



BAJIRAO IAS ACADEMY

THE HINDU ANALYSIS

**13 SEPTEMBER
2025**

**15th VICE-PRESIDENT OF
INDIA**





RTI Act

The RTI's shift to a 'right to deny information'

The Right to Information (RTI) Act is founded on the principle that in a democracy, which is defined as "rule of the people, by the people, for the people", all information held by the government inherently belongs to the citizens. The government acts as a custodian of this information on behalf of the populace. Citizens legitimise their representatives by electing them, who in turn legitimise the bureaucracy.

Therefore, the default mode under the RTI is that all information must be shared with citizens. However, the Act always included specific exemptions to protect certain interests, such as national sovereignty. One crucial exemption is the Act's Section 8(1)(j), which is on "personal information".

The original Section 8(1)(j) was a detailed provision designed to balance the right to information with individual privacy. It stipulated that personal information could be denied if it had no connection to public activity or constituted an "unwarranted invasion on the privacy of an individual", unless there was a larger public interest in its disclosure.

A key aspect of this original provision was a proviso which is an acid test. It said: "provided that the information which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person". This meant that if information could not be denied to Parliament or a State Legislature it could also not be denied to an ordinary citizen.

The intent was to guide public information officers (PIOs) in discerning what constituted public activity, private activity, or an invasion of privacy, especially given the difficulty in definitively defining "privacy" (even Justice K.S. Puttaswamy *(Retd)* vs Union Of India acknowledged that it would evolve on a case-to-case basis). The government routinely collects information from an individual in the normal course of its duties, and such information is generally not considered to be an invasion of privacy and should, therefore, be shared.

However, if it invades his privacy, it must not be taken routinely. Restrictions on the fundamental right to information should be within the limits set by Article 19(1)(2) of the Constitution. Here, there are only two words relating to privacy: 'decency' or 'morality'. If disclosure violates decency or morality, it should be denied to Parliament and citizens.

The ambiguity of "personal information"
The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act amends Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act – a drastic alteration of Section 8(1)(j) that reduces its length to six words. This significant abbreviation makes it easy for most information to be denied. The core concern revolves around the interpretation of "personal information" itself.



Shalish Gandhi
is a former Central Information Commissioner

One of the most pressing issues is the lack of a clear and consistent definition of "personal information" under the amended RTI Act, especially in its relationship with the new Data Protection Law. There are two conflicting views: the first is Natural Person Interpretation. One view holds that "person" should be understood in its general sense, referring to a "normal person" or natural person. The second is the DPDP Bill Definition. The other, equally valid view, interprets "person" as defined in the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill. The DPDP Bill's definition is expansive, including a "Hindu undivided family, a firm, a company, [and] any association of individuals and the State".

If the latter definition is adopted, "almost everything is personal information". A significant amount of information can be shown to be related to some person. Thus the law gives a handle to deny most information. The RTI is transformed into a Right to Deny information. It becomes an "RDI". This broad interpretation poses a fundamental threat to the spirit of transparency. Adding to the complexity, the DPDP Bill contains a provision that overrides all other laws in cases of conflict. This is alarming because the DPDP Bill specifies strong penalties for violations which can be as high as ₹250 crore.

This creates an untenable situation for PIOs. As much of the government information is now digital, PIOs are apprehensive that a mistake in disclosing information could lead to severe financial penalties. This fear will incentivise PIOs to err on the side of information denial rather than disclosure, effectively creating a "right to deny information". The DPDP Act must not override the RTI Act, though it might be acceptable for it to override other Acts.

Facilitating corruption

The practical implications of these amendments are dire for public accountability and the fight against corruption. Transparency is a crucial tool in this battle, especially when other anti-corruption mechanisms have proven to be ineffective.

The first is the loss of public monitoring. Citizens are the best monitors against corruption. If information is denied, this vital monitoring mechanism is severely hampered. India's multilayered government agencies such as vigilance departments, anti-corruption bureaus and the Lokpal, have abjectly failed to curb corruption.

The second is denial of essential information. The broadened scope of "personal information" means that even mundane yet crucial documents could be withheld – a citizen's own corrected birth certificate could be denied as "personal information". The example of Rajasthan sharing details of pension beneficiaries to combat "ghost employees" and "ghost cards" will cease. Even a simple order

signed by an official could be denied as "personal information". It can result in over 90% of information being denied.

