repeatedly beaten professional forecasts, raising a question: How can the economy beat forecasts every time? To understand this, it is better to look at forecasts by RBI's panel of professional forecasters. Since September 2007, the RBI has been conducting a survey of professional forecasters involving respected economists every two months.

We have looked at the median forecast for real Gross Value Added (GVA) in RBI's survey in March each year. The GVA is a better variable than GDP here because GDP is arrived at by taking the GVA and then adding taxes earned by the government and removing subsidies from it.

The table shows a clear trend. Up until the 2021-22 financial year, the actual GVA growth rate mostly turned out to be lower than what forecasts suggested at the start of the fiscal. Even if one keeps 2020-21 aside because forecasts made in March were rendered useless by the start of April due to

6. How India's Growth Rate Keeps Beating Forecasts

GS-3 — Indian Economy, Economic Growth and Monetary Policy

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth forecast for 2026–27 to 7.1%, reflecting India's economic resilience amid global uncertainties.

1. GDP vs Gross Value Added (GVA)

Gross Value Added (GVA): Measures the value created by producers across agriculture, industry and services after deducting intermediate consumption.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Measures the value of final goods and services produced within the economy. GDP at market prices equals GVA plus product taxes minus product subsidies.

Why GVA matters: It helps assess the performance of individual economic sectors without the direct effect of net product taxes.

2. Growth Forecasts vs Actual Performance

Recent trend: Since 2022–23, actual economic growth has generally exceeded professional forecasts.

2023–24: Actual Real GVA growth was 8.6%, against a forecast of 5.8%.

2025–26: Actual GVA growth was 7.9%, against a forecast of 6.4%.

Earlier slowdown: Growth was 3.9% in 2019–20, against a forecast of 7.1%.

Pandemic impact: GVA contracted by 4.2% in 2020–21 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Why Does Actual Growth Exceed Forecasts?

Conservative projections: Economists often adopt cautious estimates because future economic conditions are uncertain.

Geopolitical tensions: Conflicts, crude oil price fluctuations and trade tariffs make growth difficult to predict.

Stronger economic activity: Consumption, investment and production may perform better than anticipated.

Unpredictable developments: Domestic and global events can change economic performance after forecasts are prepared.

Data revisions: Changes in national accounts methodology and the base year can affect historical estimates and comparisons.

4. **Way Forward**

Improve data quality: Ensure timely, reliable economic statistics and transparent revisions.

Refine forecasting models: Incorporate geopolitical risks, commodity prices and domestic economic conditions.

Use multiple indicators: Assess consumption, investment, employment and industrial output alongside growth forecasts.

Strengthen resilience: Diversify supply chains, promote domestic manufacturing and reduce external vulnerabilities.

Ensure inclusive growth: Translate economic expansion into employment, higher incomes and improved living standards.

Online facility for pregnant women to book lower train berths soon

Dheeraj Mishra
New Delhi, October 9

IN RELIEF to pregnant women passengers, the Railway Board has allowed them to book lower berths online, a facility that until now was available only offline.

The board has asked the Centre For Railway Information Systems (CRIS) and Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to make necessary modifications in all the online booking portals of Indian Railways to enable the option of lower berth booking for pregnant women.

Until now, pregnant women could avail this facility only while booking tickets through

offline mode at railway counters, where they had to submit a pregnancy certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner to get a lower berth. The lower berth quota is also earmarked for senior citizens and women above 45 years of age.

The Delhi High Court had issued notice to the Railways on September 16 on a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking online facility for pregnant women to book lower berths.

"The matter has been reviewed and it has been decided that pregnant women may also be permitted to avail the facility to book accommodation under combined lower-berth quota through online as well as offline



The combined lower berth quota is also earmarked for senior citizens and female passengers of 45 years of age & above

mode of booking, on the lines of the similar facility available to senior citizens and female passengers of 45 years of age and above. The condition of furnishing proof of pregnancy by such

passengers while booking a ticket under this quota across the reservation counter is also dispensed with," said the Board in its order on September 28.

While the Railway Board has

approved the facility, it may take time for CRIS and IRCTC to make necessary changes to their online booking portals and apps.

However, if this category of passengers fails to produce proof, they might face action under the Railway Act. "Whenever any person booking accommodation under lower berth quota fails to produce the proof of age (in case of senior citizen & female passengers of 45 years and above), and certificate from registered medical practitioner in case of pregnant women, necessary action as per Section 138 of Railway Act 1989 shall be taken," said the Board.

According to the Railways, 6-7 lower berths per coach in

sleeper class, 4-5 lower berths per coach in AC 3 tier, and 3-4 lower berths per coach in AC 2 tier are earmarked in trains for these passengers. Even if no choice is given, these berths are allotted automatically to senior citizens and female passengers above 45 years, subject to availability. Apart from this, the facility of reservation quota for Persons with Disabilities is applicable in all mail/express trains, including Rajdhani and Shatabdi-type trains, where four berths in Sleeper Class (including two lower berths), four berths in 3AC/3E (including two lower berths) and four seats in reserved Second Sitting (2S) or air-conditioned chair car (CC).

7. **Online Lower-Berth Booking Facility for Pregnant Women**

GS-1 — Women and Social Empowerment; GS-2 — Governance and Digital Service Delivery

Context: The Railway Board has directed the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) and Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to enable pregnant women to book lower berths online, a facility previously available only through railway reservation counters.

1. **Key Features**

- 1. Online Booking:** Pregnant women will be able to access the combined lower-berth quota through online reservation platforms, reducing the need for physical visits to railway counters.
- 2. Simplified Documentation:** The requirement to submit a pregnancy certificate at the reservation counter for booking under this quota is proposed to be waived.
- 3. Existing Quota:** The combined lower-berth quota also covers senior citizens and female passengers aged 45 years and above, subject to availability.
- 4. Berth Allocation:** According to the report, each coach has approximately 6–7 lower berths in Sleeper Class, 4–5 in Air-Conditioned Three-Tier and 3–4 in Air-Conditioned Two-Tier reserved under the relevant quota.

2. Significance: Women-Centric Governance

- 1. Gender-Sensitive Policymaking:** Recognises pregnant women's specific travel needs and adapts public transport services to improve comfort and dignity.
- 2. Substantive Equality:** Demonstrates that equitable service delivery may require targeted arrangements to address the distinct needs of women.
- 3. Ease of Living:** Reduces procedural burdens, paperwork and the need to visit reservation counters.
- 4. Responsive Governance:** The initiative followed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) before the Delhi High Court, illustrating how citizen grievances and judicial intervention can encourage administrative reform.