SOORYAVANSHI SHINES

Indian cricket sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has done it again. This time representing India A in the tri-series final against Sri Lanka, the youngest international cricketer, remained unruffled by the sledging and the subsequent spat between him and grownup Lankan players. Sledging just is not a thing that happens; it's often a calculated strategy to put down the rival psycholoigically. Lankan players probably thought that due to his debut in the international cricket Sooryavanshi was highly vulnerable to pressures. That is why he was chosen for the spat and sledging. Many Indian fans were worried if it would impact his performance. However, the boyish Sooryavanshi showed his nerves of steel as he scored 95 runs in the final match between the nations and played a decisive role in India lifting the One day tri nation series. His performance came in for praise from a super veteran Clive Lyod, who advised Sooryavanshi top never change his style.

IS WAR ENDING?

The ongoing negotiations between Iran and the USA are expectedly going through ups and downs. While Iran boycotted the main signing ceremony in Switzerland, it resumed later and both sides said that they would keep negotiating till they reach a final agreement. On one side while Iran is refusing to admit its nuclear programme is on the agenda of negotiations, JD Vance has claimed that Iran would open its nuclear facilities for inspection. The strait of Hormuz has become biggest bone of contrition between not only Iran and USA but also with the rest of the world. In the meanwhile Israel continues to pound Hezbollah in Lebanon and hard the Iranian assets. Till writing Iran claimed it has launched a major strike on Israel. Over all while the US is eager to wriggle out of the war that serves none.

Europe's Two 'Queens' at War

Nilantha Ilangamuwa

When Israel announced last Thursday that it was cutting "all contact" with Estonia-born EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas after accusing her of comparing Israel's treatment of Palestinians with apartheid-era South Africa, the fallout created an immediate political crisis in Brussels. The obvious casualty was Kallas, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs. But inside the EU's power structure, some may have viewed the decision with quiet satisfaction. For Ursula von der Leyen, the powerful president of the European Commission and Kallas's institutional superior, the controversy arrived at the height of their growing rivalry over who controls Europe's foreign policy. A weakened Kallas would strengthen von der Leyen's position in a battle that increasingly resembles a Cold War inside the EU itself.

This is not simply a clash between two ambitious women. It is a fight over what kind of power Europe wants to become. One side believes the European Union needs stronger central institutions, tighter coordination and a Commission powerful enough to act like a government. The other believes Europe's influence depends on a strong diplomatic voice, clearer foreign policy and a tougher response to threats such as Russia. The rivalry between Kallas and von der Leyen is the latest battle in Europe's unresolved argument over whether the EU should move towards something closer to a United States of Europe or remain a union of independent states. The irony is that both women want a stronger Europe. They simply disagree over who should control that strength.

Kallas entered Brussels in December 2024 with a reputation shaped by Estonia's history, a country whose modern identity has been defined by Soviet occupation and fears of Russian expansion. As Estonian prime minister, she became one of Europe's most outspoken critics of Moscow and one of Ukraine's strongest supporters. Her critics argue that she has continued to act like a national leader rather than an EU official whose role requires balancing the interests of 27 governments. Her supporters argue that this is exactly what Europe needs, a clear voice at a time when Russia, China and geopolitical competition are becoming more aggressive.

Her ally Marko Mihkelson, chairman of Estonia's parliament foreign affairs committee, captured this argument when he described representing EU foreign policy as almost "Mission Impossible". His point was not that Kallas was without faults, but that the role itself is designed to create weakness. The High Representative is expected to speak for Europe abroad, yet real foreign policy decisions remain controlled by member states. One government can block action. The diplomat speaks, but national capitals decide. That contradiction sits at the centre of the dispute with von der Leyen. The European Union created the High Representative role after the Lisbon Treaty to give Europe a stronger international voice. But instead of creating a genuine foreign minister, it created a position caught between institutions. The High Representative serves as a vice-president of the European Commission while also leading the European External Action Service, the EU's diplomatic body. The title suggests power. The reality is limited authority.

The result is predictable. Every major international crisis becomes a struggle over who leads.

The Commission under von der Leyen has steadily moved into areas once controlled mainly by traditional diplomacy. Russia's invasion of Ukraine changed the nature of European foreign policy. Sanctions, defence production, energy security and industrial strategy became tools of geopolitical competition. China's economic rise turned trade into a strategic weapon. The Commission argues that modern power is not just about diplomats and statements. It is about economic strength, technology and industrial capacity. Kallas's supporters see this differently. They argue that von der Leyen's expansion of Commission power has weakened the very diplomatic structure created to give Europe a single foreign policy voice. In their view, the Commission is gradually taking control of foreign policy without having the same democratic legitimacy or political accountability as national governments.

