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**EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**DELHI CENTRE:**  
636, Mukherjee Nagar  
New Delhi-110009

**PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE:**  
1/1/8A, Stanley Rd,  
Maharana Pratap Chauraha,  
Civil Lines, Prayagraj, UP - 211002

 **9555-124-124**

 **sanskritiias.com**

GS-03

INTERNAL SECURITY, THE HINDU (PAGE NO-5)

# Shah launches database on bomb blasts in India

National Improvised Explosive Device Data Management System will have details since 1999; it will be crucial in probing terrorist activities, and formulating effective strategies against them, he says

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday inaugurated the National Improvised Explosive Device Data Management System (NIDMS), a first-of-its-kind platform that contains details of every bomb blast that has occurred in the country since 1999.

Mr. Shah said the NIDMS would prove extremely important in the coming days for the investigation of all types of terrorist incidents and for analysing their various aspects.

The Minister said the Union Home Ministry had generated different kinds of data over the years, but these remained in silos until now.

“Now, we are making efforts to connect all these data sources with one another and to develop an advanced artificial intelligence-based software for their analysis. Today’s launch of NIDMS will accelerate this process and prove to be an important milestone in the direction of making the country safe



Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurates National IED Data Management System of NSG via video conference. PTI

from terrorism,” Mr. Shah said.

The NIDMS headquarters is located at the National Security Guard (NSG) garrison in Manesar, Haryana. The online database can be accessed by State police, Central Armed Police Forces, and other investigating agencies. The NSG is the primary force for conducting post-blast analysis.

Mr. Shah said data related to any explosion or IED incident occurring at any location could be included in the system and that its use would provide necessary guidance during in-

vestigations across States. He said the platform would be crucial in investigating terrorist activities, understanding trends in explosions and formulating effective strategies against them.

The NIDMS would become a robust platform for accurately analysing patterns of bomb blasts, the *modus operandi* and the explosives used. It would also help establish inter-linkages between incidents based on *modus operandi* and circuit methods, and in understanding overall trends and insights.

The NIDMS is a secure

national digital platform designed to enable accurate and organised analysis of bomb explosion-related incidents across the country.

It will strengthen the collection, standardisation, integration and secure sharing of IED-related data. Mr. Shah said it would serve as a single-click access window for data scattered across different case files for investigation agencies and anti-terror organisations.

Explaining the features of the platform, Karan Sharma, Squadron Commander of the National Bomb Data Centre, NSG, said, “One of its main functionalities is that it establishes the signature link between two or more incidents. This could be either location, type of explosions or even the circuit used. For example, the same type of delayed circuit timer was used in the March 2024 Rameswaram cafe blast and in the 2022 Mangaluru blast. Police can use this information during investigation, and the information can be used for predictive analysis in the future.”

GS-03

EDUCATION, INDIAN EXPRESS (PAGE NO-10)

# High-quality education needs trust between state and institutions



ASHISH DHAWAN AND  
PRAMATH RAJ SINHA

**T**HE NATIONAL Education Policy is actively informing the big moves in Indian higher education. The regulatory landscape is evolving, degree pathways are becoming more flexible, and institutions are more willing to rethink curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments to move towards holistic and multidisciplinary education.

This policy-led momentum matters. China's experience shows that consistent state attention to higher education can effectively manage quality and scale over time. India's environment is different, but the lesson is relevant. When there is clear policy direction and sustained state support, institutions execute better, and public confidence grows. As the home of the world's largest young population, India finds this moment especially significant. How effectively our higher education prepares young people for learning, work, and leadership will shape our social and economic growth.

Three shifts stood out over the past year. First, the state moved decisively to institutionalise the research ecosystem. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) and the Rs 1-lakh-crore Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme represent a powerful dual track: The ANRF nurtures long-term scientific inquiry and industry-academia collaboration, while the RDI Scheme emphasises private-sector participation in market-ready innovation.

