

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

15-07-2026

GS 2: POLITY

THE HINDU PAGE: 01

SC weighs SOP for urgent cases affecting citizens' life and liberty

Constitutional remedies must be accessible at all time, says petition in top court; Bench headed by CJI Kant says an SOP could be put in place to reduce 'response time' in cases such as illegal detentions, demolition drives or other state actions

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to consider framing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to allow citizens to knock on the doors of the courts any time, day or night, in cases affecting life and liberty, including illegal detentions, imminent demolition of homes, deportations, custodial violence, or other state actions.

Beyond court schedules
A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant was hearing a petition filed by a top court advocate, Maheravish Rein, who said the courts cannot afford to close especially against the background of credible reports of late-night arrests, early-morning demolition drives, and deportation or executive actions undertaken during weekends or holidays.

"The absence of a structured and institutionalised

 The absence of a structured and institutionalised mechanism ensuring continuous judicial accessibility may result in irreversible consequences

MAHERAVISH REIN
Petitioner

 Preparation of an SOP should be undertaken by the Supreme Court on its administrative rather than judicial side

TUSHAR MEHTA
Solicitor-General

 Maybe the response from the court should come within an hour of an urgent mention

SURYA KANT
Chief Justice of India

mechanism ensuring continuous judicial accessibility may result in irreversible consequences before affected persons are able to approach constitutional courts... The protection of liberty cannot remain dependent upon the temporal boundaries of court schedules. In a constitutional democracy governed by the rule of law, the Constitution cannot fall silent at night, nor can the protection of liberty await the morning bell of the courts," Ms. Rein sub-

mitted. Access to justice cannot exist merely in theory. Constitutional remedies must be practically accessible at all times, she said.

The Bench noted that an SOP could be put in place to reduce the "response time" to urgent requests in cases of life and liberty. "Maybe the response from the court should come within an hour of such an urgent mention," Chief Justice Kant noted.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the prepara-

tion of an SOP should be undertaken by the top court on its administrative rather than judicial side.

In response to the law officer, the Chief Justice noted that High Courts did not come within the administrative ambit of the top court in a federal set-up, indicating that the petition may have to be heard and orders passed on the judicial side.

Justice Joymalya Bagchi, a part of the Bench, said there was a difference in approach in accessing justice during office hours and after office hours. The judge said a "graded approach" to access to justice after court hours cannot be interpreted as a denial of justice.

Digital access

The judge pointed out that courts never "close-up" when there was digital access to justice through e-filing. "A letter, an email or a phone call would be enough to activate the justice system," Justice Bagchi said.

Ms. Rein agreed with Justice Bagchi that technological advancements, including digital filing, electronic court records and virtual hearing infrastructure had significantly enhanced the capacity of courts to provide remote access to justice.

"The present institutional framework of courts largely restricts access to judicial remedies to designated court hours, working days and limited vacation benches. As a result, individuals facing urgent violations of liberty and fundamental rights often encounter significant practical difficulty in obtaining immediate judicial protection during nights, weekends, public holidays and court recesses," Ms. Rein submitted.

"However, these technological capabilities have not yet been integrated into a uniform institutional framework enabling emergency judicial access for urgent constitutional matters outside regular court hours," she submitted.

GS 3: ENVIRONMENT THE HINDU PAGE: 02

Grey hornbills thrive again in Gir as four years of successful breeding revive a lost species

Abhinay Deshpande

AHMEDABAD

More than 60 years after the Indian Grey Hornbill disappeared from Gujarat's Gir forests, the species has recorded four consecutive years of successful breeding following its reintroduction, according to a scientific study published in the international peer-reviewed journal *Birds*.

The findings come as Gujarat recently reported another wildlife conservation milestone, with the second Great Indian Bustard chick hatched through the "jump-start" technique surviving beyond the critical 40-day period.

The study, *Reintroduction of Indian Grey Hornbills in Gir, India: Insights into Ranging, Habitat Use, Nesting and Behavioural*



Indian Grey Hornbill

Patterns, presents the first comprehensive assessment of the reintroduction programme undertaken by the Gujarat Forest Department and its conservation partners after the species disappeared from Gir.

'Significant success'

"Wildlife conservation in Gujarat has entered a new phase, particularly in spe-

cies recovery and the protection of rare and endangered wildlife. Grey Hornbills reintroduced into the Gir landscape in 2021 have successfully established territories, adapted to their new habitat, and produced offspring, marking a major milestone in restoring a species that had disappeared from the region between the 1950s and 1960s. The research conducted following the reintroduction of the Grey Hornbill into the Gir forests is a significant success for us," Forest and Environment Minister Arjun Modhwadia said.