The dispute over the European External Action Service reflects this deeper struggle. Reports that the EEAS could be weakened or absorbed triggered concern among European diplomats. Kallas warned staff that the institution's role was protected by EU treaties and that its structure remained unchanged. Her allies accused forces inside the EU system of attempting to reduce her influence and shift foreign policy authority towards the Commission. The roots of this conflict go back to the euro crisis, when another powerful woman faced a similar battle over the future of European power.

During the financial crisis, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel rejected the idea that Europe should respond by rapidly transferring more authority to Brussels. She stressed that under the Lisbon Treaty, "the member states are masters of the treaties". The message was clear. Europe should integrate, but national governments must remain in control. It was a direct rejection of the federalist vision supported by figures such as Ursula von der Leyen, who had previously spoken about the idea of a "United States of Europe". Merkel feared that transferring power during a crisis would create public anger and make citizens feel that decisions were being taken by distant institutions they could not control. Merkel and von der Leyen came from the same German conservative tradition, but their instincts were different. Merkel believed Europe advanced through compromise, caution and gradual integration. Von der Leyen believed Europe needed stronger institutions capable of acting quickly when faced with global threats. The Kallas dispute is the latest version of that unresolved disagreement. History shows that conflicts between powerful women often emerge when institutions create competing centres of authority. The relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Queen Elizabeth II remains one of the most discussed examples. Their tension was not simply personal. It reflected a clash between two forms of power. Thatcher represented electoral authority, political change and ideological conviction. A similar pattern appeared in American politics between Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi. They were not direct enemies, but they represented different sources of influence. Pelosi controlled legislative power in Congress, while Clinton represented executive diplomacy and presidential politics. Their rivalry reflected a wider reality. Political systems often create overlapping authority, and those overlaps produce competition. The lesson is simple. Institutional rivalries are rarely caused only by personalities. They emerge when systems allow multiple figures to claim leadership. This is why the Kallas-von der Leyen relationship has become so politically sensitive. Von der Leyen's Commission has increasingly presented itself as Europe's geopolitical centre. Her supporters argue that the old separation between economics and foreign policy no longer exists. A Europe facing Russia, China and uncertainty from Washington needs a stronger institution capable of acting quickly.

Kallas's supporters argue that Europe risks becoming a system where diplomacy serves Commission priorities rather than member states' foreign policy interests. For them, the question is whether the EU will still have an independent foreign policy chief or whether that role will gradually become symbolic. However, this question will be decided by whether Europe's institutions can adapt quickly enough to match a world that has become more competitive and dangerous.

INDIA'S QUIET PROMISE OF AGEING WELL

Gaurav Sharma

On the morning of 21 June 2026, dawn broke over Kolkata's Red Road, the Hooghly carrying the reflections of five hundred boats, as India marked the twelfth International Day of Yoga with a message both understated and civilisational. What began as a UN resolution has grown into a grassroots movement now visible everywhere from neighbourhood parks to ancient monuments and global landmarks. With the Prime Minister leading the Common Yoga Protocol along Kolkata's riverfront, this year's event reinforced a simple truth: yoga has stopped being a once-a-year spectacle and become woven into ordinary Indian life.

This year's theme, "Yoga for Healthy Ageing," suited a nation that is simultaneously youthful and, in raw numbers, ageing fast. Lifestyle disorders now strike urban professionals in their forties while rural elders silently manage chronic conditions. Yoga answers this with something unglamorous but powerful: a daily practice that slows physical and mental decline. This isn't a fresh discovery repackaged by modern wellness culture - it's a return to insight long held by Indian tradition. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras describe the discipline as quieting the restless mind, and at its core, the day stands as an invitation to find calm amid modern chaos.

Kolkata's selection as host city carried its own resonance. The former capital of British India, home to Bankimchandra's verse and Vivekananda's spiritual conviction, staged a mass gathering that fused colonial-era avenues with a practice millennium old. Broadcast nationwide, the Red Road scenes showed a country comfortable with both its modern identity and ancient roots. Thousands moving through asanas together became more than a fitness display - it read as a democracy learning to breathe as one.

Equally striking was the decision to anchor sessions at heritage sites: a hundred ASI-protected monuments and a dozen landmark locations, from Nalanda to Konark, the Red Fort to Metcalfe Hall. Stone and sculpture became living backdrops for living practice. At a time when many societies struggle to reconcile faith, history, and modern life, India placed yoga mats before Buddhist ruins, in Mughal courtyards, near Chola temples, and along old riverbanks - a reminder that yoga transcends sect and era, a civilisational thread outlasting empires and ideologies alike.

