

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

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GS 2: EDUCATION THE HINDU PAGE: 01

IITs, IIMs, Central varsities push back against VBSA norms

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NEW DELHI

Institutes of National Importance (INIs), including IITs and IIMs, have pushed back against the Centre's Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, asking to be exempted from many provisions of the Bill that intends to overhaul India's higher education regulatory framework.

These institutes, along with Central Universities, have cited the need to protect institutional autonomy, flagging contradictions in the Bill and criticising aspects such as the provisions for centralisation.

The Bill is under review by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) headed by BJP MP D. Purandeswari. Submissions to the JPC show that the NDA-ruled States of Andhra Pradesh,



The Bill seeks to repeal statutory Acts governing the UGC, AICTE, and NCTE, and replace them with a single apex body. FILE PHOTO

Meghalaya, and Madhya Pradesh have objected to the provisions, as reported by *The Hindu* on Friday.

Structural overhaul

The Bill proposes a structural overhaul of higher education in the country by repealing the statutory Acts governing the University Grants Commission, the All India Council for

Technical Education, and the National Council for Teacher Education and replacing them with a single apex body called the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan, with regulatory, accreditation, and standards councils under it.

The government has defended the Bill by citing Clause 49, which promises to protect the autonomy of

INIs and Institutes of Eminence.

The IITs, IIMs, along with institutes such as the Indian Institutes of Information Technology and IISERs, called for the Bill to explicitly include language exempting these institutes from the scope of the new regulatory structure.

While IIT-Kanpur, IIT-Hyderabad, IIM-Sambalpur, and IISER, Mohali, sought total exemption, IIT Madras said the IITs should be excluded from certain clauses on regulatory approvals for online programmes, opening new colleges, and the applicability of the Bill's penalty provisions.

Several other IITs, IIMs, and IISERs have expressed the need to ensure complete institutional autonomy for research, curriculum, and academic

activities. The IIT-Dhanbad, IISER, Kolkata, and the University of Hyderabad have pointed out that there are other provisions in the Bill which imply that the new Bill will take precedence over the laws under which the IITs, IIMs, and IISERs were set up.

Graded penalty system

The IIT Bombay has questioned the logic of leaving law and medicine out of the Bill's scope.

Several institutes have criticised the proposed penalty structure. The Bill introduces a graded penalty system that could go up to ₹75 lakh in fines and/or closure of the institution.

While IIT Madras submitted that IITs should be left out of the clause, the University of Hyderabad suggested that penalties of a particular amount and

above should be imposed only after the decision of an "independent adjudicator".

The Central Tribal University (CTU) of Andhra Pradesh, however, cautioned that the penalty clause could have "differential and unintended" consequences for small and rural institutions serving tribal or underserved areas. It said these institutes may fall short on indicators such as availability of faculty but "not due to institutional negligence, but because of structural and regional constraints".

IIT Madras said the idea of the envisioned single, unified, and institutional accreditation body may not be adequate to deal with the performance of different types of higher educational institutions in the country.

GS 3: INTERNAL SECURITY THE HINDU PAGE: 06

Terrorism's data retreat hides emerging global threats

At first glance, the macroeconomic indicators of global security offer a rare moment of statistical comfort. Recent reports suggest that global terrorism experienced a noteworthy decline in 2025, with fatalities around the world falling to 5,582 across 2,944 recorded incidents – representing a 28% drop in deaths and a 22% reduction in overall attacks. With as many as 81 nations registering measurable improvements in their domestic security landscapes, a superficial reading of the data might suggest that the international community is finally turning the tide against terror, or as the strategists prefer to call it, asymmetric warfare.

Beyond statistical comfort

Yet, there lies a far more unsettling reality: the world is not necessarily becoming safer; it is becoming unevenly unsafe. The aggregate reduction in violence masks a profound structural mutation in how terror operates, where it thrives, and how we, as a global society, perceive it.

It raises a haunting philosophical and strategic question: have we begun to subconsciously accept terrorism not as a horrific aberration to be entirely eradicated, but as a "normal" tax on modern civilisation?

There is an insidious trap in treating aggregate declines as a triumph. When violence becomes highly concentrated, it risks becoming invisible to the global conscience. The data show that nearly 70% of all terrorism-related deaths are now compressed into five countries: Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the volatile Sahel region, alone accounts for over half of all global fatalities.

