

11 FEBRUARY, 2026

The Newsletter

Centre for Law and Legislative Research



OUR NEW BEGINNING

We are glad to announce **the launch of our think tank's first newsletter**. This is the **first edition** of our newsletter, and with this, we aim to create a space where ideas around **law, public policy and social issues** are expressed and discussed with clarity, curiosity, and care. This newsletter is our way of sharing insights, ideas, sparking a discussion and our ongoing work, while also building a community that values informed dialogue and thoughtful engagement. We see this first edition as a small step in our long journey and as **an invitation to our esteemed audience** to read, to question and to grow with us as we move forward and be a part of our journey. A journey of sharing ideas, sparking conversations and building a community rooted in curiosity and responsibility.

VOLUME 1

EDITED BY TANUPRIYA

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INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS

BY TANUPRIYA



The **United Nations** has declared **2026** as the **International Year for Rangelands and Pastoralists** drawing global attention to ecosystems and communities that are important yet often ignored. **Rangelands** cover nearly half of the Earth's land surface and **support pastoralists whose livelihoods depend on sustainable grazing, biodiversity and climate resilience**. In the face of climate change, land degradation, and shrinking access to commons pastoral communities are among the most vulnerable despite their traditional knowledge being crucial for sustainable land management. For **countries like India** where pastoral groups contribute significantly to **livestock-based livelihoods**, this declaration offers an opportunity to rethink policies around land rights, conservation, and climate adaptation.

Thus, the year aims to promote inclusive governance, **restore degraded rangelands**, and recognise pastoralists as custodians of ecological balance rather than as peripheral actors in development.

77TH REPUBLIC DAY, 2026

BY TANUPRIYA

January 26, 2026, saw **India unfurl its tricolour** with great pride and joyous celebration as the nation marked its **77th Republic Day**. This year's theme, "**Vande Mataram**," echoed across the grand parade at **Kartavya Path** in New Delhi, where colourful cultural tableaux, precision marching contingents, and awe-inspiring flypasts reflected India's unity in diversity and technological progress.

Adding historic diplomatic resonance, **H.E. Ms Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and H.E. Mr António Costa, President of the European Council**, graced the celebrations as Chief Guests, marking the first time top European Union leadership jointly attended the Republic Day parade.

President Droupadi Murmu presided over the ceremony, and the air rang with patriotic fervour as citizens across the country paid homage to the Constitution and the ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity that define the Indian republic.



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UNION BUDGET 2026-2027

BY ANSHUKA, GARIMA



The **Union Budget 2026–27** was presented by **FM Nirmala Sitharaman**, which focuses on education, rural development, and local governance; however leaves uncomfortable questions on employment and worker security unanswered.

Employment: A Stagnant Allocation and Rising Concerns

The allocation for the Union Labour Ministry has remained unchanged at around **₹2.32 lakh crore** compared to the previous Budget. Trade unions have criticised this, arguing that the Budget fails to address the urgent need for job creation and social security, especially at a time when informal employment is rising.

Education: Campuses, Hostels, and Talent Retention

Education comes as a relative Focal Point. The overall allocation rose by **8% to ₹1.39 lakh crore**, with higher education receiving **₹55,727 crore**. The Budget announced the development of five university townships near major industrial and logistics corridors. States will provide land, while institutions will be selected through a challenge-based model. These townships will host universities, colleges, skill centres, research hubs, and residential facilities, all aimed at aligning education with industry needs. Also, a girls' hostel will be set up in every district with special focus on students pursuing STEM fields. The government framed these measures as a way to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, and reduce brain drain by offering quality education closer to home.

Rural Employment

One of the most significant changes came quietly as the **Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (VB-GRAM G)** is all set to replace **MGNREGA**. It is not mentioned in the Budget speech, but received a substantial allocation of **₹95,692 crore for 2026–27**. At the same time, **₹30,000 crore** has been allocated for MGNREGA for the coming financial year to remain in place until the new scheme becomes operational. Together, rural job programmes will receive a combined allocation of **₹1.25 lakh crore**, signalling continuity in rural employment support though under a redesigned framework.

Local Bodies Get a Major Boost

The **16th Finance Commission** has recommended **₹7.91 lakh crore** in grants for local bodies over the next five years (2026–27 to 2030–31). Of this, rural local bodies will receive **₹4.35 lakh crore**, while urban local bodies will get **₹3.56 lakh crore**.

