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Why Yuvraj Mehta's Death Was Not an Accident

Context

- Urban India often treats deaths caused by infrastructural failure as unfortunate events.
- The death of 27-year-old Yuvraj Mehta in Greater Noida, after his car plunged into an unguarded construction pit, illustrates a deeper pattern.
- Cities are not merely sites where tragedies occur; they actively generate them through weak **governance**, poor **infrastructure**, and diffused **accountability**.
- The issue reflects not isolated **negligence** but a systemic outcome of rapid **urbanisation** where daily life is shaped by unmanaged **risk**.

The Myth of the Accident

- The term accident suggests unpredictability, yet dangerous roads, open construction sites, exposed wiring, and waterlogging are documented repeatedly in civic complaints.
- National Crime Records Bureau data for 2023 records 1.73 lakh road fatalities, with urban areas accounting for roughly 32% and showing higher death rates per lakh population.

- These deaths occur in an environment where citizens anticipate danger and constantly adjust behaviour for personal **safety**.
- Instead of institutional protection, individuals navigate hazards themselves: slowing near dark stretches, avoiding flooded areas, and choosing routes carefully.
- This transfer of responsibility contradicts the 74th Constitutional Amendment, which intended decentralised urban administration.
- In practice, fragmented **authority** and weak **regulation** leave cities unable to guarantee basic protection.

Development Priorities and Invisible Infrastructure

- Indian cities heavily prioritise visible **development**– flyovers, expressways, and metro corridors.
- Projects that enhance **visibility** attract attention, funding, and political prestige. In contrast, essential systems such as **drainage**, pedestrian pathways, and electrical networks receive little urgency.
- The result is a modern façade masking structural vulnerability. Karol Bagh in Delhi demonstrates this pattern.
- The area, known for educational aspiration, repeatedly experiences monsoon flooding.
- In 2024, three students drowned in a flooded basement library already flagged in municipal **audits**.
- The illegal use of basements persisted despite known **violation** because demand was high and enforcement weak.
- Such incidents reveal a consistent logic: expansion and appearance take precedence over safety.

Fragmented Responsibility and Lack of Accountability

- After tragedies, multiple agencies appear: municipal departments, contractors, inspectors, and police.
- Each controls a limited portion of the system but none assumes full responsibility.
- In Mehta’s case, oversight failures combined with delayed **emergency response**, as recovery was handled only after the State Disaster Response Force intervened.
- Administrative reactions typically involve a **committee**, an **inquiry**, and suspension of junior officials.
- These actions rarely address deeper institutional flaws. Investigations often stop at lower levels even when failures are clearly **systemic**.
- As a result, procedural activity replaces genuine accountability, and structural risks remain unchanged.

Social Vulnerability Across Classes

- Urban danger cuts across social categories. Mehta, a working professional, and students living in unsafe basements share the same **vulnerability**.
- Infrastructure failure does not discriminate by **class**. Yet public **outrage** is limited because responsibility lacks a single identifiable face.
- Harm accumulates through overlooked inspections, delayed repairs, and ignored warnings.
- Public mourning follows a predictable cycle: sorrow, assurances, and eventual silence. Without sustained attention, tragedy becomes routine rather than transformative.

The Way Forward: Toward Safer Urban Governance

- Deaths resulting from infrastructural neglect should be recognised as **political** outcomes of planning and **policy**
- Meaningful reform requires enforceable oversight rather than reactive measures. Three steps are essential:
- RTI-linked urban risk registers ensuring citizen complaints lead to action within 30 days.
- Quarterly independent audits of preventable deaths to introduce administrative **transparency**.
- Independent urban safety commissions empowered to enforce binding **standards** across municipalities.
- These measures would convert awareness into responsibility and prevention into a governance priority.

Conclusion

- Urban fatalities caused by **infrastructural neglect** are not random misfortunes. They arise from planning priorities that privilege visibility over protection and speed over maintenance.
- **Fragmented institutions** dilute responsibility, while citizens adapt to danger rather than challenge it.
- Until safety becomes central to governance and accountability is clearly assigned, such deaths will persist.
- Ultimately, these tragedies are civic failures, **demonstrating that development without reliable public systems** does not represent progress but enduring insecurity.

Why Yuvraj Mehta's Death Was Not an Accident FAQs

Q1. Why are urban infrastructure deaths often misunderstood?

Ans. They are misunderstood because they are labeled accidents even though they result from predictable governance failures.

