

## Weaponizing the Constitution

By Uday Kumar Varma

Author is a former Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, GOI

The political discourse in India today is more acrimonious and divisive than ever before. Personal attacks dominate the landscape, and political rivalries have reached unprecedented levels of hostility. The explicit objective of much of the opposition appears to be the unseating of the current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, at any cost. Despite his tenure being largely free of corruption charges, Modi has been subjected to relentless criticism, surpassing what any previous Prime Minister has faced.

The latest weapon in this political arsenal is the Constitution itself. Accusations of its subversion have become a rallying cry for the opposition. However, in the 75th year of India's constitutional journey, one must ask: does this weaponization hold any conviction? Will such a narrative resonate with the public?

### The Judiciary and the Constitution: Caught in the Crossfire

As political rivalries intensify, the Supreme Court is increasingly drawn into these battles, often under the pretext of safeguarding constitutional values. These attempts, however, frequently stem from personal animosities rather than principled stands, leading to a concerning erosion of civility in public discourse. This trend of politicizing constitutional issues risks transforming the judiciary into a battleground for political vendettas.

The Supreme Court must resist the temptation to wade into every political controversy cloaked in constitutional rhetoric. While the Constitution is broad and adaptive, allowing diverse issues to acquire constitutional dimensions, the judiciary must develop stringent filters to identify cases that genuinely warrant intervention. Failure to do so risks diverting the Court from its core judicial mandate and exposing it to manipulation by vested interests.

This challenge highlights an essential characteristic of India's Constitution: its dynamism. Unlike a static rule book, the Constitution is a living document, designed to adapt to the changing needs of society. Its interpretation must evolve with the times, balancing timeless principles with contemporary realities. The judiciary's role is not merely to enforce its provisions but to interpret them innovatively and contextually, ensuring the Constitution remains a beacon for governance and justice.

The judiciary's ability to navigate these challenges will rest significantly on the quality and vision of its judges. Sadly, clear-headed, erudite, and articulate judges are becoming alarmingly rare. The same can be said of lawyers. Those few who rise above the allure of monetary gain, possess balanced reasoning, and maintain an ability to think beyond immediate concerns are a minority. Elevating erudite and principled individuals to the judiciary is crucial to preserving its integrity and effectiveness.

## **A Crisis of Political Maturity**

One of the most troubling aspects of the current political landscape is the shift in focus from substantive policy debates to relentless personal attacks. This singular focus on individual(s) reflects a disturbing lack of depth and seriousness in the political opposition's approach. When animosity towards one leader dominates political thinking, it clouds perspective and obscures larger national interests.

This immaturity diminishes the dignity and gravity of political discourse. Rather than engaging in constructive debates about policies and governance, political brinkmanship has devolved into a toxic exchange of personal barbs. Such an environment undermines the very essence of democratic dialogue and risks alienating the electorate.

## **Challenges for the Judiciary**

The coming months will present unprecedented challenges for the judiciary. Cleverly crafted petitions aimed at exploiting the Court for political purposes will test the resolve and sagacity of judges, particularly the Chief Justice of India. It is imperative that the judiciary remains steadfast in its commitment to preserving the Constitution's integrity and resists becoming an instrument for settling political disputes.

The Constitution must not be weaponized to undermine its very ethos. Instead, it should inspire a renewed dynamism in governance and public life. Honourable judges must ensure that their rulings are guided by the principles of justice, equity, and constitutional fidelity, rather than succumbing to external pressures or political, even judicial expediencies.

## **Looking Ahead: A Call for Maturity**

One can only hope that this unprecedented low in the current political discourse is temporary and that greater maturity and depth will gradually return to public debates. Political leaders, particularly in the opposition, must rise above personal vendettas and engage in meaningful discussions about policies, governance, and national priorities.

The judiciary, too, faces a defining moment. The judgments pronounced in the coming years will have far-reaching implications for India's unity, integrity, and future trajectory. The fundamental truth remains that the Constitution is a dynamic legacy, not a static guide, that has constantly evolved. As the judiciary interprets its provisions, it must respond to emerging challenges with freshness and innovation. It is incumbent upon judges to rise to this occasion with strength, sagacity, and boldness while preserving an unwavering commitment to the Constitution.

