

WHY INDIA FACES A CYBERCRIME EMERGENCY

For years, cybercrime in India was not taken seriously — yet another crime that could be easily dealt with. But the menace has now emerged as a multi-headed hydra that has siphoned off millions of rupees and even forced individuals to lock themselves in their own homes as prisoners — digital arrest and phishing is no longer minor crimes; they can wreck lives and the worst part it is very difficult to nab the culprits. But not anymore, that comfortable distance has collapsed.

The Prime Minister has reviewed digital-arrest scams at a PRAGATI meeting and pushed states to operationalise the e-Zero FIR system nationwide, while the Supreme Court continues to hear a suo motu case it opened after an elderly Ambala couple was swindled of over a crore rupee by fraudsters wielding forged court orders. When the executive and the judiciary independently decide the same menace deserves their direct attention, it is no longer a law-and-order footnote. It is a governance emergency.

The apex court itself has described the scale of digital fraud — running into tens of thousands of crores — in language usually reserved for organised crime, not white-collar mischief. "Digital arrest" scams, where con artists impersonate police officers, CBI or ED officials, or even judges to terrify victims into transferring their life savings, have proliferated precisely because they exploit two things India has in abundance: rising digital penetration among people who weren't raised on it, and a fragmented enforcement architecture where a fraud originating in one state, routed through a server in another, and cashed out via mule accounts in a third, falls through every jurisdictional crack. The e-Zero FIR mechanism — which converts verified financial-fraud complaints filed through the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal into instant, borderless FIRs — is sound in design but has been adopted by barely a handful of states. Universal, urgent rollout is the need of the hour.

This must be matched by genuine coordination between police, banks, telecom operators and platforms to freeze and trace money in real time, a standard operating procedure of the kind the Supreme Court has already asked the Centre to draft, and movement on international cooperation frameworks like the UN Cybercrime Convention, since most networks behind these scams operate from beyond India's borders. But no FIR portal, however fast, repairs damage already done. The first line of defence has to be the citizen. Verifying independently, hanging up, and reporting to 1930 or cybercrime.gov.in before money moves is the only real firewall available to most people, and it costs nothing.

Horse trading and the limits of anti-defection law

Kalyani Shankar

The Indian Opposition is facing considerable political challenges due to ongoing conflicts within its parties. This complex political landscape, where party switching and defections have become common, is understandably worrying for many. Such actions can erode trust, weaken accountability, and put our democratic stability at risk. It's important for all of us to feel a sense of responsibility in safeguarding our democracy together during these uncertain times.

States such as Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu are experiencing political splits. There are claims of horse-trading to lure Members of Parliament.

Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) is facing increased pressure amid reports that some members may join the Eknath Shinde faction. Significant rifts within Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) have intensified once again. Reports claim that around 16 MLAs and seven MPs from the Shiv Sena (UBT) are in communication with the Eknath Shinde faction.

Uddhav held a meeting with these lawmakers on Sunday. According to sources, during the meeting, Uddhav Thackeray delivered a clear message to the leaders. He reportedly stated that anyone who wants to leave the party can do so. Another report claims he offered to step down. This is a developing story. Meanwhile, the Aam Aadmi Party has seen 7 of its Rajya Sabha members defect to the BJP. The situation in Punjab is not good for the AAP.

In Bengal, which just saw the BJP forming its first government, 20 TMC Members of Parliament are joining a lesser-known political group from Tripura. They might be doing this to



avoid the anti-defection law. The rebel group has asked the Lok Sabha Speaker for separate seating in Parliament. Meanwhile, loyal members of the original party argue that a proper merger should include the entire party, not just individual lawmakers.

Additionally, BJP ally OP Rajbhar claims that the Samajwadi Party might soon split, but the SP leadership strongly denies this. The DMK and the AIADMK may also face internal challenges.

The BJP-led NDA is working to secure a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha by attracting smaller regional parties. Currently, they hold 293 seats and aim to increase this with the support of rebels from the Trinamool Congress. If the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam aligns with them, the alliance could get even closer to their goal.

These internal conflicts and external political strategies raise questions about whether party instability stems from external influences or internal leadership issues.

The Opposition's strength in Parliament is changing more than it has since the Shiv Sena split in 2022 and the NCP in 2023, with defections weakening democratic representation and decision-making. There is an urgent need for accountability and reforms to protect democracy.

The anti-defection law has come in for sharp criticism over the years for weakening a critical aspect of democracy: the power of elected legislators. In effect, the law empowers parties over elected representatives.

But the law has been unable to achieve its stated aim of preventing defections. Since it was enacted, defections have gone on unabated. All it has done, as we can see in the Trinamool's case, is make defections a bulk game.

