

# Daily Current Affairs



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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

**BY BHUNESH SIR**  
(TILL NOV 23)

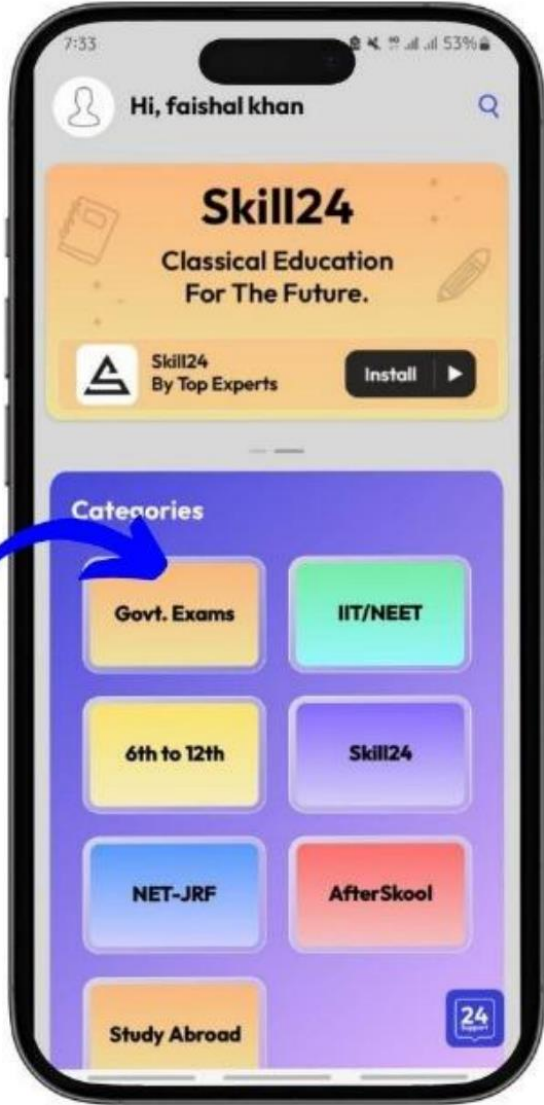
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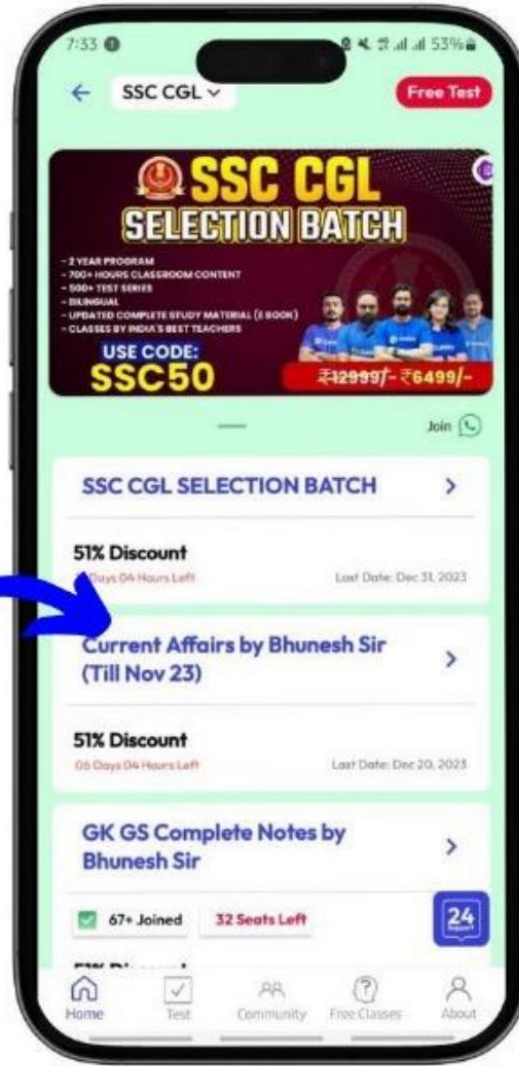
# Step-1



