



# Delhi to increase water supply with 249 tube wells and enhanced tanker fleets

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

In a bid to address the city's persistent water shortages, Delhi's Water Minister, Parvesh Verma, unveiled a series of initiatives on Wednesday aimed at boosting the capital's water supply and improving infrastructure. The plan includes the mandatory installation of biometric attendance systems for Delhi Jal Board (DJB) staff, the addition of 249 new tube wells, and a substantial increase in the number of water tankers deployed across the city.



July. Alongside this, the number of water tankers will rise from 901 to 1,327, although Verma acknowledged that tankers are a short-term fix for a much larger problem. Verma also highlighted the establishment of a new command centre to better monitor water distribution across the city, with plans for its inauguration by Chief Minister Rekha

Gupta in the coming days. The Minister stressed that despite these temporary measures, a more comprehensive solution is needed to address the root causes of Delhi's water shortages. Other notable initiatives include the deployment of 32 new super sucker machines for sewer cleaning, with tenders for an additional 30 machines ap-

proved. In the coming months, the government plans to desilt all gutters and sewers and install sensors in water tankers to ensure accurate monitoring of water levels. Verma also drew attention to the pressing need for infrastructure repairs, citing a Rs 4 crore water project in Sangam Vihar that remains unusable due to leaks and outdated pipelines. To improve efficiency and accountability, the government will install fingerprint scanners in DJB offices to track employee attendance and recruit 180 junior engineers for maintenance work. The number of laborers per constituency will also be doubled from 10 to 20, in a bid to streamline operations and enhance service delivery. These measures form part of the Delhi government's ongoing efforts to address the city's chronic water issues and build a more sustainable water management system for the future.

# Former CM Atishi requests retention of central-pool bungalow as LoP Delhi assembly

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

Former Delhi Chief Minister Atishi has formally requested that the Public Works Department (PWD) allow her to retain the AB-17 bungalow on Mathura Road, which she has been occupying since her tenure as Chief Minister. LoP Atishi, now serving as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Delhi Assembly, has requested either continued residence at the Mathura Road bungalow or an alternative accommodation to be allotted to her, specifically the Ansari Road bungalow in Daryaganj. PWD sources confirmed that Atishi still resides in the Mathura Road property, which had previously been allotted to former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. After his arrest, the bungalow was reassigned to Atishi. However, PWD officials have stated that the bungalow is part of the central government's



pool of residences, meaning it may not be available for her long-term use. As of now, no decision has been made regarding her request. Sources within the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) revealed that Atishi's initial request to retain the Mathura Road bungalow was denied, with the PWD informing her that the residence is centrally managed. In response, Atishi has asked the PWD to allot her the bungalow on Ansari Road, which had been used by party leader Jasmine Shah during her tenure as Vice-Chairman of the Delhi Dialogue and Development Commission. A senior official from the

PWD explained that Atishi had written to the department in March requesting the Mathura Road residence. "She was told that the bungalow belongs to the Centre's pool, and the decision on her official residence is still pending," the official said. The AB-17 bungalow, located near Bharat Mandapam, has been home to various senior politicians in the past, including former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit and Sisodia. Following Sisodia's legal issues, the property was assigned to Atishi, but with the ongoing uncertainty over her request, she remains in residence. Meanwhile, PWD officials noted that new Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has yet to be allotted an official residence, despite more than a month having passed since her appointment. Sources say the government is currently looking for a suitable bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi, keeping in mind its proximity to the Secretariat. In the interim, Gupta is residing at her personal residence.

# Battle against RSS-BJP continues: Kharge to District Presidents



The Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has said that the party's battle against the RSS and the BJP will continue. He said the united front against the RSS-BJP during 2024 General Elections had prevented the BJP from getting absolute majority and saved the constitution from their desire to change it. He also emphasised the need for voter list management. Addressing the first leg of the District Presidents from 13 states and 3 union territories here today, he underlined the importance of the meeting, pointing out that the party had called all District Presidents from across the country just before the AICC session. Maintaining that in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections INDIA parties fought unitedly against the BJP alliance, restricting them to 240 seats, he said, "our 'Save Constitution' campaign exposed BJP-RSS' secret desire to change the Constitution". He said, "while the Congress secured almost 100 seats, if we had worked harder, we could have gained 20-30 more seats and a gain of such seats could have led to the formation of an alternative government in the country".

# Growing Stars CDC celebrates world autism awareness day with special event

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

Growing Stars Child Development Centre (CDC) celebrated World Autism Awareness Day by organizing a special event to showcase the extraordinary talents of children with autism. The event, held at the center, featured performances in dance, singing, and public speaking, underscoring the potential of neurodiverse children and raising awareness about autism and child development. Children with autism captivated the audience with their remarkable skills, highlighting how, with the right support, they can excel in various fields. The event also included an insightful presentation by Dr. Deepa Gautam, Founder of Growing Stars CDC, and Pratyaksh Trivedi, an Occupational Therapist. They discussed "How Senses Affect Child Development," offering valuable insights into sensory integration and therapeutic strategies for children with autism. Dr. Santosh Kumar, Director of Chetna Foundation and a pediatric specialist, graced the event as the chief guest. In his address, he praised the children's incredible performances and emphasized the importance of early intervention. "Today, we witnessed that every child, regardless of their challenges, holds immense potential. With proper guidance, therapy, and inclusive education, children with autism can lead fulfilling lives and contribute meaningfully to society," Dr. Kumar stated. The Growing Stars CDC team also presented a powerful group dance performance, symbolizing the organization's journey and commitment to supporting neurodiverse children. Dr. Kumar honored the dedication of the children and staff by distributing awards and certificates, motivating them to continue their progress.