In these trying times, the preservation of democratic values and the Constitution's spirit must remain the collective responsibility of all stakeholders—the judiciary, the political class, and the citizenry alike.

---

# **Trump 2.0: The End of Dollar Imperialism and the Rise of a New Crypto-Era**

**By Dr. Santhosh Mathew**

The author is Associate Professor at Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University

Dollar imperialism is the force that backs Uncle Sam's role as the world's policeman, ensuring that the U.S. maintains its influence over global trade, finance, and geopolitics. "This statement encapsulates the essence of U.S. economic and geopolitical dominance for much of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The U.S. dollar has long served as the linchpin of global power, establishing the United States not just as a financial leader but as a central figure in the maintenance of global order. However, as the world shifts into a new digital era, the future of the dollar—and the role it plays in global politics—appears to be at a crossroads. Under the leadership of Donald Trump in a potential second term, this dominance could face a radical transformation, influenced by the rise of cryptocurrencies and the changing tides of international trade. The notion of "dollar imperialism" has long been associated with the U.S. military-industrial complex and the country's ability to influence international policy. With the dollar as the world's primary reserve currency, the U.S. has been able to exert significant power over the global financial system, forcing countries to rely on it for everything from oil transactions to international reserves. This financial dominance has been a key enabler of America's role as the self-appointed global policeman. But the cracks in this system are becoming more visible, and the arrival of a Trump 2.0 administration could herald the beginning of a new era—one where cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin may replace the dollar, and where the very foundations of dollar dominance are questioned.

Trump's relationship with cryptocurrencies is likely to be a crucial part of this shift. Initially, Trump was sceptical of digital currencies, often expressing doubts about their stability and potential risks. However, over time, as cryptocurrencies gained increasing traction and legitimacy in global markets, Trump's stance softened. His growing affinity for Bitcoin is not just a personal preference but reflects a broader shift in the financial world. In a second term, Trump could position cryptocurrencies as a cornerstone of America's future monetary policy, potentially even creating a U.S. digital currency or backing the dollar with blockchain technology. Elon Musk, the billionaire entrepreneur known for his ventures in space exploration and electric vehicles, is another influential figure who could play a central role in this transformation. Musk's support of cryptocurrencies, particularly Bitcoin and Dogecoin, has been well-documented. His influence extends far beyond the tech world, as he has consistently made waves in the financial sector with his unorthodox views on money. In Trump's second term, Musk's growing influence in both tech and finance could be a key driver of the shift toward a crypto-backed future. With Musk's success in integrating Bitcoin into his companies, particularly Tesla, and his ongoing promotion of decentralized finance, it's easy to envision a future where Trump's administration works closely with Musk to shape a new economic framework.

The idea of a crypto-backed dollar might sound like a fantasy, but it's becoming more plausible as digital currencies continue to grow. The U.S. dollar, once entirely reliant on the power of the Federal Reserve and U.S. government policy, could increasingly face competition from decentralized alternatives. A cryptocurrency like Bitcoin, with its transparent ledger and decentralized nature, provides an alternative to the inflationary pressures that have historically plagued fiat currencies. Trump's willingness to embrace this digital revolution could represent a pivotal moment in the history of the U.S. dollar. However, the future of the dollar is not solely tied to cryptocurrencies. The rise of gold and other commodities as alternative stores of value could further reshape the global financial system. The U.S. has long been the leader in the dollar-gold-oil pattern, with oil transactions conducted almost exclusively in U.S. dollars. This system has allowed the U.S. to maintain its dominance in global trade. However, countries like China, Russia, and even some European nations are increasingly seeking to move away from the dollar. They are establishing trade networks that bypass the U.S. dollar, opting for deals in local currencies or gold-backed agreements. These shifts signal the growing cracks in the dollar's monopoly over global finance.

