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DAILY BRIEF

ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

Briefs, scans the best academic platforms, national newspapers & leading think tanks to pick the most relevant articles & research. It converts them into crisp, high-impact points you can directly use in your mains answers.



PSIR OPTIONAL BY
Amit Pratap Singh
| ForumIAS |

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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.

ECI’s course correction is welcome, need for accountability remains

In the past few days, the ECI has made some hasty decisions that amount to admitting to its mistakes and atoning for wrongs caused by previous decisions.

Written by:
Ashok Lavasa

6 min read
Oct 23, 2026 06:21 AM IST

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Context

The Election Commission of India prepares and revises the electoral roll. Changes to the roll run through standard forms – Form 6 to add a name, Form 7 to object to one – and through periodic revisions, of which the Special Summary Revision is the routine annual exercise.

Since 2025 the Commission has also run a Special Intensive Revision in several States, under which names were re-verified and large numbers deleted. On 23 September The Indian Express reported that two Election Commissioners had objected on record, fourteen times in ten months, to steps taken by the poll panel. In the weeks after that report the Commission rolled back several of those steps.

The author is a former Election Commissioner. He lists the rollbacks, asks whether they amount to an admission of error, and argues that responsibility for the decisions now rests with the Supreme Court and with Parliament.

ECI's course correction is welcome, need for accountability remains

Facts

- **What set it off :** The rollbacks began almost immediately after The Indian Express investigation of 23 September, which reported that two Election Commissioners had objected on record 14 times in 10 months to poll panel steps.

- **The rollbacks :** The changes to Form 6, called "illegal and unauthorised" by one of the Election Commissioners, were admitted and dropped for non-Special Intensive Revision states; booth level officers were sent to the homes of those notified for logical discrepancy; and Chief Electoral Officers were told to organise camps so that those deleted earlier could be readmitted subject to eligibility.

- **What is still unexplained :** The mystery surrounding the over 16 lakh appeals in West Bengal remains unsolved, and the Chief Electoral Officer of Maharashtra has written to the Commission so that citizens are not left open to criminal liability for a false undertaking under the current Form 6.

Analytical Crux

1. These are welcome steps even if they seem like those of a warrior who retreats after inciting the battle: the changes to Form 6 were admitted and dropped for non-Special Intensive Revision states, BLOs were asked to visit the homes of those notified for logical discrepancy, and CEOs were directed to organise camps to ensure that those deleted earlier were readmitted subject to their eligibility.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. These may partially make up for the contentiousness of the SIR but do not account for the alleged illegalities: decisions made unilaterally as opposed to the unanimous or majority decisions mandated by the law, illegally amending Form 6, and designing a software that obstructed the Electoral Registration Officers from performing their duties.

3. The responsibility for these now rests with the Court, which watched the SIR exercise unfold, largely letting the ECI be a judge in its own cause; the verdict could uphold the decisions of the ECI as valid or rule them illegal and overturn them, and the matter now rests on collective will and individual sense of propriety.

Verbatim Quotes

"The ECI cannot evade responsibility for causing the disenfranchisement of millions."

– Ashok Lavasa

Why SC said Section 17A of anti-corruption law does not protect public servants in bribe cases

The court held that prior approval is not needed to investigate bribe demands unrelated to official duties. It clarified the scope of Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Written by: **Amaal Sheikh**

5 min read **New Delhi** Oct 22, 2026 06:21 PM IST



Context

The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 lists the offences for which a public servant can be prosecuted. Section 17A was added to shield officials from harassment: before the police may investigate an offence under the Act that relates to a recommendation or a decision the official made while discharging official duty, they must first obtain the approval of the government concerned.

A constable in Rajasthan was charged with demanding a bribe of 1.5 lakh rupees. He argued that the case against him was bad because no prior approval under Section 17A had been taken. The Rajasthan High Court dismissed his plea and he appealed to the Supreme Court.

This explainer sets out what the Court held, and why the line between an official decision and a personal demand decides when the Section 17A protection is available at all.

Why SC said Section 17A of anti-corruption law does not protect public servants in bribe cases

Facts

- **The ruling :** A bench of Justices S V N Bhatti and N V Anjaria dismissed the appeal of a Rajasthan police constable, Tejaram, over an alleged demand for a bribe of 1.5 lakh rupees on behalf of the Superintendent of Police; he was arrested in September 2021 and a sanction followed in December 2023.

- **What Section 17A requires :** No police officer shall investigate an offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 without the order of the appropriate authority, which must respond within three months, extendable by one month with reasons recorded; the approval is not needed where a person is arrested on the spot.