The third is unfettered corruption. The amendment "makes it the easy thing to be corrupt". Information relating to ghost employees or corruption charges falls under "personal information". It will be hidden, allowing corruption to "flourish and continue unhindered".

While the "larger public interest" clause still exists in the RTI Act (in Section 8(2)), its practical application is extremely rare and difficult. Citizens should not have to demonstrate "larger public interest" to access information as it is their fundamental right. This requirement only applies if information is already exempt.

There will be less than 1% orders where an exemption is accepted, but disclosure is based on larger public interest. This is because it is an incredibly challenging decision for any officer to make, weighing potential harm to an individual against the broader public benefit of disclosure. Therefore, relying on this clause to ensure transparency after the amendment is largely futile.

Apathy and a call to action

Despite the gravity of these amendments, there has been a notable lack of public and media outcry when compared to previous RTI changes, such as those concerning Commissioner's salaries and tenures. This apathy may be due to the amendment being "under the guise of data protection", making it seem less threatening to the average citizen. There is also a common sentiment that an individual's own information should not be shared, regardless of its relevance, leading to an "ego takes over" mentality.

Sections 8(2) and 44(3) of the DPDP Bill constitute a "very fundamental regression on our democracy" and a "very fundamental attack on our fundamental rights".

There needs to be a focus on four issues. First, media and citizen engagement – there must be widespread public discussion across the country. Second, political accountability – citizens should demand assurances from political parties in their election manifestos that these amendments will be reversed. Third, public opinion – it is crucial to build strong public opinion with the support of the media. Fourth, recognition of gravity – this issue deserves as much attention as any other critical national debate, as the fundamental right to information is being compromised.

If citizens continue to remain silent, they will imperil their freedom and democracy. Collective action can lead to these changes being reversed. The future of transparency and accountability in India hinges on whether citizens and media can push back and protect the integrity of the RTI Act.

Citizens and the media need to challenge the Digital Personal Data Protection Act's amendment of Section 8(1)(j) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act

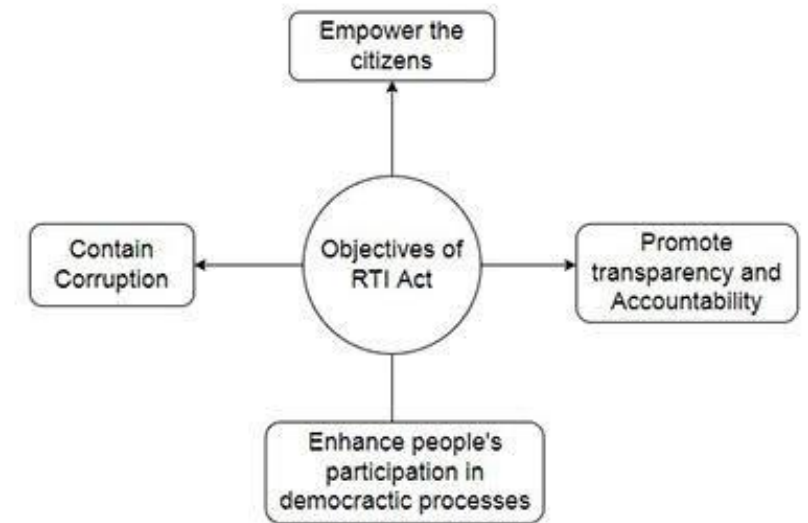
- ❑ The Right to Information (RTI) Act is founded on the principle that in a democracy, which is defined as **"rule of the people, by the people, for the people"**, all information held by the government inherently belongs to the citizens.
- ❑ The government acts as a custodian of this information on behalf of the populace.
- ❑ Citizens legitimise their representatives by electing them, who in turn legitimise the bureaucracy.

Context

- ❑ The Right to Information (RTI) Act in India has long been celebrated as a landmark legislation that **deepened democracy** by empowering citizens with access to government-held information.
- ❑ By establishing **transparency as the default mode of governance**, the RTI transformed the relationship between citizens and the state, enabling ordinary people to scrutinize decisions, demand accountability, and expose corruption.
- ❑ Yet, the recent **amendments to Section 8(1)(j)** through the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act mark a significant departure from this vision.
- ❑ What was once a **nuanced balance between privacy and transparency** now risks becoming a legal framework for denying access to vital public information.