The Bhagavad Gita offers a timeless lens here. As Arjuna hesitates on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Krishna teaches him the paths of action, knowledge, and devotion - describing yoga essentially as skill and excellence in action. Where Patanjali turns attention inward toward stillness, the Gita turns it outward toward engaged, compassionate living. Healthy ageing, in this light, isn't just supple joints or stable blood pressure - it's ageing with purpose, clarity, and continued duty.

This link between inner discipline and outward responsibility showed up far beyond the cameras. Across towns and neighbourhoods, yoga has become routine: residential societies hosting dawn sessions, offices building wellness breaks into the workday, schools treating it as a life skill rather than an extracurricular. The most touching scenes weren't of officials on a stage but of grandchildren guiding grandparents through gentle stretches, seniors using chairs for support, everyone sharing the same open sky.

That is where this year's theme truly lives. The real test now is simple: will people return tomorrow to that same patch of ground where breath and body meet? If even some do, Red Road's images will endure - not as archived photographs, but as quiet markers on India's path toward ageing not just longer, but wiser.

From rhetoric to statecraft: India's institutional turn on illegal infiltration

Sanchita Bhattacharya

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi, from the ramparts of the Red Fort in August 2025, framed illegal infiltration as a challenge to employment, welfare access and demographic stability, the statement was more than a political declaration. It reflected a broader concern increasingly visible across many nations: how should states respond when vulnerabilities linked to illegal infiltration begin to intersect with questions of governance and internal stability? Yet an even more difficult question lingered, what happens after the rhetoric?

The answer is now beginning to take shape. On May 26, 2026, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announcement of a high-level committee to examine illegal infiltration and what the government describes as "unnatural demographic change" suggests a shift from political messaging to governance architecture.

The concern itself is not entirely new. In September 2024, the Prime Minister had also spoken about the rapid demographic shift in the Santhal Parganas and Kolhan regions of Jharkhand. Significantly, Jharkhand is not a bordering state. Irrespective of the political contestation surrounding the issue, these interventions are analytically significant because they attempt to place a long-debated concern within a more structured administrative framework rather than episodic public discourse.

For decades, India's conversation around infiltration has oscillated between moments of public urgency and periods of administrative reaction. Concerns emerge, particularly in border regions and vulnerable districts where infiltration pressures intersect with fragile governance systems, only to recede without sustained institutional attention. What has often remained missing is a long-term mechanism that treats illegal infiltration not merely as a border challenge but as a larger governance question requiring policy coordination.

It is in this context that Amit Shah's committee deserves closer attention. The significance of the exercise lies less in political rhetoric and more in institutional design. Chaired by former Supreme Court Judge Justice Prakash Prabhakar Navlekar (Retired) and tasked with studying demographic changes at regional and district levels, the committee seeks to replace broad political claims with a structured administrative process. In essence, it

seeks to answer a difficult but legitimate question: what are the implications for governance systems, welfare delivery and local administration when demographic changes occur in vulnerable regions?

Such concerns are not unique to India. Modern states routinely monitor demographic trends because governance depends upon administrative predictability. Public infrastructure, including schools, healthcare systems and employment ecosystems, is planned around demographic assumptions. Sudden shifts, particularly in sensitive or resource-constrained regions, can place unexpected pressure on local institutions if governance mechanisms remain unprepared.

The security dimension cannot be dismissed either. As the Union Home Minister has repeatedly argued, infiltration today is rarely a question of physical entry alone. It intersects with forged documents, identity fraud and weak verification systems, all of which can make administrative loopholes easier to exploit over time. In such situations, what begins as a border management issue can gradually evolve into a broader governance concern with implications for internal stability and institutional credibility.

At the same time, the strength of any democratic response lies in procedural legitimacy. Administrative vigilance must remain evidence-based and legally sound, carefully distinguishing unlawful infiltration from lawful citizenship.

This is precisely where the committee-led approach acquires significance. By focusing on district-level assessment, consultation and structured policy recommendations, the government appears to be prioritising process over impulse. It reflects a recognition that durable governance solutions require administrative precision, not merely political urgency.

More broadly, the initiative reflects an evolving understanding of national security itself. Security is no longer confined to fences, patrols and intelligence intercepts. It increasingly resides in administrative capacity, institutional preparedness, databases and the state's ability to anticipate vulnerabilities rather than merely react to them.

Seen through this lens, the committee announced by the Union Home Minister may represent something larger than an intervention on infiltration alone. It may signal an attempt to institutionalise a preventive governance framework, one that seeks to identify vulnerabilities before they mature into larger administrative or social challenges.

For a country as vast and administratively complex as India, governance is often tested not by the intensity of political declarations but by the durability of the institutions that follow them.

If implemented with consistency and legal clarity, the committee may well signal a broader shift in India's governance imagination, from reacting to vulnerabilities after they surface to preparing for them before they deepen into more difficult challenges.

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