Recognising these shifts underscores why it is crucial to protect our democracy. Understanding the impact of defections can inspire voters to see their role in safeguarding democratic processes and advocating for reforms. The consequences of these shifts are

substantial, affecting legislative processes and voter confidence. When leaders prioritise personal interests over party loyalty, it can erode trust in our democratic system, making citizens uncertain about the reliability of their representatives and the political process as a whole. Exploring how defections undermine democratic legitimacy can help the reader understand the urgent need for reforms to strengthen democracy.

This ongoing phenomenon underscores the importance of reforms, inspiring the audience to feel hopeful and motivated to work towards strengthening democratic accountability and trust.

The reasons for these changes are diverse and complex, including personal ambitions and dissatisfaction with existing party ideologies. Politicians often seek new opportunities with parties that offer greater influence or more appealing positions, leaving many constituents feeling overlooked and frustrated.

The anti-defection law has serious flaws because it does not prevent the political changes seen in India, such as party splits and resignations, which continue despite the law's enactment, underscoring the urgent need for reforms to safeguard democratic stability effectively.

For this exodus in the party, while the legislator wins in the name of the charismatic leader, if they want to defect, they must resign their seats and contest again to become legislators.

Overall, Indian democracy is admired globally; however, flaws in the electoral process and issues in political party practices need to be addressed. It is the responsibility of lawmakers to improve the system. Parliament and political parties must carefully consider how to close these loopholes.

THE QUIET DISAPPEARANCE OF PATIENCE

Deeba Salim Irfan

There was a time when delay was not unusual enough to be noticed. A train running late did not become a conversation. A letter arriving after several days did not feel like inefficiency. A decision taking weeks was not interpreted as hesitation. It was simply how things moved. Life, in that sense, had a natural lag built into it. Nothing arrived fully formed. Everything required a passage.

That rhythm has quietly disappeared. Today, delay is treated as failure. A message unanswered within minutes raises questions. Complaints can be raised just because a delivery did not reach on time. Even a brief pause in a system, raises brows and creates frowns.

Speed has stopped being a feature. It has become an expectation. This is where the shift has happened - not in technology alone, but in behavior. Time is no longer experienced as duration. It is experienced as a response. The moment something is initiated, the expectation is completion. Anything in between feels like friction. Workplaces are a clear example. Though a quick output is confused with efficiency, in reality, they may not be the same. Speed, at times, may mask poor thinking, just as easily as it can signal competence. Even in



personal communication a same pattern exists. Silence is no longer neutral. It is interpreted. A delayed response is read as avoidance, absence is assumed to be intentional.

The result is a constant state of overreading and under waiting. What is often missed is that many essential processes were never designed for acceleration. Learning does not compress neatly. Neither does recovery. Neither does trust. These are cumulative processes built through repetition, distance and time. When forced into urgency, they do not im-

prove. They weaken. The larger cultural change is not just that things are faster. It is that waiting has become uncomfortable. That discomfort is relatively new. Earlier systems had built-in pauses. Information arrived late. Decisions were revisited overtime. Even boredom had structure - it was a gap between inputs, not a condition to be eliminated. That gap mattered. It allowed thinking without interruption. It allowed ideas to settle instead of reacting immediately to the next stimulus. That space is now almost gone. Every pause is filled. Every silence is corrected.

Every delay is monitored. What remains is continuous activity without equivalent depth. That is where the imbalance sits. This is not a discussion against technological progress. The gains are undeniable. Healthcare is faster. Communication is instant. Information is accessible. Logistics are efficient in ways previously unimaginable. The problem is not speed itself. The problem is the extension of speed into every category of life. The issue lies elsewhere. Not everything is meant to be immediate. Some systems are not broken because they are slow. Perhaps things are getting restored in real time and that perhaps may take time. What is being eroded is not efficiency. It is tolerance. The ability to remain steady when outcomes are not immediate is weakening. And that has implications beyond convenience. It affects judgment, attention, and even the way problems are understood.

A fast world is not automatically a right one. The question, then, is not whether speed will continue to define the age. It will. The more relevant question is whether patience can still coexist alongside it - not as nostalgia, but as a necessity. Because, at some point, the line must be drawn. Speed belongs to systems. Patience belongs to people. Confusing the two is where the problem lies.

FIFA 2026: The rise of a new Football world

Chaitanya K Prasad

Football as a sport has undergone a strategic shift. This shift is exemplified through the upsets, victories and tenacity that audiences are witnessing globally. Football today has moved beyond being a traditional bastion of favored nations to becoming a global sporting festival. The performance of Cape Verde has created a football tsunami for pundits and strategists analyzing the emergence of a new brigade in the football fraternity. It has stunned viewers through its spectacular performance against Spain and Uruguay. DR Congo has emerged with a new killer instinct.

