

Central Chronicle

Founder: Late Shri Ramgopal Maheshwari
Inspiration: Late Shri Prafulla Kumar Maheshwari

EDITORIAL

Expanding Conflict

The expanding crisis in the Gulf region is no longer a distant geopolitical tremor; it is fast becoming a seismic event with the potential to reshape global security and destabilize economies far beyond West Asia.

Oil, the lifeblood of the Gulf, is once again at the center of global anxiety. Even modest disruptions in supply lines send crude prices soaring, straining import-dependent nations like India.

Yet, the crisis is not confined to energy alone. India's export sector is experiencing an abrupt and painful standstill. Agricultural exports from Maharashtra — one of the country's most productive states — have come to a complete halt.

The Gulf region has long been a vital market for Indian agricultural produce. Disruptions in maritime routes, port operations, and payment channels have effectively choked this lifeline.

conomic scars will be — not just in Maharashtra but across other states where a similar situation prevails.

An atmosphere of uncertainty now hangs heavy over both trade and diplomacy. Businesses are hesitant to commit to fresh orders; insurers are recalculating risk premiums; shipping lines are revising routes.

Equally alarming is the human dimension of the crisis. The Gulf countries host crores of Indians — workers, professionals, entrepreneurs — who have contributed significantly to both the economies of their host nations and to India through remittances.

The evacuation of Indians has begun, but it is undeniably a Herculean task. Coordinating airlifts, ensuring safe passage, managing documentation demand extraordinary logistical support.

Beyond economics and evacuation, the broader implications for world security are profound. The Gulf is strategically positioned at the crossroads of global trade routes. Any prolonged instability threatens not only oil flows but also maritime commerce linking Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Will a landmark judgment spur progress from menstrual hygiene to menstrual justice?

SHOBHA SHUKLA - CNS

In a landmark judgment delivered on 30th January 2026, the Supreme Court of India declared menstrual health an integral component of individual fundamental rights, making India the only country in the world to constitutionally guarantee menstrual health.

With a view to ensure that this landmark decision does not remain only on paper, but is truly put into action, the Supreme Court will hear this matter again after 3 months (from 30 January 2026) to know how well the mandates of the judgment have been implemented across the country.

Lauding the judgement for addressing a long-standing gap between legal guarantees and lived experiences, Debanjana Choudhuri, a gender justice activist, said that "by recognising menstrual health and hygiene as an integral part of life under the Article 21, the Court acknowledged a reality that has been long affecting girls and women particularly, in silence and neglect because it stems from patriarchal mindset, stigma, and taboo.

The recognition is supported by

the constitutional mandate under Article 15 which empowers the state to make special provisions for women by bringing menstruation into constitutional discourse."

In India, approximately one in four adolescent girls drop out of school annually due to challenges in managing their menstruation. Government

struation as a source of shame or impurity. It aims to bring about systemic changes to root out economic injustice; health injustice; environmental injustice and challenge laws that ignore menstrual needs in workplaces, schools, and prisons, viewing menstrual health as a fundamental human right.

mental right. Onset of menstruation leads to irregular school attendance. Inadequate toilet facilities, lack of privacy, unavailability of sanitary products and fear of embarrassment compel many girl students to remain absent during their menstrual cycle.

Debanjana and Ruchi were speaking in SHE & Rights session that focussed, amongst other gender equity issues, on Indian Supreme Court's ruling reinforcing menstrual hygiene as a fundamental right. SHE & Rights was organised by Global Center for Health Diplomacy and Inclusion (CeHDI), International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Women Deliver Conference 2026, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), and CNS.

Ruchi shared that the Court judgment alone is half the problem as far as menstrual hygiene is concerned. It emphasised that the role of men and boys, including male teachers and peers, is to sterilise themselves from menstruation-related stigma, until then such services would be under-utilised.

Menstrual justice is a human rights and social justice framework that aims to end the stigma, economic barriers (period poverty), and structural inequalities that prevent individuals who menstruate from managing their periods with dignity.

data shows that in India approximately 4 million (40 lakhs) girls dropped out of primary education in the last four years. Perhaps this was one of the reasons that prompted the top court to intervene to make menstrual health a fundamental right.

Menstrual justice is a human rights and social justice framework that aims to end the stigma, economic barriers (period poverty), and structural inequalities that prevent individuals who menstruate from managing their periods with dignity.

Coined by legal scholar Margaret Johnson in 2018, it moves beyond "menstrual hygiene" or "equity" to address the deep-seated structural and cultural barriers that treat men-

Ruchi Bhattar, a lawyer and journalist, elaborated that the 127 pages long judgement mandates all Indian states and union territories to ensure the provision of functional, accessible, and gender-segregated toilets in every school with usable water and hand-washing facilities; free and regular supply of biodegradable sanitary pads in every school, and safe environmentally compliant mechanisms for their disposal; and integration of gender-responsive education on menstruation and related health concerns into school curricula to break the stigma around puberty and menstruation.