According to Vinod Rao, Principal Secretary, Forests and Environment, "One pair successfully bred during the first year after release, while three additional breeding pairs nested in

the second year, demonstrating that the restored population is beginning to establish itself naturally. The Grey Hornbill plays a crucial ecological role as a long-distance seed disperser, helping regenerate forests by transporting seeds of fruit-bearing trees across large areas."

The project involved the release of 40 Indian Grey Hornbills in two phases. Twenty-eight birds were released between 2021 and 2022, followed by another 12 in 2023.

"Eleven males were fitted with satellite transmitters, allowing scientists to track their movements, habitat use, and breeding behaviour over several years," Mohan Ram, Conservator of Forests, Junagadh Circle, and one of the authors of the study, said.

GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THE HINDU

PAGE: 05

'Gold standard' India-U.K. trade deal is coming into effect today

Commerce Secretary describes pact as one of the 'most ambitious and aspirational free trade agreements' signed by the country; he adds that it will benefit farmers, fisherfolk; officials in U.K. welcome deal and highlight its multi-sectoral impact

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and Double Contribution Convention (DCC) that will come into force on Wednesday are a "gold standard" and one of the "most ambitious and aspirational free trade agreements" signed by India, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Tuesday.

He added that the deals benefit India's farmers, fisherfolk, workers and women entrepreneurs. The India-U.K. CETA and the DCC were signed in July last year.

"This is one of the first free trade agreements (FTAs) of its kind, which establishes a future-oriented economic architecture between two major economies of the world," Mr. Agrawal said at a press briefing. "This is also one of the most ambitious and aspirational FTAs of India, which we are operationalising as till date."

"It is a gold standard and the first of its kind be-

Terms of trade

The India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and Double Contribution Convention (DCC) are set to come into force on Wednesday

■ Under the CETA, the U.K will immediately eliminate tariffs on **96.8%** of its tariff lines, accounting for **97.7%** of the trade value

■ India will immediately eliminate tariffs on **30.3%** of the trade value, with **47%** more seeing tariffs eliminated in a phased manner

■ The DCC will exempt Indian workers and their employers from paying social security contributions in the U.K. for **5 years** if contributions are being made in India

■ India has protected **sensitive sectors** such as dairy, cereals, pulses, vegetables, gold and jewellery, smartphones, and critical polymers



cause of its wide sectoral coverage and deep reduction in both tariff and non tariff barriers," he added.

Under the deal, the U.K. will immediately eliminate tariffs on 96.8% of its tariff lines, accounting for 97.7% of the trade value. An additional 2% of tariff lines, amounting to 1.8% of trade value, will see reduced tariffs based on quotas. In total, this covers 98.8% of tariff lines and 99.5% of trade value.

India, on the other hand, will immediately eliminate tariffs on 30.3% of the trade value, with 47% more seeing tariffs eliminated in a phased manner. It will also provide reduced quota-based tariffs on 12.1% of the trade value. In total, this would cover 89.5% of tariff lines and 89.4% of trade value.

Officials in the U.K. have also welcomed the deal, highlighting a multi-sectoral impact. "For the City of

London, the agreement provides a strong platform to unlock even greater collaboration in financial and professional services, insurance, fintech, sustainable finance and infrastructure investment," Chris Hayward, Policy Chairman of the City of London Corporation, told *The Hindu*.

"As India continues its remarkable economic growth story, London stands ready to support the mobilisation of global capital and expertise needed to help deliver those goals," he added.

Mr. Agrawal said that the 30 chapters across which negotiations have taken place under this pact extend beyond conventional tariff liberalisation to cover digital trade, government procurement, SMEs, innovation, labour, environment, and gender.

He added that the deal addresses non-tariff barriers as well, so that issues like Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) "do not become unjustified trade restrictions for our businesses in the future".

He further explained that the deal protects India's sensitive sectors such as dairy, cereals, pulses, vegetables, gold and jewellery, smartphones, and critical polymers.

'Game changer'

On the DCC, he said that the agreement was a "game changer" for India's services sector and skilled workforce. "Indian employees and their employers contribute around 25% of their salary to the U.K.'s national insurance system," he said. "Their contribution is like a tax of 25% as employees are unable to draw benefits. These are like sunk costs."