Trump's second term could further accelerate this shift. His "America First" approach, which places a premium on American self-sufficiency and independence, might lead to a reevaluation of the U.S. dollar's role in global trade. With a greater focus on securing critical resources like energy and gold domestically, the U.S. could be less reliant on the dollar's global hegemony.

In this new economic framework, gold may once again become a key player in the global financial system, alongside emerging cryptocurrencies. Trump has often referred to gold as a hedge against inflation, and the rise of blockchain technology could allow for a digital currency backed by gold. Such a move would combine the stability of precious metals with the efficiency of digital currencies, offering a modern alternative to the outdated systems of the past. Additionally, Trump's second term would likely see a continued push for greater integration between the U.S. economy and the broader tech world. By surrounding himself with billionaires and tech moguls, Trump could usher in a new era of economic policy that places more emphasis on technological innovation. The growing influence of figures like Musk, who has become a leading voice in both cryptocurrency and the renewable energy sectors, could lead to a complete rethinking of the global financial system. With his push for digital currencies and his vision of a future that blends technology with finance, Musk could be instrumental in shaping Trump's economic agenda.

However, there are risks associated with this dramatic shift. Traditional financial institutions and global powers that benefit from the dollar's dominance will likely resist any move that threatens the status quo. The Federal Reserve, in particular, may push back against Trump's plans for a crypto-backed dollar, seeing it as a threat to its control over U.S. monetary policy. Moreover, the transition to a new global financial system could be messy, with significant upheaval in markets and potential instability as nations adjust to a new way of doing business. Despite these challenges, the trajectory of the dollar seems increasingly uncertain. With Trump's leadership, an alliance with influential figures like Musk, and the growing prominence of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology, the dollar's future may no longer be as secure as it once was. The U.S. may be on the brink of embracing a new monetary order—one that balances the power of the dollar with the innovations of the digital age.

In conclusion, the future of the U.S. dollar in a Trump 2.0 administration could be marked by a significant shift in global financial dynamics. The rise of cryptocurrencies, the potential backing of the dollar by blockchain or gold, and the growing influence of tech moguls like Elon Musk signal a potential transformation of the global monetary system. While the path forward remains uncertain, it's clear that Trump's second term could be a pivotal moment in the evolution of money and global power. The age of dollar imperialism may be coming to an end, replaced by a new era where digital currencies and decentralized finance take centre stage. The question remains: will the dollar adapt, or will something entirely new rise to replace it?

---

## **What Indian PM's First Visit to Kuwait in Four Decades Means for Diplomacy in Middle East**

**By C Raja Mohan**

The writer is contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait this weekend will close the last gap in India's expanded diplomatic engagement with the Gulf region that is so vital to the country's security and prosperity. Modi will be the first prime minister to visit Kuwait in more than four decades. His visit comes soon after the fall of the Assad dynasty in Damascus, whose consequences could involve a radical restructuring of the regional order in the Middle East.

When the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invaded and occupied Kuwait in August 1990, the coalition government in Delhi was so paralysed by the event that it could not bring itself to unambiguously condemn the fact that Saddam Hussein had sought to wipe out Kuwait as a sovereign nation from the map of the Middle East. It is impossible to escape the parallel with the Indian reluctance to criticise the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Then, as now, there was little internal criticism of the government's refusal to condemn Saddam Hussein's unacceptable aggression by India's political class or the foreign policy elite. Many arguments were offered to suggest that Saddam Hussein was "provoked" or "trapped" into invading Kuwait — somewhat similar to the argument that Brezhnev had no option but to send troops to Afghanistan and Putin was provoked to attack Ukraine.

To be sure, as a post-colonial nation, India is deeply committed to the inviolability of territorial sovereignty as the core principle of international relations. Delhi was reluctant to condemn these invasions because Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Brezhnev's Soviet Union were, and Vladimir Putin's Russia is a close partner of India. Many countries don't like criticising their partners. India is not alone in finessing the tension between principles and interests. All countries do it. India's problem in 1990 was not about hypocrisy that is endemic in international relations.