# Delhi Extends EV Policy by 15 Days; New Draft to Focus on Electric Buses & Cars

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi government has announced a 15-day extension to its current Electric Vehicle (EV) policy following its expiration. Officials have indicated this will be the final extension as a new draft policy has already been prepared and awaits implementation. Under the existing policy, EV buyers receive various financial incentives including a 25 per cent purchase subsidy (up to Rs 5,500) for e-cycles, Rs 30,000 for e-rickshaws and e-carts, Rs 5,000 per kWh of battery capacity (capped at Rs 30,000) for two-wheelers, and Rs 30,000 for e-light commercial vehicles. A senior official revealed that the upcoming policy will shift focus toward promoting adoption



of electric buses and cars while implementing disincentives for petrol, diesel, and CNG vehicles. The short extension period is designed to ensure policy continuity during the transition to the new framework. The revised policy, expected to be announced next month as Delhi's Electric Vehicle Policy 2.0, will introduce fresh incentives for EV buyers alongside stricter measures to phase out fossil fuel-based vehicles. The original policy had expired in August 2023 before

receiving extensions through 2025. According to sources, the new policy will mandate EV charging points for at least 20 per cent of parking spaces in all new buildings, while older buildings will need to allocate 5 per cent of total parking for charging infrastructure. Buildings with large parking areas will face specific provisions for EV charging facilities. Additionally, the draft policy proposes that all garbage collection vehicles operated by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Jal Board (DJB), and other civic agencies transition to electric vehicles in phases, with the goal of achieving a fully electric fleet by 2027.

# Delhi to relocate 1,000 anganwadi centres to government schools to enhance facilities



OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

In a major step to improve early childhood care, around 1,000 Anganwadi centres in Delhi will be co-located with government schools over the next three months, officials from the Women and Child Development Department announced. This initiative aims to enhance infrastructure and provide better services for young children, ensuring access to quality healthcare, nutrition, and early learning opportunities. The newly relocated centres will be designated as Saksham Anganwadis under the Poshan 2.0 program, an integrated nutrition support scheme designed to promote child welfare. The program focuses on improving facilities such as healthcare, safety, responsive caregiving, and learning environments for children to help them reach their full potential. "These changes are part of a broader effort to provide better infrastructure for children's

early development. It is essential that they receive the right nutrition, healthcare, and opportunities for early education to support their growth," an official said. The relocation will involve transferring Anganwadi centres to a mix of Delhi government schools, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) schools, and institutions under the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB). The process is expected to be completed within three months, with financial aid for infrastructure upgrades coming through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). To date, 153 MCD schools have been identified for relocation, with efforts continuing to identify additional schools that can accommodate the centres. Officials explained that moving Anganwadis into schools would address infrastructure challenges faced in rented spaces, making it easier to improve facilities for children.

# Ten year old minor became pregnant, rapist arrested

SATISH HANDA  
Rohtak



In a shameful incident in Rohtak, a 10 years old minor child complaining of severe stomach pain was taken to PGI in Rohtak where her ultrasound was done and the report revealed that the minor was pregnant. On the information of child the police have arrested the accused, a 35-year-old man identified as Ravi, being close to the girl's father frequently visiting their house whose wife died about four years ago, had raped minor girl. The accused used to lure the girl by giving her cold drinks and sweets, misbehaving with the girl after which the minor became pregnant. According to the CIA Staff of police started investigation in the case, the accused Ravi who used to work with the girl's father earlier used to visit the girl's house and the girl's entire family knew the accused, as such taking advantage of this, the accused committed abominable acts a couple of times on the girl when she was alone at



home. He used to give her cold drinks and sweets to entertain her. Meanwhile, the doctors have discharged the girl from PGIMS on Monday. On March 27, the 10-year-old victim girl was admitted to PGIMS after her health dete-

riorated, there, an ultrasound test revealed that the girl was pregnant. However, the doctors got the girl aborted as per the rules, after this, the police registered a case in the matter on the statement of the girl and his family. Rohtak SP Narendra Bijaria formed a team under the leadership of Kuldeep Kadyan CIA One in-charge and City Police Station and ordered an investigation by female investigating officer Santosh ASI and arrested the accused Ravi during the investigation. The counseling of the girl child was done when it was revealed that Ravi had misbehaved with her and sexually assaulted her. But the victim girl's father did not know where the accused lived at present, in such a situation, it was difficult for the police to reach the accused. However, the police gathered information about the accused by interrogating him at many of his old hideouts, the police team was able to reach the accused by connecting the dots, who initially refused the crime, but admitted when the police investigation team applied third degree measures.

