

## WINDS OF CHANGE

As winds of change are blowing in J&K, it's gladdening to know that the IRCTC would serve vegetarian cuisine to passengers travelling on the Katra-Srinagar Vande Bharat train. This gives due recognition to the culinary heritage of the UT where, for the some strange reason, non-vegetarian food not rooted in the culture of the people was imposed as heritage. As against the much touted Wazwan, most of the vegetarian food be that from Kashmiri Pandits or the Jammu Dogras is based on locally grown varieties. In all likelihood the vegetarian thali comprising dam-aloo and Jammu's famous Rajma-Chawal, Ambal kaddu, Babru will be served to the passengers. Kashmiri Pandit food was never made commercial and hence unavailable for tourists, but Jammu's cuisine was never promoted by the authorities. Article 370 removal has empowered all the communities and people of J&K. So far, except one community, the government did not patronize others. All that began changing with the going away of the divisive article in the statute but there are many more miles to cross.

## NIA AND PAHALGAM ATTACK

The national Investigating Authority (NIA) has cracked the Pahalgam terrorist attack and identified the three Pakistanis who executed the assassinations. As suspected, two locals who helped with shelter and logistics for the Pakistanis to carry out the massacre have since been arrested and they have spilled the beans to their interrogators. The Pakistani terrorists might have left India but there is no way they would escape the dragnet of Indian authorities. This piece of news would give confidence to the people to travel to Kashmir and visit Pahalgam, one of the most scenic places in the Valley. Also, it exposes Pakistan's plans on Kashmir, The Pahalgam massacre was aimed at scaring away tourists from Kashmir at the onset of the peak season. Though initially, the terrorist did succeed in their plans, Pakistan has no idea of how resilient Indians are. The tourists' rush to Kashmir has resumed.



**Smt. Annpurna Devi,**  
*Union Minister of Women and Child Development*

From boardrooms to battlefields, women with physical and mental toughness can really make a difference; women must work towards unlocking their real strength and Yoga is a key to it.

India, the birthplace of the ancient practice of Yoga, continues to uphold this ancient wisdom, not just as physical exercises but as a holistic philosophy for the nurturing of the human mind, body, and spirit. The Sanskrit phrase "???? ?????", from the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Verse 50), means "Yoga is skill in action." This is a powerful teaching by Lord Krishna, which reminds us that true yoga is not limited to physical postures or meditation but is reflected in how skilfully and mindfully we perform our daily duties.

As Union Minister of Women and Child Development, I firmly believe in Yoga's transformative potential, particularly in empowering women and nurturing children- the very foundations of our society.

Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Naren-

dra Modi, Yoga has gained global recognition as a channel for wellness and social transformation. The United Nations' decision to declare June 21 as International Day of Yoga in 2014 was the world's recognition of India's great spiritual and civilizational heritage.

This year, the theme of International Day of Yoga, "Yoga for One Earth, One Health", highlights Yoga's inclusive and universal appeal. Hon'ble Prime Minister also emphasised "Yoga is free from copyright, patent, royalty. It is flexible - you can practice alone, in a group, learn from a teacher, or be self-taught". As the nation steps towards a Viksit Bharat, it is necessary to integrate Yoga into the lives of women and children across the nation.

Women and children constitute about two-thirds of India's population, and they are more vulnerable and exposed to health issues. So, looking after their physical and mental health becomes imperative, and Yoga can play a pivotal role in it. Yoga offers numerous physical and mental benefits for women. From improving mental health and hormonal balance to strengthening the muscular and skeletal system, Yoga is uniquely suited to meet the physiological needs of women across age groups.

Adopting yoga before and after pregnancy empowers women to effectively manage the health challenges they encounter during this transformative period. Prenatal Yoga, with its targeted postures and meditative techniques, alleviates pregnancy discomforts, supports pain management, and boosts energy.

It prepares expectant mothers for childbirth physically and emotionally. Postnatal Yoga helps lactating mothers in their recovery, emotional well-being, enhancing breastfeeding, and

strengthening the mother-child bond.

To accentuate the practice of Yoga in women, we have a network of over 25 lakh Anganwadi workers across India who inform, educate, and assist women and children in adopting Yoga as a necessary habit in their daily lives.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has constantly advocated for women-led development. He actively supports the increased participation of women in the workforce, which is instrumental to the growth of any economy. The World Bank also argued that increased female labour force participation can boost the manufacturing output by 9% and help us achieve a high-income developed nation status by 2047. All this can only be achieved when we have a physically and emotionally healthy women workforce.

In today's rapidly changing world, children too are increasingly impacted by lifestyle disorders, screen dependence, and academic pressures. Yoga offers an evidence-based, timely, and culturally rooted response to these challenges. It enhances concentration, memory, emotional regulation, sleep quality, and stress management - key components of holistic childhood development. Through Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, the Ministry is embedding Yoga into early childhood care and development, laying the foundation for lifelong wellness habits.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development under the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister is working towards a multi-pronged strategy to enhance yoga practices into the lives of women and children. The Ministry houses various flagship programmes and schemes for women and children aimed towards their well-being, health, and nutrient intake, and

while delivering these benefits, our institutions such as Anganwadi Centres, One Stop Centres, Child Care Institutions etc. educate, influence, and facilitate the beneficiaries to complement their lifestyle with yoga for better health results.