Because the vast majority of this devastation occurs within these specific, vulnerable geographies, the wealthier and more stable quarters of the world are prone to a dangerous complacency. When terrorism is confined to nations already beset by chronic systemic fragility, the international community tends to relegate it to background noise – a tragic feature of post-colonial states.

This regional containment fosters a false sense of security. Not every terror incident is a Pahalgam: organised, ruthlessly planned and flawlessly executed. The rise of decentralised, transnational, and rapid digital recruitment has facilitated lone-actor attacks in many countries. When the methodology of terror shifts from massive, complex operations to low-tech, high-impact individual strikes incited on online echo-chambers, the threat becomes an



Shashi Tharoor

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While the world may be recording fewer terrorist attacks, it is simultaneously confronting a far more resilient and adaptive adversary

internalised, ambient hazard of modern pluralistic societies. By treating these as an unavoidable operational hazard of the 21st century, we risk normalising the unacceptable.

Reaction to prevention

To prevent terrorism from metastasising further, counter-terrorism strategy must move away from reactive responses and toward addressing the structural ecology of extremist violence. There are two critical arenas where this intervention must take place: the blurring line between state conflict and terrorism, and the specific vulnerability of international frontiers.

First, the data establishes an overwhelming correlation between political instability and violent extremism: an estimated 99% of all terrorism-related deaths occur in nations already entangled in armed conflict. Terrorism is rarely an isolated phenomenon generated in a vacuum; it is the ultimate by-product of institutional or diplomatic collapse. Where state capacity is hollowed out, extremist groups swiftly step into the vacuum, offering alternative forms of primitive security, or ideological certainty to disillusioned populations.

Second, the geography of modern terror has become distinctly granular. Over 60% of attacks now take place within 100 kilometres of international borders. These frontier zones, frequently neglected (or weaponised) by central governments, offer ideal operational sanctuaries. In these porous margins, terrorist syndicates manage cross-border movements, establish illicit supply lines, and conduct recruitment enabled or unhindered by state authority.

Curbing this threat requires an intentional re-investment in state capacity, development and border sovereignty. If central authorities continue to treat borderlands as secondary priorities, they leave the door open for non-state actors to entrench themselves. Furthermore, development assistance must be strategically aligned with security imperatives, treating the reinforcement of judicial systems, localised policing, and basic administrative services as the primary bulwarks against extremist encroachment.

Whether the statistical downward trend recorded in 2025 will endure remains an open and highly precarious question. The contemporary security landscape is caught in a tug-of-war between institutional stabilisation efforts and powerful destabilising catalysts.

The constriction of violent extremism to a smaller pool of actors – specifically the five dominant networks (Islamic State, Jama'at Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimen (JNIM), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Taiba and al-Shabaab)

– means that counter-terrorism forces can achieve maximum impact through highly focused intelligence and interdiction efforts. As the threat becomes more localised and frontier-centric, multinational intelligence apparatuses must become equally agile, disrupting cross-border logistics before they can scale into wider insurgencies. Tech platforms and state regulatory bodies must continue to refine their capabilities to detect and dismantle decentralised digital radicalisation pipelines before they can catalyse lone-actor violence.

However, the headwinds militating against a sustained decline are formidable. The ongoing conflicts in West Asia threaten to completely reverse recent global gains. Prolonged warfare, mass displacement, and the systematic erosion of state institutions create a uniquely fertile breeding ground for extremist resurgence in 2026 and beyond. The persistence of major geopolitical conflicts, including India-Pakistan, lowers the barriers to entry for new, fragmented radical actors, further complicating the global threat matrix.

Furthermore, even within the current downward trend, the stark resilience and adaptability of organisations such as the TTP – which bucked the general decline by increasing its attacks – serve as a potent warning. Modern terrorist organisations are highly adaptive entities. When squeezed globally, they fragment, localise, and embed themselves within pre-existing domestic ethnic or political grievances, making them extraordinarily difficult to curb.

The complacency trap

The ultimate lesson of the contemporary security paradigm is that terrorism is not receding; it is simply reorganising. The international community cannot afford to be lulled into a state of complacency by declining aggregates; it is simultaneously confronting a far more complex, resilient, and adaptive adversary.