"Despite some progress, menstrual hygiene discourse in India has not been discussed vocally as a funda-

India's Livestock and Fisheries Sector Grow Steadily

India's agricultural progress is increasingly supported by the expansion of allied sectors such as livestock, dairy, poultry, and fisheries. These sectors have become major contributors to agricultural Gross Value Added (GVA) and rural employment.

Although rural livelihoods remain largely agriculture-based, changes in land use, climate variability, and income uncertainty have encouraged households to adopt additional income sources. For small and marginal farmers, diversification has become an important way to manage seasonal income fluctuations and ensure more stable earnings.

tral but is supported by multiple livelihood options. Stronger institutions such as cooperatives, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have improved access to credit, technology, and organised markets, helping small producers connect better with value chains.

Within allied agricultural activities, livestock and fisheries have demonstrated relatively stable growth rates of approximately 5-6 percent, underscoring their strategic importance in generating rural incomes. Their economic significance lies in generating regular and comparatively predictable cash flows. Dairy production facilitates frequent income realisation through routine milk sales, while fisheries enable multiple production cycles, thereby providing sustained employment opportunities.

Between FY15 and FY24, the sector's Gross Value Added (GVA) increased by nearly 195 percent, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.77 percent at current prices. In the Union Budget 2026-27, 6,153.46 crore has been allocated to the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, reflecting a 16 percent increase from 5,302.83 crore in FY 2025-26.

India holds the leading global position in milk production, accounting for nearly 25 percent of global output. Over the decade, the sector has recorded a compound annual growth rate of 5.41 percent, with production increasing from 146.31 million tonnes in 2014-15 to 247.87 million tonnes in 2024-25, representing a growth of over 69.4 percent.

India ranks second globally in egg production. National output has increased from 78.48 billion eggs in 2014-15 to an estimated 149.11 billion eggs in 2024-25, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.63 percent for more than a decade.

India is the world's second-largest fish producer. Output has increased to 19.77 million tonnes in FY 2024-25 from 9.58 million tonnes in FY 2013-14. It contributes nearly 8 percent of global output and supports over 30 million livelihoods, thereby constituting a central pillar of the blue economy.

Coastal States and Union Territories, comprising approximately 4,434 fishing villages, account for 72 percent of production and 76 percent of seafood exports. The sector contributes 7.43 percent to agricultural GVA, with policy measures such as reducing GST on key fish products and enhancing domestic demand and export competitiveness.

Healing the World

India's Transformation into a Global Health Powerhouse



From conquering longstanding public health challenges to becoming a leading force in affordable medicines and global healthcare delivery, India's rise as a global health powerhouse stands as a testament to visionary leadership, resilient institutions, and the unwavering commitment of the Government of India to building a healthier, stronger, and more prosperous nation.

The Government runs flagship schemes that provide public health insurance, free healthcare and services across all levels and subsidised medicines, along with a widespread and accessible health infrastructure. The guiding principle is to provide universal health coverage — ensuring that everyone, including the most socio-economically disadvantaged populations, gets access to affordable and quality healthcare so that India can progress towards its goal of being a healthy, productive and prosperous society — a Viksit or developed Bharat — by 2047.

India's medical education system, comprising private colleges along with publicly funded institutions, has seen expansion and growth over the years. India's pharmaceutical sector, the world's third largest by volume, enables a ready supply of affordable medicines not just to Indian citizens but also to the world — as evidenced by India's prowess in manufacturing and

supplying COVID-19 vaccines. India's biopharmaceutical sector is growing in leaps and bounds, supported by government investment and private industry's innovative spirit.

India has been witnessing a rise in medical tourists, from over 112,000 in 2009 to over 600,000 in 2024. To enhance India's medical tourism sector, the Government of India in its Union Budget 2026-27 announced the establishment of five integrated medical hubs across India featuring diagnostic infrastructure and rehabilitation services in partnership with the private sector.

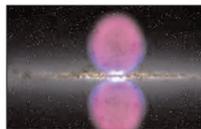
The Government of India launched the Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) on September 23, 2018, to achieve universal health care. It is the world's largest public healthcare scheme with hundreds of millions of vulnerable Indian families enrolled in it.

AB-PMJAY provides healthcare coverage up to Rs. 5 lakhs per year (~\$5,000 USD) for secondary and tertiary care services and hospitalisation to enrolled socio-economically deprived families and to all senior citizens above 70 years, saving them from catastrophic medical bills. The scheme provides cashless treatment across empanelled government-funded and private hospitals. The scheme is aimed at the bottom 40% of the Indian population, covering 120 million people, with over 434 million Ayushman cards already made.

Science Fact

The Milky Way's black hole is constantly bubbling

The black hole at the Milky Way's heart neither slumbers nor sleeps. Instead, the ring of plasma surrounding it flickers constantly, punctuated by superbright flares, observations show.



Astronomers used the James Webb Space Telescope to observe Sgr A\* and its disk for hours at a time over the course of a year, from April 2023 through April 2024. These were the longest continuous observations yet of our galaxy's central supermassive black hole.