- ❑ When first enacted, **Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act** sought to carefully reconcile the **citizen's right to information with the individual's right to privacy**.
- ❑ It allowed public authorities to withhold personal information only if it had no connection to public activity or if disclosure would amount to an **unwarranted invasion of privacy**.
- ❑ Even then, disclosure was permitted when a larger public interest justified it.
- ❑ A crucial safeguard in this provision was its provision: information that could not be denied to Parliament or a State Legislature could not be denied to an ordinary citizen either.
- ❑ This acid test ensured that privacy could not be used as a **blanket excuse to restrict transparency**, while also acknowledging that privacy is an evolving concept, to be assessed case by case.



The Ambiguity of Personal Information

- ❑ **The DPDP Act's intervention has radically altered this equilibrium.** By reducing Section 8(1)(j) to a mere six words, it introduces ambiguity and expands the scope of “**personal information**” to the point of absurdity.
- ❑ Two interpretations of person now compete: one confined to natural persons, the other, derived from the DPDP Bill, encompassing entities as diverse as companies, associations, and even the state itself.
- ❑ If the latter definition prevails, nearly every document or decision could be shielded as personal information. In effect, the **RTI risks being transformed into a Right to Deny Information (RDI)**.
- ❑ This expansive interpretation is compounded by the **DPDP Act's overriding effect on other laws** and its severe penalties for disclosure violations, which may reach as high as ₹250 crore.
- ❑ Faced with such risks, Public Information Officers (PIOs) are incentivised to adopt a defensive posture, erring on the side of denial rather than disclosure.
- ❑ This chilling effect undermines the very spirit of the RTI, replacing openness with opacity

Implications for Corruption and Accountability

- ❑ **Corruption thrives in secrecy**, and transparency has long been one of the few effective tools available to citizens in combating it.
- ❑ With broadened definitions of personal information, even routine and seemingly harmless documents, such as a corrected marksheet, a signed official order, or lists of pension beneficiaries, can now be withheld.
- ❑ Examples like **Rajasthan's public disclosure of pension details**, which once exposed ghost employees and ghost cards, may no longer be permissible.
- ❑ This legal transformation effectively institutionalises opacity. Information that directly exposes corruption or malpractice could be dismissed as personal.
- ❑ Even the clause allowing disclosure in cases of larger public interest provides little relief, as it is rarely invoked in practice and demands an onerous justification from citizens.
- ❑ Thus, the **DPDP amendments not only weaken the RTI but also embolden corruption** by making concealment the default.

Translocation of Tigers from Tadoba

Centre clears translocation of tigers from Tadoba, Pench to Sahyadri reserve

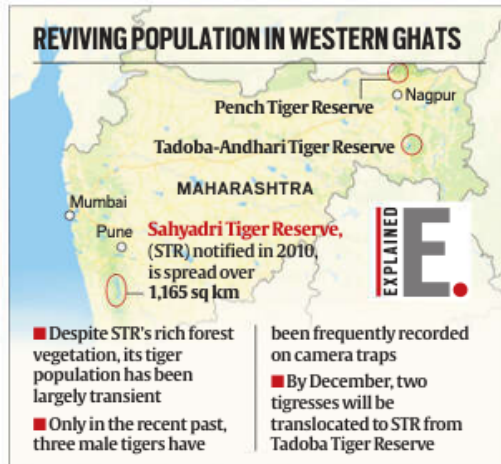
NIKHIL GHANEKAR
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

THE UNION Environment Ministry has approved the capture of eight tigers from the Tadoba-Andhari and Pench reserves for their translocation to the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve in western Maharashtra, a move aimed at reviving the big cat's population in the northern Western Ghats.

The ministry's Wildlife Division on Thursday gave the green light to the Maharashtra Chief Wildlife Warden for capturing tigers, subject to certain conditions.

Key among these conditions are a provision of adequate veterinary care at all stages of capture and translocation, and care to prevent post-capture complications. The Wildlife Division also told Maharashtra officials to ensure minimal trauma to tigers during the operation.

The ministry's approval is learnt to have come after the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), which is working with the Sahyadri reserve's field staff,



gave a positive appraisal of the preparations to host translocated tigers.

Initially, two tigresses will be translocated from the Tadoba Tiger Reserve, said Tushar Chavan, the field director of the Sahyadri reserve.