Part of the problem was in assessing and dealing with the geopolitical implications and consequences of Saddam Hussein's attempt to annex Kuwait. The Gulf Arabs as well as Egypt and Syria got together to support a massive American expeditionary army to force Saddam Hussein to vacate the occupied territories and restore the sovereignty of Kuwait within a year.

Another element of India's problem was its well-established affinity with Ba'athist leaders like Saddam Hussein in the Middle East. Hafez al Assad and his son Bashar are part of that Arab tradition as well. In the second half of the 20th century, Delhi was comfortable with the radical nationalist Arab Republics that espoused pan-Arabism, socialism, secularism, anti-imperialism, and anti-Zionism. But the Ba'athists tragically turned out to be extremely authoritarian as well.

Despite much goodwill for India in the conservative Gulf monarchies and the growing energy imports and labour exports, Delhi tended to view them through the prism of Pakistan and struggled to develop a positive engagement strategy. The relationship with Kuwait, unsurprisingly, was a casualty from India's Iraq policy during 1990-91. It was well into the 2000s, when high level visits between Kuwait and India resumed. After Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to Kuwait in 1981, Vice President Hamid Ansari's visit to Kuwait in 2009 was the highest visit.

Even as the Gulf's energy, economic, and security salience grew in the 21st century, the region remained low on India's diplomatic priorities. During the UPA's decade-long rule, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited three Gulf countries one time each — Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The Modi years have seen a definitive change. The PM has visited the region frequently — seven times to the UAE, two times each to Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and once to Bahrain and Oman. His travels to Kuwait this weekend closes the circle on this comprehensive engagement. The past few months have seen preparations for Modi's visit with the exchange of visits by the two foreign ministers setting the stage for the PM's travel. High-level visits are only one metric of the engagement between any two nations.

What we have seen in the last decade is the qualitative transformation in ties between India and the Gulf monarchies — from strong personal rapport between the PM and the Gulf rulers to the intensity of commercial engagement and from security partnerships to connectivity projects. The Arab Gulf today has emerged as one of the highest strategic priorities for Delhi. Few other relations of India have transformed as dramatically as Delhi's ties with the Arab Gulf nations over the last decade.

It is entirely accidental that the PM's visit to Kuwait comes days after the swift collapse of the last Ba'athist ruler in Syria. If India's ties with Kuwait were troubled by Delhi's dalliance with the Ba'athists, the fall of the Assad dynasty marks the long overdue political booster shot for India's relations with Kuwait. The downfall of Assad also underlines the tragedy of Ba'athist republics that turned into horrible dictatorships in which the security services brutalised the populations. The monarchies, which were once reviled by progressives around the world, have turned out to be less repressive than the Republics in the Middle East.

Some of them, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are now undertaking significant reform that seeks to promote religious moderation, social modernisation, and economic transition away from oil revenues. On all these counts, the Arab Gulf is a natural partner for India. Meanwhile, Pakistan has ceased to be a complicating factor in Delhi's relations with the Arab monarchies that now attach higher weight to ties with India. India's partnership with the moderate Arab states — including Egypt, the Gulf, Jordan, and Morocco — acquires a new importance amidst the scramble for post-Assad Syria and the inevitable reordering of the Middle East.

Deeper engagement with the moderate Arab states demands better appreciation of their core concerns in Delhi. This in turn will involve discarding many of the old Indian premises about the region. Delhi also needs a clear assessment of the hierarchy of contradictions between the moderate Arab states and the non-Arab powers of the region – Iran, Israel, and Turkey. The moderate Arab states have no desire to restore the Ottoman imperial hegemony over their lands or acquiesce in Persian claims for regional primacy. Nor do they want radical Islamist republicans to replace the Ba'athist Republics and sow regional chaos. They deeply resent Israel's refusal to accommodate the Palestinian concerns. A more flexible Israel could make it easier for the moderate Arab states to build cooperation with the Jewish state in stabilising the Middle East. Having bet on hopes for positive ties between Israel and moderate Arab states in the form of the Abraham Accords, India ought to nudge Tel Aviv in the direction of accommodation. Modi's visit to Kuwait, then, must be seen as an important first step in upping India's game in a Middle East poised for deep structural change.

