

PSIR & GS-2

DAILY BRIEF

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Amit Pratap Singh
| ForumIAS |

SOURCES SCANNED TODAY



ARTICLE

O1

India Must Not Give
Up Russian Oil :
ORF

ARTICLE

O2

Himalayas Speak :
The Statesman

ARTICLE

O3

Finality v.
Correctness in
Review : Bar &
Bench

ARTICLE

O4

India-EFTA: One
Plus One Equals
Three : The Hindu

ARTICLE

O5

ECI, the Court and
Institutional Trust :
The Indian Express

Daily Brief · Source Plan (Monday to Saturday)

Common Daily

The Hindu · The Indian Express · Deccan Herald · The Statesman

read every day, alongside the day's sources below

Day-wise Sources

Monday

ORF (Observer Research Foundation) · *Foreign Affairs* · *The Diplomat*

Tuesday

MP-IDSA · *EPW* (Economic & Political Weekly) · *Gateway House*

Wednesday

Firstpost · *South Asia Monitor* · *ICWA* (Indian Council of World Affairs)

Thursday

ORF · *Frontline* · *Bar & Bench* · *World Focus*

Friday

MP-IDSA · *Carnegie Endowment* · *VIF* (Vivekananda International Foundation)

Saturday

Firstpost · *Project Syndicate* · *The Economist*

As per relevance, articles from other relevant sources such as NatStrat, ThePrint and The Telegraph (India) will also be included.

India Must Not Give Up Russian Oil

Home / Research / Essay Series / Expert Speak

India Must Not Give Up Russian Oil

AUTHOR : GAUTAM CHIKERMANE

Expert Speak India Matters

Published on Sep 29, 2026

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With Washington using coercion as diplomacy, whims as strategy, and hostility as engagement, New Delhi must deepen energy ties with Moscow.



Author



Gautam Chikermane

Context

The Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026 authorises tariffs of up to 100 per cent on the largest buyers of Russian energy, India among them. Gautam Chikermane argues that New Delhi should hold its ground.

Facts

■ **Bipartisan law** : Trump signed it on 18 September 2026, after votes of 86-11 in the Senate and 262-159 in the House.

■ **India's exposure** : India is Russia's second-largest crude buyer; the US takes about one-fifth of India's merchandise exports.

■ **Double standards** : the US imported \$4.05 billion of goods from Russia in 2025, including \$1.8 billion of fertilisers.

■ **BRICS alternative** : the New Delhi Declaration tasks the BRICS Payments Task Force with local-currency settlement.

Analytical Crux

A domestic US law now seeks to impose its will on other countries, a shift from negotiation to coercive assertion by a hegemon that senses its monopoly on power slipping. The author reads it as part of the decline of the rules-based order the US itself built. For India, a sudden cut-off of Russian oil would bring energy risk into its growth story. Supplies from the UAE or Nigeria would cost more, feeding inflation through transport, fertilisers and food, and pressuring the rupee. Giving up Russian oil under duress would also be read as surrendering strategic autonomy, and the law puts India and China on the same footing despite the 10-year India-US defence framework. *The pressure revives the 'if you are not with us, you are against us' doctrine of the George W. Bush years.* Therefore, India should treat the law as a contingency, keep diversifying energy sources and export markets, and continue buying Russian oil.

Verbatim Quotes

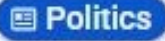
"It would be best for India to prepare for the worst, continue to diversify energy sources and export markets, and not give up Russian oil."

– Gautam Chikermane

Himalayas speak

Opinion

Himalayas speak

Nepal has done something important at the United Nations: it has tried to turn a natural disaster into a  political argument about the unequal costs of climate change. 

Statesman News Service | New Delhi | October 1, 2026 8:19 am



Context

In his first address to the UN General Assembly, weeks after devastating floods, Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah turned a natural disaster into a political argument about the unequal costs of climate change.

