



Monthly Brief #13, May 2025

### India's Judicial Rebirth: A Call for Transparent Reform

India's judiciary suffers from a lack of transparency in judge appointments and an almost impossible removal process. The opaque collegium system, born from the 'Judges Cases' (1981-1998), gives judges exclusive control over appointments, while removal under Articles 124(4) and 218 demands an arduous parliamentary process. Only two judges have faced such motions, both resigning before completion. Scandals, such as the 2025 burnt currency note case involving Justice Varma, erode public trust.

A Judicial Service Commission (JSC), inspired by South Africa and Kenya, could fix this. South Africa's JSC includes judges, MPs, lawyers, academics, and civil society, conducts public interviews, and ensures diversity — 45 percent of judges were Black by 2022. Its removal process involves a conduct committee, tribunal, and parliamentary oversight. India can adopt a similar model, led by the CJI and inclusive of civil society and academics.

Studies show nepotism ('uncle judge syndrome') and a lack of diversity hinder trust. Marginalised communities often feel alienated from a judiciary dominated by urban upper-caste men. A transparent JSC, with civil society oversight, can restore faith and end judicial elitism. As Justice Brandeis said, "Sunlight is the best disinfectant." It is time for reform to ensure justice truly serves all.

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*Abridged from an article appeared in Mint, on May 21, 2025. The same can be accessed at: <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/yashwant-varma-supreme-court-india-national-judicial-appointments-commission-chief-justice-of-india-lok-sabha-jacob-zuma-11747742955767.html>*

## Message for our Readers

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### India to Push for Bespoke BITs

India is likely to pursue country specific, bilaterally negotiated investment pacts instead of using a templated model text. In the February budget, the government said the current model bilateral investment treaty (BIT) will be revamped. It will be made more investor friendly to encourage sustained foreign investment besides ensuring the spirit of "first develop India."



## India to Present Voluntary Review on SDGs



Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery and its Chief Executive Officer BVR Subrahmanyam are likely to present India's achievements on key indicators and the country's outlook on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next five years. India has so far presented two voluntary national reviews, in 2017 and in 2020, since the launch of the SDGs in 2015.

- [India-Maldives Ferry Deal Gerts US\\$6.6mn Boost](#)  
India News Network, May 19, 2025
- [India's April Trade Gap Widens](#)  
Reuters May 15, 2025
- [APEDA Plans Export Push for Agro Products](#)  
Business Standard, May 04, 2025
- [India Drafts Industry Emission Targets](#)  
Simrin Sirur, Mongabay, May 02, 2025



## Parliament Panel Seeks Digital Market Data from CCI, MCA

A Parliamentary Panel has sought detailed information from Competition Commission of India (CCI) and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on various aspects of competition in relation to the digital markets, including those pertaining to the digital competition bill. The Panel has asked about whether the ongoing India-US bilateral trade negotiations has any bearing on the progress of the digital competition bill.



## [\*\*Cisco Report Highlights India's Cybersecurity Gaps\*\*](#)



Cisco's 2025 Cybersecurity Readiness Index reveals that only seven percent of organisations in India have reached the 'Mature' level of cybersecurity readiness, a slight increase from 2024's four percent. Despite this improvement, cybersecurity preparedness remains low as AI and hyperconnectivity introduce new complexities for security professionals.

- [TRAI May Review Backhaul Spectrum Pricing](#)  
Kiran Rathee, Economic Times, May 27, 2025
- [Regulator Nod Needed for New LNG Terminals](#)  
Economic Times, May 18, 2025
- [Foreign Oil Firms May Get Arbitration Option Abroad](#)  
Sanjeev Choudhary, Economic Times, May 18, 2025
- [Local Sourcing Must for Boilers in Govt Tenders](#)  
Twesh Mishra, Economic Times, May 08, 2025

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## **Rethink OTT Ads: 75% of Users Aren't Engaging**

A recent CUTS International study reveals that mandatory tobacco warnings on OTT platforms are largely ineffective for Indian smartphone users. Over 41 per cent find these static, unskippable messages intrusive, leading to irritation and potential platform abandonment. The research, surveying 1,200 users across 15 cities, advocates for shorter, targeted, and age-appropriate messaging.



## Safe Pedestrian Movement is a Fundamental Right



In a landmark judgment, India's Supreme Court has ruled that safe pedestrian infrastructure is a fundamental right protected under Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to life. The court directed all states and union territories to formulate comprehensive guidelines within two months to ensure unobstructed, disability-friendly footpaths.

- [Maternity Leave a Right, Even for Third Child](#)  
Economic Times, May 24, 2025
- [Solar Rooftop Scheme with Backup for Rural India](#)  
Vikram Singh, Timesbull, May 22, 2025
- [Govt to Launch Farmer Awareness Drive](#)  
Economic Times, May 08, 2025
- [Govt Plans District-Wise Road Safety Ratings](#)  
Swarajya, Arun Dhital, May 02, 2025

## In Media

- [Road Safety a Fiscal Imperative, not a Traffic Problem](#)  
*By Bipul Chattopadhyay and Amrat Singh, Policy Circle, May 28, 2025*
- [Bureaucratic Instability and the Politics of Transfers](#)  
*By Pradeep S Mehta & Madhvendra S Panwar, First India, May 16, 2025*
- [The SC's JSW-Bhushan Ruling Will Hit Both the IBC and Investor Confidence](#)  
*By Pradeep S. Mehta, Livemint, May 07, 2025*
- [How Can India 'Make for the World'? Unlocking its Defence Export Potential](#)  
*By Pradeep S. Mehta, Anjali Shekhawat and Purushendra Singh, The Economic Times, May 07, 2025*

## Publications

- Anti-Tobacco Messages on OTT Platforms Need for a Strategic and Targeted Approach  
<https://www.cuts-crc.org/pdf/report-anti-tobacco-messaging-on-ott.pdf>
- The End of Patchwork: A Unified Framework for India's Gig Economy  
<https://circ.in/pdf/CIRC%20WP%202025-02.pdf>
- The Future of Trade and Competition in the Digital Economy  
<https://circ.in/pdf/CIRC%20WP%202025-01.pdf>

### CUTS on Strategic Panel of T20 South Africa



Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International, joins the T20 South Africa Advisory Council. With prior roles in Brazil's T20 and the WTO DG's NGO Advisory Board, he brings global policy expertise, reflecting CUTS' commitment to inclusive development and amplifying Global South voices on equality, solidarity, and sustainability.