Q2. What does the 74th Constitutional Amendment aim to achieve?

Ans. It aims to decentralise urban administration and strengthen local governance responsibilities.

Q3. Why is everyday infrastructure neglected in cities?

Ans. Everyday infrastructure is neglected because governments prioritise visible development projects over basic safety systems.

Q4. How is accountability weakened after such tragedies?

Ans. Accountability is weakened because responsibility is divided among multiple agencies and often limited to junior officials.

Q5. What key reform can improve urban safety?

Ans. Establishing independent urban safety commissions can improve enforcement of safety standards.

Source: **The Hindu**

India's Aviation is in Need of Data-Driven Oversight

Context

- In December 2025, IndiGo's operational crisis triggered a sharp rise in airfares nationwide, exposing vulnerabilities in India's rapidly expanding aviation sector.
- Although the Ministry of Civil Aviation imposed **temporary fare caps** and the DGCA sought pricing data from major airlines to probe potential market abuse, the episode revealed a deeper issue.
- India, now the world's **third-largest aviation market**, lacks robust, real-time data systems to systematically monitor fare patterns.
- While reactive interventions may offer short-term consumer protection, the absence of a sustained analytical framework limits regulators' ability to distinguish genuine demand-driven price increases from potential misuse of market dominance.
- This article highlights the urgent need for India's aviation sector to transition from reactive fare controls to a structured, data-driven oversight framework.

Learning from the U.S.: Building a Data-Driven Aviation Regulator

• From Crisis Response to Continuous Oversight

- The recent fare surge presents an opportunity for India's DGCA to move beyond reactive interventions toward sustained, data-based regulation.
- Mature aviation markets like the United States offer a useful template for this shift.

• The U.S. DB1B Model

- The U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) maintains the Airline Origin and Destination Survey (DB1B), which publishes ticket-level data for a 10% random sample of all domestic tickets sold each quarter since 1995.
- The database includes actual fares paid, route details, and carrier information—creating a comprehensive digital trail of airline pricing behaviour.

• Implications for India

- Unlike the DGCA, which mainly tracks passenger and freight volumes, the DB1B model enables monitoring of pricing trends and market conduct.
- Adopting a similar 10% sampling framework in India would enhance transparency and help regulators detect abnormal fare patterns over time.
- Such a system would function like a speed camera—encouraging compliance and maintaining market discipline without constant punitive action.

Transparency as a Check on Airline Pricing Power

• Encouraging Self-Regulation Through Data Disclosure

- Greater fare transparency can prompt airlines to self-regulate pricing algorithms.

- When ticket data are open to scrutiny, carriers are more likely to embed safeguards against opportunistic or algorithm-driven price spikes, reducing legal and reputational risks.

- **Strengthening Research and Policy Design**

- Public access to long-term pricing data—like the U.S. DB1B dataset—has enabled landmark research, including the “Southwest Effect,” where entry of a low-cost carrier lowers fares and boosts passenger traffic.
- A similar dataset in India could enhance regulatory insight and academic research.

- **Detecting Market Power Through Data Analysis**

- A structured fare database would allow regulators to:
 - Compare routes: Persistently higher fares on monopoly routes may signal dominance.
 - Track entry and exit effects: Fare spikes after competitor exits—or drops upon entry—indicate pricing power.
 - Monitor peak-period pricing: Disproportionate hikes on high-share routes during demand surges may reflect leverage of dominance.
- **Resistance to Transparency**
 - Opposition to data disclosure typically cites concerns about proprietary information, technical burdens of reporting, and fears of tacit coordination among competitors.

Why a 10% Fare Data Sample Is a Practical Solution

- **Balancing Transparency and Proprietary Protection**

- Airlines often argue that revenue management algorithms are commercially sensitive.
- A 10% random ticket sample offers a middle path—protecting the proprietary “how” behind pricing systems while revealing the “what,” or actual fares charged.
- Because only a fraction of total ticket data would be collected, compliance would not impose significant operational or technical strain on airlines.

- **Addressing Concerns Over Competitive Coordination**

- Fears that transparency could enable airlines to track competitors are overstated.
- In today’s environment of real-time data scraping, airlines already monitor market prices.
- Publishing sampled data with a quarterly delay can further prevent short-term fare alignment.

- **From Reactive Controls to Data-Driven Oversight**

- Instead of relying on ad hoc fare caps and investigations, the DGCA should adopt a structured, data-first framework—allowing market competition to function while ensuring informed and continuous regulatory oversight.