Facts

■ **Scale of loss** : *at least 1,400 confirmed deaths, more than 6,000 missing and recovery needs of roughly 10 per cent of GDP.*

■ **Emissions gap** : *Nepal contributes less than 0.1 per cent of global greenhouse-gas emissions.*

■ **Himalayan Climate Resilience Mechanism** : *a proposed Nepal-India-China framework for satellite data, glacial-lake monitoring and early warning.*

■ **CBDR** : *the principle recognises different historical contributions and different capacities to respond.*

Analytical Crux

For a poor mountain state, climate change is a developmental trap, because each disaster diverts scarce resources from development to reconstruction. Shah tied climate resilience to international responsibility under 'common but differentiated responsibilities'. Himalayan watersheds ignore borders, and the recent floods hit both sides of the Nepal-China border before moving towards India, so rapid sharing of environmental information could matter more than declarations. For India, the Himalayas feed its rivers, agriculture, hydropower and water security, which makes cooperation with Nepal a matter of enlightened self-interest. *Climate diplomacy fails when vulnerable states describe their suffering and high emitters respond with sympathy but little finance, while compensation claims need workable mechanisms for assigning responsibility.* Therefore, the measure of the speech is whether it produces institutions, money and information-sharing before the next flood.

Verbatim Quotes

"Shah's strongest message, therefore, was not that Nepal needs saving. It was that the world needs a more credible system for preventing climate disasters from becoming development disasters."

- Editorial, The Statesman

| Columns

Reconstructing the doctrine of review jurisdiction under CPC and Constitution: Finality v. correctness

The constitutional balance is better expressed not as “finality versus correctness” but as “finality subject to controlled correction.”



Context

Bimlesh Kumar Singh reconstructs the doctrine of review under Section 114 and Order XLVII of the CPC and Article 137, arguing that finality must remain the rule while leaving room to correct patent judicial error.

Facts

■ **Grounds of review** : *new evidence despite due diligence, an error apparent on the record, or any other sufficient reason.*

■ **Article 137** : *the Supreme Court may review its judgments, subject to parliamentary law and rules under Article 145.*

■ **Review is not appeal** : *the error must be self-evident, not found by long reasoning (Parsion Devi).*

■ **Curative petition** : *recognised in Rupa Ashok Hurra to prevent gross miscarriage of justice.*

Analytical Crux

Adjudication must end, yet the law needs a limited capacity to correct the court's own error, a paradox the Supreme Court recognised in *S Nagaraj v. State of Karnataka*. Review addresses a legally recognised defect, while an appeal challenges correctness. A later reversal of law by a superior court is no ground for review, as *Beghar Foundation* reaffirmed, and 'any other sufficient reason' cannot become an open door to rehearing. Recall applies only where the adjudicatory process itself is impeached, and curative jurisdiction is narrower still, so at each stage the threshold rises and the scope of intervention narrows. *The real distinction lies between an erroneous judgment and a reviewable one.* Therefore, review is best understood as controlled correction, which guards against endless litigation and against judicial error hardening into judicial authority.

Verbatim Quotes

"The constitutional balance is thus better expressed not as 'finality versus correctness' but as 'finality subject to controlled correction.'"

- Bimlesh Kumar Singh

The India-EFTA partnership, one plus one equals three

The India-EFTA partnership, one plus one equals three

On October 1, 2025, the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the four European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – entered into force. One year on, the more useful question is not how many tariff lines have fallen, but what kind of partnership the agreement is making possible. The tariff figures are substantial. EFTA states have offered concessions on 92.2% of their tariff lines, covering 99.6% of the value of India's exports to them. India, in turn, is granting concessions on 82.7% of its tariff lines, covering 95.3% of the value of EFTA's exports. Few market-opening exercises between India and a group of developed economies have been this ambitious.