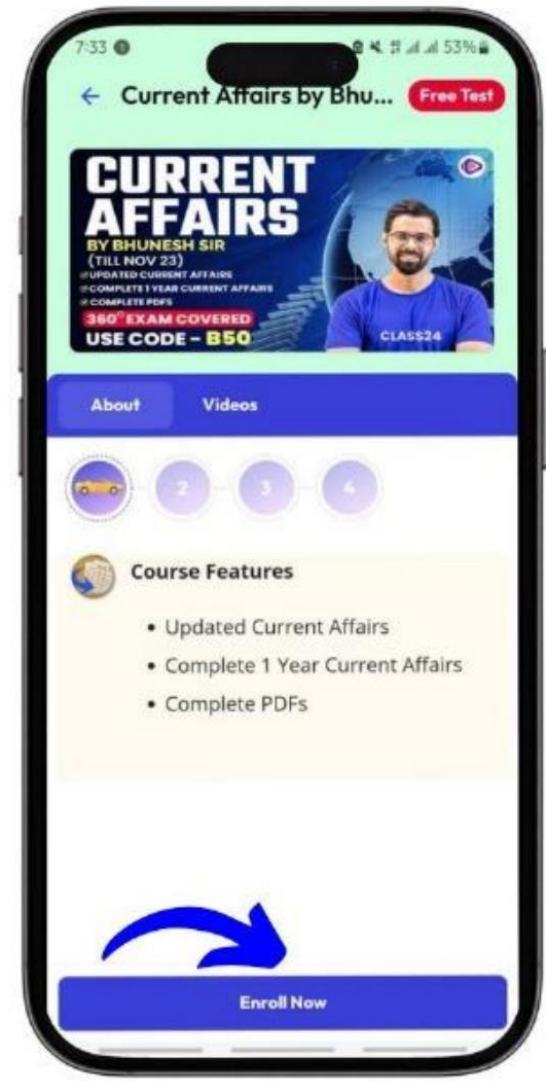
# Step-2




# Step-3



# Step-4





**Negative thoughts are  
bound to come,  
but it depends on you,  
How much do you value  
them?**

LITERARY REVIEW

# It's prime time for graphic novels

With demand up by 50% since the pandemic, graphic novels find success beyond traditional grounds

MAGAZINE » PAGE 2



Three criminal laws to come into force on July 1  
NEWS » PAGE 3



Is the Ukraine war changing the world order?  
FAQ » PAGE 8



Bashir puts India on the back foot in Ranchi Test  
SPORT » PAGE 13

## Centre discloses key consumption expenditure survey findings after 11-year gap

Vikas Dhoot  
NEW DELHI

For the first time in about 11 years, the government on Saturday released the broad findings of the All India Household Consumption Expenditure Survey carried out between August 2022 and July 2023.

The Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (HCES) is usually conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) every five years. However, findings of the last survey, conducted in 2017-18 soon after the demonetisation of high-value currency notes and the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), were never released after the government cited "data quality" issues.

As per the latest survey, the average monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE) in Indian households rose by 33.5% since 2011-12 in urban households to ₹3,510, with rural India's MPCE seeing a 40.42% increase over the same period to hit ₹2,008.

Importantly, the numbers show that the proportion of spending on food has dropped to 46.4% for rural households from 52.9% in 2011-12, while their urban peers spent just 39.2% of their overall monthly outgoes on food

which were calculated separately, while including a few non-food items received through such schemes, including computers, mobile phones, bicycles, and clothes.

The average MPCE, at 2011-12 prices, was a tad higher when these items were included while excluding free education and healthcare tops at ₹2,054 for rural households, and ₹3,544 for urban homes.

### Food spending

Share of cereals and food in average monthly per capita consumption expenditure decreased in both rural and urban areas

Period	RURAL		URBAN	
	% share of cereals	% share of food	% share of cereals	% share of food
1999-00	22.23	50.4	12.39	48.06
2004-05	17.45	53.11	10.63	45.53
2009-10	13.77	56.98	8.16	44.39
2011-12	10.75	52.9	6.56	42.62
2022-23	4.91	46.38	3.64	39.17

### Tractor tragedy



Searchers: Rescue efforts at a pond in Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh, where at least 22 people died when a tractor-trolley fell into it on Saturday. PTI REPORT PAGE 11

### INSIDE



### Assam govt. to repeal Muslim Marriage Act

GUWAHATI Ahead of introducing a Bill on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) that is akin to the legislation in Uttarakhand, the Assam government has decided to repeal the Assam Muslim Marriages and Divorces Registration Act of 1935. » PAGE 3



### Alexei Navalny's body released to his mother

WARSAW After authorities refused to give Ustymia Navalnyeva custody of the body of her son and late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny for more than a week after he died, his body has been handed over to a spokesperson said on Saturday. » PAGE 11

## How the gardens of Delhi welcomed tulip blooms to become yet another 'City of joy'

The special gardens, which took off with 3 lakh tulip bulbs imported from the Netherlands, bring delight to residents, foster pride among caretakers, and see some concern from environmentalists

Satvika Mahajan  
NEW DELHI

Over the past week, pictures of Delhi's tulips in bloom have been shared across social media and WhatsApp groups. City residents passing by Shantipath in the diplomatic enclave, runners' haunt Nehru Park, and Lodhi Garden where history and modernity meet, have all marvelled at the sight.