Second, Indian higher education institutions (IIEs) themselves pushed forward on innovation. Several IIMs announced new undergraduate programmes, and colleges began incorporating well-being, life skills and apprenticeships into their curricula, recognising that student success and satisfaction extend beyond academic performance. Building institutional capability is central. At Ashoka University, we launched two new schools this year — the Havells School of Management and Leadership and the Ashoka School of Advanced Computing — to take our next big steps in interdisciplinary research and applications.

Following the NEP, universities have also started moving toward graduating their first four-year undergraduate cohorts, though the three-year path remains an option. The Bachelor's with Honours in Research is an important addition, providing the focus and depth required for global competitiveness. These efforts reflect in global metrics: 64 Indian universities featured in the QS World University Rankings 2026, up from just 11 in 2015 and 46 in 2025. India is now the fourth-most represented country and the fastest-rising G20 nation in these rankings, indicating progress in research output, faculty strength, and international engagement.

Third, the landscape of global mobility is changing fast. While over 1.25 million Indian students study abroad (MEA), tighter visa regimes and geopolitical conditions are necessitating high-quality domestic alternatives. Increasingly, we are witnessing higher education globalise in both directions: Foreign universities are entering India, and Indian institutions are expanding overseas.

Three developments will likely guide the next year.

The first, undoubtedly, is regulatory change through the Viksit

Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025. This is a welcome step in response to the fragmentation and overlapping mandates of the current system. By proposing a single apex structure with independent councils for regulation, standards, and accreditation, the Bill provides the integrated oversight required for holistic and multidisciplinary educational experiences.

India is beyond the era of narrow specialisations. There was a time when siloed institutions served specific national priorities, such as engineering-focused institutes or standalone teacher education colleges. That phase played an important role and should not be loosely dismissed. However, the needs of today's talent and economy demand broader setups. Technology, management, science, and liberal education institutions need space to interact across boundaries; regulatory consolidation and benchmarking of standards will enable that coordination. With private institutions serving two-thirds of the student population, a strong, unified system for accreditation and public disclosure is necessary to signal quality to both students and parents.

Second is the increasing integration of artificial intelligence into how students learn, how teachers design classrooms, and how institutions manage their resources and administration. India's unique diversity of learner types, institutional histories,

and learning models (formal, informal and alternative) positions it to lead the global discourse on context-sensitive AI. This is not just about adopting technology; it is about defining its application in a localised, high-impact way.

The launch of the Ministry of Education's four centres of excellence in AI, focused on education, health, agriculture, and sustainable cities, is timely. By hosting

these centres at premier institutions, the state is creating a structured way to explore best practices and address specific future needs for India and the world.

The third is a stronger focus on science education. While promoting excellence in science is key to pathbreaking innovation, significant gaps in exposure remain. Science education needs to become more hands-on and experiential. Utilising campus makerspaces, improving institutional engagement with start-ups and industry for skilling and practice, and ensuring that tools and resources are accessible and robust are how we will cultivate the high-calibre talent pool required for a competitive deep-tech ecosystem.

India is making significant strides in massifying education. Meeting the goal of a 50 per cent gross enrolment ratio by 2035 will require sustained prioritisation of higher education as national infrastructure, as well as the encouragement of new thinking.

India has a massive chance to leverage its expanding digital and internet landscape to scale imparting learning. By integrating technology and digital delivery models into institutional frameworks, we can move beyond the constraints of physical capacity to reach every aspiring student.

At the same time, a true love for learning and high academic standards will continue to define quality education. For a Viksit Bharat, high-quality education will produce high-quality talent. That requires implementation from all sides, trust between the state and institutions (public and private), and a relentless commitment to excellence.

The direction is set. Momentum is building. The task ahead is to keep advancing, for India and for India's place in the world.

The writers are founders of Ashoka University. Views are personal.

While promoting excellence in science is key to pathbreaking innovation, significant gaps in exposure remain. Science education needs to become more hands-on and experiential

## GS-02

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, INDIAN EXPRESS  
(PAGE NO-11)

SUJAN R CHINYOY

THE YEAR 2025 proved to be one of the busiest and most consequential for PM Narendra Modi and India, marked by outreach to 23 countries across Africa, the Middle East and Europe. These engagements delivered tangible diplomatic, economic and strategic outcomes. Consolidation of ties with the Maldives and other Global South partners was complemented by diversified strategic partnerships, notably with the UK and the EU. A palpable thaw stabilised India-China relations, bringing them out of the trough following the Galwan clash in 2020. PM Modi's meetings in 2025 with Canadian PM Mark Carney during the G7 and G20 sum-

mits ensured that the year ended with a renewal of ties between the two democracies.