# Gujarat HC extends Asaram's temporary bail by 3 months for medical treatment



**AHMEDABAD:** The Gujarat High Court has extended self-styled godman Asaram Bapu's temporary bail by three months, citing the need for continued medical treatment. The 86-year-old, who is serving a life sentence in Jodhpur Central Jail for rape, had earlier been granted interim bail due to heart-related ailments and other age-related health complications. The Supreme Court had initially granted Asaram temporary bail until March 31, 2025, on medical grounds. With the latest decision from the Gujarat High Court, his temporary release has now been extended further. Asaram, once a revered spiritual leader with millions of followers, has faced multiple legal battles over the past decade.

# Many cases of husbands being harassed by their wives have come to light in country after Saurabh murder case in Meerut

SATISH HANDA  
New Delhi



Saurabh Rajput (29), who was hacked to death and sealed in a drum with cement by his wife Muskaan Rastogi and her lover Sahil Shukla in Meerut and the incident hitting headlines of every newspaper as well as electronic media in which the woman chop alcoholic husband along with her lover in Meerut and seal him inside drum with cement. Both the accused have been lodged in the jail since March 19 after a court sent the duo to judicial custody for 14 days. Recently, after this murder case, in another case, a woman

in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut allegedly threatened to cut her husband into pieces and seal him in a drum if he did not change his behaviour and excessive use of liquor. The incident was reported from Meerut's Kanker Khera region when a youth approached the local police station after the alleged threat from his wife that she will chop him into pieces and pack him in a drum' in the same way as Muskan had killed her husband Saurabh with a smile, saying his fate will be like Saurabh's. The complainant alleged his wife of

attacking him on the head with a brick, causing serious injuries to him, has also threatened to chop him into pieces and pack in Drum Like Saurabh Rajput Murder Case. The Saurabh Rajput murder case of Meerut is being discussed all over the country. After the murder, the blue drum is also being discussed and it is becoming a means of threat. According to police, in the latest case, a wife has given a similar threat to her husband when the husband and wife had a fight over excessive use of liquor by him, and the wife first beat up the husband and then threatened him that if you fight, you will meet in the drum. A video is viral on social media in which the husband who has received the threat works as a labourer a resident of labour colony under Kanarkhedha police station area of Meerut district alleged that his wife married 5 years ago also had an argument on Sunday night when he was intoxicated.

ened that if he does not stop his antics, he will be chopped into pieces and packed in a drum. Information revealed that there was often a quarrel between husband and wife over drinking alcohol. This time also the husband came home after drinking alcohol and once again there was a dispute over this matter. It is alleged that the husband was sleeping till late in the morning, so the wife woke him up. When the wife woke him up. When the husband protested, the wife hit him on the head with a brick. After this the matter reached the police. However, later the police explained to both of them and made them compromise and then sent them back home. Sources reveal, even though this case has been solved by Meerut police. The couple, married for five years with two children, had a troubled relationship due to a husband's addiction to alcohol. The couple had an argument on Sunday night when he was intoxicated.

# BJP's approach to convince JDU and TDP about the Waqf Amendment Bill, astonishing opposition



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA

By garnering support for the Waqf Bill, the BJP has effectively demonstrated that, despite relying on coalition partners to govern at the centre, Prime Minister Narendra Modi can still secure backing from these allies on contentious issues. However, both the JD(U) and TDP have a significant portion of Muslim voters within their electoral base. With assembly elections scheduled in Bihar this year, where the JD(U) is one of the major parties, the opposition is astonished at how the BJP managed to persuade the JD(U), a party that has consistently opposed issues concerning Muslims. In the past, when issues related to Muslims have arisen, both the JD(U) and TDP, as well as Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), have consistently expressed differing opinions from the BJP. Notably, the JD(U) has

frequently voiced its dissent regarding the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). However, during the election season in Bihar, the JD(U) chose to support the NDA on the Waqf Bill. The reality is that for the past year, the BJP has been working to clarify aspects of the bill to the opposition, focusing on how it will benefit ordinary Muslim voters, women, and widows, rather than adhering to the narrative constructed by the opposition. Over this period, the party has held more than a dozen meetings with its allied parties regarding the bill. Consequently, while the opposition has crafted a narrative against the bill, the NDA and its allies are planning to promote the positive aspects of the Waqf Bill, also known as 'Umeed,' through various national programs immediately following the conclusion of the parliamentary session. According to sources, the government is preparing points to illustrate how

this bill will benefit women and how it can help release the properties of ordinary Muslims from Waqf control. According to the government, one of the most significant changes proposed in the Waqf Amendment Bill of 2025 is the protection of women's inheritance rights under family waqf (waqf-alal-awlad). The bill stipulates that waqf property can only be dedicated once it is ensured that female heirs receive their rightful share of inheritance. This provision directly addresses long-standing concerns regarding the neglect of inheritance laws, which have often disadvantaged women. Tarun Chugh, the National General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party, has remarked that certain leaders from the Congress and Samajwadi Party have succumbed to mental bankruptcy and are acting like puppets in collusion with land mafias that exploit waqf properties for electoral gains. Section 3(R)(iv) stipulates that the income generated from waqf can now be utilized for the maintenance and welfare of vulnerable groups, thereby ensuring economic security and social stability for those in need. This provision reinforces the government's commitment to gender justice, aligning with the principles of Islamic welfare.



ANIRUDH SHINGAL ADVISES INDIA TO CUT TRADE BARRIERS TO COUNTER RECIPROCAL US TARIFFS



## Time to untangle reciprocal tariffs



Plan.' These countries include Canada, the EU, Japan, and the U.K. — among America's largest trading partners, which together accounted for half of total U.S. merchandise exports in 2022. In fact, U.S. commercial interests could be harmed if these countries imposed reciprocal tariffs on American merchandise exports instead.