For nations such as India, navigating an immediate strategic environment surrounded by highly volatile neighbourhoods and cross-border security challenges, these transformations require a continuous, sophisticated recalibration of both domestic and regional counter-terrorism doctrines. We must not surrender the moral and strategic clarity required to defeat it. The numbers may be falling, but the structural risks are not. True security will not be achieved by celebrating statistical lulls, but by relentlessly dismantling the fault lines of conflict, governance failures, and digital radicalisation that allow the ideology of terror to survive.

GS 3: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INDIA EXPRESS PAGE: 12

Next leap will come from bringing AI and digital public infrastructure together



MANISH SABHARWAL
AND RAVI BAPNA

THE FAILURE of multiple visits by the Japanese government to 111-year-old Sogen Kato's house to honour him — he was never home — had a simple explanation. He had been dead for 30 years while his family collected his pension. This triggered a national investigation that identified 3 lakh people who were assumed to be "living" but were dead. India's Aadhaar programme has reduced such pension scandals, improved the efficiency of government spending (up 117 times since 1991), and catalysed digital payments (42 per cent of the world's transactions). The next orbit for digital public infrastructure (DPI) lies in AI integration — it will raise state capacity and empower the new tone from the top on Jan Vishwas.

The last few years have been tough for Indian tech. We don't have a credible horse in the AI generation race, DeepSeek came out of China, and automated code generation has blunted the employment outlook for software services. But a recent conference at the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) suggested optimism about this digital revolution of AI for three reasons. India is the world's largest natural data laboratory. Integrating DPI with AI could be the biggest reimagination of the

Indian state since 1947. And AI deployment may be more employment-generative than AI generation. Let's look at all three in detail.

First, India has gone from data poor to data rich in just 10 years because of three bold acts of entrepreneurship in 2016: Jio, UPI, and GST. For decades, India's economic policy relied on periodic surveys and delayed, uneven and incomplete administrative data. But now, DPI's digital exhaust makes us the world's largest natural data laboratory for financial inclusion, welfare targeting, enterprise formalisation, platform economics and digital governance. UPI's monthly 23 billion transactions create one of the world's largest behavioural datasets. GST's 20 crore payments create real-time visibility into supply chains, invoicing, production and consumption. FASTag's 4.5 billion payment transactions create mobility and logistics datasets at scale. And, more than 27 billion annual Aadhaar authentications enabled a 16-fold expansion in direct benefit transfer beneficiaries. For the first time, a developing country is using population-scale digital data to accelerate development rather than waiting for conventional statistical systems to catch up. The job is hardly done — rigorous academic research, well-funded think tanks to bridge theory and practice, and open public data commons are just emerging — but the future seems very different from the past.

Second, India's political reimagination since 1947 has created the world's largest democracy on the infertile soil of the world's most hierarchical society. But why didn't we create the world's largest economy? Besides the delusional 1956 Second Five-Year Plan, weak state capacity

is another suspect in our failed transition from farm to non-farm jobs. Historically, governments increased state capacity through more administrative structures and personnel (government spending has increased 53,000 times since the 1947 budget of Rs 198 crore). DPI enables better resource allocation, improved service delivery, earlier fraud detection, and quicker responses. But a reimagined citizen interface has been blunted by a lack of interoperability (digital silos are stronger than physical silos), the government's internal technology capacity, and a mentality that seems to be satisfied with PDFs, when the aim should be for APIs. AI's capacity to use unstructured data will help us leapfrog data integration and the interoperability challenges within our strong consent architecture and the recently articulated principles of Jan Vishwas Siddhant. Multiple language interfaces will open up labour and education markets, and AI will improve public health expenditure. India will be the first large country to integrate AI into population-scale DPI — America built AI on private-sector data ecosystems, and China built AI on platform-centric digital ecosystems. DPI without AI is infrastructure, and AI without DPI is intelligence. AI plus DPI is enhanced state capacity.

