

NEW ERA IN SPACE EXPLORATION

India's journey into space, once viewed with skepticism by global observers, is now hailed as one of the most inspiring success stories in the modern world. From humble beginnings with the launch of Aryabhata in 1975, India has steadily transformed its space programme into a powerful engine for scientific advancement, strategic capability, and socioeconomic development. Today, with missions like Chandrayaan, Gaganyaan, Aditya-L1, and the ambitious plans for a lunar astronaut landing by 2040, India stands at the cusp of a new era-one in which it is not merely a participant but a leader in space exploration.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), under the Department of Space, has been the driving force behind this remarkable transformation. What sets India apart is not just its technological capability, but its cost-effectiveness, self-reliance, and public welfare orientation. With successful launches that cost a fraction of those by more advanced nations, India has demonstrated that excellence in space science need not be prohibitively expensive. The Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan), for instance, achieved what few expected-a successful entry into Martian orbit on the first attempt, and at the lowest budget in global history.

But beyond the symbolism and science, India's space programme has always been rooted in development. Satellite technology has been deployed to support agriculture, education, healthcare, disaster management, and environmental monitoring. The integration of space applications with flagship schemes like PM Fasal Bima Yojana, Digital India, and Smart Cities Mission shows the breadth of utility that space-based tools offer for ground-level governance.

The latest vision laid out by the Modi government for India's space sector is even more ambitious. The Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission, expected in 2027, will mark India's entry into an elite group of nations capable of manned space missions. This will be followed by more advanced missions including Chandrayaan-4, Venus exploration, and the establishment of Bharat Antariksh Station by 2035.

Crucially, India's space story is no longer a government-only pursuit. The opening up of the space sector to private enterprises has created a fertile ground for startups and entrepreneurs to bring innovation, reduce costs, and expand the application of space technologies. With over 190 space-tech startups now operating in the country, the ecosystem is thriving. Initiatives such as the Bharatiya Antariksh Hackathon and ISRO Robotics Challenge have engaged youth talent, creating a future-ready human resource base for the space economy.

India's space diplomacy has also taken a leap forward. Collaborations with NASA, ESA, JAXA, and other global agencies have enhanced India's strategic stature and opened avenues for co-development, resource sharing, and planetary research. Moreover, the use of space assets for regional cooperation, such as the South Asia Satellite, demonstrates India's commitment to using space as a tool for peace and partnership.

Still, challenges remain. India must significantly increase its space budget, invest in cutting-edge technologies like reusable launch systems, quantum communication, and deep-space propulsion, and address the regulatory gaps that could hamper private sector participation.

Nonetheless, India's space journey exemplifies the country's broader developmental ethos: inclusive, aspirational, and deeply rooted in self-belief. As we move toward 2047, the centenary of independence, space exploration will be one of the most visible and transformative frontiers of India's rise. The stars are no longer out of reach-they are the next milestone on the nation's trajectory of progress.

India is not just aiming for the Moon or Mars-it is carving a unique space of its own in the universe.

Contractual Hands, Broken Trust, and the Betrayal of Dogri Language

**■ MOHD YASEEN**

The recent recruitment controversy at Prasar Bharati's Regional News Unit, Jammu, has thrown open a window to the disturbing realities of favoritism, mismanagement, and erosion of institutional credibility. What should have been a transparent process to promote regional languages like Dogri and Gojri has instead exposed how fragile and compromised our systems become when temporary authority collides with permanent responsibility.

The recruitment of Editorial Executives and Newsreader-cum-Translators in Dogri was supposed to strengthen local broadcasting and give a platform to deserving youth. Instead, the episode is remembered for irregularities, procedural violations, and blatant internal manipulation. In the name of opportunity for regional talent, the process became a showcase of how personal networks and contractual influence can override fairness and legality.

The central charge lies in the role of contractual employees who were allowed to run critical aspects of recruitment without having any statutory power. In a national broadcaster where accountability is paramount, the sight of temporary employees conducting voice tests and even sitting in the chair of senior officials is not only irregular but deeply shocking. The presence of Jagmohan Sharma, who insiders say often acted in place of Assistant Director Gulshan Raina, raises sharp questions. Can a person with no permanent status in the organization be allowed to carry out functions reserved for senior officers? The answer lies in law and governance, and both seem to have been ignored.