Of the remaining 130 countries where the Trump administration perceives a tariff disadvantage, the magnitude of the tariff increase needed to nullify the disadvantage is less than 5 per cent in 57 countries, including China and India. Moreover, in 15 of these 57 countries, the U.S. needs to increase its import-weighted tariffs by less than 1 per cent to restore parity with partner tariffs. Thus, the threat of reciprocal tariffs may be more credible in the remaining 73 countries worldwide, where U.S. bilateral tariffs need to be raised by more than 5 per cent.

Interestingly, however, the magnitude of the tariff hikes in these cases is positively correlated with the U.S. export shares in the partner countries. Put simply, pursuing the policy of reciprocal tariffs against partners where there is a significant tariff differential results in raising average import duties on exports from countries for whom the U.S. is an important destination market. There is extensive commentary on how tariffs are a self-defeating policy. The correlation above only compounds the self-inflicted harm that a policy of reciprocal tariffs brings to the U.S.

This simple analysis is at the aggregate level, and more detailed product-level bilateral tariff and U.S. export share comparisons might be more revealing. However, based on

this simple analysis, could partner countries be tempted to divert their exports to other countries in response to large reciprocal tariffs? After all, even today, 87 per cent of global merchandise exports do not involve the U.S. While there are obvious costs to finding new export markets and trading partners, the experience during the pandemic has shown that firms adapt to external shocks quicker than governments.

### Removing barriers

The best policy response to reciprocal tariffs is for impacted countries to remove barriers to doing business, both internally and with their non-U.S. trading partners. This is also the time to enhance regulatory cooperation and reduce regulatory bottlenecks to cross-border trade with the rest of the world, not just in goods but also in services.

The World Bank and World Trade Organization reports show that exports of digitally delivered services have grown faster than those of all other services and goods during the last decade. My own research also shows that preferential trade agreements, which include provisions on regulatory behind-the-border issues, have the most positive effect on digital services trade. Instead of wasting scarce resources on retaliatory tariffs, countries will be much better served if policymakers focus on issues that matter.

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Under the 'Fair and Reciprocal Plan,' the Donald Trump administration is countering "non-reciprocal trading arrangements with trading partners by determining the equivalent of a reciprocal tariff with respect to each foreign trading partner". The non-reciprocal trading relationship is assessed based on tariffs, discriminatory taxes, non-tariff barriers (including subsidies and restrictive regulations), exchange rate manipulations, and any other practice deemed to limit U.S. market access or impede American firms from competing.

In 2010, countries across the world sent 12 per cent of their total merchandise exports to American shores. By 2019, one year before the pandemic, the U.S. share of world exports had only risen to 13 per cent. The share stood at 13.4 per cent in 2022, the latest year for which internationally comparable data on merchandise exports are available for the largest sample of the world's trading economies. Thus, roughly 87 per cent of global merchandise exports are currently traded among countries that do not include the U.S.

Of course, there are variations around this average. For instance, the Cayman Islands and Bermuda in the Caribbean export almost 85 per cent of their goods to America. The U.S. also accounts for over 75 per cent of Canadian and Mexican merchandise exports. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 81 out of 160 countries, for which data were available from UN Comtrade for 2022, exported less than 5 per cent of their total goods to the U.S. For 26 of these 81 countries (many from Africa), the U.S. share was less than 1 per cent. The average U.S. share across the 160 countries was 11.4 per cent, while the

median was much lower at 4.7 per cent. Less than a fifth of Indian, Chinese, and EU merchandise exports (18 per cent, 16 per cent, and 19 per cent, respectively, in 2022) were destined for the U.S.

Now, let us look at the tariff picture and compare U.S. tariffs on partner exports vis-à-vis partner tariffs on U.S. exports. The latest tariff data available for this comparison are from UNCTAD TRAINS for 157 trading partners of the U.S., mostly for the year 2022. The European Union is considered a single partner given its common external tariff.

The average import-weighted tariffs on U.S. exports in 27 partner countries are lower than the corresponding U.S. tariffs. Technically, the concept of reciprocal tariffs works as a threat and a bargaining tool only when U.S. tariffs are lower than those in the partner country.

Considering only tariffs, this simple analysis thus rules out almost a fifth of all countries for which comparable tariff data are available from the 'Fair and Reciprocal

KANIKA JAMWAL SAYS WATER POLICIES SHOULD FOCUS COMMUNITIES IN DECISION-MAKING



## Communities play role in conserving water



On March 22, World Water Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the need to conserve water for present and future generations through collective action. On the same day, the Ministry of Jal Shakti launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain 2025, emphasising the importance of community participation in water conservation.

In the context of this occasion, it is important to take a panoramic view of India's water policies, with a focus on rural areas. New environmental challenges and renewed understandings of ecosystems underscore the need to recalibrate rural water policies. The following issues must be considered by policymakers.

First, policies should ensure effective participation from communities and mainstream their ecological practices. Indigenous and local communities carry rich knowledge of their immediate ecosystems. Existing policies provide for their participation, but it is limited to the management of water sources; decision-making powers remain with state authorities. Further, policies have overlooked the need to identify and empower communities' own ecological practices on water management. Rather, they have formalised water governance by introducing uniform practices. This is counter-intuitive to the objective of encouraging effective participation from communities.