This shows a major jump for rural governance as the recommended grant is almost double what the 15th Finance Commission had proposed earlier. Year-wise allocations for rural local bodies will steadily increase starting from **₹55,909 crore** in 2026–27 and rising to **₹1.13 lakh crore** by 2030–31, strengthening grassroots institutions like gram and district panchayats.

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Agriculture and Rural Innovation: Digital Meets Development

The Budget also introduced **several initiatives for agriculture and rural livelihoods**, such as **She-Marts** to the promotion of high-value crops. A key announcement was **Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources)**, which is not just an app but a national digital backbone designed to connect farmers with markets, advisory services, and institutional support. Built through collaboration between the Centre and not-for-profit organisations, it aims to streamline access to agricultural resources and improve rural incomes through technology-driven integration.

Conclusion

The **Union Budget 2026–27** shows **ambition in education, rural governance and digital agriculture**. However, its silence on expanding employment opportunities and safeguarding informal and gig workers remains a sore point. The vision is long-term and structured, but for millions seeking immediate job security, the reassurance still feels incomplete.

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NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: INTERNET REGULATIONS AND TEEN SAFETY IN INDIA

BY PRATIBHA



There have been many tragic incidents of teenage deaths due to **social media addiction**, and the world is debating the best ways to control the "Wild West" of the internet. Again, the **Indian situation** is a pressing issue regarding the balance between digital rights and child protection.

Internet and social media regulations in India primarily fall under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** and the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB)**. The legal basis for these regulations lies in the **Information Technology (IT) Act of 2000**, under which **Section 69A** grants power to the Central Government to block access to information on the Internet in the interest of security, public order, or to prevent the incitement to the commission of any offence.

Similarly, the **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, also require intermediaries like social media companies to designate grievance officers and follow the directives of the government for takedown notices. Lately, with the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023**, the norms for verifiable parental consent for the personal data of children who are below 18 years of age are also more stringent.

The major players include government agencies such as MeitY, which issues initial directives, and the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team, which addresses technical threats. It also includes social media intermediaries, such as giants like **Meta (Instagram, WhatsApp)**, **X (formerly Twitter)**, and **Google**, which are supposed to implement their own self-regulatory rules and automated filtering. The judiciary, such as high courts and the supreme court, is responsible for safeguarding and protecting fundamental rights to ensure that "bans" do not translate into censorship of civil society organisations, which always come to the rescue at a root level, like the Internet Freedom Foundation, which works to ensure user privacy and digital literacy over bans.

India is not alone in the fight. **Australia**, in December 2025, instituted a **groundbreaking piece of legislation that prohibits children under 16 from using most social media sites, levying a fine of up to 50 million Australian dollars on companies** that fail to enforce their rules. Others, like Denmark, are considering a ban on children below 15, while the UK employs its **"Online Safety Act"** to force sites to proactively remove content that promotes self-harm or eating disorders.

Algorithmic accountability entails letting regulators focus on "safety by design" and requiring companies to disable "infinite scroll" and notifications from small accounts. It also includes the role of **Mental Health Infrastructure**, where school systems and communities need to have accessible counselling programs that target the underlying reasons for addiction, such as loneliness or academic stress, as opposed to just treating the symptom of screen time. In order to overcome the digital crisis, there is a need for a paradigm shift from perceiving the internet as an enemy that must be banned to perceiving it as an environment that must be made "biologically safe" for children's minds.

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INDIA'S CONTRACT TEACHERS: A NATIONAL CRISIS UNDERMINING EDUCATION

BY GARIMA



Teachers are considered to be amongst the **primary builders of a nation**, but a large number of teachers in **Indian Schools** serve in their respective institutions without having job security. The **Indian school education sector** is facing an alarming transformation and is shifting towards employing more and more part-time teachers. is facing an alarming transformation and is shifting towards employing more and more part-time teachers.

Contractualisation of the teaching profession was initiated as far back as the early 1990s when the **State governments** first appointed these teachers to fill the **shortage of teachers** in schools. They were hired on a contractual basis and received significantly **lower salaries** than their regular counterparts. However, over the years, the trend has not been to absorb them as regular employees of the school system but to engage them as contractual employees again and again and deny them job security and promotional benefits.

Currently, an alarming 16% of school teachers in India, amounting to over **16 lakh educators**, are employed on a **contractual or part-time basis** and receive lower salaries.