- **The provision is itself under challenge :** Earlier this year a split verdict arose on Section 17A: Justice K V Viswanathan upheld it while Justice B V Nagarathna struck it down as a provision that "protects the corrupt rather than seeking to protect the honest", and the matter has been referred to a larger bench.

Analytical Crux

1. Section 17A cannot be viewed as to have an omnibus application: the protection could be extended only if the offence is linked to a decision or recommendation made while discharging the official duty, and the act of demanding a bribe is a pure criminal act.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. Section 17A and Section 19 are both procedural safeguards but operate at different stages of the criminal proceedings, approval before an investigation and sanction before a court can take cognisance; the delay in granting sanction did not invalidate the criminal proceedings.

3. Earlier this year a split verdict arose on Section 17A, Justice K V Viswanathan upheld the provision whereas Justice B V Nagarathna struck it down as one that protects the corrupt rather than seeking to protect the honest, and the matter has been referred to a larger bench.

Verbatim Quotes

"The court held that Section 17A does not protect every act committed by a public servant."

- Amaal Sheikh

Xi’s Delhi visit: China’s new tone, old assumptions about India

Xi’s Delhi visit: China’s new tone, old assumptions about India

China’s president spoke of partnership in Delhi, but China’s longstanding doubts about India’s rise persist.

Saqlain Rizve 22 October 2026 4 min read

When China’s President Xi Jinping flew into New Delhi for the BRICS summit last month, it was his first visit to India in seven years. Meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 12 September, Xi said the two countries should be “partners rather than rivals”. Modi also spoke of improving ties. After years of tension along their Himalayan border, the language marked a welcome change.

Context

India and China have an unsettled boundary, a large trade imbalance and a long contest for influence in Asia. Relations froze after the clash in the Galwan Valley in 2020 and began to thaw with an agreement in 2024 that eased the military stand-off.

In September 2026 Xi Jinping came to New Delhi for the BRICS summit, his first visit to India in seven years. Meeting Narendra Modi on 12 September, he said the two countries should be partners rather than rivals.

The author asks whether the warmer language reflects a changed Chinese view of India. Drawing on recent scholarship, he argues that Beijing's estimate of India rests as much on ideas inherited from the last century as on the present balance of power.

Xi's Delhi visit: China's new tone, old assumptions about India

Facts

- **The visit :** Xi Jinping's first visit to India in seven years. He met Narendra Modi on 12 September at the BRICS summit and said the two countries should be "partners rather than rivals".

- **What has not moved :** The 2020 Galwan Valley clash killed 20 Indian soldiers and, according to Beijing, four Chinese soldiers; a 2024 agreement eased the military stand-off, but troops remain deployed and boundary negotiations have made limited progress.

- **The asymmetry :** Bilateral trade reached a record 155.6 billion US dollars in 2025 with India's deficit above 100 billion; the World Bank puts China's 2025 economy at about 19.5 trillion US dollars against nearly 4 trillion for India, and SIPRI puts Chinese military spending at 336 billion against India's 92.1 billion.

Analytical Crux

1. China and India have disputes over territory, influence and international status rooted in how Chinese leaders have understood India's place in Asia for more than a century; better relations do not necessarily mean a different view of each other.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. The attitudes predate the present economic gap: in 1978 the two economies were relatively close in size, around 150 billion for China and 137 billion for India, yet China's dismissive image of India was already established.

3. Pardesi described India as a lesser rival in Chinese strategic thinking, but one capable of obstructing Beijing's wider ambitions in Asia; for New Delhi, China is a central security concern, while Beijing is more focused on its rivalry with the United States.

Verbatim Quotes

"Still, the attitudes are relevant because they predate the present economic gap."

– Saqlain Rizve

Practical Cooperation: How China and Bhutan Engage Beyond Borders

AUTHOR : ADITYA GOWDARA SHIVAMURTHY

Expert Speak Raisina Debates

Published on *Oct 22, 2026*

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Despite the absence of diplomatic relations, Bhutan and China are expanding cooperation, especially on trade and tourism through third countries and digital space

Context

Bhutan lies between India and China and has no diplomatic relations with China. Its foreign policy has long been shaped by the 1949 India-Bhutan Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship, and by its own choice not to establish ties with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

China claimed Bhutan in its entirety in its early years, then from the 1960s narrowed its claims to certain contested areas. The two had no direct communication until 1984; India raised Bhutan's border issue with China several times, and China refused, insisting it would deal only with Thimphu.

This essay maps what has grown up in place of formal ties – trade and tourism routed through third countries and digital platforms – and argues that diplomatic relations are becoming gradually inevitable.

Practical Cooperation: How China and Bhutan Engage Beyond Borders

Facts

- **No ties, many rounds :** China and Bhutan still lack diplomatic relations; the first bilateral border talks were held in 1984 and more than 25 rounds of negotiations have taken place since.