Take, for example, Water User Associations (WUAs), which are statutory bodies set up in different States since the 1990s to further participatory irrigation management. Water users (or farmers) are members of these bodies. While the responsibility to manage irrigation sources has been transferred to them, they have

little say in decision-making.

Second, water policies should consider the disproportionate vulnerability of certain groups to environmental crises. Subaltern social groups and economically marginalised individuals are more vulnerable to such crises than others. Within these groups, those located at the intersection of social and economic marginalisation are the most vulnerable. Therefore, it is crucial for policies to consider the interests of vulnerable groups. Concomitantly, policies must recognise their agency in managing water and ensure their participation in decision-making.

Third, policies must address the issue of fragmentation of water management. Here, fragmented management means that different parts of the ecosystem, such as forests, water, land, and biodiversity, are regulated by different policies and authorities. Such an approach fails to consider the interdependence of these constituents. While there have been some

efforts towards taking an integrated approach, they are limited and ineffective. Since policies adopt a fragmented approach, they do not always achieve the desired goals, and in fact, adversely affect each other's potential to do so.

A good example of an integrated approach comes from the ecological practices of rural communities in western India. For example, the practice of establishing orans. Orans are sacred forests which hold deep religious and cultural significance to local communities. Some communities have been establishing orans to serve an additional purpose — water conservation. By augmenting tree and grass cover, orans trap surface runoff and support in-situ rainwater harvesting. Such an appreciation about the interdependence of water with other constituents of the ecosystem is key to effective water management and conservation.

Fourth, globally, there has been a thrust on adopting a more-than-human perspective in environmental governance. This means considering the interests of the non-human environment in laws and policies that regulate the environment. This approach is based on the idea that the non-human environment has an intrinsic value, and so its interests must be considered in environmental policies. The judiciary has often subscribed to this approach and developed compelling jurisprudence recognising the rights of nature. However, water policies have overlooked this aspect. Their sole focus has been on

human needs policy water. Contrastingly, water management practices of some of the local communities in western India take a more holistic perspective to water governance. For example, the amount of water available for irrigation is partly dependent on its sufficient availability for animals.

A final issue is the impact of climate change on water. A recent report published in the journal *Nature* concluded that as global temperatures rise, the water gap in India will widen. Both climate and water policies must address the impact of climate change on water. Water policies must focus on creating climate-resilient water systems and increasing the climate resilience of existing systems; climate policies, particularly adaptation policies, should focus on building the resilience of ecosystems to water gaps.

### Beyond the rhetoric

A common theme across these suggestions is that local and indigenous communities and their practices can support effective water management. Therefore, rural water policies should facilitate active engagement with communities. This means moving beyond the existing rhetoric of engagement, and centering communities' voices in the decision-making process. While doing so, we must be mindful that communities' practices may come with their own limitations which should be addressed through sensitisation and capacity building where required.

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### LETTERBOX

Readers' feedback adds value to the newspaper. Please email comments on reports, features and columns to [fwletters@gmail.com](mailto:fwletters@gmail.com). We will publish them on this page.

## Message from Publisher



I wish the team of *The Financial World* (FW) a hearty congratulation on its 25th Anniversary of Chandigarh edition and 15th Anniversary of Delhi edition. Team's hard work and dedication has helped in to maintain its continuity even during bad phase of its journey. We had to change its periodicity from Daily to weekly for its existence.

I hope this team would continue to work with same enthusiasm and professionalism to serve the society as fourth pillar of democracy in India. I once again congratulate & wish good luck to entire team to take *The Financial World* forward

*Swinder Pal Singh Bajwa,*  
Publisher

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## New book traces the migrant's longing through centuries

Devi Yesodharan's *The Outsiders* is a profound exploration of displacement, identity, and the universal quest for belonging. Through the intertwined narratives of Nita, a migrant worker in 1990s Dubai, and Darius, an ancient Egyptian sailor, Yesodharan delves into the complexities of being an outsider in unfamiliar territories.

Nita, a widowed teacher from Kerala, seeks better opportunities by moving to Dubai to work as an English tutor for a wealthy family. Her employer, Rouhi, an Egyptian woman trapped in an abusive marriage, becomes both a friend and a symbol of the complex social hierarchies that pervade their environment. As Nita becomes entwined in Rouhi's tumultuous life, the boundaries between employer and employee blur, leading to a profound relationship that

challenges societal norms. This narrative sheds light on the fragility of migrant existence and the intricate dynamics of power, privilege, and vulnerability.

Interwoven with Nita's story is the tale of Darius, an Egyptian sailor who arrives at the bustling port of Muziris in 213 CE. His journey is one of self-discovery, as he navigates the vibrant and diverse marketplace teeming with traders from various cultures. Through Darius's eyes, Yesodharan vividly reconstructs the ancient harbor, immersing readers in its sights, sounds, and scents. Darius's experiences mirror Nita's, as both characters grapple with love, betrayal, and the ephemeral nature of human connections.