Equally startling is the involvement of Vijay Bajaj, another contractual worker, who allegedly played an active role in conducting the recruitment tests. Voice tests are one of the most crucial elements in the selection of newsreaders and translators, but instead of being handled by authorized officers, they were reportedly managed by contractual hands. This is not a small procedural lapse. It is a direct assault on the sanctity of recruitment and on the trust of candidates who came forward with the hope of a fair assessment.

Adding insult to injury, the name of Professor Veena Gupta, a highly respected scholar of Dogri and former head of the Dogri Department at the University of Jammu, was misused as a supposed consultant for setting the examination paper. Professor Gupta herself clarified that she had no role in the process. This was not just a casual clerical mistake. It was a deliberate act to cloak a compromised selection with the veneer of scholarly endorsement. By misusing the name of an eminent academic, the organizers crossed the boundary from irregularity into deliberate deception.

But the consequences of these irregularities have become most visible on air. Even those who were finally selected are seen fumbling when they

present their bulletins. Pronunciations falter; sentences break midway, and the flow of news collapses into hesitation. Listeners who tune in for clarity and confidence are instead greeted by confusion and stammering. When merit is sidelined and selections are made on the basis of dosti-yaari, favoritism, or other informal networks, the result is bound to be incompetence. Broadcasting is not a hobby; it requires training, fluency, and the ability to carry the trust of an entire audience. Sadly, this trust is being shattered every time an undeserving candidate takes the microphone.

This situation raises a haunting question: was the entire exercise meant to find the best voices for the job, or was it only meant to accommodate a chosen few? If personal friendships and hidden alliances decide who becomes a newsreader; then what future is left for hundreds of youth who prepare tirelessly, study for exams, and refine their skills in the hope of a fair chance?

The allegations do not end here. Insiders revealed that during the recruitment process, two highly qualified individuals who had once been associated with Akashvani were sidelined entirely. Their exclusion speaks volumes about the intentions behind the exercise. If merit and experience are deliberately ignored while questionable candidates are promoted, then the process cannot be described as anything but manipulation. The names repeatedly emerging in this manipulation are Jagmohan Sharma and Vijay Bajaj, who seem to have built an outsized influence within the unit.

The damage caused by such practices is not limited to a few failed candidates. It undermines the very spirit of public broadcasting. Akashvani is supposed to represent the voice of the people, provide a fair opportunity to regional language practitioners, and protect cultural diversity. When favoritism replaces merit, when procedural violations replace transparency, the entire credibility of the institution collapses.

The larger question is how such practices have been allowed to thrive. Yaseen and other cultural activists argue that there is a structural failure within the system. Contractual employees, instead of being limited to their defined roles, are often empowered to act like permanent officers. Government employees drawing hefty salaries are given casual duties in addition to their official assignments, thereby blocking opportunities for unemployed youth. The outcome is an atmosphere where insiders protect each other and outsiders, however qualified, are kept away.

This is not an isolated case. Reports suggest that similar irregularities are happening in other language sections, including Gojri. Appointments and selections are being influenced by informal networks rather than by transparent procedures. In effect, a public institution funded by taxpayers is being run like a private fiefdom, with a handful of people deciding who gets opportunities and who remains excluded.

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The controversy has also highlighted the larger debate on governance. India is at a juncture where the government often speaks of transparency, accountability, and meritocracy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of good governance emphasizes fairness and opportunity. But when a national broadcaster, operating under Prasar Bharati, permits such irregularities, it creates a sharp contradiction between vision and reality. The credibility of not just the organization but also of the broader system comes under question.

The incident also reflects how deeply entrenched favoritism has become in our institutional culture. Instead of nurturing new talent, organizations are often content to recycle the same names, empower the same insiders, and protect the same networks. For languages like Dogri and Gojri, which already struggle for visibility, such practices are doubly damaging. They deprive genuine practitioners of opportunities while pushing forward those who may not even have the required qualifications or experience.