"The tiger reserve is ready. We have ample prey, and the tigers recorded in recent times

have been hunting the available prey. The initial translocation of the two tigresses should happen by December," said Chavan.

He said the prey base is healthy but will be regularly augmented. The translocated tigers will first be put in a temporary enclosure — known as a soft release — before being released into the wild.

Studies carried out by WII and state forest department have shown that the Sahyadri reserve can be home to over 20 tigers.

The technical committee of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had recommended approval for the translocation project in October 2023.

The translocation is part of the second phase of the long-term tiger recovery plan being implemented in the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. In the initial stage, the state forest department and WII worked to strengthen the forest habitat and prey base.

The Sahyadri Tiger Reserve, named after the Sahyadri range in the Western Ghats, is spread over 1,165 sq km, straddling Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara and Ratnagiri districts. It was notified in 2010, combining the Chandoli National Park and Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary area.

But despite its rich forest vegetation, breeding tigers have never colonised the reserve. Field staff have recorded a largely transient tiger population, which disperses in forests around the reserve.

In the recent past, however, three male tigers have been frequently recorded on camera traps, said Chavan and senior WII scientist K Ramesh. "There are three male tigers seen regularly and we can say that one is primarily living within the STR's boundaries, preying on sambar and gaur," said Ramesh.

He said tigers could also be brought from the Pench Tiger Reserve, which has a similar undulating terrain.

V Clement Ben, the Central Zoo Authority's member secretary and a former director of STR, said the revival of tigers in Sahyadri Tiger Reserve is also crucial to protect the dense forests and watershed of rivers. "It will also help maintain connectivity of tiger habitats between northern Western Ghats and the tiger forests to the south in Goa and Karnataka," he said.

As per the NTCA's management effectiveness evaluation of tiger reserves, the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve forms the catchment for Koyna and Warna rivers, which are crucial for livelihoods in neighbouring districts.

Context

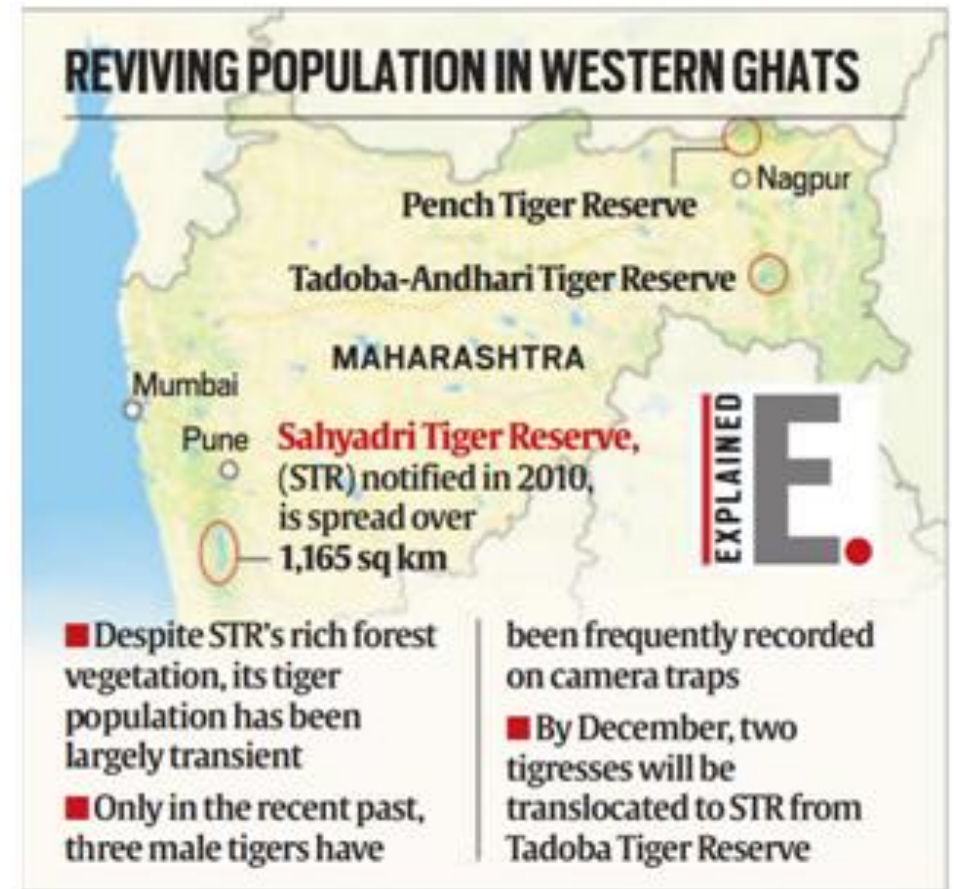
- ❑ The Union Environment Ministry has approved the translocation of tigers from Tadoba-Andhari and Pench reserves to the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra to revive the big cat's population in the Western Ghats.