Modi's stature rose tangibly amid global trade volatility. His resolve in the face of President Donald Trump's tariff war stood out, even as others buckled under pressure. By protecting the interests of Indian farmers and small businesses, Modi's "Nation First" approach signalled that Bharat would not accept inequitable trade arrangements.

With GDP growth forecast at around 7.3 per cent for FY 2025-26, following a robust 8.2 per cent real growth in Q2, India remained among the world's fastest-growing major economies. Landmark GST reforms, rising consumer demand, industrial and manufacturing stimulus, implementation of the four labour codes and wide-ranging deregulation provided renewed momentum. The emphasis remained on building a

knowledge-based, *atmanirbhar* economy, with digital infrastructure, semiconductors, AI and advanced manufacturing emerging as core priorities.

Following the horrific Pahalgam terror attack in April, India launched Operation Sindoor — a precisely calibrated yet devastatingly effective response that destroyed terror infrastructure deep inside enemy territory. By suspending the Indus Waters Treaty and declaring that "blood and water cannot flow together", Modi established a new normal in India's zero-tolerance doctrine on ter-

Advanced negotiations with the EU, Canada, Israel, Mexico and GCC countries collectively reduced uncertainty

rorism. Nations expressed understanding of India's sovereign right to self-defence against cross-border terrorism. This writer observed it first hand when he visited the UAE, D R Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia as a member of the all-party delegations.

During the year, Modi received an unprecedented 29 international honours, including top civilian awards from Barbados, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Cyprus, Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, Namibia, Ethiopia and Oman. As before, he dedicated these awards to India's 1.4 billion citizens.

Strategic trade negotiations further strengthened India's economy. The India-UK CETA and India-Oman CEPA expanded access to Western and Gulf markets, while the TEPA with EFTA nations marked India's first FTA with developed European economies, backed by a binding \$100-billion in-

vestment commitment on their part. India also finalised an FTA with New Zealand. Advanced negotiations with the EU, Canada, Israel, Mexico and GCC countries collectively reduced uncertainty and reinforced confidence in India's upward economic trajectory.

The year also witnessed rare personal gestures — from "air diplomacy" with President Vladimir Putin and Crown Prince Hussein of Jordan to Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed personally escorting Modi, and Bhutan's King receiving him on the tarmac.

All in all, 2025 has proved to be a defining moment in India's journey as a confident and rising nation, and Modi's own, as its most visible embodiment.

*The writer is director general of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. Views are personal*

## GS-02

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, THE HINDU

### (PAGE NO-6)

## *Somaliland is no longer a diplomatic endnote*

Israel's decision, in December 2025, to recognise Somaliland as an independent sovereign state marks a significant diplomatic rupture in the Horn of Africa. Beyond the immediate diplomatic fallout, the move carries wider risks. It may intensify Cold War-style proxy conflicts, provoke economic and political coercion, and further militarise an already volatile maritime corridor of the Red Sea and beyond.

### China's dilemma

So far, most of the debates have focused on Israel's maritime calculations and the reactions of regional actors, West Asian nations and Türkiye; the most acute strategic dilemma belongs to China. For Beijing, Somaliland sits at the intersection of three core interests: safeguarding the "One China" principle, securing the Red Sea corridor, and controlling the intensifying great-power competition in Africa.

From that perspective, Beijing's response has been predictable. China has condemned Israel's decision as an endorsement of separatism, reiterating that Somaliland is an "inseparable part" of Somalia. This language is consistent with Beijing's long-standing position, driven primarily by its domestic sensitivities over Taiwan.