He said that the DCC will ensure that workers will not need to pay double contributions towards their social security. That is, if they are paying social security in India, then they will not have to pay it in the U.K. as well for a period of five years.

According to Mr. Agrawal, this will benefit over 75,000 Indian workers and over 900 employers. (With inputs from Sriram Lakshman in London)

GS 2: POLITY

THE HINDU PAGE: 8

The disruptive rise of India's new political generation

India's political establishment has long spoken of youth in the future tense – young people as tomorrow's leaders, democracy's inheritors, and the next generation of voters. Beneath this language of hope, however, is a political reality, which is that power has remained concentrated among ageing leaders who rarely entrusted young people with real influence. That political fiction is now rapidly fading.

India's youth are no longer "citizens in waiting". They are already shaping elections, influencing political discourse, forcing parties to recalibrate, and redefining how politics itself is practised in a unique way. This transformation is not simply demographic. India has long been a young country. What is different today is the emergence of youth as an independent political force with its own language, expectations, methods, and centres of influence. Political leaders who fail to recognise this shift increasingly risk irrelevance.

A new political language

The shift is most visible in political communication. For much of the post-Independence years, Indian politics operated through hierarchy and distance: leaders spoke from elevated stages while citizens listened. Communication flowed through party structures, newspapers, television, and carefully managed public events, depending on spectacle, organisational control, and ideological certainty. That model is weakening rapidly.

Today's youth inhabit a radically different political landscape shaped by short-form videos, memes, podcasts, livestreams, online commentary, and decentralised digital communities. While attention spans may be shorter, political awareness has not declined. Young voters are not necessarily anti-political; they are anti-performance. They respond to accessibility, authenticity, responsiveness, humour, emotional intelligence and transparency over scripted rhetoric. Tamil Nadu offers one of the clearest examples of this shift.

The rise of actor-turned-politician C. Joseph Vijay cannot be explained through celebrity appeal alone. What makes Mr. Vijay's emergence politically significant is his intuitive understanding of a transformed communication ecosystem. More importantly, even leaders within established parties have publicly acknowledged his growing influence among younger voters.



Amal Chandra

Political analyst, columnist and the author of the book, 'The Essential' (2023)



Ajay Karuvally

Senior Research Associate at the International Institute of Migration and Development

For decades, India's political establishment spoke of youth as the future, but that future has arrived sooner than expected

This transformation is also visible in the rise of meme-driven political commentary and satire collectives that increasingly shape public perception among younger audiences. On Instagram, YouTube, and X, informal digital ecosystems now influence political narratives far more rapidly than traditional party communication machinery. The "Cockroach Janta Party" phenomenon – alongside a broader ecosystem of meme creators, satirical commentators, and independent digital voices – reflects a generation engaging with politics through humour, irony, cultural references, and decentralised online participation. Once dismissed as frivolous Internet culture, these spaces increasingly function as parallel arenas of political socialisation and opinion formation.

A similar recalibration is visible elsewhere in India. In Kerala, Congress leader and the "pookie CM" V.D. Satheesan has consciously cultivated an image distinct from the confrontational and centralised styles that increasingly characterised the State's recent political culture. His emphasis on accessibility, dialogue, and participatory communication reflects a recognition that younger citizens no longer respond automatically to ideological inheritance or party loyalty. A political leader unable to communicate within this evolving ecosystem risks irrelevance, regardless of organisational strength.

From protest to participation

India's youth politics is no longer confined to party youth wings or campus elections. The 2017 pro-Jallikattu protests in Tamil Nadu marked a turning point in understanding how digitally connected youth could sustain mass mobilisation without centralised party leadership. What began as a cultural movement evolved into a wider demonstration of youth-led political coordination powered by social media networks, online narratives, and decentralised participation.

Since then, online political culture – from meme creators and independent digital commentators to podcast ecosystems and Instagram-based political analysis – has become a major force shaping public discourse. Political parties now obsessively monitor online sentiment, adapt campaign messaging to digital reactions, and respond rapidly to narratives emerging far outside traditional institutions.

The distinction between "online politics" and "real politics" is steadily disappearing. This broader shift mirrors developments elsewhere in

South Asia. Sri Lanka's 2022 Aragalaya protests demonstrated how digitally connected youth could convert public frustration into sustained political pressure against corruption, dynastic entitlement, and elite detachment. Nepal too has witnessed growing youth-led mobilisations around governance failures, unemployment, and democratic accountability.