Background of Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR)

- ❑ Established in **2010** and spread over **1,165 sq. Km.**
- ❑ Encompasses parts of **Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara, and Ratnagiri districts** of Maharashtra.
- ❑ Formed by merging **Chandoli National Park** and **Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- ❑ Despite rich forest cover, tiger presence has remained **transient and non-breeding**.

Reason for Translocation

- ❑ STR has suitable forest and prey base but lacks a stable tiger population.
- ❑ Translocation aims to ensure **long-term tiger survival in the Western Ghats**, an ecologically sensitive and biodiversity-rich region.



Implementation & Institutions Involved

- ❑ Approved by the Union Environment Ministry's Wildlife Division.
- ❑ Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and State Forest Department are responsible for scientific planning and execution.
- ❑ The project had earlier been recommended by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in October 2023.

Ecological Significance

- ❑ Strengthening tiger presence in STR ensures habitat connectivity between Western Ghats reserves and those in Goa and Karnataka.
- ❑ Helps maintain ecological balance and boosts conservation of prey species.
- ❑ Supports the long-term goal of landscape-level tiger conservation in India.

Karki is Nepal's First Women PM

Karki is Nepal's first woman PM

73-year-old former Chief Justice, who backed the protesters, has to appoint Cabinet, oversee polls

President Ram Chandra Poudel dissolves Nepal's Parliament, accepting a key Gen Z demand

Sanjeev Satgajanya
KATHMANDU

Nepal President Ram Chandra Poudel appointed former Chief Justice Sushila Karki as the country's new Prime Minister and dissolved Parliament on Friday, as days of political turmoil showed signs of abating in the Himalayan nation. He also announced fresh elections on March 5, 2026.

Mr. Poudel administered the oath of office and secrecy to Ms. Karki at a brief ceremony. According to the Office of the President, Mr. Poudel dissolved the House and set the election date at the recommendation of the newly appointed Prime Minister.

Ms. Karki, 73, the first woman Chief Justice of Nepal, is now the country's first woman Prime Minister.

Following hectic meet-

ings that began late on Thursday, Mr. Poudel on Friday evening agreed to dissolve Parliament, a key demand of Gen Z protesters who brought down the government of K.P. Sharma Oli on September 9. Ms. Karki will soon form a Cabinet that will oversee the elections.

Even after Gen Z campaigners agreed on Ms. Karki's name as the leader of the next government, a dispute over the dissolution of Parliament had delayed the process of her appointment.

Mr. Poudel has held several rounds of consultations with Ms. Karki and other legal experts, facilitated by the Army, since Thursday night.

According to sources and experts he consulted, the President was extremely concerned that dissolving Parliament before appointing the head of



Regime change: Ram Chandra Poudel administers oath of office to Sushila Karki as Prime Minister, in Kathmandu on Friday. AFP

government could give a free rein to the new Cabinet, with nobody to hold it accountable. Ms. Karki, however, backed the protesters' demand that the House be dissolved. Protesters argued that if Parliament was not dissolved, the same old parties would retain their control and influence.

Sudan Gurung, a prominent Gen Z campaigner,

sulted major political leaders, who told him that any action he took should remain within constitutional limits.

The Army, the key facilitator whose presence on the streets has ensured a semblance of calm, was waiting for the process to move ahead as soon as possible and was getting exasperated as the hours passed, sources said.

Though some expressed concerns that the process of appointing Ms. Karki fell outside constitutional bounds, constitutional expert Bipin Adhikari said it was "unlikely" to be challenged in court.

"Given that her appointment is a remedial measure taken at a time of crisis, its legitimacy is not likely to be questioned," Mr. Adhikari said.

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CONTEXT

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❑ He also announced fresh elections on March 5, 2026.

