

FALLOUT ON AVIATION

The Flydubai incident has reignited the fear of worst case scenarios for the fliers and the government. A lone wolf or a non-state actor could be used for mass killings as came up in this incident. Though details about the Omani Co-pilot who stabbed the Pilot Smit Machchhar with the apparent intention of crashing the plane carrying Jews from Dubai to Tel Aviv are scanty, but it certain that he was on a suicide mission. The security lapses will be examined and hopefully shared with other nations by the Israeli and the UAE which are carrying the investigation. The Omani accused, who has since been shifted to the UAE, is being called a ‘jihadi’ and the Israeli and even UAE government has said he was on a terror mission. The West Asia has been a historically turbulent part of the world and each incident of concern happening there is linked to more than one entity/nation. This too may turn out to be such a case. According to experts, the Omani national could not be copiloting the plane to Tel Aviv under terms of Abraham Accord. As per this historic agreement pilots from countries which have diplomatic relations with the Jewish State can fly the flight to and from Israel. How was the Omani pilot placed on duty in this flight? There is surely going to be an overhaul of the aviation security. Companies many impose fresh restrictions on passengers and even in recruiting crew.

For India good news is that Captain Smit Machchhar is stable and has been shifted to the UAE. He is a hero for the world with felicitations, prayers and praise pouring in from all over. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with him and called him a hero and pride of India.

Kalyani Shankar

India is campaigning for both a permanent and a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Securing a permanent seat requires significant changes to the UN structure, which are progressing slowly. India is seen as a key voice for the Global South and in the Indo-Pacific. Foreign Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, currently in New York for the UN meeting, has initiated the campaign for a non-permanent seat this year.

In August 1950, the US proposed to India, through its ambassador, that it consider replacing China as a permanent UNSC member. Nehru reportedly dismissed this suggestion, missing India’s chance for permanent membership. However, the international situation was at the peak of the Cold War; the complexity may have justified his stance.

New Delhi has been working for the seat for the past 30 years as part of its foreign policy goals. Over the years, many countries have supported India’s candidacy, recognising its growing influence, large population, and contributions to peacekeeping. However, changing the UNSC’s structure is complicated because it requires unanimous consent from the current five permanent members: the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom. Currently, there is no clear timeline for when, or if, India will achieve this goal.

India believes the current UNSC structure no longer reflects modern realities. It argues that its status as the largest democracy and its growing economy make it a key global player. India’s commitment to



peace is shown through its significant involvement in UN peacekeeping missions, where it has sent many personnel to help maintain stability.

India will need to engage in strong diplomatic efforts, as Tajikistan is also vying for the Asia-Pacific non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Tajikistan’s support from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation could make the competition harder for India. To strengthen its position, India needs more support beyond Fiji, the United States, Austria, and Sri Lanka. Elections happen once a year through a secret ballot and require a two-thirds majority, even if candidates are not opposed.

The G-4 nations support each other’s ambitions for permanent seats, and some European countries back India’s bid for the UNSC.

However, challenges remain, including disagreements over

how many new seats to add and the controversial question of veto power for those new members.

Despite support from various nations, India faces challenges regarding new seats and veto power. It favours a proposal that initially excludes veto rights for new permanent members, addressing existing members’ concerns while promoting fairer representation. As External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar reiterated in parliamentary sessions, India is actively engaged in the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) on UNSC reforms.

India is working to mobilise broader support for expanding the UNSC. This strategic engagement includes bolstering its ties with Global South nations, highlighting India’s commitment to fostering collective development and addressing shared challenges on the international stage.

India advocates reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) because it believes the current structure no longer reflects 21st-century realities. As the world’s largest democracy with a rapidly growing economy, India plays an important role on the global stage.

Additionally, India’s long-standing commitment to international peace and security is demonstrated by its substantial contributions to UN peacekeeping missions. The country has deployed thousands of personnel, further solidifying its reputation as a regional player dedicated to maintaining global stability.

Several European nations have supported India’s candidacy, seeing it as a way to diversify representation within the Council. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been particularly outspoken about the urgent need for reform, emphasising important issues such as seat allocation and claims regarding regional representation. How-

ever, the reform process has faced significant challenges because no unified negotiating text exists and disputes continue over expanded membership and the contentious issue of veto power.

Despite strong backing from multiple countries, substantial challenges remain. Central to these challenges are contentious discussions over allocating new seats and the implications of allowing additional members to wield veto power. Nevertheless, India continues to champion permanent membership, articulating its commitment to both global governance and the principles of peace and security the UNSC is meant to uphold.