What should have been a platform for promoting regional culture has thus been turned into a stage for personal gain. The misuse of authority by contractual employees is not just a breach of rules, it is a betrayal of the trust of young aspirants who prepare and compete in good faith. Every instance of unfair selection sends a message to talented youth that merit does not matter; that transparency is an illusion, and that institutions are in the grip of those who treat them like personal estates.

The outrage is growing. Cultural and linguistic circles in Jammu are demanding a thorough inquiry into the recruitment scandal. Yaseen himself has announced plans to file fresh RTI applications to obtain documentation of not just this recruitment but also other recent selections, including for the post of Copy Editor in the news section of Akashvani Jammu. The demand is simple: show the procedures followed, show the qualifications of those selected, and explain on what grounds the decisions were made. If transparency exists, there should be no hesitation in making these details public.

The worry, however, is that silence will prevail. Institutions often prefer to protect themselves by denying information rather than by acknowledging faults. But silence cannot erase the truth. The more Prasar Bharati delays action, the deeper the damage will be to its credibility. The more irregularities are swept under the carpet, the harder it will be to restore faith in the system.

This episode is also a cautionary tale about the broader state of public institutions in India. When authority becomes concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who operate without checks and balances, institutions begin to decay from within. Instead of being engines of opportunity and fairness, they turn into tools for personal networks and vested interests. The story of

Akashvani Jammu's Dogri recruitment is not just about one examination. It is about the future of public broadcasting and the future of regional languages in India.

Dogri and Gojri are not just academic subjects. They are living languages that carry the culture, history, and identity of millions of people. For years, activists, scholars, and cultural workers have fought to ensure that these languages receive institutional support and visibility. When recruitment processes meant to support these languages are corrupted, it is not just an administrative failure. It is an assault on cultural preservation itself.

There is still time for corrective action. An impartial inquiry, conducted by authorities who have no stake in the local networks, can restore some faith. Making the recruitment documents public, verifying the qualifications of selected candidates, and reviewing the role of contractual employees in decision-making would be important steps forward. More importantly, rules must be clarified and enforced to ensure that contractual staff remain within the limits of their appointments and are not empowered to act as de facto officers.

The youth of Jammu deserve better. The aspirants who dedicate years to preparing for such opportunities cannot be left at the mercy of insiders who bend rules. Institutions funded by public money must be accountable to the public. Prasar Bharati, as the national broadcaster, carries a special responsibility to set an example of transparency, not of manipulation.

If ignored, this controversy will not remain a local issue. It will become a symbol of how easily public institutions in India can be subverted by a handful of insiders. For every unfair selection, there are dozens of deserving candidates who lose not just an opportunity but also faith in the system. That erosion of faith is the most dangerous outcome, because when citizens no longer believe in the fairness of public institutions, the entire democratic framework is weakened.

The story of Akashvani Jammu's Dogri recruitment scandal is still unfolding. Voices are rising, evidence is being gathered, and demands for inquiry are growing stronger. The ball is now in the court of Prasar Bharati. Will it act decisively to uphold fairness and accountability, or will it allow the damage to spread until the institution itself becomes a hollow shell?

For the sake of transparency, for the sake of regional languages, and for the sake of public trust, there can only be one acceptable path. The recruitment process must be investigated, the guilty must be held accountable, and the rules must be enforced. Anything less would not just be a failure of administration, it would be a betrayal of the very idea of public broadcasting.

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Government Introduces Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025: Boosting Innovation, Protecting Citizens

Over the past 11 years, digital technologies have brought a major change in our lives. Digital India, Digital Public Infrastructure, UPI payment system, 5G connectivity, and the semiconductor ecosystem have together given a new identity to our country.

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the use of technology across sectors has delivered immense benefits to citizens. At the same time, new risks have emerged, especially in the digital space. It is therefore equally important to ensure that society is protected from potential harms of technology misuse. With this thought process, the Government has brought forward the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025. This Bill encourages e-sports and online social games while prohibiting harmful online money gaming services, advertisements, and financial transactions related to them. Bill also outlaws all online Betting and Gambling (Satta and Jua) activities - from Online Fantasy Sports to Online Gambling (like Poker, Rummy and other Card games) and Online Lotteries. This is to protect our youth from predatory online Real Money Gaming apps - that manipulate them through misleading 'monetary return promises' into compulsive and addictive playing, that leaves entire families in financial distress.