Lasting partnerships, an India focus
Yet, the defining feature of TEPA lies elsewhere. It was the first trade agreement that India signed with a dedicated chapter on investment and job creation. Under it, the EFTA states aim to raise investment in India by \$100 billion over 15 years and to facilitate one million direct jobs. An agreement based on that is designed to build lasting industrial and technological partnerships. For a country of just under 4,00,000 people, Iceland's contribution to that partnership was never going to be about scale. It is about experience, particularly in three areas where that experience speaks directly to India's priorities. The first is geothermal energy, specifically a part of it that receives far less attention than power generation: the direct use of low- to medium-temperature heat. In Iceland, geothermal energy heats nearly every home, dries fish, warms greenhouses and keeps entire communities running through Arctic winters without burning fossil fuels. That century of experience in direct use is what the Himalayan geothermal belt of northern India can draw on. Consider the apple growers of Himachal Pradesh. Many have long been forced to sell their



Benedikt Höskuldsson
The Ambassador of Iceland to India

and time their sales rather than remain price-takers at harvest, drawing on the same direct-use techniques that Iceland has refined over generations. Or consider the high-altitude communities and installations along India's northern frontier, which depend on fuel hauled along supply lines that can close for months. Heat drawn directly from the ground beneath them offers something no convoy can: energy security that does not depend on the road remaining open. The second area is carbon capture, utilisation and storage. A NITI Aayog study in 2022 estimated that India could capture some 750 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year by 2050. The scientific foundations are being laid by the Department of Science and Technology, which has steered India's carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) research for years and, in December 2025, published the country's first dedicated research and development road map for CCUS in support of the 2070 net-zero goal. The Union Budget followed in February with an outlay of ₹20,000 crore over five years to take these technologies towards scale in power, steel, cement, refining and chemicals, while public sector companies such as the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, NTPC Limited (formerly National Thermal Power Corporation) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited are taking the work into the field through feasibility studies, pilot projects and subsurface assessments. This pre-commercial stage is exactly where Iceland's experience is most valuable, on both sides of the equation. On storage, CarbFix has shown that when carbon dioxide is dissolved in water and injected into basalt, more than 95% of it turns to stone within two years; India's Deccan Trap basalts share striking geological similarities with Iceland's volcanic rock. **New frontiers** On utilisation, Iceland was home to the world's first industrial-scale plant to turn captured carbon dioxide into fuel: Carbon Recycline

building partnerships through technology licensing, storage assessment, monitoring and verification, and the co-development of projects as India's pilots scale up. The third area is the ocean. Iceland's economy was built on the sustainable management of North Atlantic fisheries, and with it came deep expertise in seafood quality, cold-chain logistics and value-added processing. Icelandic companies are already exploring how to bring further processing of North Atlantic catch to Indian shores, creating local jobs and transferring technology under the TEPA concessions. Iceland has also shown that the greatest gains may lie in what is usually thrown away. Where most fishing nations use only 40% to 60% of each fish, Iceland now uses around 90% of every cod landed, turning skin, liver and bones into medical products, oils and feed. India does not need to catch a single additional fish to create new value, jobs and exports. It needs only to look differently at what its fleets already bring ashore. All of this sits within a wider frame. Nearly six years of working on energy access at the United Nations, along with a seat at the table during the Paris Agreement negotiations, taught this writer that climate and energy policy are, at their core, exercises in patient and practical partnership between nations. That same spirit defines Iceland's and India's engagement in the Arctic. Iceland is a founding member of the Arctic Council; India has been an Observer since 2013 and has taken that role seriously, publishing its Arctic Policy in 2022 and operating the Himadri research station in Svalbard. As one of the eight Arctic States, Iceland offers India a direct and trusted bilateral channel into Arctic governance and research, complementing its multilateral engagement. For Iceland and India, energy, trade and Arctic stewardship are part of the same conversation. **Some Icelandic arithmetic** TEPA is young, but it is already showing what an ambitious, rules-based partnership between

Context

One year after the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement entered into force on 1 October 2025, Iceland's Ambassador Benedikt Höskuldsson argues that its value lies in the partnerships it makes possible.