At its core, *The Outsiders* delves into the essence of "otherness." Both protagonists confront the challenges of being outsiders in foreign

lands, highlighting the universal struggle for acceptance and understanding. Yesodharan masterfully captures the nuanced emotions associated with migration—the longing for home, the pain of isolation, and the resilience required to forge new identities. As noted in an interview with *The Federal*, the author reflects on how migration, while a journey of hope, often results in a hyphenated identity, perpetually positioning individuals between worlds.

Employing a "story within a story" technique reminiscent of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Yesodharan intertwines Nita's and Darius's narratives seamlessly. Nita's recounting of Darius's adventures to Rouhi serves as both a bonding mechanism and a means of expressing her own suppressed desires and fears. This layered storytelling not only enriches the narrative



*The Outsiders*  
By Devi Yesodharan;  
Penguin,  
208 pages; Rs. 399.

but also emphasizes the timeless nature of migration and the continuous search for belonging.

Yesodharan's prose is replete with sensory details that bring both ancient Muziris and modern Dubai to life. From the aromatic food tents and vibrant marketplaces of Muziris to the opulent yet soulless landscapes of Dubai, the author paints vivid tableaux that immerse readers fully. Such meticulous descriptions underscore the contrasts between the two settings, enhancing the thematic depth of the novel.

The emotional depth of the characters is another standout aspect of the novel. Nita's internal conflicts, stemming from her status as a migrant and her complex relationship

with Rouhi, are portrayed with sensitivity and realism. Similarly, Darius's transformation from a naive sailor to a worldly individual is depicted with nuance, making his journey compelling and relatable.

Yesodharan also delves into the power dynamics inherent in employer-employee relationships and the societal structures that perpetuate them. Nita's position in Rouhi's household highlights the vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers, especially women, in foreign countries. This exploration adds a critical socio-political layer to the narrative, prompting readers to reflect on issues of privilege and exploitation.

*The Outsiders* is an evocative and thought-provoking novel that resonates deeply in today's globalized world. Devi Yesodharan's exploration of migration, identity, and human connection offers readers a profound understanding of the complexities of belonging. Through the intertwined lives of Nita and Darius, the novel serves as a testament to the enduring human spirit and the universal quest for home.

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# On the Prowl: The Gangs, Criminal Syndicates of Punjab

FW Special

On Sunday, March 23, 2025, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) transferred notorious gangster and drug trafficker, Jagdeep Singh (also known as Jaggu Bhagwanpuria), from the high-security Bathinda prison to the Central Jail in Silchar, Assam. This move is part of a larger crackdown on criminal syndicates operating from within prisons. Bhagwanpuria is a prime accused in the murder of Punjabi singer-rapper Sidhu Moosewala on May 29, 2022.

The NCB stated that his “established linkages with international operatives” in Canada, the United States, and Pakistan made this relocation necessary to disrupt his ongoing criminal activities. He has been detained under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (PITNDPS), a measure that prevents individuals involved in drug trafficking from engaging in such activities.

A Career Steeped in Crime

Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, a native of Gurdaspur district, has an extensive criminal record. He has over 128



Vikramjit Vicky Middukhera

FIRs registered against him across multiple states and is implicated in several high-profile cases, including extortion, arms smuggling, and narcotics trafficking. Bhagwanpuria is widely considered one of Punjab's most dangerous gangsters, ranking just behind Lawrence Bishnoi in terms of notoriety. His criminal network has been responsible for facilitating the smuggling of heroin, opium, psychotropic substances, and illegal arms.

The NCB confirmed that Bhagwanpuria's influence extends beyond Indian borders, with links to criminal groups in Canada, the US, and Pakistan. His detention and relocation to Assam are part of a broader effort to dismantle the ecosystem that supports his criminal activities.

The Murder of Sidhu Moosewala

The killing of Sidhu Moosewala has remained one of the most shocking events in Punjab's recent history.



Murder of Punjabi singer-rapper Sidhu Moosewala

On May 29, 2022, the young star was shot dead by eight assailants who intercepted his vehicle in Mansa district. According to police reports, the attackers fired 30 rounds, ensuring that Moosewala had no escape. This tragic murder is believed to have been orchestrated by Bhagwanpuria and Lawrence Bishnoi, although their relationship later soured.

Moosewala's death was preceded by the murder of Vikramjit “Vicky” Middukhera, a student leader who had entered politics. Police suspect that both killings are linked to gang rivalries, with some suggesting that Moosewala's murder was an act of revenge for the death of Middukhera.

A New Breed of Criminals

Punjab is increasingly



Gurmeet Singh Chauhan, Assistant Inspector General of Police at the Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF)

becoming a breeding ground for criminal gangs, many of which are headed by youths with no clear direction or discipline. Gurmeet Singh Chauhan, Assistant Inspector General of Police at the Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF), notes that the current generation of Punjabi youth are lured by the allure of fast money, luxury lifestyles, and a glorification of violence.

Chauhan highlights the troubling trend in student politics, where university and college campuses are becoming hotspots for gangster recruitment, rather than places of political and academic growth.

The “Deadly Cocktail” of Crime and Terrorism

An alarming aspect of the current gang situation in Punjab is the growing synergy between criminal



gangs and Khalistani Activists. The fusion of organized crime with militant activities has led to a rise in violence and terror-related incidents. The RPG attack on the Punjab Police Intelligence Headquarters in Mohali in May 2024, allegedly masterminded by gangster Lakhbir Landa under the instructions of a terrorist in Pakistan, is a prime example of this dangerous convergence.