The Government believes that the harms of addiction, financial losses, and even extreme consequences such as suicides associated with online money gaming can be prevented by prohibition of such activities. Additionally, online money gaming platforms are often misused for financial fraud, money laundering, terror financing and messaging activities that compromise national security. Furthermore, this aligns the national laws for the digital domain with the existing laws for corresponding activities in the physical world, wherein betting and gambling are restricted or punishable - such as in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 as well as various State government legislations. For the promotion of e-sports, the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports will establish a dedicated framework. For online social games, the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) will extend support to online games that foster educational & cultural values, skill development and social engagement. Thus, the Bill seeks to encourage the positive aspects of technology while protecting society from the adverse impacts of online money games.

**Key Provisions of the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025**

**1. Promotion and Recognition of e-sports**

- e-sports recognised as a legitimate form of competitive sport in India.
- Ministry of Sports to frame guidelines and standards for conduct of e-sports events.
- Establishment of training academies, research centres, and technology platforms for advancement of e-sports.
- Incentive schemes, awareness campaigns and integration of e-sports into broader sports policy initiatives.

**2. Promotion of Social and Educational**

**Games**

- Central Government empowered to recognise, categorise, and register online social games.
- Facilitation of platforms for development and distribution of safe, age-appropriate social and educational games.
- Awareness programmes on the positive

unlawful gaming platforms under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

**4. Establishment of an Online Gaming Authority**

- Central Government to establish a national-level Authority or designate any existing Authority or Authorities or any agency for oversight.

money games: Imprisonment up to 3 years and/or fine up to ₹1 crore.

- Repeat offences attract enhanced penalties, including imprisonment of 3-5 years and fines up to ₹2 crore.
- Offences under key sections to be cognizable and non-bailable.

**6. Corporate and Institutional Liability**

to investigations under the Act.

**8. Rule-Making Powers and Delegated Legislation**

- Central Government empowered to make rules for:
- Promotion of e-sports and social gaming.
- Recognition, Categorisation and registration of online games.
- Powers and functioning of the Authority.

- **India poised to become global hub of creative & innovative game development: New Bill to Promote e-sports, Online Social Games and Prohibit Online Money Games**
- **Balanced Growth in Digital India: Online Gaming Bill, 2025 to Encourage Innovation and Safeguard Society**
- **Protects youth and families from financial, psychological, and social harms**
- **Ensures responsible use of technology, strengthens consumer protection and national security**

role of social games in recreation, skill-development and digital literacy.

- Support for cultural and educational gaming content aligned with Indian values.

**3. Prohibition of Harmful Online Money Games**

- Complete ban on offering, operating, or facilitating online money games, irrespective of whether based on skill, chance, or both.
- Ban on advertising and promotion of money games across all forms of media.
- Ban on financial transactions linked to online money games; banks and payment systems barred from processing such payments.
- Empowerment to block access to

- Functions include:
- Categorisation and registration of online games.
- Determination of whether a game qualifies as a money game.
- Handling complaints and grievances related to online games.
- Authority to issue guidelines, orders, and codes of practice to ensure compliance.

**5. Offences and Penalties**

- Offering or facilitating online money gaming: Imprisonment up to 3 years and/or fine up to ₹1 crore.
- Advertising money games: Imprisonment up to 2 years and/or fine up to ₹50 lakh.
- Financial transactions related to

- Companies and their officers held liable for offences under the Act, unless they prove due diligence.
- Independent directors or non-executive directors not involved in decision-making are protected.

**7. Powers of Investigation and Enforcement**

- Central Government may authorise officers to investigate, search, and seize digital or physical property linked to offences.
- Officers empowered to enter, search, and arrest without warrant in certain cases of suspected offences.
- Provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 apply

- any other matter required or permitted to be prescribed under this Act.

**Positive Impacts of the Bill**

- Boost to Creative Economy: Enhances India's role in global gaming exports, employment and innovation.
- Empowering Youth: Encourages constructive participation through e-sports and skill-based digital games.
- Safe Digital Environment: Protects families from predatory online money gaming practices.
- Global Leadership: Positions India as a leader in responsible gaming innovation and digital policy-making.