Facts

■ **Tariff concessions :** EFTA covers 92.2% of its tariff lines (99.6% of India's export value); India covers 82.7% (95.3%).

■ **Investment chapter :** a first for India: \$100 billion of EFTA investment over 15 years and one million direct jobs.

■ **Geothermal at Tapri :** a Geotropy facility in Kinnaur uses ground heat to dry fruit for Himachal's apple growers.

■ **CCUS :** the Union Budget set aside ₹20,000 crore over five years to take these technologies towards scale.

Analytical Crux

Iceland, a country of just under 4,00,000 people, brings experience where India's priorities lie, in geothermal energy, carbon capture and the ocean. Direct use of geothermal heat lets farmers store produce instead of selling at harvest lows, and can give frontier posts energy that does not depend on supply roads. Carbfix has turned over 95 per cent of injected carbon dioxide into stone within two years, and India's Deccan Trap basalts resemble Iceland's volcanic rock. Where most fishing nations use 40 to 60 per cent of each fish, Iceland uses around 90 per cent of every cod. As one of the eight Arctic States, Iceland also offers India, an Arctic Council Observer since 2013, a direct channel into Arctic governance. Therefore, TEPA complements the EU-India FTA as a working model of what Europe-India trade can become.

Verbatim Quotes

"India does not need to catch a single additional fish to create new value, jobs and exports. It needs only to look differently at what its fleets already bring ashore."

- Benedikt Höskuldsson

ECI and Court make it harder, not easier, to trust in independent institutions

REALLY in the annals of Indian constitutional history have two key institutions, the Supreme Court of India and the Election Commission, acted in tandem with such shameless disregard for the constitutional purpose of their office, inflicting administrative cruelty on citizens and disenfranchising them. The SIR enterprise, which in principle may be justified, was so badly conceived and executed that it has left citizens reeling. But worse still, at almost every opportunity to set things right, these institutions have responded mendaciously, failing to address any of the core concerns their critics have raised about the fairness and ease of the SIR process. Ritika Chopra and Damini Nath's reporting in this paper highlighted important questions about the functioning of the Commission. But they were not merely procedural questions. They raised serious substantive questions. The opaque process, including the software protocols, was shifting the burden of proof onto citizens. These days, nothing is shocking. But still, the idea that the Election Commission files appeals en masse against 16 lakh voters in West Bengal who had been found eligible for inclusion is stunning indeed.

The SIR mess is the joint effect of the Supreme Court and ECI. The Election Commission has the power to ensure the integrity of voting lists. The independence of the Commission requires that the removal of the Commissioners be by impeachment. The only practical mechanism of accountability was therefore the Supreme Court. It should have, without infringing on the Commission's powers, insisted on the strongest possible procedural and substantive safe-

guards against the misuse of that power. But the net effect of Court intervention was to legitimise the whole exercise, without any real safeguards. Worse still, the Court, via Justice Joymalya Bagchi, gave *ad hominem* remarks suggesting those who were excluded could simply vote in the next election. The same sentiment is again repeated by the Chief Justice in his refusal to expedite the hearing of a petition before the by-election in Rejinagar and Nandigram, regarding the pending appeals in West Bengal. They sent a powerful signal that voting rights can be treated casually. In effect, the Lordships and the Election Commission were the guarantors of this right, according to procedures they could make up in whichever way they liked. More than the technical details of the SIR saga, it is this culture of impunity that has become institutionalised.

The lack of self-awareness of these constitutional bodies is staggering. You would have imagined that a Chief Justice, first criticised and socially sanctioned over his remarks (allegedly misunderstood) about "cockroaches", would be a little more self-aware of what it means to treat citizens as free and equal? It is one thing for the government to adopt a governing style where it regards reasonable demands for accountability as an affront to its authority. The government at least will still, we hope, face a contested election. But for constitutional functionaries, whose mandate is to protect citizens from arbitrary power and disenfranchisement, to act in this manner systematically smacks of incredibly bad judgment. What do



But think of the implications of this dynamic. It is a way of saying that the rot in the system does not begin and end in politics; it saturates a whole elite and perhaps even a generation of voters and public servants

we call the resultant constitutional order? The Shameless Constitution? The Constitution of Impunity? This is a condition which the historians of Rome knew well: Where despotic and arbitrary power can inhabit important constitutional offices without formally abolishing them.