Data paints an even more worrying picture at the local level: in over **1.5 lakh schools** across India, contract and part-time teachers constitute at least half of the total teaching staff. The dependence is particularly high in northeastern **States like Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya**. Furthermore, over **30% of schools in States like Jharkhand and Haryana, and the Union Territory of Chandigarh**, also show a heavy reliance on contract teachers. Crucially, this trend is observable in both rural and urban areas, indicating its widespread nature.

The economic disparity is profound. Some research has demonstrated that contract **teachers are paid one-fourth**, or even less, than regular teachers for performing the same duties. This significant **pay gap** is a major demotivator for teachers and inevitably impacts the quality of classroom instruction. The students most affected by this compromised system are those attending government schools, particularly children from poor and marginalised sections of society.

Therefore, unless the rising and entrenched phenomenon of contract teachers in India is immediately helped to resolve, providing it the dignity and respect it rightly deserves, India's quest to attain quality and equal education for all will increasingly turn out to be an uphill task.

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WILL THE RETURN OF AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT HEAL MANIPUR'S ETHNIC DIVIDE OR IS IT JUST A POLITICAL RESTORATION?

BY VASUNDHARA MA



The return of an **elected government in Manipur** represents a hope for the **restoration of democracy** after the prolonged protest. But the question that arises is whether the return of an elected government is sufficient to solve the conflict that has impacted the social dynamics and government since 2023. Although the elected government may increase the credibility of institutions, peace would depend upon factors such as inclusive government, disarmament, negotiation and the restoration of mobility along with sound law enforcement. Without these, the government would only be a political process and not a change.

The **ethnic violence** that erupted in May 2023, between the majority Meitei community in the Imphal valley and **the Kuki-Zo community** in the **Churachandpur district**, ignited one of India's severe internal clashes in recent years. According to government data, more than **258 people have lost their lives** and around **60,000 people** have been displaced, with thousands of homes and places of worship destroyed. The conflict has further increased the territorial divide between the two communities. The internally displaced people have been taking shelter in relief camps, struggling with trauma and limited resources.

But doubts remain if a change in the political structure is enough to bring back normalcy. Critics argue that neither central authority nor previous governance methods were effective in rebuilding public trust or ensuring safety. This criticism offers a broader understanding that suggests peace is not just a political event but a slow process that needs institutional trust, justice and ongoing involvement.

The return of an elected government in **Manipur** should be viewed as the beginning of **peacebuilding**. **Political restoration** can provide a foundation for dialogue, changes in policies and accountability, but cannot substitute them. Lasting peace will rely on whether the new leaders can turn authority into legitimacy and governance into reconciliation.

Ultimately, the question is not if democracy will come back to **Manipur**; it is if **democracy** can be made significant for communities that have learned to distrust each other. Mending the ethnic divide will take more than just votes; it will require bravery to face grievances, the discipline to uphold the rule of law and the creativity to rebuild a common political community. If these conditions are fulfilled, forming a government could be the first step towards peacebuilding. If not, political restoration might just be a facade.

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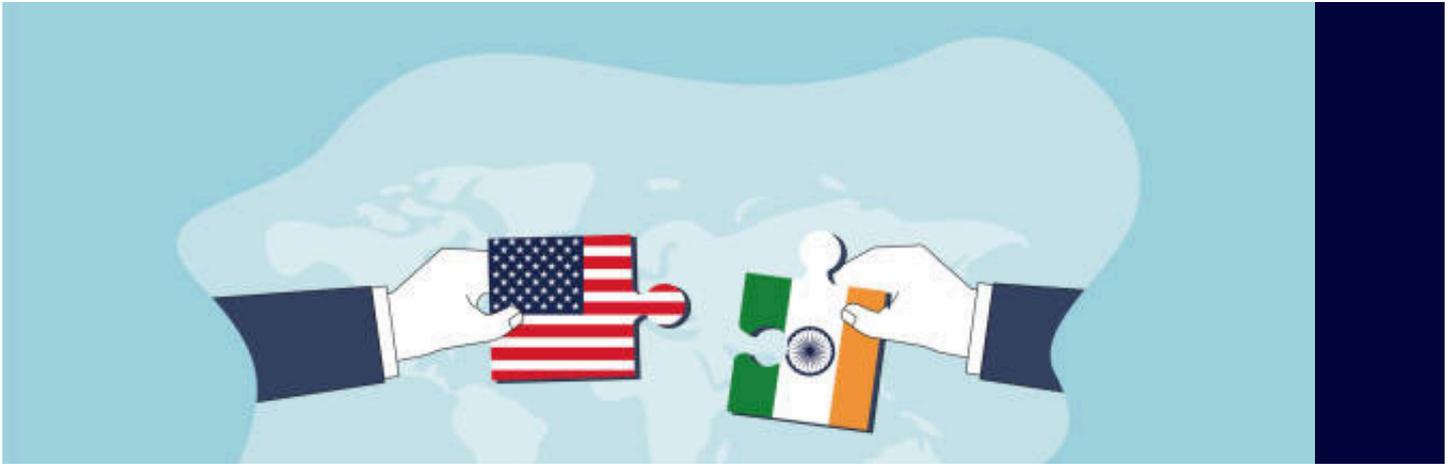
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INDIA-US TRADE TIES STRENGTHEN THROUGH TARIFF CUTS AND AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION| HARSHITA