India has so far remained relatively insulated from such large-scale upheaval. But recent political developments suggest that a quieter transformation is underway – not necessarily through street uprisings, but through changing patterns of political communication, participation, and voter behaviour.

This also calls into question the assumption that youth mobilisation is inherently anti-establishment or anti-democratic. The rise of Mr. Vijay in Tamil Nadu suggests that where democratic institutions remain credible and electoral participation feels meaningful, young citizens are willing to work within existing democratic structures rather than reject them outright.

The problem is not apathy – it is institutional distrust. Increasingly, younger citizens recognise that much of what passes as "youth engagement" is little more than managed participation without genuine power-sharing. Political parties often speak about bringing youth into politics, but resist the logical consequences of doing so: redistributing authority, opening leadership pathways, decentralising candidate selection, and allowing younger voices to shape policy priorities.

Adapt or become irrelevant

The challenge before political parties is no longer simply attracting young voters through social media content, campaigns or symbolic outreach. The real question is whether entrenched political structures are willing to meaningfully share power and adapt to a new democratic culture shaped by honesty, participation, transparency, responsiveness, and decentralised influence over scripted authority. Young citizens are no longer waiting quietly at the edges of democracy. They are already reshaping it. The street protest and the polling booth are no longer separate democratic spaces; they are increasingly interconnected. Political parties that continue to underestimate this transformation risk finding themselves stranded in a political culture that no longer exists.

GS 2: POLITY

THE HINDU PAGE: 10

What is meant by 'trial in absentia'?

Who can be tried in absentia under BNSS? What changed under the new criminal law? How does the law protect the accused's right to fair trial? What happens if the accused later appears before the court? Why was trial in absentia introduced?

EXPLAINER

Rizmi Lia M.

The story so far:

A Special NIA Court in Jammu has issued a non-bailable warrant against Hafiz Saeed, the Pakistan-based chief of the proscribed terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), in connection with the investigation into the Pahalgam terror attack. The warrant was issued at the request of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The order was passed by the Special Judge of the NIA Court on July 8, two days after a supplementary chargesheet was filed against Saeed in the Pahalgam terror attack case.

Since Saeed is unlikely to appear before an Indian court, the agency is expected to seek a trial in absentia under Section 356 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). In its supplementary chargesheet, the NIA has charged Hafiz Saeed both in his individual capacity and as the chief of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and its proxy outfit, The Resistance Front (TRF).

"The accused has been charged under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The NIA has also invoked provisions relating to waging war against India and hatching a conspiracy from across the border," the agency said.

What is trial in absentia?

A trial in absentia refers to a criminal trial conducted in the absence of the accused.

Section 356 of the BNSS provides that if a person declared a proclaimed offender has absconded to evade trial and there is no immediate prospect of arrest, the court may treat the accused's absence as a



The law does not permit courts to try every accused person in their absence. It applies only to a "proclaimed offender", as defined under Section 84 of the BNSS. GETTY IMAGES

waiver of the right to be present during the proceedings. After recording its reasons in writing, the court may proceed with the inquiry, trial and pronouncement of judgment as if the accused were present.

Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC), the predecessor of BNSS, Section 82(4) of CrPC allows proclamation and attachment of the property of an absconding accused, and Section 317 of CrPC allows the Judge or Magistrate to conduct trial of an accused in his absence in certain specific cases. Section 299 CrPC allows the Judge or Magistrate to record the evidence in absence of absconded accused if there is no prospect of arresting him soon.

Those provisions provide a discretion to a presiding officer to conduct an in-absentia trial only when it feels that, firstly, the personal attendance of the

accused before the court is not necessary in the interests of justice, and secondly, the accused persistently disturbs the proceedings in court. But none of those provisions allowed full-fledged trials in absentia. As a result, trials often remained pending for years until the accused was apprehended.

Whom does it apply to?

The law does not permit courts to try every accused person in their absence. It applies only to a "proclaimed offender", as defined under Section 84 of the BNSS.

Under Section 84(4), where a proclamation has been issued against a person accused of an offence punishable with imprisonment of 10 years or more, life imprisonment, or death under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, or any other law, and the person fails to appear at the specified place and time, the court

may, after making such inquiry as it considers necessary, declare the person a proclaimed offender.