- **Why Bhutan stayed out :** India's role in guiding Bhutan's foreign policy rested on the 1949 India-Bhutan Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship, and Thimphu avoided diplomatic relations with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, especially after China became a P-5 member in 1971.

- **The trade turn :** China is now among Bhutan's top five import sources, and in 2025 Bhutan's imports from China reached their highest value at 21,045 million rupees, routed through India because no direct trade infrastructure exists.

Analytical Crux

1. Bhutan has preferred resolving the boundary issue before establishing diplomatic relations, to deter China from influencing the talks through new economic incentives and to avoid false alarms in Delhi about growing Chinese influence.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. Beijing terms this practical cooperation because it supports Bhutan's development path chosen in line with its national conditions; playing a long game, Beijing is not rushing to establish diplomatic ties while it has continued to use border intrusions and aggression to build pressure.

3. No infrastructure or mechanism exists for direct trade with China and Bhutan depends heavily on land routes which run only through India; despite the additional time and cost, trade has continued to grow, and Nepal has become a bridge, with Gyirong port the main entry point.

Verbatim Quotes

"Playing a long game, Beijing seems to be leveraging this momentum by not rushing to establish diplomatic ties and showing what it has to offer."

- Aditya Gowdara Shivamurthy

Tehran is a Different Beast Now

Tehran is a Different Beast Now

COLE BUCY

October 21, 2026



Context

Iran is governed by a Supreme Leader who holds final authority over the armed forces and foreign policy, with decisions taken by a small inner circle around him.

On the account given in this piece, a United States-led attack in February opened a war in which Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed on the first day. His son Mojtaba Khamenei, wounded in the same strike, became Supreme Leader. Washington had expected the conflict to last only a few weeks.

The author is a former CIA analyst whose job was to see the world as Iranian leaders do. He argues that the surviving leadership is working from an altered set of strategic principles, and that American policy keeps misreading what it is now dealing with.

Tehran is a Different Beast Now

Facts

- **The decapitation strike :** Former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei died on the first day of the war in February; his son and new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei was wounded in the same airstrike that killed his father and his wife.

- **The June Memorandum of Understanding :** It recognised Iranian control of the Strait of Hormuz, administered jointly with Oman, as a security guarantee against future United States attack, and provided significant sanctions relief without any concrete concessions on Iran's nuclear programme.

- **The endurance argument :** Iranian leaders regularly cite the death of nearly half a million Iranians in the 1980s war with Iraq, when food was rationed, as evidence of national grit, and count on 90 million citizens to turn the territory into another quagmire.

Analytical Crux

1. The unprecedented decapitation strikes have likely persuaded surviving members that they are dead men walking; this mindset has eroded U.S. and Israeli deterrence, because Iran's inner circle asks what he is going to do that Iran has not already endured.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. Iran's constant rebuffs indicate that they see most U.S. diplomatic offers as cups of poison; the United States and Israel launched surprise attacks on Iran twice in the past two years when Tehran's diplomats were in negotiations, a pattern that probably has confirmed Iranian hardliners' cynicism that the White House often uses negotiations as a military tactic.

3. Iran had not previously closed the Strait of Hormuz because it feared U.S. military reprisal, but once it had already suffered the very attack it feared, that calculus flipped; because the United States initiated this round of conflict without consulting allies, Europe and Asia will not join a U.S. coalition.

Verbatim Quotes

"New Tehran recognizes that there is little to gain by playing it safe: Its only chance to survive is an aggressive posture that imposes enough cost that the United States and its regional partners can no longer easily threaten the Islamic Republic's existence — even if that brinksmanship brings the regime's own survival to the edge."

- Cole Bucy

UPSC LINK

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** Accelerating of Chinese influence across South Asia is fundamentally reshaping the region's geopolitical landscape. This is a big foreign policy challenge for India. Analyse.

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** India has recognised that West Asia is not a single contest, but a tangle of rivalries, bargains and anxieties. Comment.

- **PSIR Paper I, 2026:** Highlight any five constitutional provisions that restrain the powers of the executive, and evaluate their effectiveness in current times.

- **GS Paper II, 2026:** Is the right to vote a fundamental right? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters?

- **PSIR Paper I, 2025:** There is a debate on the procedure for appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners to the Election Commission of India. Analyse its various aspects.

- **PSIR Paper II, 2024:** Bhutan has historically been an ally of India, but the China-Bhutan border related issues have become a security issue for India. Discuss.

- **PSIR Paper II, 2024:** Does the idea of the 21st century as 'Asian century' continue to remain feasible given the growing friction between India and China?

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