Finally, India's angst about AI's impact on jobs is understandable if it ends up with the winner-take-all characteristics of search or the fiery nationalism that halts access to frontier models — the recently-revoked restrictions on frontier AI models such as Claude 5, for instance. But deploying AI in the daily lives of citizens and companies requires more ingenuity, organisational savviness, and

human capital than AI generation itself does. You don't have to build a car to drive it; let's build the roads (AI applications) that get people to extract economic and social value. The deployment of AI in DPI could make India the use-case capital of the world, not unlike the American state that used defence spending during the Cold War to catalyse Silicon Valley. India's enterprise DPI, currently under implementation (universal enterprise number, entity digilocker, API Setu, single source of truth for regulation), could potentially combine with a Universal Lifetime Social Security Account for every citizen (Aadhaar *punji*) to unleash a revolution in formalisation similar to what NPCI did in payments (private innovation on a non-profit layer). This would reduce information asymmetry, lower transaction costs, improve credit allocation and worker-job matching, enhance supply chain and logistics efficiency, and accelerate the creation of high-wage, private, non-farm jobs.

The *Arthashastra* suggests that strategy is most powerful when choices in strength, timing, and place are mutually reinforcing. Combining our strengths in DPI with the new tone from the top about Jan Vishwas (NCAER research suggests 66 per cent of connected Indians use the internet for entertainment but only 11 per cent for online government services), could deliver our new trust with destiny: Higher state capacity, citizen satisfaction, and mass prosperity. And this is an appointment we shall keep.

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DPI without AI is infrastructure, and AI without DPI is intelligence. AI plus DPI is enhanced state capacity

GS 2: HEALTH

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• HEALTH

Why weekly diabetes shot could reshape treatment



ANONNA DUTT

DANISH PHARMACEUTICAL giant Novo Nordisk Thursday launched its once-a-week insulin shot in India that promises to make blood sugar control more convenient in one of the world's largest diabetes populations. Called icodex, the drug will be sold under the brand name Awiqli ("a weekly") for just Rs 261 per week. This is the world's first long-acting insulin shot that reduces injections from 365 days a year to 52 days.

How does it work?

For long-lasting effects, two key modifications were made to human insulin to develop insulin icodex.

FIRST, a fatty acid chain was added to increase its affinity to a protein in the blood called albumin. When a week's dose of insulin is delivered under the skin, this bonding with albumin creates an inactive depot of the drug. This bond is reversible and the drug is slowly released into the bloodstream throughout the week.

SECOND, three amino acid substitutions were made to lower the molecule's affinity to insulin receptors. Even after the molecule gets out of the albumin bond, the reduced affinity for insulin receptors means the drug gets used slowly. The reduced affinity does not reduce the potency of the drug.

"The impact of this drug is similar to that of any other insulin. The advantage for the patients, however, is that it would reduce the number of shots they have to take. This is likely to improve compliance as well," said Dr SV Madhu, professor of endocrinology at GTB Hospital, New Delhi.

Is icodex different from insulin?

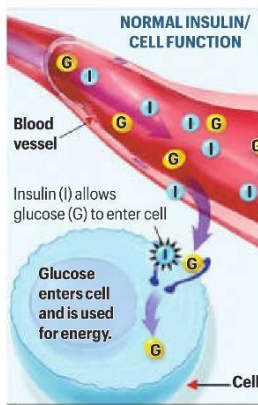
Icodex is an insulin analogue — a genetically engineered version of human insulin — that increases its life within the body.

Before the discovery of insulin in 1921, a childhood diabetes diagnosis was fatal. Physicians prescribed starvation treatment — low-calorie diets with periods of fasting. "Patients with T1D [type 1 diabetes] were often kept in hospital for weeks or months at a time, while their calorie intake and glucose excretion were meticulously recorded," ac-

• HOW DIABETES TYPES 1 AND 2 AFFECT THE BODY

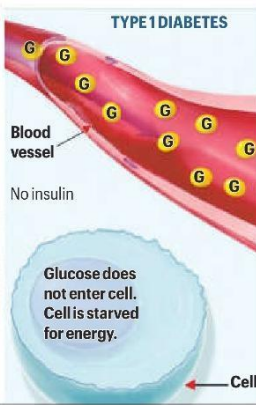
TYPE 1 DIABETES

A condition where the pancreas completely stops producing insulin, the hormone responsible for controlling the level of glucose in blood.

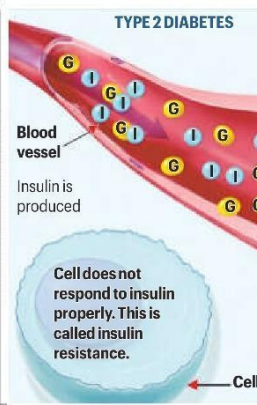


TYPE 2 DIABETES

Body's insulin production either goes down or the cells become resistant to the insulin. It accounts for more than 90% of all diabetes cases in the country.