There is a distressing institutional dynamic at work here. There are legitimate questions to be asked about what the government knew, and what it thought of the legality of the goings-on in the Election Commission. But the truth is, when the Supreme Court of India and the Election Commission conduct themselves with such a lack of constitutional self-awareness, it is hard to focus the blame on the government. One might say that the actions of the Election Commission are at the behest of the government. But the independence of the Court and Election Commission has now become a shield for the government as well. So we are in a curious situation: For once, the Opposition's ire is directed at constitutional authorities. Ironically, the government gets off lightly.

But think of the implications of this dynamic. It is a way of saying that the rot in the system does not begin and end in politics; it saturates a whole elite and perhaps even a generation of voters and public servants. The Supreme Court has once again belatedly raised the question about the appointment procedure for the Election Commission; the executive has inordinate power over the selection process. But the Supreme Court's own conduct is living proof that the formal appointment process greatly underdetermines the

quality of people being appointed, or their conduct in high office. Procedure is no substitute for virtue, nor can it manufacture it.

The BJP's long-term political strategy has been to cultivate a nihilism about institutions: It thrives on the scepticism about constitutional functionaries. The Election Commission and the Supreme Court have reinforced this script, making it harder to believe in independent institutions. It will take a drastic effort to reverse that tide. The Election Commission's press notes in response to queries raised about its conduct are a partial response to public criticism: Part admission of procedural impropriety, and partly a commitment to help voters who are facing queries. But while the media and Opposition are mobilised, there is still a curious absence: The mobilisation of the disenfranchised voter. This may be partly because the process is still not complete; the legal measures are still underway. But most voters whose political rights have been snatched away remain outside the zone of visibility. Converting that statistic into political agency has not been easy, and blunts the power of the anger at the process.

The resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner might send one signal of accountability. The Court belatedly restoring integrity to the SIR process might send another. But something important has already been destroyed: The citizen's faith that constitutional institutions, and a few old men, are worth believing in.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

Context

Pratap Bhanu Mehta argues that the Supreme Court and the Election Commission have handled the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in ways that erode citizens' faith in independent institutions.

Facts

■ **Mass appeals** : the ECI filed appeals against 16 lakh West Bengal voters who had been found eligible for inclusion.

■ **Burden of proof** : an opaque process, including software protocols, shifted the burden of proof onto citizens.

■ **Accountability gap** : since Commissioners can be removed only by impeachment, the Court was the only practical check.

■ **Appointments** : the Court has again raised the executive's inordinate power over selecting Election Commissioners.

Analytical Crux

Mehta's case is that the problem extends beyond procedure to a culture of impunity in constitutional bodies whose mandate is to protect citizens from arbitrary power. The Court, instead of insisting on strong procedural and substantive safeguards, legitimised the exercise, and remarks from the bench suggested that excluded voters could simply vote next time. Because both bodies are formally independent, their conduct shields the government from blame. He likens this to a condition Roman historians knew, where arbitrary power occupies constitutional offices without abolishing them. *The disenfranchised voter remains largely invisible and unmobilised, which blunts the political force of the anger.* Therefore, in his reading, a better appointment procedure cannot by itself secure integrity in high office.

Verbatim Quotes

"Procedure is no substitute for virtue, nor can it manufacture it."

- Pratap Bhanu Mehta

- GS Paper II, 2019: What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India's national self-esteem and ambitions. Explain with suitable examples.
- GS Paper II, 2018: In the light of recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), what are the challenges before the Election Commission of India to ensure the trust of elections in India?
- GS Paper II, 2022: Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India in the light of the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct.

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