India's Aviation is in Need of Data-Driven Oversight FAQs

Q1. Why did the December 2025 IndiGo crisis highlight regulatory gaps?

Ans. The crisis triggered nationwide fare spikes, exposing the DGCA's lack of systematic pricing data to distinguish genuine demand fluctuations from possible market dominance abuse.

Q2. What is the U.S. DB1B database model?

Ans. The DB1B database publishes ticket-level data from a 10% random sample of domestic tickets quarterly, enabling long-term analysis of pricing behaviour and competitive patterns.

Q3. How can fare transparency influence airline behaviour?

Ans. Public or regulatory scrutiny of fare data encourages airlines to embed safeguards in pricing algorithms, reducing opportunistic spikes and strengthening ethical revenue management practices.

Q4. How can regulators detect market power using fare data?

Ans. By comparing monopoly and competitive routes, tracking entry-exit effects, and analysing peak-period pricing, regulators can identify patterns suggesting dominance or anti-competitive behaviour.

Q5. Why is a 10% random sample considered practical?

Ans. It balances transparency and confidentiality, revealing actual ticket prices without exposing proprietary algorithms, while imposing minimal technical burden on airlines.

Source: **TH**

India-France Relations - Strategic Convergence, Recasting Multipolarity through a "Multipolar West"

Context

- President Emmanuel Macron's **fourth visit** to India since 2017 underscores the steady transformation of India-France relations, especially in defence, technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and the Indo-Pacific.
- His engagements in Mumbai and Delhi reflect not just bilateral warmth with the Indian Prime Minister, but a **deeper recalibration** in India's global strategy — one that increasingly runs through Europe.
- This visit coincides with India's broader pivot towards Europe, evidenced by high-level exchanges, EU participation in Republic Day celebrations, and progress on trade negotiations.

Key Highlights/ Outcome of the French President Visit to India

- **Shared vision**

- At a time of global geopolitical flux, the Indian PM described the Indo-French partnership as a “force for stability”.
- Both leaders underscored shared principles of rule of law, strategic autonomy, **opposition to hegemony**, and advocacy of sovereign equality, and technological sovereignty.

• Institutional elevation

- From Strategic to “**Special Global Strategic**” Partnership, marking a qualitative shift in India-France ties across defence, technology, innovation, space, AI governance, and economic cooperation.

• AI governance (A “Third Way” Approach)

- Macron emphasised transparent algorithms, respect for diversity, and ethical AI governance.
- This echoes India’s attempt to promote a “third way” between the American corporate-dominated AI model, and Chinese state-centric digital control.
- Their joint participation in the AI Action Summit in Paris (2025) and the India AI Impact Summit signals growing cooperation in **global norm-setting**.

• Defence and industrial cooperation (From Buyer-Seller to Co-Production)

- **H125 Helicopter**: Both leaders virtually inaugurated the Airbus H125 Helicopter final assembly line in Vemagal, Karnataka.
- **Dassault Rafale**: Recent developments include expansion of India’s Rafale fleet (Air Force and Navy). French willingness to produce components in India. Joint jet-engine development.
- **Significance**: Reinforcing Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence, defence technology transfer, etc.

• Launch of India-France Year of Innovation

- Marked at the iconic Gateway of India, this initiative aims –
 - At deeper integration between two **knowledge-based economies**.
 - To promote joint R&D, enhance digital sovereignty, create high-skilled workforce, and strengthen startup and industrial ecosystems.

• Space diplomacy (TRISHNA Satellite)

- A joint mission between ISRO and CNES, TRISHNA will help monitor and understand **climate change** through advanced thermal infrared observation.

• Counter-terrorism and strategic signalling

- President Macron paid tribute at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel to victims of the 26/11 attacks, reiterating France’s firm stance against terrorism.

• Economic and cultural diplomacy

- Amendment of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (**DTAA**) protocol enhances investment climate.
- Farm-to-plate agricultural tracking projects reflect cooperation in sustainable agriculture and food systems.
- Macron's engagement with investors in Mumbai underscores economic partnership.
- Cultural diplomacy (cinema interaction, museum cooperation) strengthens soft power ties.