Thus, trial in absentia is available only in cases involving serious offences punishable with imprisonment of at least 10 years, life imprisonment, or death, where the accused has been declared a proclaimed offender.

What are the procedural safeguards under Section 356?

Section 356 lays down several procedural safeguards before a trial can commence in the absence of the accused. These include the issuance of two consecutive warrants of arrest within an interval of at least 30 days. A notice must also be published in a local or national newspaper, giving the accused 30 days to appear before the court. In addition, the notice must be displayed at the accused's last known place of residence, and a relative or friend of the accused must be informed about the trial.

The trial cannot commence until 90 days have elapsed from the date of framing of charges, giving the accused sufficient opportunity to appear before the court. If the absconding accused does not have legal representation, the court must appoint a defence lawyer at the State's expense to safeguard the accused's right to a fair trial.

Statements of prosecution witnesses recorded before the commencement of the trial may be used as evidence against the absconding accused. However, if the accused later appears or is apprehended, the court may permit cross-examination of witnesses in the interest of justice.

The deposition and examination of witnesses may, as far as practicable, be recorded through audiovisual electronic means. Such recordings must be preserved to ensure transparency, accuracy and the integrity of the trial process, and to facilitate review if the accused is subsequently apprehended.

THE GIST

Section 356 of the BNSS provides that if a person declared a proclaimed offender has absconded to evade trial and there is no immediate prospect of arrest, the court may treat the accused's absence as a waiver of the right to be present during the proceedings.

If the accused later appears or is apprehended, the court may allow cross-examination of witnesses in the interest of justice. Witness testimony can also be recorded through audiovisual means and preserved for future review.

GS 3: SPACE

THE HINDU PAGE: 10

How the Gaganyaan crew module is built to survive

What happens to the crew and service modules during descent?

Unnikrishnan Nair S.

The story so far:

Gaganyaan is India's maiden crewed space mission, designed to carry Indian astronauts to space and safely return them back to earth. Here, the rocket – Human-rated Launch Vehicle Mark (HLVM) 3 – will inject the orbital module (OM) into the desired orbit. The Gaganyaan astronauts will be onboard the OM.

What does the OM contain?

The OM consists of two sections, the crew module and the service module, connected by a joint. The crew module serves as the crew habitat while the service module provides on-orbit support to the OM.

After the orbital phase, the propulsion system in the service module will fire its thrusters to de-orbit the OM, then the service module will separate from the crew module by severing the joint with a redundant mechanism.

While both modules descend to the

earth, the crew module – which is designed to survive the intense thermo-structural loads of re-entry – will decelerate by aero-braking and safely splash down in sea. Meanwhile, the service module will burn up.

Some crewed spacecraft, such as Russia's Soyuz and China's Shenzhou, use a three-module configuration. The third module provides extra living and working space for the crew while in orbit. It also houses the docking mechanism, cargo, and basic life-support facilities, including the toilet. Like the service module, this third module will also separate during descent and will be destroyed during re-entry.

Which configuration is best for re-entry?

The crew module design must balance several critical objectives, including maximise the internal volume, manage the aerodynamic lift and drag generated during atmospheric flight, be as easy as possible to fabricate, maintain aerodynamic and hydrodynamic stability, and stabilise the module dynamically at

low speeds.

Because no single configuration can satisfy all these requirements simultaneously, the final shape of the crew module will depend on which design attributes are prioritised. To minimise launch and re-entry mass, engineers strip the crew module down to essential landing systems, directly reducing the required size and mass of both the heatshield and the parachutes.

A spherical configuration offers the highest possible internal volume with the lowest structural mass. This is because a sphere has minimum surface area required to enclose a given volume. The design closest to a sphere was the Soviet Union's Vostok module, in which Yuri Gagarin made the historic first trip to space.

However, because a perfect sphere creates no aerodynamic lift, it falls straight down through the atmosphere, like a dropped stone. This subjects the crew to painfully high g-forces.

Consequently, a sphere-cone combination is the preferred configuration for a re-entering body. Its

blunt base generates a detached shockwave that pushes intense frictional heat away from the spacecraft, while its conical body provides the aerodynamic stability and lift necessary for a controlled, survivable descent.

The Gaganyaan crew module has a sphere-cone configuration.

Why aren't all re-entry modules mono-stable?

Aerodynamic and hydrodynamic mono-stabilities are highly preferred features for a re-entering body.