Other nations such as Egypt, Haiti, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Iraq and Canada have also given us a whiff of professionalism that has been unprecedented and unparalleled. All this proves that the experiment to expand FIFA to 48 nations has met with success, giving new hope and aspiration to countries across the world. In the past, we witnessed the "Mexican Wave", which became a natural sporting symbol at global events. FIFA 2026 has not been left behind. The tagline and narrative have echoed ideas such as "Global Audiences Pick", "Underdogs Spectacle" and "David V/s Goliath Contest."

Every edition of the FIFA World Cup has given us a splash of unusual excitement, dogged performances, underrated displays and the emergence of unrecognized dark horses. The current edition has been no exception. FIFA 2026 has so far had several defining moments, particularly through the rise of teams that were earlier seen as peripheral to the football imagination. These teams have given traditional showstoppers a run for their money.

With expanded participation, football branding has also scaled new heights. Each participating nation has given audiences a fresh taste of professionalism, along with new dynamics of skill, speed and strategy. Established superpowers have witnessed bouts of struggle and underperformance, while newer entrants have used the platform to announce their arrival with confidence. Football has transcended boundaries, leaving a lasting legacy among admirers, supporters and audiences. FIFA 2026 has shown to the world a bold new experiment, showcasing the "Democratization of Football" with renewed confidence, vigor and vitality.

The recent implications of FIFA 2026 have gone beyond the field of play. The enlarged format has not merely increased

the number of teams; it has expanded the emotional, commercial and geopolitical footprint of football itself. With 12 groups, a new Round of 32 and the possibility of third-placed teams progressing, every match has acquired greater tactical meaning and every goal has begun to carry qualification consequences. This has made FIFA 2026 refreshing because the tournament is no longer being viewed only through the lens of traditional football powers. The entry and performance of countries such as Cape Verde, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Haiti, DR Congo and others has been received with curiosity, admiration and surprise. Their inclusion has reinforced the belief that football's future lies in wider participation, not closed dominance.

The eastern part of the world is also emerging as an important zone to watch. Asian and Middle Eastern teams are bringing discipline, speed, compact defending and fearless counter-attacking football into the tournament's mainstream imagination. Japan, South Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan and Uzbekistan have shown that the football map is gradually shifting eastward. FIFA 2026, therefore, is refreshing not only because it is bigger, but because it is more representative, unpredictable and truly

global.

Communication, outreach and narrative building have created new frontiers at FIFA 2026. It has been a rare symphony of diverse stakeholders leading to "Communication Convergence." Global conversation across multiple platforms has unleashed the power of soft power in the narrative-building process. An unusual diplomacy has emerged across stadiums, where the dynamics of sport, identity and national pride are visible in real time. We have witnessed an interconnect unprecedented in scale and volume across stadiums, players, fan communities and digital platforms. This has brought to light the importance of using sport as a medium for building a cohesive communication environment between fans, brand identity, real-time dissemination and response. All this has led to a new phase of strategic global communication, influencing national networks, global visibility and soft power connectivity. Strategic communication through FIFA platforms is reinventing narrative discourse through different tools, platforms and engagement protocols.

FIFA 2026 has shown the importance of people-centric communication and narrative building in creating a perception where sport is not limited only to playing

time. It is being utilized to build bonhomie through innovative storytelling and conversations that touch the heart and emotions, rather than relying on pure statecraft alone. Audience investment has been one of the critical pillars of FIFA 2026. The emotional journey of audiences has been relayed on a real-time basis to create an impact resting on authenticity, values, aspirations and hope. Technology, value systems and emotions have together shaped the benchmarks of audience engagement and excitement. FIFA 2026 has seen a Unified Voice across stadiums, where sports lovers have chanted triumph in unison or expressed disappointment with the resolve to fight back once again. It has created "Emotional Bonding" among people through common voices, shared memories and collective sporting imagination.

FIFA 2026 has also proved to be a new "Branding Vehicle", creating a multi-layered brand platform through visual visibility, thematic positioning, FIFA logos, sloganeering, theme song placement and corporate participation. Coupled with this is the presence of iconic players such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappé.

FIFA has created new parameters and benchmarks for endorsements, con-

sumer engagement and fan experiences. Loyalty, emotional participation and cultural association have become the new mantras of branding principles. Fan experiences have added to the color of branding, where the "product" is no longer just the match, but the complete universe of emotion, identity, visibility and audience acceptance created around it.

FIFA 2026 is not merely another edition of the World Cup; it is a statement on the changing geography of global football. It has shown that the sport is no longer confined to a few historic power centres, but is being shaped by new nations, new audiences, new markets and new aspirations.

The expanded format has opened the gates for wider participation, while the performances of emerging football nations have given the tournament a new emotional and competitive pulse. As the world moves towards the knockout rounds, FIFA 2026 stands as a celebration of unpredictability, inclusion and global sporting democracy. It has reaffirmed that football's greatest strength lies not only in goals scored or trophies lifted, but in its power to unite identities, ignite hope and create a shared global imagination. This is the real legacy of FIFA 2026.