The telescope revealed a "constant bubbling" in the disk's light that changed every few seconds or minutes, says astrophysicist Farhad Yusef-Zadeh of Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. A few times a day, and seemingly at random, the disk would emit a blindingly bright flare, Yusef-Zadeh and colleagues report in the Feb. 20 Astrophysical Journal Letters.

The supermassive black hole, called Sagittarius A\* or Sgr A\* for short, is about 4 million times as heavy as the sun and lies about 26,000 light-years from our solar system. The black hole is fairly quiet most of the time, only occasionally gobbling up material in its vicinity and letting out bursts of light and energy.

But that doesn't mean it's just lying there. Earlier observations, including the first image of the black hole, had suggested that the white-hot disk of plasma that accretes around it is constantly flickering. Computer simulations of how material flows in the accretion disk predicted that the disk's brightness should vary from minutes to years. The new observations not only confirm those ideas, but also shed light on how the flickering happens.

Spiritual

When Parental Love Is Not A Guiding Light

In a recently released film, Mrs, on an OTT platform, a mother suggests that her daughter 'adjust' in her in-laws' home, where she is unappreciated, because it is socially acceptable. Her daughter cooks, cleans and takes care of her husband's family as it is her duty, only to realise that she is forgotten in the grand scheme of things. The film is a reminder that most of us are caught in a bind, trying to follow our parents' advice, fulfilling familial duties, and social obligations, forgetting that we are souls on a spiritual journey, and can get Home only through a spiritual preceptor's mentorship.



Yet another film, Three Idiots, depicts how parents' intentions, even though well-meaning, could be detrimental to children's growth. In the film, while Rancho is epitome of liberation, Farhan and Raju are burdened by familial expectations. Farhan wants to be a wildlife photographer; but his father forces him to become an engineer. When a child is born, parents are the first and most natural mentors — hence family comes first.

While parents are innate guides, their mentorship styles can sometimes inhibit their grown-up children's progress towards becoming a jivanmukt. Often, parents forget that their children are adults — individuals seeking moksh — and burden them with social obligations. Kahlil Gibran offers wisdom to such parents: "Your children are not your children... They come through you but not from you. They are sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you," he says.

In Bhagwad Gita, Krishn instructs Arjun, to act in accordance with his role, emphasising Self-awareness over external validation for even a mother's love could be selfish. For instance, Mahabharat's Gandhari, mother of Kauravs, passively wanted her son Duryodhan to succeed as King of Hastinapur, although she didn't voice her opinion openly, but just before the final battle, she tried to safeguard her son by blessing his unclothed body.

Letter to the Editor

Strategic Resilience Amidst Hormuz Closure

Dear sir, The reported 50 days buffer of crude & refined products provides a critical albeit temporary cushion as the Strait of Hormuz closure chokes 40% of our supply lines. While 25 days of crude excluding Strategic Petroleum Reserves is reassuring the volatility of Brent crude exceeding dollar 80 per barrel demands accelerated diversification. With Qatar's LNG production paused & Aramco's Juaymah terminal damaged our energy security hinges on distant geographies. The Ministry's 24/7 monitoring is vital but we must address the 44 month low in Russian imports. True resilience requires aggressive procurement from non Middle Eastern sources to ensure that cautious optimism doesn't dissolve if this West Asian conflict becomes a protracted war of attrition.

Dr.Vijaykumar H K

Attack on Iran

Dear Sir, US intelligence had conveyed to President Trump that Iran did not have an active nuclear programme. Despite this, United States along with Israel went on to attack Iran in a ruthless manner, the result of which led to the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, supreme leader of Iran. Attacks by Israel and the United States on Iran has triggered a strong response from Iran and one does not know as to how the scenario in the Middle East unfolds. The intent behind attacks by the United States on Iran is possibly to force a regime change in Iran.

Devendra Khurana

Tech

Apple appeals UK govt order for sweeping access to encrypted cloud data

Apple has filed a court appeal to overturn an order issued by the government of United Kingdom that demanded sweeping access to users' encrypted cloud data and prompted criticism from several quarters.



The iPhone-maker's appeal was filed before the Investigatory Powers Tribunal, an independent court empowered to probe allegations against the UK's Security Service, according to a report by Financial Times.

It is the latest development in a tussle between Apple and the UK government's Home Office, which reportedly issued a secret order in January this year, requiring the tech giant to offer the country's law enforcement blanket access to Apple's cloud data in the event of a potential national security threat. User data that is stored on iCloud and has been end-to-end encrypted via Apple's Advanced Data Protection (ADP) feature, is not accessible to the company as well. Hence, Apple decided to disable the ADP feature for users in the UK instead of creating a backdoor to encryption and complying with the government notice.

The removal of ADP in the UK means that Apple can, in certain cases, access user data and hand it over to authorities if legally compelled. The company has said that it would never compromise its security features and it was disappointed at having to take the action in the UK.

Send your articles on email: chroniclebp@gmail.com