Special yoga modules, designed in convergence with the Ministry of AYUSH, are being introduced through these Centres, focusing on women and children.

In the changing discourse of the global order, women are now taking on new roles and responsibilities. From IT to space and from policymaking to strategic defence, women are the new frontline warriors. We recently witnessed how two brave women officers, Col. Sofiya Qureshi and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh, became the face of Operation Sindoor

. This is a great example of the difference women are making in today's world. Hence, women must keep working towards unlocking their potential with yoga playing a key role.

Our government's commitment to yoga is about fostering inclusive development. By actively incorporating yoga into our women and child welfare policies, we are asserting our cultural sovereignty while simultaneously enhancing grassroots health and well-being. Yoga must be seen not just as a practice, but as a participatory movement- a Jan Andolan, for health and wellness, and our government is committed to take this movement to every part of the nation.

In our journey towards Viksit Bharat@2047, Yoga offers a vision for a more compassionate, resilient, and empowered society. Let us unite in embracing Yoga as a social and personal commitment to build a healthier India and reach new heights.

## ANATOMY OF A MANUFACTURED CATASTROPHE

**Nilantha Ilangamuwa**

That was brutal and predicated on years of fabricated deceit. But that is how power operates. Netanyahu is not acting in isolation; he was ushered into this calamity with calculated endorsement from the West. For both Iran and Israel, this is a zero-sum confrontation — a tragic entanglement where ancient antagonisms, contemporary geopolitics, and enduring colonial residues violently intersect.

What is most intellectually arresting is the glaring paradox Western powers routinely embrace. When Netanyahu launches a premeditated and unlawful assault on Iran, it is euphemistically labelled as a measure of self-defence. Yet when Vladimir Putin deploys forces into Ukraine, the West decries it as an unprovoked invasion.

This hypocrisy in moral reasoning illustrates the incoherence of Western ethical frameworks — marked by selective outrage, selective jurisprudence, and selective memory. Netanyahu is actively courting American bombardment of Tehran, even venturing so far as to suggest the types of ordnance most suitable

for maximum devastation. Trump, meanwhile, hesitates — not over Iran's fate, but because the ensuing ramifications will inevitably encircle him. This cynical arithmetic typifies the geopolitical stage on which empires perform their cruelties. A week has now passed since Netanyahu's incursion into Iran — a deliberate campaign tacitly sanctioned by the United States and its constellation of affluent allies, whose modern prosperity is inseparable from centuries of extraction and systemic plunder. War, whether desirable or not, remains the central mechanism by which empires assert dominion, redraw territories, and dismantle resistance. Israel's open defiance of international law — manifest in its missile barrage on Iranian soil — lays bare an unsettling truth: if global powers truly revered international legal norms, Netanyahu's actions would face unequivocal denunciation. Instead, one could argue — chillingly — that he affirms history's most ominous prophecies.

Western media, complicit in sanitising this act of aggression, frames it as an "unprecedented" strike — yet again resorting to euphemism to mask illegality. This was not an improvisational operation; it

was the culmination of extensive clandestine preparation by Netanyahu and his ultranationalist Orthodox coalition. Israel's intelligence apparatus has, over decades, embedded itself within the architecture of Iranian society, executing key figures and orchestrating strategic assassinations.

The latest Friday strikes were not merely military engagements — they constituted a coordinated political decapitation, targeting senior officials central to the Iranian state. Iranian society today endures compounded crises. Their tenacity and national pride remain steadfast, yet they are economically suffocated by Western sanctions, which have induced runaway inflation and scarcity. From first-hand experience in Tehran, Iranians are not consumed by a siege mentality; rather, they display a cautious hospitality that, once trust is earned, transforms into deep generosity — qualities starkly misrepresented in Western discourse. In contrast, Israelis are socialised into a perpetual state of existential fear. "Security" is not merely policy — it is a psychological infrastructure, permeating every aspect of public and private life. Israel's economy thrives not only

through sanctioned trade but also through its robust arms industry and cyber-warfare enterprises, often exported under the guise of national expertise. This divergence in societal conditioning is critical: it reflects distinct historical wounds and geopolitical compulsions.

To grasp Israel's war on Iran, one must situate it within the long arc of Western imperial entrenchment in West Asia. This history is punctuated by covert operations, artificial borders, and a strategy of managed chaos. The 1953 CIA-backed coup in Iran — toppling the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and reinstating the autocratic Shah — is emblematic of this trajectory.

For decades, Western powers suppressed indigenous sovereignty while installing compliant strongmen. The 1979 Islamic Revolution was not merely theological upheaval; it was a radical assertion of national agency forged in the crucible of sustained foreign domination. In the revolution's wake, Iranian society was reconstituted through a deep-rooted collectivism and assertive nationalism that continues to shape its resistance against external coercion.