101 million
INDIANS ARE LIVING WITH DIABETES
136 million
INDIANS HAVE PRE-DIABETES



GRAPHIC SOURCE: OREGON HEALTH & SCIENCE UNIVERSITY

cording to the *BMJ*. Initially, the insulin given to these patients came from extracts of mashed-up pig and cow pancreas. It was only in the 1960s, when the structure of insulin was discovered, that it could be manufactured. It became more widely available after recombinant technology — which can be used to alter the genetic code of a protein — was developed in the 1970s. Now, most insulin is commercially manufactured and altered to increase the duration it stays in the body or improve the way it is absorbed. Insulin icodex is one such development.

While everyone with type 1 diabetes needs insulin injections because their body does not produce the hormone, when it comes to the more common type 2, many can manage with pills. Yet, 25 to 30% of the people end up requiring insulin eventually.

Who is the drug meant for?

The drug is meant for two categories of diabetics:

FIRST, type 2 diabetics who have failed to achieve blood glucose control even with the highest doses of oral medicines

"Those living with diabetes for eight to ten years, with pills being unable to control

Weight-loss drugs

Icodex, which lowers blood glucose levels, becomes more effective when combined with GLP-1 drugs.

This is because abdominal obesity, which GLP-1 tackles, reduces insulin sensitivity. Meaning, more insulin is needed to process same amount of sugar.

the blood glucose levels, need to take insulin injections to prevent further complications. Yet, most of them are unwilling to switch to the shots. Initiating insulin early can prevent damage to the organs, nerve endings, and the eye," said Dr SK Wangnoo, head of endocrinology at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, New Delhi. Even doctors show reluctance to start their patients on insulin treatments.

Dr Madhu said once patients do not meet blood glucose targets despite the maximum dose and combination of oral medications, they should immediately be moved to insulin, initially at a lower dose with oral pills before transitioning completely to insulin.

Vikrant Shrotriya, managing director of Novo Nordisk India, said: "Currently, there are six million people on insulin in India, but this number should at least be double. Insulin is a drug that is never abused and is very effective for the treatment of diabetes, yet people stay away from it. We are hoping that the convenience of using this drug would mean more and more people who are recommended insulin start using it."

SECOND, as background insulin for type 1 diabetics

Those with type 1 diabetes need a long-

acting dose known as the basal dose, along with shots around the meal times known as the bolus dose, based on how many calories they consume. "People with type 2 diabetes would be the best fit for this drug. This is because people with type 1 diabetes already need to take the three doses a day; a fourth dose doesn't add too much burden. Plus, they typically see more fluctuations in their blood glucose levels and need to adjust their insulin doses accordingly. When I put out a survey two years ago, some women reached out to me and said that they needed to adjust the dose during menstruation. This type of flexibility is not possible with a weekly dose," said Dr V Mohan, chairman of Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre, Chennai.

What about side effects?

The most common side effect of the medicine is hypoglycemia — a condition where the blood glucose levels fall too much — that can affect one in ten people. Dr Wangnoo, however, says this is the same level as seen with other daily insulin shots.

Dr Madhu says: "The reason people notice these episodes of hypoglycemia with insulin is that blood glucose levels are controlled for the first time with it. Even pills can cause episodes of hypoglycemia, but when blood glucose levels are through the roof, the question of hypoglycaemia does not arise."

How much does it cost?

The drug will cost Rs 261 per week. It will be available in two doses of pre-filled pens — a 700 ml unit costing Rs 2,611 and a 2,100 ml unit costing Rs 7,883. A patient usually needs around 70 units per week, which may need to be scaled up depending on need. "The Rs 261 per week cost is cheaper than the current price of other insulin analogues, which can cost anywhere between Rs 345 and 453 a week. This drug will essentially cost around Rs 50 a day," said Shrotriya.

How many people in India need it?

Currently, 101 million people are living with diabetes and 136 million with pre-diabetes. "While initially most of them would be managed with pills, after five years, say, 5% to 10% would need insulin shots. And, after 10 years, maybe 20% to 30%. Even if we consider that only 20% need it, the number would still stand at around 20 million. There would definitely be more use for the drug in type 2 diabetics because of the convenience of taking one shot and cost similar to other products in the market," said Dr Mohan.