Visual delight: A manicured row of tulips seen along Shantipath on a sunny afternoon in New Delhi. GOUTI, ISTOCK/VIKAS

In a bid to fulfil Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena's promise when he took charge in May 2022, to make Delhi a "City of joy, city of flowers", three lakh tulip bulbs were imported from the Netherlands in December 2023; two lakh for NDMC-governed areas and one lakh for the Delhi Development Authority (DDA, which it paid for).

Along with other gardeners, Rajia (name changed to protect privacy) was trained by NDMC's horticulture department in the art of raising tulips in the national capital. For the past two years, he has treated the bulbs with care, transferring them from the Tulip Growth Centre Storage Chamber established at Lodhi

Garden to flower beds in Central Delhi, where the most prominent government offices are. "Extensive care" — NDMC has taken extensive care to ensure the tulips survive in Delhi despite them not being indigenous found in the city," Mr. Raju said, beaming, as he gently watered the plants.

as a security guard on the Shantipath lawns. He works in eight-hour shifts along with two or three other security personnel, reprimanding any visitor who "disturbs" the tulips. "They are very expensive; NDMC has given us strict instructions to make sure that nothing happens to them," he said.

Reshna Verma, 59, a homemaker, drove almost 20 km, for her grandson to see the tulips. She said, "If our government is taking such initiatives and making the city beautiful by adding foreign flowers, it is our responsibility to support them."

Pradip Krishnan, an environmentalist and author of *Trees of Delhi: A Field Guide*, said that since tulips bloom for a very short period, they would probably not have long-term impacts on the environment of Delhi, despite their being imported (foreign). However, he says it is akin to raising a polar bear in the capital: "One can obviously attempt to watered the plants with technology, but that does not mean one should."

## Bitter rivals Congress, AAP seal alliance deal

The AAP will contest four seats in Delhi, leaving three to Congress; no alliance in Punjab and Assam over 'special circumstances', say parties

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have arrived at a seat-sharing understanding in Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, and Chandigarh, to help defeat the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha election, they said on Saturday.



AAP and Congress leaders announce their seat-sharing deal at a press conference in New Delhi on Saturday. ANS/ANNA VISHA

In a joint press conference addressed by leaders of both parties, Congress leader Mukul Wasnik said that after prolonged discussions, the two parties have arrived at a 4:3 deal for the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi. The AAP will contest from the New Delhi, West Delhi, South Delhi, and East Delhi seats, while the Congress will contest from the Chandni Chowk, Northeast Delhi, and Northwest Delhi seats.

"In Gujarat, the AAP will contest from Bharuch and Bhavnagar seats, while the Congress will contest from the remaining 24 seats. In Haryana, the AAP will contest from Kurukshetra, while Congress will contest from the remaining nine seats," Mr. Wasnik said.

The Congress will be contesting both seats from

Goa and the single seat from Chandigarh. "I have full confidence that each Congress worker will honour this decision and AAP workers will also follow this agreement," he said.

"Mutual understanding" Leaders from the two parties announced last week that they had reached a "mutual understanding" to enter into an alliance in Punjab, and will be fielding their own candidates for all 13 seats.

Asked why the two parties had not joined hands in Punjab, Mr. Wasnik said that "special circumstances" exist in the State. In Assam as well, the AAP has announced that it will be

contesting three seats. Once bitter rivals, the two parties are now part of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) that was formed in an attempt to unite the Opposition and take on the BJP.

"Today the country needs a strong alternative. This alliance has been formed in the interest of the country. The BJP's calculations will go wrong because of the alliance; AAP general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak said. He added that the AAP has entered into an alliance with the Congress as it believes that the "country is important and the party secondary".

## Air strikes in Russia leave Indian 'security helper' dead

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

A 23-year-old man from Gujarat who was hired as a security helper by the Indian Air Force in a Ukrainian air strike on Wednesday in the Donetsk region on the Russia-Ukraine border, was killed in the attack, the man's family said.

### The man had gone to Russia in Dec. 2023 and was attacked with Russian Army

subsequently attacked with the Russian Army. An agent had written to the Indian consulate on behalf of his father earlier this month, asking for help in bringing him back home. Ministry of External Affairs said that they had not been informed about this incident. Ashvinbhai

Mangukiya, the father of the deceased, told *The Hindu* that he had last spoken with his son on February 20 but refused to provide any other details. The occupied worker, Sameer Ahmed told *The Hindu* that Mangukiya was killed as he was struck by missiles. "Though the exact details of the incident are unknown, a report by BBC News said that at least 60 Russian troops were killed after a training area of a captured eastern Ukraine was hit by two missiles.