## NITI Aayog's Push for Genetically Modified Imports Sparks Outrage

**Ashwani Mahajan**

A few days ago, in a working paper, NITI Aayog recommended, to the Indian Government that the import of genetically modified (GM) agricultural products should be allowed in the currently proposed India-US trade agreement. In this, NITI Aayog has also specifically mentioned crops like maize and soybean. It has also been suggested in the working paper that the Government should also offer opening of the import of those agricultural products also, which are either not produced in India or their production is so low that their import will not have any significant impact on the farmers. In this regard, the working paper gives examples of rice, black pepper, soybean oil, shrimp, tea, coffee, dairy products, poultry, apples, almonds, pistachio etc., whose import has been recommended to be opened.

After the recommendations by NITI Aayog in this working paper, there have been strong reactions from the farmer organisations including the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) and in this regard, NITI Aayog has been vehemently criticised and it has been said that these suggestions are against the interests of the

country in general and farmers in particular. For example, the BKS has said that these suggestions are against the interests of the country and the farmers. The BKS also says that NITI Aayog has kneeled before the US, which is not a happy sign.

On the other hand, there is also news that the trade talks between India and America have come to a halt because the Government is not ready to concede the US demand for opening markets for the USA's GM and other agricultural products. In such a situation, this working paper of NITI Aayog is not able to acknowledge the position of the Government. This may also be interpreted that Niti Ayog is trying to impact the anti-GM position of the Government. Both these situations are not good for the country. Previously Also NITI Aayog had Supported GM. This is not the first time that NITI Aayog has advocated GM crops. Earlier also, Aayog, under the vice-chairmanship of Prof Arvind Panagariya, also had released a report in favour of GM crops. At that time too, there was strong opposition to the same.

There has been opposition to GM crops in the country for a long time. Proponents of GM have constantly been

making efforts in favour of GM. However, due to strong opposition to GM and its solid arguments, GM supporters could not succeed. There are many reasons for their opposition:

The first reason is that most GM crops are herbicide tolerant. That is, when these crops are grown, all the surrounding herbs can be destroyed by using designated herbicides and GM crops are not affected. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans". It is worth noting that when these herbicides are used during the production of GM crops, some of their residues remain in those agricultural products and soil, which can cause cancer. Statistics show that in the USA, there are 350 cancer patients per lakh of the population, whereas in India this figure is 100 per lakh. One reason for this is also the excessive use of herbicides in GM crops in the USA.

Although the use and import of GM food products are prohibited in India, due to the shortage of edible oils, the import of edible oils from the US and other countries has been increasing for some time, out of which some amount of GM edible oils is also being imported un-

knowingly. The Government of India has also accepted this earlier. Due to this, the incidence of cancer in India is continuously increasing. Where there were only 8 lakh cancer patients in 2000, by the year 2024 their number has reached 15 lakh. Consumption of GM edible oils could also be one of the reasons for the same.

The second reason for the opposition to the import of GM crops is that the production and import of GM crops are not legally allowed in the country, as per the law of the land. In international trade, no dispute can be raised by other partner countries in this regard, while respecting our rules. Under the WTO rules, every country has the right to ban goods coming from other countries given its right to protect the health of its citizens.

As per international rules, it is possible to stop GM products coming from the US from entering the country.

Since Indian farmers are already suffering financial losses due lack of remunerative prices for their produce, if cheap GM products are allowed to be imported, our farmers will suffer, and in such a situation, if farmers stop practising agriculture, the food security of the

country itself may be in danger.

Thirdly, the sale of GM products is not possible under the food safety rules framed by the Food Security and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which mandates that food products cannot have more than a threshold limit of GM ingredients. In such a situation, after allowing the import of GM products into the country, they will become part of the food chain in India, which will not only circumvent the rules of the country but will also pose a threat to the health of the citizens.

Apart from the above reasons, a fourth reason, which goes against the import of GM products in the country, is that the GM products whose import has been recommended by the NITI Aayog are generally not actually consumed by humans in the US.

In the US, corn and soya are mostly used either as animal feed or for making ethanol. It is worth noting that in the US, 40 to 50 per cent of GM corn is used as animal feed, 30 to 40 per cent is used in making ethanol and only 10 per cent is used in food processing. Similarly, soya is also mostly used as animal feed. The inclusion of such GM products in the food chain of India is not only harmful to the

health of the countrymen but is also an insult to the people of this country.

Although GM products are constantly advocated by the people sitting in NITI Aayog, due to the opposition by the farmers and enlightened scientists in the country and due to the lack of judicial permission in this regard, they are not able to succeed. In such a situation, when the trade agreement with America is under negotiations, and the ban on GM food in India can be used as a shield to protect the interests of farmers and dairy, such recommendations by NITI Aayog are indicative of their indifference towards farmers, and the health of the people and the food security of the country. Moreover, we need to realise that India exports nearly 50 billion USD worth of agricultural food products, and a major attraction of Indian food is that it carries a non-GM tag.

Moment, GM enters into our food chain, we may lose a major chunk of our export markets, as Middle Eastern countries Europe and many other countries, do not allow the import of GM food products. Perhaps, NITI Aayog fails to factor in this important risk associated with GM imports and production in India.