Nepal is witnessing youth-led protests triggered by deep-seated grievances over corruption, inequality, and the failure to implement promises made in the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Historical Background

- ❑ **Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2006)** The CPA was signed between the Maoists and the Nepalese government to end the 10-year-long civil war, creating hopes for peace, justice, and democracy.
- ❑ The monarchy was abolished, and the interim constitution (2007) paved the way for a new republican framework based on inclusiveness and human rights.
- ❑ The CPA also mandated the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Commission on Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) to address conflict-era human rights violations.

Failure of Implementation

- ❑ Successive governments failed to deliver justice, truth-seeking, or reparations to victims, leaving CPA promises largely unimplemented.
- ❑ Although Nepal promulgated a new Constitution in 2015, political compromises diluted its inclusiveness, leaving marginalized groups disillusioned.
- ❑ Corruption scandals, elite capture of state resources, and widening socio-economic inequalities have fueled frustration among youth

Contemporary Youth Protests

- ❑ Young protesters are rejecting corruption and demanding a more accountable, inclusive, and equitable political order.
- ❑ Nepal's per capita income is only RS 1.54 lakh, and unemployment remains high, with many youths forced to migrate for work.
- ❑ The protests highlight Nepal's failure to utilize post-conflict peacebuilding resources effectively, instead squandering them on political patronage.

C.P Radhakrishnan 15th Vice-President

C.P. Radhakrishnan takes oath as 15th Vice-President of India

He holds meeting with floor leaders of parties in Parliament; Trinamool Congress, BJD, and some other parties stay away citing short notice; predecessor Jagdeep Dhankhar attends ceremony; his first public appearance since resignation in July

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Chandrapuram Pon-nusamy Radhakrishnan was sworn in as the 15th Vice-President of India on Friday. President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in the presence of several dignitaries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former Vice-Presidents Jagdeep Dhankhar and Hamid Ansari, Cabinet Ministers, and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge attended the ceremony. This marked Mr. Dhankhar's first public appearance since his resignation on July 21, citing health reasons.

Mr. Dhankhar, accompanied by his wife Sudesh Dhankhar, was seated in



Newly-elected Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan greeting his predecessor Jagdeep Dhankhar at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. PTI

the front row along with Mr. Ansari, M. Venkaiah Naidu, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis. He stayed on for tea after the ceremony, where he was greeted by Cabinet members and engaged by the Opposition

leaders on his health.

According to sources, there was some disquiet over seating arrangements. Mr. Kharge was placed in the second row, while floor leaders of other Opposition parties were seated in the fifth row. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde was seated in

the fourth row. At the conclusion of the event, Mr. Modi posted on X: "Attended the oath-taking ceremony of Thiru C.P. Radhakrishnan Ji. A dedicated public servant, he has devoted his life to nation-building, social service, and strengthening democratic values. Wishing him a successful Vice-Presidential tenure, dedicated to the service of people."

Mr. Radhakrishnan, who later assumed charge as the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, held a meeting with floor leaders of parties in Parliament. The Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal, NCP (SP), and Shiv Sena (UBT) skipped the meeting, citing short notice. Mr. Radhakrishnan reportedly told members he intended to take the Opposition along in running the House. "I am very pa-

tient," he is learnt to have said, noting his long experience as an Opposition leader in Tamil Nadu. He emphasised that the Opposition is an essential element of parliamentary democracy. He also recalled his political journey, prompting some leaders to remind him that his grandfather was aligned with the Left while his uncle was with the Congress.

After the swearing-in, Mr. Radhakrishnan paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat. He also paid homage to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Sadaiv Atal and former Prime Minister Charan Singh at Kisan Ghat. He visited Prerna Sthal at Parliament House, where statues displaced due to the construction of the new Parliament building have been relocated.