# How the gardens of Delhi welcomed tulip blooms to become yet another 'City of joy'

The special gardens, which took off with 3 lakh tulip bulbs imported from the Netherlands, bring delight to residents, foster pride among caretakers, and see some concern from environmentalists

**Satvika Mahajan**  
NEW DELHI

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In a bid to fulfil Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena's promise when he took charge in May 2022, to make Delhi a "City of joy, city of flowers", three lakh tulip bulbs were imported from the Netherlands in December 2023: two lakh for NDMC-governed areas and one lakh for the Delhi Development Authority (DDA, which it paid for).

According to NDMC sources, the cost of a single tulip bulb was between ₹25 and ₹30, with a total approved cost of ₹87 lakh, of the ₹120.69 crore NDMC horticulture budget for 2023-24. This is



**Visual delight:** A manicured row of tulips seen along Shantipath on a sunny afternoon in New Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

the second year of tulip plantation in the city.

Along with other gardeners, Raju (name changed to protect privacy) was trained by NDMC's horticulture department in the art of raising tulips in the national capital. For the past two years, he has treated the bulbs with care, transferring them from the Tulip Growth Cum Storage Chamber established at Lodhi

Garden to flower beds in Central Delhi, where the most prominent government offices are.

#### 'Extensive care'

"NDMC has taken extensive care to ensure the tulips survive in Delhi despite them not being indigenously found in the city," Mr. Raju said, beaming, as he gently watered the plants.

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as a security guard on the Shantipath lawns. He works in eight-hour shifts along with two or three other security personnel, reprimanding any visitor who 'disturbs' the tulips. "They are very expensive; NDMC has given us strict instructions to make sure that nothing happens to them," he said.

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Pradip Krishen, an environmentalist and author of *Trees of Delhi: A Field Guide*, said that since tulips bloom for a very short period, they would probably not have long-term impacts on the environment of Delhi, despite being *vilayati* (foreign). However, he says it is akin to raising a polar bear in the capital: "One can obviously attempt to do so with modern technology, but that does not mean one should."





**Overview:**

The Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar recently entered the World Book of Records (London) as Asia's largest such park.



It is **situated on the foothills of the Zabarwan Range with an overview of Dal Lake.**



The garden was **opened in 2007** with the aim to boost floriculture and tourism in Kashmir Valley.



The garden is **built on a sloping ground in a terraced fashion** consisting of **seven terraces.**



The garden **houses about 48 varieties of tulip flowers.** The garden also **has several types of other flowers, including daffodils, hyacinths, roses, narcissus,** and other ornamental plants.



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- **Tulip festival:**

- **It is an annual celebration that aims to showcase the range of flowers in the garden as a part of tourism efforts by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.**
- **It is organized during the onset of the spring season in Kashmir valley.**

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**IN BRIEF**

**SEBI using AI for probes, says whole time member**

The Securities and Exchange Board of India is using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for investigations, its whole time member Kamlesh Chandra Varshney said on Saturday. Against the backdrop of instances of manipulations in the stock market, he said the message is that abiding with the law will be more beneficial and violations will cause problems. As long as the market is transparent and no manipulation is happening, that is fine with the regulator, he noted.

**Pune Gas installs LPG project for Taj Group hotel in Tawang**

Pune Gas on Saturday said it had completed a project involving the installation of an LPG gas bank at a Taj Group hotel in Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang is dotted with a large number of hotels and restaurants traditionally relying on fuels like LPG, furnace fuel, and coal, among others, the company said. Recognising the importance of preserving the biodiversity of this nature-centric location, Taj Vivanta decided to transition to LPG fuel, Pune Gas said.

**IRF calls for making seat belts mandatory in heavy vehicles**

International Road Federation (IRF), a global road safety body, has urged the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) to make the use of seat belts mandatory in all heavy vehicles, including passenger and school buses, to minimise casualties and injuries in road accidents. IRF President Emeritus K.K. Kapila said in a letter to MoRTH that there was an urgent need to provide seat belts in buses, which needed to be made mandatory.