In its reform proposal, India is open to a structure that may initially exclude veto power for new permanent members. This proposal seeks to address historical apprehensions among current members while promoting more equitable representation. This move acknowledges the need to balance power dynamics within the Council and ensure diverse global voices are included in decision-making.

Moreover, support for India’s candidature continues to grow, with backing from entities like the African Union, which has called for a permanent seat to ensure the UNSC adequately represents African interests and perspectives.

Nevertheless, the path to permanent membership is complex and requires careful negotiations and consensus-building among current permanent members. The bid will test India’s diplomatic outreach across regions, especially among the Global South, OIC members, SCO countries, African states, island nations and major Western partners.

THE UNFINISHED STORY OF INDIA’S HANDLOOM WEAVERS

Namrata Kohli

At The Kunj, in New Delhi, Aadyam Handwoven recently brought together handwoven textiles from different weaving clusters across India. Alongside the textiles was something increasingly difficult to encounter—a special screening of Shyam Benegal’s 1987 Hindi film *Susman*, which portrayed the lives and struggles of India’s handloom weavers.

Susman is not readily available on mainstream streaming platforms, and Aadyam obtained special permission from Shyam Benegal’s family to screen the film. “*Susman*”—loosely translated as “the essence”—is an apt title for a film about the people who form the very warp and weft of India’s handloom tradition.

Nearly four decades after the film was made, it raises an uncomfortable question: how much has really changed for the Indian weaver? “From the time of Shyam Benegal’s movie, a lot has changed, but nothing much has changed. The film is equally relevant today,” says Manish Saxena, Business Lead, Aadyam Handwoven, an Aditya Birla initiative.

Among the traditions showcased was Pochampally Ikat, which originates in Bhoodan Pochampally in Telangana’s Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district and is renowned for its distinctive geometric



patterns. The beauty of Ikat begins even before the loom. Unlike conventional weaving, where the design emerges primarily during weaving, in Ikat the yarn itself is carefully tied and resist-dyed according to a predetermined pattern before it reaches the loom. The coloured threads must then be aligned with remarkable precision during weaving for the pattern to emerge. The slight feathering at the edges of motifs—rather than machine-like uniformity—gives Ikat much of its distinctive handmade character.

There is something truly distinct about this craft. In Pochampally, this intricate process also creates an unusual partnership between weavers. “In Pochampally, the weaver has to be very particular. He has to synchronise with the person doing the tie-and-dye,” explains Saxena. “The husband and wife often work in tandem here. In other clusters, men may do the main weaving and women some of the lighter weaves, but because of the technique in Pochampally, there is much

more working together.”

But keeping such labour-intensive craftsmanship alive comes at a price. Pochampally saris at premium stores in silk can today range from around Rs 20,000 to Rs 1 lakh, depending on the silk, intricacy and amount of work involved. “Handloom is meant to be worn by everyone. That is the true essence,” says Saxena. “But silk prices have really been shooting up. At the same time, there is a minimum wage, and we are very conscious that the weavers’ livelihood is maintained.” It creates one of handloom’s contemporary contradictions: how does a craft remain accessible while ensuring that the people making it are adequately paid?

For Saxena, Susman is also personal. He first saw the film at a festival in 1987. “It pretty much shaped why I chose this profession,” he recalls. “It was a very inspirational film and impacted me at a very impressionable age.” At the exhibition, he also displayed another piece of his own history—a sari he bought for his mother from his first salary in 1994.

A sari can carry a family memory for decades; a weaving tradition can carry a cultural memory for centuries. Nearly 40 years after Susman, perhaps the challenge is no longer simply preserving the loom. It is ensuring that the people sitting at it can build a future from it.

India’s AI push gathers pace, data protection test in 2027

MD Afshar Alam

India’s artificial intelligence sector is expanding under a new legal framework built around the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, amended IT Rules on deepfakes and a national AI mission backed by public money. The full test of this framework will come in May 2027, when every obligation under the data protection law takes effect.

AI in daily life

Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems that learn from large volumes of data to predict outcomes, classify information and generate text, images or speech. In India, the technology already checks UPI payments for fraud, sends crop advisories to farmers, translates government services into regional languages and supports doctors in reading scans. Generative AI tools became widely available after 2022 and have since spread into offices, classrooms and social media feeds.

Every such system depends on data. A model that recommends loans learns from past borrowers. A chatbot learns from text written by millions of people. The laws governing how personal data is collected and used, therefore, decide how far Indian AI can develop and how much protection citi-

zens receive along the way.