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025 strikes a balanced path-encouraging innovation and youth engagement through safe and positive online gaming, while firmly prohibiting harmful online money games.

It reflects the Government's commitment to a safe, secure, and innovation-driven Digital India that boosts creativity, safeguards citizens, and strengthens national security.

YOUR COLUMN

Feeding free-ranging dogs in streets or public places outside designated areas will face legal action; SC

Dear Editor,

A Bench of two Hon'ble Judges of Supreme Court comprising Hon'ble Justice J. B. Pardiwala & Mr Justice R Mahadevan, took suo moto cognizance on 28th July 2025, of a news report published in The Times of India, Delhi Edition, titled "City Hounded by Strays, Kids Pay."

Pursuant to the taking of suo moto cognizance, the matter came to be listed before the Bench on 11th August 2025, on which, the directions were issued to start picking up and rounding the stray dogs from all localities of Delhi, Ghaziabad, Noida, Faridabad, Gurugram as well as areas on the outskirts, and relocate these dogs into designated shelters/pounds, create dog shelters/pounds, relocate the stray dogs after their release back onto the streets, while maintaining proper records by the concerned authorities regularly. The stray dogs shall be captured, sterilized, dewormed and immunized as required by

Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023 and as noted above, shall not be released back. Any hindrance or obstruction that may be caused by any individual or organization in the smooth and effective implementation of our aforesaid directions will be viewed as contempt of Court for taking appropriate action in accordance with law." In the intervening period, several interlocutory applications for intervention came to be filed purportedly by individuals and organizations working for the welfare of the stray dogs, seeking a stay on the directions contained in the order dated 11th August, 2025.

The "streeties", the "Indies", the ones who are fed leftovers on the street, the ones who "enjoy" a free life, coming and going as they choose, forming alliances and barking through the night, to ward off intruding packs. These dogs bark and chase any passer-by, be they morning joggers or someone returning home late at night. The issue involved in these petitions placed before the Three-Judge Bench which centred around the right of the stray dogs to live on the streets, vis-à-vis, the safety and security of the citizens particularly the kids and elderly people from these very stray dogs, many of whom are suspected to be infected with the communicable disease, i.e., rabies. It is indisputable that human beings bitten by rabid dogs suffer indescribably, and many times, the infection proves to be fatal.

Per contra, Shri Tushar Mehta, learned Solicitor General of India, appearing for the GNCTD urged that reports estimate that approximately 37, 15, 713 dog bites occurred in India in 2024, and in several cases, human lives were lost due to trauma and rabies infection. The reports mention that the presence of aggressive stray dogs on streets is causing grave risk to the lives of children and elderly people, as well as other vulnerable sections of

society. They are unable to access streets and parks because of the fear of being attacked and bitten by the rabies-infected stray dogs.

The Supreme Court held that it is illegal to feed stray dogs on the streets and in public places. The Supreme Court directed that stray dogs must be fed only in the dedicated feeding spaces to be created in each Municipal Ward by the authorities.

A Bench of Justice Vikram Nath, Justice Sandeep Mehta & Justice N. V. Anjaria passed this direction while modifying the August 11, 2025 Order passed by a Two-Judge Bench which directed the relocation of the stray dogs in Delhi-NCR to dog shelters, held that it is illegal to feed stray dogs on the streets and in public places..

Each municipal authority shall create a dedicated helpline number for reporting incidents of violation of the above directions. On such a report being received, appropriate measures shall be taken against the individuals/NGOs concerned.

The Supreme Court reiterated the direction given in Para 13 of the Order dated 11th August 2025, with slight modification that no individual or organization shall cause any hindrance or obstruction in the effective implementation of the directions given above. In case any public servant acting in compliance with the aforesaid directions is obstructed, then the violator/s shall be liable to face prosecution for obstructing the public servant acting in discharge of official duty. The Supreme Court further ordered the prohibition on public feeding.

**Dinesh Singh Chauhan, Advocate**  
**High Court of J&K & Ladakh**