BY HARSHITA



India is working continuously to expand its market for **US agricultural products** while at the same time **safeguarding its domestic market and the interests of its farmers**. The global agricultural trade scenario has been affected by **high tariffs, unwarranted non-tariff measures**, and other barriers impacting US products. A break in these barriers is also set to further the reform of subsidies for a better mutual relationship.

In a bid to address the significant **agricultural deficit**, a US spokesperson pointed out that the **Three-Point Plan** was announced in September 2025. This plan aims to chip away at the \$50 billion agricultural deficit through market promotion support, rapid response to reciprocal trade agreements, and increasing rural prosperity.

The US has long been seeking greater access to the **Indian agricultural market**. India's current imports in this sector primarily consist of fresh fruits, dry fruits and nuts (including almond and walnut), alcoholic beverages, raw cotton, vegetable oil, and processed items. On its part, India's agricultural exports to the US, which primarily include **marine products, spices, dairy products, rice, and herbal products**, stood at **\$6.2 billion, accounting for 11.74 per cent of the country's total agricultural exports of \$53.2 billion**.

The Indian government has been maintaining a firm stance on protecting its farmers' interests. **Last August, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan** reassured farm leaders that while the **US desires to export its soybeans, wheat, maize, and rice to India**, the interests of Indian farmers "will not be compromised."

Reiterating this commitment on February 3, 2026, in a Written Reply in the **Lok Sabha**, Chouhan stated that the government enters into negotiations for **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** only after carefully ensuring the interests of Indian agriculture, allied sectors, and farmers, including small and marginal farmers. He then added, "no market segment has been opened in a manner that could harm Indian farmers, and all major crops, food grains, fruits, and dairy products remain shielded."

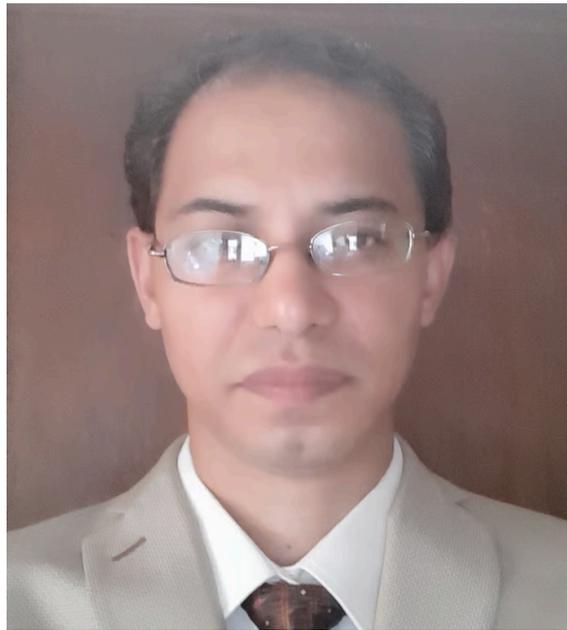
We welcome your thoughts and ideas. If you wish to contribute to our newsletter, write to us at contactus@cllr.in

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MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Adv. Amrit Singh Sinchury

“Our first edition of the newsletter represents not only the beginning of our process, but also the shared intent. Because every organisation is built not only based on the ideas we hold, but on people who show up daily with sincerity and purpose. This newsletter, in many ways, is a small step towards acknowledging that, and as we take this journey forward, I invite all of you to take this opportunity to read, reflect, and contribute, for growth is never a solitary endeavour. Thank you for believing in the work we do and the values we uphold. This is only the beginning.....”

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