[Read complete article on website indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)

---

## **Syrian Crisis Gives Islamic State a Window of Opportunity**

**By Vappala Balachandran**

The author is Former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat

Regime change in any country, achieved not through parliamentary elections, introduces considerable instability in the region. This is worrisome to its neighbours, like what happened in Bangladesh. It is more so in Syria, a classic example of “ungoverned territory” or “failed state”, as defined by American think tank RAND in 2007.

The characteristics of a “failed state” are low-level administrative penetration into its territory, a lack of monopoly on the use of force by permitting illegal armed groups, the absence of effective controls on its land and sea borders, thus allowing influence by undesirable foreign elements. Syria has been welcoming foreign terrorists for years, much before the start of the Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011.

From the 1960s, Syria allowed terrorists like Abu Nidal, Nazar Mansur Hindawi and George Habash to freely operate from its land. On December 18, 1985, Abu Nidal claimed to a French paper, ‘Jeune Afrique’, that he was helping French covert group Action Directe, Basque separatist group ETA, Irish Republican Army and Baader-Meinhof gang. Abu Nidal was expelled from Syria only in 1987, under US pressure.

Consequently, the Syrian government could not help other states, even if they wanted, in hostage rescue from their territory. The Washington Post (July 18, 1986) reported Syrian Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam admitting to American and French leaders, with whom he had good relations, that he could not help rescue American and French hostages kidnapped by local extremists as “they were being held in a region outside Syrian control”. In 2005, Khaddam exiled himself to Paris due to differences with Bashar al-Assad.

Even with this inconstancy, Syria tried to take care of Western sensitivities while offering sanctuary to terrorists, as in the case of notorious mercenary Carlos the Jackal (Ilich Ramírez Sánchez) by forcing him to be inactive when Hungary expelled him in 1985.

However, it expelled him in 1991 when he showed signs of joining Iraq's covert operations against America as Syria had opposed Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

Syria's alignment with American security policy continued during the post-9/11 period, although in that process it received considerable flak from human rights organisations. Diplomatically, Syria openly opposed Saddam. To quote noted Middle East scholar Shibley Telhami of Brookings, Syria "surprised many by supporting UN Resolution 1441 demanding immediate Iraqi compliance with previous UN resolutions".

Covertly, Syria helped the CIA deal with terrorists suspected to be involved in the 9/11 attacks. The Canadian Justice Dennis O'Connor Commission report (2004-05) on the "extraordinary rendition" of Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen of Syrian origin, to Syria on the CIA's initiative and his harsh interrogation and incarceration by Syrian agencies for one year is an example of covert intelligence cooperation between the two countries.

All these factors should be kept in mind while assessing the long-term stability of the new government under Ahmed al-Sharaa alias Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). He was once the chief of 'al-Nusra', an al-Qaeda front. True, American officials are expressing a new comfort level, as is evident from the statements of US diplomats Barbara A Leaf and Roger D Carstens on December 20, which has led to the scrapping of a \$10-million reward for al-Sharaa's arrest.

Apart from the possibility of future clashes with Turkey over the Kurds, who are supported by America, the new al-Sharaa government must ensure that the Islamic State (ISIS) does not make a comeback, not just in Syria but also the entire region. There is a view that some hardliners within the HTS are not yet reconciled in supporting the leadership's "more moderate and pragmatic approach". This is because some of the Chechen, Balkan and Central Asian jihadists are still among the HTS's rank and file. It is quite possible that ISIS "could seek to poach these militants and bring them into their fold".

The Soufan Centre, which has been mostly correct in the past in its assessments about the ISIS in that region, has flagged some scenarios in its brief dated December 18, 2024. It says: "The current environment in Syria is tailor-made for the Islamic State to exploit in an effort to help facilitate its comeback and resurgence, not just in the country but across the region".