A module is aerodynamically monostable if it maintains only one stable attitude while flying through the atmosphere – like a shuttlecock. Similarly, hydrodynamic mono-stability ensures the module will self-right itself and float in a single, stable orientation after splashdown.

Mono-stability is controlled by the module's aerodynamic shape and the location of its centre of gravity. As the centre of gravity is dictated by the packaging of internal subsystems, system engineers often lack the flexibility to achieve the required location of the centre of gravity.

As a result, in practice, modules frequently have more than one stable orientation. The Gaganyaan crew module, for instance, has two distinct stable aerodynamic positions as well as two stable hydrodynamic positions.

The undesired attitude is managed by firing control thrusters during flight through the atmosphere and by deploying a gas-based up-righting system upon

splashdown in sea.

What is dynamic instability during re-entry?

Dynamic instability is a critical condition experienced by a re-entry module, resulting in rapidly growing and uncontrolled oscillations as it decelerates through the atmosphere. Just like a traditional kite without a tail wobbles and spins wildly out of control because it lacks stability, the crew module can experience dangerous, self-growing swings that make it tumble if it is not controlled.

How smoothly the crew module falls through the atmosphere depends strongly on its shape, mass, and the way air flows around it. The module shakes and wobbles the most as it approaches the speed of sound, where bouncing shockwaves and swirling air violently whip it around. To stop the module from spinning dangerously out of control, it must either use small control thrusters to steady itself or deploy parachutes before this instability grows too large.

Ultimately, balancing all of these competing traits, from its blunt aerodynamic shape and mass to its fight against dynamic instability, is what transforms the module design into a masterfully engineered lifeboat capable of bringing astronauts safely back to the earth.

Unnikrishnan Nair S. is Former Director, VSSC and IIST; Founding Director, HSFC; and an expert in launch vehicle systems, orbital re-entry and human spaceflight technologies. Currently Dr Sarabhai Professor at VSSC.

GS 2 & 3: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ECONOMY

THE HINDU PAGE: 12

India's imports from China soar to \$80 bn in first half of 2026

Two-way bilateral trade was up to \$91.72 bn after six months, a 23.6% rise from last year, on track to surpass record \$155.62 bn figure from 2025

Ananth Krishnan

India's imports from China rose 21.8% in the first half of 2026 to a record \$79.41 billion, according to data released by China's General Administration of Customs on Tuesday.

Two-way bilateral trade was up to \$91.72 billion after six months, a 23.6% rise from last year, and on track to surpass the record \$155.62 billion trade figure from 2025, when China was again India's biggest trade partner in goods.

While the trade deficit reached \$67.1 billion after the first half of the year – also on track to exceed last year's record \$116.12 billion figure – India's exports to China have also registered strong growth, up by 37.2% to \$12.31 billion.

Trade deficit

India's official data on Monday showed the overall trade deficit in the month of June 2026 rose over fourfold year-on-year to \$15.3 billion in June 2026, on the back of high growth in merchandise imports and a rise in the value of crude oil, electronics and gold imports.

Indian officials are less concerned by the quantum of the trade deficit with China than by the nature of the basket of goods. India imports not only large quantities of finished electronics and other equip-



Chinese checkers: India is less concerned by the quantum of trade deficit with China than by the nature of the basket of goods. REUTERS



Obviously, we would like to be able to export more to China. This is nothing unreasonable about suggesting that

VIKRAM DORAISWAMI,
India's Ambassador to China

ment from China, but also intermediates that are needed for Indian manufacturing and fuel India's own exports. A particular concern is the nature of India's exports to China, which in the past have been dominated by low value-added products such as organic chemicals, ores and seafood.

Earlier this month, India's Ambassador to China Vikram Doraiswami pitched for greater Indian exports to China, especially in areas where India is globally competitive such as pharmaceuticals. "Obviously, we would like to be

able to export more to China. This is nothing unreasonable about suggesting that," he said, speaking at the World Peace Forum, an annual foreign policy forum in Beijing.

"How do we find ways in which India and China can be connected, with a widening basket of goods that both sides can provide each other, but also a sense that reasonable mechanisms to protect consumers can be applied in a way that enables India also to export more of the goods that it can export elsewhere in the world also to China?" he said. "In other words, it would be easier to consider that the trade wouldn't be exactly 50-50 balanced, but one side would have more exports, provided that exports consist of goods that we can also add value. If it is pure consumption goods, that becomes a little harder to sell as a reasonable mechanism for the deficit."