In some instances, even deceased gangsters continue to wield influence. The second-in-command members of these gangs are running operations from jails or abroad, further complicating the law enforcement's efforts to contain the situation.

The Power Play of Punjab's Gangs

There are currently eight main gangs operating in Punjab, each with a vast network of associates. These gangs have connections to other states, including Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, making their reach in-



ter-state. Some of these gangs have even infiltrated the music industry, extorting protection money from singers and actors, who are also engaged in a battle for dominance within the Punjabi music scene.

Notable gangsters like Davinder Bambiha, Vicky Gounder, Prema Lahoria, and Jaipal Singh Bhullar have been killed in encounters with the police, but their successors continue to drive the criminal operations in the state.

Gangs and the Music Industry: A Sinister Connection

A disturbing trend has emerged where gangs are investing heavily in the Punjabi music industry and film sector. This involvement often leads to threats and extortion, as gang members demand money in exchange for “protection.” The con-

nections between the music industry and these criminal networks are so deep that gang members are now actively involved in managing the careers of aspiring singers and actors.

Moreover, the ongoing feud among gangs has resulted in violent incidents, including the murder of Sandeep Singh Sandhu (Sandeep Nagal Ambian) a famous kabaddi player, in March 2022. The police have linked this murder to gang rivalries, with one of the suspects identified as a gangster based abroad.

The Growing Threat of Cross-Border Smuggling

Police sources reveal that many Punjab-based gangs are involved in cross-border smuggling, including the illegal transportation of weapons and narcotics. The rise of these international links has made Punjab's criminal underworld more powerful and dangerous. Moreover, the involvement of foreign nationals, particularly from countries like Canada and Malaysia, is indicative of the growing global reach of these criminal syndicates.

This detailed account sheds light on the notorious gang wars in Punjab, involving multiple criminal organizations, each led by influential and feared gangsters. These gangs have deep roots in extortion, murder, robbery, and other forms of violent crime, with significant connections both within India and internationally.

Here's a brief overview of the key gangs and figures mentioned:

1. The Lawrence Bishnoi Gang:



Lawrence Bishnoi Gang

- Headed by Lawrence Bishnoi, a 30-year-old gangster from Punjab, currently imprisoned in Delhi's Tihar Jail. His gang operates across Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and Rajasthan.
- Known for a variety of criminal activities, including murder, extortion, carjacking, and more. Key members like Sachin Tapan, Anmol Bishnoi, and Goldy Brar are absconding.
- His gang has an understanding with the Bhagwanpuria Gang despite being rivals initially. They are also linked to the murder of Congress leader Gurlal Pehalwan.

2. The Bambiha Gang:



Bambiha Gang

- Initially led by Davinder Bambiha, who was killed in an encounter in 2016, the gang is now headed by Gaurav Patial (Lucky) from Armenia.
- Known for extortion, investing in music companies, and issuing threats to Punjabi singers like Mankirt Aulakh.
- Historically in rivalry with the Lawrence Bishnoi Gang but now shares ties with Harvinder Singh Rinda, a terrorist in Pakistan.

- Led by Jaipal Singh Bhullar, who was killed in an encounter in 2021, the gang was involved in highway robberies, extortion, and other violent crimes.
- Bhullar's death led to further criminal activities involving his associates, particularly Gurjant Singh, based in Australia.

3. The Vicky Gounder Gang:



Vicky Gounder

- Originally led by Vicky Gounder, who was killed in 2018, this gang is now managed by close aides Gurpreet Singh Sekhon and Neta Deol.
- The gang is linked to a range of crimes, including the murder of gangster-turned-politician Jaswinder Singh Rocky.

4. The Jaipal Singh Bhullar Gang:



Jaipal Singh Bhullar

- Led by Jaipal Singh Bhullar, who was killed in an encounter in 2021, the gang was involved in highway robberies, extortion, and other violent crimes.
- Bhullar's death led to further criminal activities involving his associates, particularly Gurjant Singh, based in Australia.

5. The Jaggu Bhagwanpuria Gang:



Jaggu Bhagwanpuria Gang

- Led by gangster Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, whose real name is Jasdeep Singh, this gang operates in Punjab and neighboring regions, known for murder, robbery, and extortion.
- Jaggu was once involved in kabaddi and used his network to expand criminal activities. He's currently imprisoned in Tihar Jail.

6. The Lakhbir Landa Gang:



Lakhbir Landa

- Headed by Canada-based gangster Lakhbir Landa, known for extortion and running a racket in Punjab.
- Landa is believed to have links with international drug cartels and has faced numerous criminal charges.

7. The Arsh Dalla Gang:

- Arshdeep Singh, known as Arsh Dalla, is a fugitive gangster-turned-terrorist based in Canada, with ties to organized crime and terror activities.

8. The Harry Chattha Gang:

- Led by Supreet Singh, alias Harry Chattha, believed to be operating from abroad and linked to radicals in the US, Canada, and the UK.