Firstly, it says that ISIS attacks in Syria alone had "tripled from last year" to about 700 for 2024. The ISIS has also improved "in sophistication, increased in lethality and become more dispersed geographically". Secondly, it would take advantage of the intra-coalition (anti-Assad) fights between Turkey-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish militia backed by America.

Soufan says the Kurds came under attack in Kobani and Manbij, aided by Turkish drones and other military assets. It adds that in northern Syria, a tenuous ceasefire between the SNA and the Kurds is holding on. There are fears that the Kurds might lose Kobani, a "geographically and symbolically important" area. The SDF is also facing major challenges in Deir ez-Zor, with Sunni Arabs protesting against its rule in Raqqa and Al-Hasakah.

**[Read complete article on website thetribune.com](https://www.thetribune.com)**

# In tech, 2025 Should be a Year of Hope, With Some Caveats

**By Mr. Abdullah Musabbah Al Darmaki**

The Author is a professor of Global Media at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and faculty associate at the Berkman Klein Centre for Internet & Society, Harvard University, USA

*Even as technologies become more consolidated and corporatised, the efforts of people who fight to keep the internet free, open and empathetic are what make it worth maintaining.*

When I told a friend I am spending some of my winter break working on a preview of digital technologies, there was a considered silence. “Are you going to be all doom and gloom about it?” she asked. I checked my notes and was surprised that while the risks and consequences of emerging technologies continue to persist, often impacting the most vulnerable among us, I am still beginning the year on a note of hope — with some caveats.

Most positive reports of technology development and deployment focus on innovation, economy, and access as indicators of success and growth. However, technologies are not mere tools. They are conditions that shape us, contexts we live in, and contestations that define how we work, speak, and love. So, instead of looking at the shiny new thing or the next big thing, I am choosing to focus on five significant milestones that future technology users will look at as history-in-the-making.

The year 2024 will go down in history as the one when we accepted digital and data privacy as our foundational right. The passing of the historic Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP) put India in league with developed nations that offer the most comprehensive protection to individual and personal data online. The DPDP might not dramatically change how we use the internet, but in the backend, it puts severe limitations and safeguards on how our data is used in our digital transactions. Conversations around digital privacy in India started in 2009, with the establishment of the Unique Identification Authority of India, which later became Aadhaar. It has taken many consultations, protests and mobilisations, and greater public literacy, for data privacy to become a fundamental right. Going forward, the DPDP rightly puts the responsibility for the protection and safety of individual data on companies, intermediaries, and actors rather than individuals, and marks a wonderful way forward for securing our digital futures.

As the year of general elections though, 2024 was also the year of misinformation. The unsupervised, uncontrolled, and weaponised use of misinformation for political segregation, profiled targeting, inciting hatred, and creating conditions of deep uncertainty were visible throughout the year. It is impossible to point fingers at just one source or bad actor because we have witnessed an entire ecosystem of misinformation forming in the country. Significant work has been done by fact-checking communities, the unsung heroes diligently fighting these misinformation attacks. However, we are left with a naturalised misinformation baseline that particularly targets women, non-conforming people, and minority communities in disproportionate ways. In 2025, we can only hope that the pioneering work started by the amazing information warriors, who have shown that human collectives are essential to counter AI-driven misinformation, will continue to grow.

Generative AI is the elephant in the room, where no matter what we talk about, we eventually talk about the disruptions and affordances it has been bringing in. This is an emerging technology and we will have to live through the futures it is foretelling. While it is impossible to figure out what will persist, the one thing to look out for is the localisation of technologies. For the longest time, the digital divide has been exacerbated by language divides. While many other populous language groups have successfully created local language internet spheres —



think about the Chinese and Spanish internets, for example — India has lagged in developing local internets. Partly, this has been because of varying literacy levels, partly because of the linguistic diversity of the country, and partly because of the reluctance of corporations who do not cater to smaller language communities because they are not considered profitable. With Generative AI, the leaps we have made in simultaneous multi-language translation are incredible. GenAI language apps are expanding and supporting the phenomenal work of Open Knowledge champions and collectives like Wikipedia. This brings forward the possibilities of localising technologies and enabling more people to find a voice online.