Yet, China may find it harder to reject Somaliland's claim to sovereignty compared to many other contested territories. Unlike many separatist territories, Somaliland has maintained relative peace, built functioning institutions, and held competitive elections for over three decades. Its stability contrasts sharply with Somalia's chronic insecurity. Although China continues to reject internal legitimacy as a sufficient parameter for statehood, Somaliland's persistence as a de facto state exposes the limits of Beijing's rigid sovereignty doctrine.

Furthermore, the Taiwan factor sharpens China's dilemma considerably. In 2020, Somaliland decided to establish official ties with Taipei, which directly challenged the "One China" principle. Taiwan's representative office in Hargeisa, alongside growing technical, medical, and economic cooperation, has turned



**Samir Bhattacharya**

is Associate Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, where he works on geopolitics with particular reference to Africa in the changing global order

Israel's recognition has pushed Hargeisa to the centre of great power competition in the Horn of Africa

Somaliland into an outlier in Africa, the small monarchy of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) being the only other country to be aligned with Taipei.

### The importance of the region

China's concerns, however, extend beyond ideology. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, is a critical choke point for Chinese trade and energy flows under the Maritime Silk Road. Beijing has repeatedly described the route as a "jugular vein" for global commerce. Its first overseas military base in the neighbouring Djibouti was established in 2017 precisely to protect these interests and ensure a sustained Chinese security presence near this choke point.

Therefore, Israel's recognition of Somaliland threatens to disrupt the carefully curated regional chessboard. If Somaliland gains wider international legitimacy, it may emerge as an alternative security and logistics hub along the Gulf of Aden, especially if backed by Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and potentially the United States. For China, the prospect of a rival intelligence and security ecosystem taking shape near Djibouti is deeply unsettling. It risks diluting Beijing's leverage in a region where it has invested heavily in ports, bases, and political relationships.

Beijing thus faces an uncomfortable strategic trade-off. It is obliged to oppose Somaliland's recognition by any country and block any diplomatic space for Taiwan. Yet, excessive pressure on Somaliland risks driving Hargeisa further into the arms of China's rivals, particularly Taiwan, Israel, and western powers seeking alternatives to Djibouti. Heavy-handed economic coercion or overt political interference could also tarnish China's carefully cultivated image as a partner that follows the principle of non-interference.

As a result, Beijing may resort to hybrid warfare, which will include economic coercion against Somaliland, lobbying political elites, as well as targeted information campaigns. There are signs that this approach may already be taking shape. For example, Chinese media networks, including StarTimes, which currently

operates in over 30 African countries, provide tools to shape narratives around territorial integrity and external interference.

Diplomatically, China can leverage its position in the UN Security Council to block any momentum toward broader international recognition of Somaliland.

### Complexities of other geopolitical factors

At the same time, China's increasingly vocal pro-Palestinian stance adds another layer of complexity. By positioning itself as a champion of Palestinian rights and criticising Israel's actions in Gaza, Beijing reinforces its moral opposition to Israel's Somaliland move. This alignment plays well with Arab and Global South audiences but may also drag China into Middle Eastern political contests, complicating its traditionally pragmatic neutral stance in the region.

The wider geopolitical context makes China's dilemma even sharper. Ethiopia's memorandum of understanding, in 2024, to recognise Somaliland in exchange for port access, growing U.S. congressional interest in Somaliland as a democratic and strategic partner, and tacit support from the UAE, all suggest that Israel's move could trigger a geopolitical recalibration. Each additional recognition would weaken China's ability to isolate Somaliland diplomatically and increase the strategic costs of maintaining the status quo.

Ultimately, China's challenge is not merely to block Somaliland's recognition, but rather to prevent greater Taiwanese visibility, deeper Israeli and western access to the Red Sea, and the emergence of a rival security architecture near Djibouti. Israel's decision has thus forced Beijing into an uncomfortable balancing act between principle and pragmatism.

What is clear is that Somaliland is no longer a diplomatic footnote. Israel's recognition has pushed it to the centre of great-power competition in the Horn of Africa. In doing so, it has exposed the limits of China's approach to sovereignty, security, and influence in a region that is becoming increasingly important to global trade and geopolitics.