Davinder Bambiha



Lawrence Bishnoi Gang

Key Issues and Impacts:

- **Inter-gang Rivalries:** There have been multiple shootouts and killings due to turf wars, with famous incidents like the murders of prominent individuals such as Gurlal Brar, Vikramjit Singh, and Sidhu Moose Wala.
- **Extortion and Threats:** Several Punjabi singers and actors have been threatened and extorted by these gangs, leading to significant fear within the entertainment industry.
- **International Connections:** Many gang leaders operate from abroad (Canada, Armenia, Australia) and have established international criminal networks.

These gangs, despite their rivalries, often collaborate or turn a blind eye to each other's operations. The situation is further complicated by political ties, terrorism, and links with international drug cartels, making it a significant law enforcement challenge for the region.

A comprehensive look into the lives of families connected to gangsters in Punjab and the broader impact of gang culture in the region provides a serious picture. The experiences shared by family members reflect the complex, often tragic, realities of living with the consequences of criminal activity, while experts and officials highlight the social, political, and technological factors that contribute to the rise of gangsters and youth recruitment.

Here are some key take-aways:

**Family Struggles:** The families of slain gangsters, such as Jarnail Singh, the father of Shera-Khuban (Gurshahed Singh), share the emotional toll of their children's criminal activities. Despite being harassed by the police, they often feel marginalized by their communities due to the misdeeds of their sons. Jarnail Singh expresses frustration with the lack of support and understanding from both the police and the villagers.

The Role of Social Media:

Gangsters are increasingly using social media to claim responsibility for crimes, which is adding a new dimension to law enforcement's challenge. This also allows them to project a flashy, glamorous lifestyle that attracts young people, especially those from lower-income families, to join gangs for the promise of easy money and power.

**Youth Recruitment:** Young people, particularly in rural areas, are being drawn into gang culture due to the influence of social media and the allure of a flashy



Vicky Gounder and Prema Lahoria



Arsh Dalla Gang



Gurmeet Singh Chauhan, IPS AIG, AGTF

lifestyle. Cases like Jimmy from Haryana and Sagar from Sonipat highlight how easy it is for youth to be lured into criminal activities through connections made online with gangsters.

**Political Influence:** The article mentions how political patronage has played a significant role in the rise of gangsters. Former police officials and experts argue that political figures have used criminals for their own

agendas, leading to a lack of control over gang activities. This has created an environment where gangsters feel untouchable, further complicating law enforcement efforts.

**Expert Views:** Sociologists and political experts like Dr. Rajesh Gill and Prof. Kuldip Singh emphasize the role of a violent, corrupt society in fostering gang culture. The connection between gangs and politics is particularly troubling, as it leads to the normalization of criminal behavior among youth.

These experts stress the importance of early intervention to prevent more young people from being drawn into this dangerous lifestyle.



Sandeep Singh Sandhu (Sandeep Nagal Ambian)

**Law Enforcement Challenges:** Officials from the Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF) outline the difficulties in combating gang violence due to the gangsters' use of modern technology (such as VOIP and VPNs) and their ability to operate from jail cells due to a corrupt prison system. There is also concern about the lack of fear of the law among gangsters, who often evade justice through manipulated legal processes.



Vicky Gounder and Prema Lahoria



**History of Punjab's Gang Culture:** The rise of gangs in Punjab is rooted in the 1980s, when student politics became intertwined with violence and militancy. Over time, student rivalries led to

the formation of gangs that later evolved into organized criminal enterprises, especially in the realm of extortion and contract killing.

What Officials Say

Assistant Inspector General of Anti Gangster Task Force (AGTF) of Punjab Police Gurmeet Singh Chauhan says that the student politics especially in universities and colleges which should be producing leaders for future roles in political parties has become more of a breeding ground for gangsters as the students indulge in personal ego clashes with rivals and try to browbeat each other with the use of guns and muscle power eventually pushing them into the world of crime rather than having professional careers in academics, public service or even sports. These gangsters flaunt their flamboyant lifestyle on social media which attracts and encourages youth from relatively poorer backgrounds to emulate and make them as their role models not realising that the money that these so called role models are flashing around is easy money earned through corruption, drugs and through mining mafias.

“The present culture in which the Punjabi youth are growing up is creating a new breed of directionless young men who lack discipline who have the lust for earning fast money in order to have a flamboyant lifestyle, luxury cars, branded clothes, late night parties with drugs and alcohol. This culture has become a challenge for modern day policing and that is why AGTF was created in Punjab. The state police has faced many such challenges in the past and is capable of handling this challenge,” he says. Chauhan says that now the people of Punjab have come out in the open to change this.

Conclusion : A State in Crisis

The gang wars in Punjab are at an all-time high, and the state's law enforcement is struggling to contain the violence. With gang members having connections both domestically and internationally, they continue to operate with impunity, striking fear in the hearts of the public. The situation is further exacerbated by the infiltration of terrorist elements, creating a complex and dangerous criminal ecosystem.

As the state grapples with this growing crisis, the question remains: will the law enforcement agencies be able to rein in the gangs, or



will Punjab continue to be plagued by this deadly cocktail of crime and terrorism? The investigation ultimately calls for a multi-faceted approach to tackling the gang problem, emphasizing the need for societal, political, and law enforcement efforts to address the root causes of gang recruitment and activity. It also stresses the importance of creating awareness among parents and communities to prevent further deterioration of youth values and societal norms. This grim picture of Punjab's criminal landscape highlights the complex relationships and operations of these criminal groups, which continue to wreak havoc across the state and beyond.