IT Act, 2000 remains the base law

The Information Technology Act, 2000, was drafted to give legal recognition to electronic records and digital signatures during the early years of e-commerce. Its privacy provisions were limited to Section 43A and the 2011 rules on sensitive personal data, which asked companies to follow reasonable security practices without spelling out consent or individual rights. Section 79 protects online platforms from liability for user content if they follow prescribed due diligence.

The Act did not anticipate machine learning, voice cloning or deepfakes. The government has used rules framed under it to address AI risks. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2026, were notified by MeitY on February 10, 2026 and came into force on February 20, 2026. The amendment brings synthetically generated information, including deepfakes and AI-altered audio and video, within the due diligence duties of platforms.

Such content must now carry a prominent label and permanent provenance metadata that users cannot remove. Take-down windows have been cut to as little as

three hours after a valid notice. A proposal in the October 2025 draft for a watermark covering 10 per cent of the surface area of synthetic content was dropped in favour of a qualitative standard.

Digital rights groups have raised concerns. They warn that short timelines and mandatory labelling, particularly where automated detection tools are used, may chill lawful speech and lead platforms to remove more content than the law requires.

DPDP Act rolls out in phases

The Supreme Court declared privacy a fundamental right in the Puttaswamy judgment of 2017. A dedicated data protection law followed after several drafts. The DPDP Act received Presidential assent on August 11, 2023. MeitY notified the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules in November 2025, with an eighteen-month period for phased compliance.

Implementation is being carried out in three stages. The Data Protection Board of India was constituted in November 2025 with four members. The consent manager framework begins in November 2026. All remaining obligations, including consent systems, privacy notices, rights of individuals and breach protocols, apply from May 2027.

Penalties can reach `250 crore per violation. The Rules require verifiable parental consent before the data of any user under 18 is processed. A personal data breach must be reported to the Board within 72 hours, and affected users must be informed.

For AI developers, the law carries both obligations and openings. Personal data must be processed with consent, for a specified purpose, and deleted once that purpose is served. Legal experts note this creates difficulty for companies training large models, since removing one person’s data from a trained system is technically hard. At the same time, the Act does not apply to personal data that individuals have themselves made publicly available, and it provides exemptions for research, archiving and statistical purposes.

Industry bodies have welcomed this flexibility as practical. Privacy advocates say the public data exemption is broad and may allow large-scale scraping of social media profiles for model training without the knowledge of users.

National AI policy

India’s first formal AI policy was the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence, released by NITI Aayog in 2018 under the title #AIforAll. It named health, agriculture, ed-

ucation, smart cities and mobility as priority areas. The strategy set a direction but carried no dedicated budget.

Funding arrived in March 2024, when the Union Cabinet approved the IndiaAI Mission with an outlay of `10,372 crore. The Mission has onboarded more than 38,000 GPUs through a subsidised national compute facility, with access offered to startups and researchers at around one dollar per GPU-hour. It also funds the development of indigenous foundation models trained on Indian languages and data.

Skilling forms a second track. Under IndiaAI and FutureSkills programmes, 500 PhD scholars, 5,000 postgraduates and 8,000 undergraduates are receiving support. Some 570 AI Data Labs and 27 IndiaAI labs are operating across states, many of them in smaller cities.

On regulation, MeitY released the IndiaAI Governance Guidelines on November 5, 2025. The guidelines rest on seven principles described as sutras. They propose an inter-ministerial AI Governance Group, a Technology and Policy Expert Committee and an IndiaAI Safety Institute to test systems and advise policymakers. The guidelines state that India will examine gaps in existing laws and amend them where

needed, and will not immediately draft a standalone AI Act on the European model.

In January 2026, the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser released a white paper on a techno-legal approach, which calls for safeguards such as watermarking and bias detection to be built into the design of AI systems. India hosted the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi on February 19 and 20, 2026.

Progress and gaps

Policy analysts describe India’s approach as infrastructure-first. The European Union began with risk regulation under its AI Act, while India began with compute, capital and skills and has kept regulation light and sector-driven.

Several gaps remain. The four-member Data Protection Board must oversee a country of 1.4 billion people and millions of businesses that handle personal data. The proposed Digital India Act, intended to replace the IT Act, has not yet been introduced in Parliament. Liability for harm caused by AI decisions in lending, recruitment, policing and healthcare is not addressed in any single law. Sectoral regulators, including the Reserve Bank of India and SEBI, are issuing separate AI guidance, which experts warn could produce uneven standards.