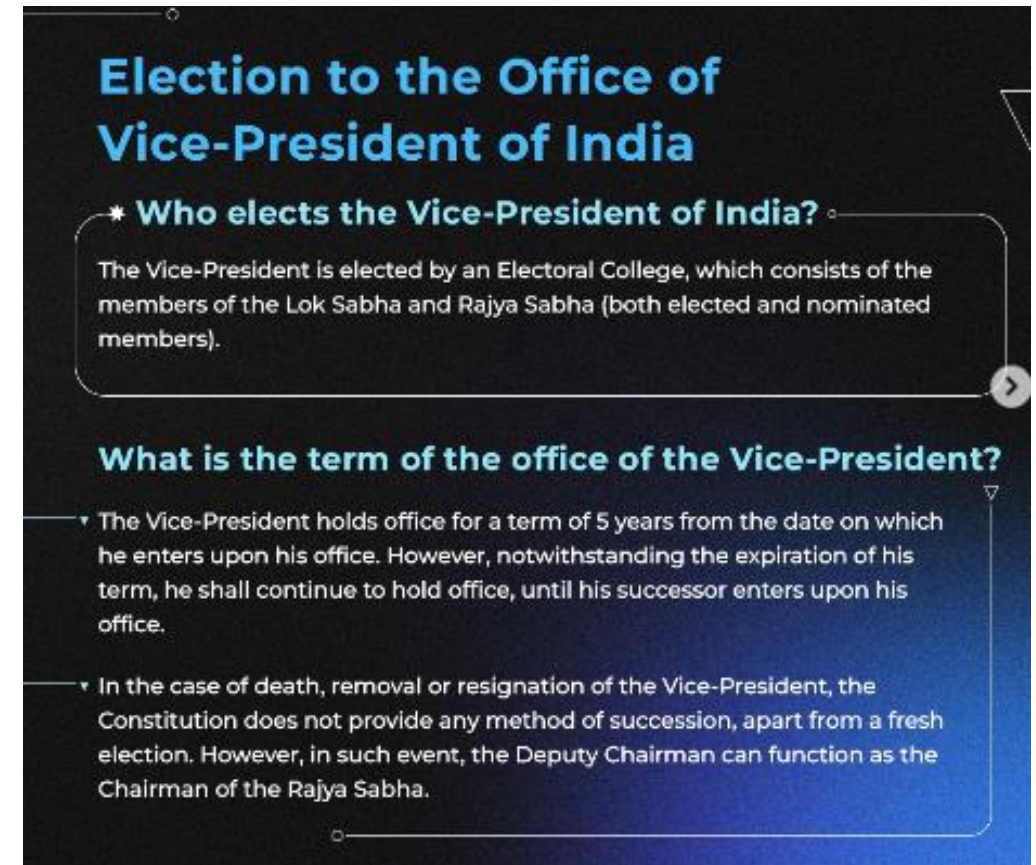
CONTEXT

❑ C.P. Radhakrishnan was sworn in as the 15th Vice President of India, administered by President Droupadi Murmu.

❑ He won the Vice Presidential elections by securing **452 votes**, defeating B Sudershan Reddy by a **152-vote margin**.

Significance of Radhakrishnan's Election for Indian Democracy

- ❑ Reflects the **strengthening of federal structure**, as leaders from diverse states reach constitutional positions.
- ❑ Emphasizes the importance of **experienced administrators in high constitutional offices**.
- ❑ Highlights the **democratic process of indirect elections** for Vice President in India.
- ❑ Demonstrates the role of **political alliances (NDA vs. I.N.D.I.A. bloc)** in shaping constitutional leadership.
- ❑ Reinforces the tradition of respecting **merit, experience, and public service in leadership roles**.



Election to the Office of Vice-President of India

*** Who elects the Vice-President of India?**

The Vice-President is elected by an Electoral College, which consists of the members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (both elected and nominated members).

What is the term of the office of the Vice-President?

- The Vice-President holds office for a term of 5 years from the date on which he enters upon his office. However, notwithstanding the expiration of his term, he shall continue to hold office, until his successor enters upon his office.
- In the case of death, removal or resignation of the Vice-President, the Constitution does not provide any method of succession, apart from a fresh election. However, in such event, the Deputy Chairman can function as the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

Key Facts About Vice President of India:

- **Vice President of India:** Second-highest constitutional position in India; acts as **Chairperson of Rajya Sabha**.
- **C.P. Radhakrishnan:** • From **Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu**. • Previously served as **Governor of multiple states** and **Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha)**. • Affiliated with the **National Democratic Alliance (NDA)**.
- **Election Details:** • Held on 9th September 2025. • Radhakrishnan secured **452 votes**, defeating **B Sudershan Reddy** by **152 votes**.

Role and Responsibilities:

- Preside over the **Rajya Sabha sessions**. • Stand in for the **President of India when required**. • Ensure **order and decorum in the Upper House of Parliament**. • Oversee discussions on crucial matters, including those related to **communal violence, bail provisions**, and **constitutional mandates**.



Thank you

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