The next trend that is worth recognising is the emergence of universal access in the country. This does not feature immediately in the imagination of the glossy, consumerist, big-tech internet stories we are used to. However, the consistent expansion of digital access, and India's rise in network readiness, found fruition in 2024. For those of us who remember the struggle to preserve net neutrality in the country without sacrificing universal access, 2025 will be the year that proves the two can co-exist. As more Indians in rural and disconnected parts come online, as India continues to offer one of the most competitive and affordable rates of digital access, and as we build more community-driven hubs, there is hope for more equitable social and economic structures for mobility and development.

And if there was ever something more to look forward to, it is you, the people. 2024 in tech was also a year of people using tech. More than ever before we are online, connected, talking to each other. There are continued assaults on our collective imagination and power. Yet, even as technologies become more consolidated and corporatised, the efforts of people who fight to keep the internet free, open and empathetic are what make it worth maintaining. Perhaps 2025 would turn out to be the year where we learn to care not only for the people around us, but also those far away facing genocide, violence and hate. One can only live in hope.

In this new year, I hope that we continue to focus on establishing digital infrastructures as fundamental rights, offering opportunities and safeties to marginalised and first-time-users to participate in our digital futures.

[Read complete article on website indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)

**Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the FINS or its members.**

**Many Festivals One Name**

**INDIA**

**FINS Wishes You and Your Family A Very Happy**

**Makar Sankranti | Pongal | Bihu | Lohari**



# India is Proud of: Ramveer Tanwar

**Man Who Cleaned 80+ Ponds Across 7 States, Even Diving Into Murky, Snake-Filled Waters**



Born in a small village in Uttar Pradesh, Ramveer Tanwar grew up surrounded by clean, vibrant ponds teeming with life. As a child, these ponds were his playground, a source of joy and community.

As he grew older, he witnessed their transformation into garbage dumps. “There were ponds where my friends and I swam, sometimes we even accidentally drank its water. Now, imagine how difficult it is to explain this to children today,” he says.

Determined to restore these vital water bodies, Ramveer left his corporate job to pursue his passion for pond conservation. Despite facing scepticism from his family and community — who questioned the respectability and practicality of his mission — he persevered.

“It’s now or never! We will keep working until people’s mindset changes,” he declares.

So far, he has cleaned more than 80 ponds, filled with debris, dead animals, and even dangerous creatures like snakes and scorpions. “This work frequently puts my life at risk, but regardless of the weather, be it rain or storm, I continue working tirelessly,” he adds.

Ramveer’s journey has not been easy. From battling limited funds to confronting encroachers, his path has been fraught with challenges. Yet his relentless dedication has galvanised a team of over 500 volunteers. Together, they dive into murky waters, often risking their safety to bring life back to these neglected ponds.

His work has not gone unnoticed; even Prime Minister Narendra Modi has praised his efforts. In the 24 October 2021 broadcast of the radio program Mann Ki Baat on All India Radio, Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended Ramveer Tanwar for his outstanding work in cleaning and conserving ponds.

In the 100th episode of the Mann Ki Baat program in April 2023, Ramveer Tanwar was selected as one of the 100 guests nationwide. During the five-day program, he participated in the National Conclave at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, on 26 April 2023. Activities included a visit to the Rajpath at Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya on 27 April, followed by a yoga session, a tour of the Red Fort, and Rajghat on 28 April 2023. On 30 April 2023, Ramveer attended a Mann Ki Baat session with Governor Anandiben Patel at Raj Bhavan in Lucknow.

Nation does need such selfless people who do impact the society and make change for better life for human beings.

Write to us at:

[bulletin@finsindia.org](mailto:bulletin@finsindia.org)

OFFICE :4, Belle View, Lakhamsi Nappu Road,  
Dadar (East), MUMBAI – 400014  
Phone 022 24127274, 98339 24371

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

Shri. Milind Bondale  
Col Ravindra Tripathi