Analysing These Outcomes

• Rethinking multipolarity

- Despite rhetorical emphasis on multipolarity, the global balance of power remains asymmetrical.
- **For example,**
 - The United States remains pre-eminent.
 - China continues to rise.
 - Middle powers like India and France lag behind in economic and technological scale.
- The AI sector exemplifies this imbalance, challenging the simplistic usage of multipolarity and highlighting structural hierarchies in global power.

• Geopolitical drivers (Space created by American retrenchment)

- The US is increasingly focused on the Western hemisphere, pressuring allies for greater burden-sharing.
- This encourages regional self-reliance in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific, and creates strategic space for India-France cooperation, India-EU strategic engagement, and expanded Indo-Pacific coordination.
- Importantly, India-France ties are **not anti-American**; rather, they complement India's diversified engagement strategy.

• India's European pivot

- India no longer sees Europe as merely an adjunct of Washington in US-China rivalry.
- Instead, it views Europe — especially France — as a source of advanced technology, a partner in economic diversification, a geopolitical balancer, and a contributor to India's "strategic autonomy".
- This marks India's exploration of what can be termed a "**multipolar West**" — recognising internal differentiation within the Western bloc.

• Institutionalising the partnership (Horizon 2047 Framework)

- Unveiled in 2023, Horizon 2047 is a long-term roadmap aligning India and France's cooperation until India's centenary of independence.
- **Key pillars:** Defence industrial cooperation, space collaboration, energy transition, technology and AI, and Indo-Pacific maritime security.
- This institutionalisation reflects a shift from transactional ties to structural strategic alignment.

Strategic Implications for India

- **Diversification within the West:** The “collective West” is not monolithic. Partnership with France allows India to reduce overdependence on Washington. Engage a geopolitically assertive Europe. Expand strategic manoeuvring space.
- **Mitigating vulnerabilities:** Cooperation among Delhi, Paris, and Brussels can help address supply-chain risks, enhance technological resilience, and balance geopolitical pressures. Manage economic interdependence with China.
- **Historical significance:** India, a post-colonial state, has built a stable and forward-looking partnership with a former imperial power embedded in the political West.

Challenges

- **Structural power asymmetry:** US-China dominance in technology and capital markets.
- **European fragmentation:** Varied threat perceptions within the EU. Economic slowdown in Europe may limit investment capacity.
- **AI norm-setting constraints:** Limited technological weight compared to US and China.
- **Defence technology transfer sensitivities:** Intellectual property and export control barriers.

Way Forward

- **Deepen co-production:** Move towards joint R&D in defence and aerospace. Integrate Indian private sector.
- **Institutionalise AI collaboration:** Joint regulatory platforms. Shared standards in ethical AI.
- **Strengthen Indo-Pacific cooperation:** Maritime domain awareness, trilateral partnerships (India-France-Australia, etc.).
- **Expand economic engagement:** Conclude and operationalise India-EU trade agreements, and strengthen clean energy partnerships.
- **Build normative coalitions:** Lead middle-power coalitions on digital governance and climate action.

Conclusion

- The “Macron moment” goes beyond bilateral warmth. It signals a deeper shift in India’s geopolitical imagination — from abstract multipolar rhetoric to a calibrated engagement with a differentiated West.
- By strengthening ties with France and a strategically autonomous Europe, India widens its **strategic options**, reduces overdependence, and enhances its manoeuvrability in a complex global order.
- For India, multipolarity is no longer merely about balancing great powers — it is about constructing resilient networks of partnerships across traditional East-West and North-South divides. The **India-France axis** stands at the heart of this transformation.

India-France Relations FAQs

Q1. What is the significance of the elevation of India-France ties to a Special Global Strategic Partnership?

Ans. The elevation institutionalises long-term defence, technology and Indo-Pacific cooperation, strengthening India’s strategic autonomy.

Q2. How does the India-France partnership reflect the idea of a “multipolar West”?

Ans. By engaging France as an autonomous European power rather than as a US adjunct.

Q3. What is the role of the Horizon 2047 Roadmap in deepening Indo-French cooperation?

Ans. Horizon 2047 provides a structured framework for sustained collaboration in defence, space, AI, energy and innovation.

Q4. In what ways does Indo-French cooperation in AI governance represent a “third way”?

Ans. It seeks to balance innovation with sovereignty and ethical regulation, positioning itself between US and China’s models.

Q5. What is the strategic importance of defence industrial collaboration between India and France?

Ans. Joint production, assembly lines and technology partnerships move India from a buyer-seller relationship to co-development.

Source: IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-18-february-2026/>

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