**Salzer Electronics to add 'smart meter' plant in Coimbatore**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
COIMBATORE

Coimbatore-based Salzer Electronics plans to add a 'smart meter' manufacturing facility in the city. The factory will have backward integration with Salzer's existing factories that manufacture electrical components for smart meters. The electrical solutions provider said in a press release. "The plant will have an annual capacity of 4 million smart energy meters that will be increased to 10 million in the second phase," Mr. Doraiswamy added. "At four million meters, we expect the revenues to be around ₹1,200 crore and generate employment to 1,000 people," Joint Man-

aging Director Rajesh Doraiswamy was quoted as saying in the release. "The plant will have an annual capacity of 4 million smart energy meters that will be increased to 10 million in the second phase," Mr. Doraiswamy added. "At four million meters, we expect the revenues to be around ₹1,200 crore and generate employment to 1,000 people," Joint Man-

**Tokyo pledges a further \$4.9 bn to help TSMC expand Japan production**

**Reuters**  
TOKYO

Japan said it will give TSMC up to \$7.2 billion (\$4.96 billion) more in subsidies to help it build a second chip fabrication plant as the Taiwanese company on Saturday marked the opening of its first Japanese factory. TSMC's decision to build chips in Japan has become a key component of Tokyo's push to revive advanced semiconductor manufacturing and harden its industrial supply chains against disruptions as tensions with neighbouring China grow.



Morris Chang

"The chips will be more advanced than the first factory and can be used for AI and autonomous driving, and will ensure we have a stable supply of semiconductors in Japan," Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Ken Saito told re-

**DBS Bank sees CAD narrowing to 0.8% as service exports buoy**

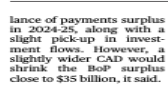
Balance of Payments to log surplus this year, lend upside for rupee, say bank's economists: FinMin estimates the CAD at 1.3% of GDP in 2023-24

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

While the Finance Ministry this week said it expects the current account deficit (CAD) to narrow to 1.3% of GDP this fiscal after the provisional merchandise trade deficit eased to a nine-month low of \$77.5 billion in January, DBS Bank economists went a step further and projected the year's CAD to come under 0.8%, citing strong services exports and declining goods import bills. The Singapore-based bank's economists, who pointed to benign commodity prices as a key factor in the softening of import costs that helped them slash the earlier CAD projection of 1.5% of GDP, also forecast the CAD at 1.1% for the year starting in April. DBS expects the Balance of Payments (BoP) to clock a \$45 billion surplus this year, after a \$9 billion growth rate over the next two years, as a positive for the Indian rupee's trajectory. The Finance Ministry had in its monthly bulletin for January estimated the CAD to narrow this fiscal to 2% of GDP in 2022-23, before widening marginally to 1.4% next year. DBS expects the inclusion of Indian government bonds in global indices will boost inflows and the bal-

**Benign view**

ance of payments surplus in 2024-25, along with a slight pick-up in investment flows. However, a slightly wider CAD would shrink the full-year current account deficit to narrow to less than 1% of GDP at 0.8% of GDP. For 2024-25, we build in a slower rise in service exports and a wider goods deficit on post-election pick-up in capital imports, leaving the CAD at 1% of GDP," Ms. Rao wrote, while factors such as continued strong growth in overseas remittances.



"These dynamics are positive for the currency, yet the authorities will prefer to keep the Indian rupee in a predictable and stable range, limiting potential sharp upside in the rupee," DBS Bank senior economist Rachika Rao wrote in a research note on India's "favourable current account cues".

Ms. Rao reckoned that the goods trade deficit could narrow by about 10% this year to \$235 billion, from a record high of \$264 billion in 2022-23, while service exports were on course to notch 7% growth and hit a record high of \$348 billion. "With imports on

course to slip, the (services) trade surplus is expected to jump to a record high of \$17 billion in this fiscal year. This should help the full-year current account deficit to narrow to less than 1% of GDP at 0.8% of GDP," Ms. Rao wrote, while factors such as continued strong growth in overseas remittances. The Reserve Bank of India has said it expects the CAD to be "eminently manageable" through this year as well as in 2024-25. Quantico Research economists said they expect the current fiscal year's CAD at 1.3% of GDP, \$47 billion, but flagged the possibility of a downward trend, owing to the turbulent disruptions to trade flows through the Red Sea.

**Ashley Coutinho**  
MUMBAI

The United Arab Emirates' exit from the grey list on Friday, nearly two years after its inclusion by the Financial Action Task Force, will ease the road for the country's investors seeking to acquire significant influence in Indian NBFCs. An RBI circular in 2021 had stated that investments in NBFCs from FATF non-compliant jurisdictions would not be taken at par with that from compliant jurisdictions. Investors from non-compliant FATF jurisdictions, whether in existing NBFCs or companies seeking Registration Certificates, were restricted from gaining "significant influence" directly or indirectly. Additionally, non-investors were prohibited from holding more than 20 per cent voting power. "India has seen an increase in investment from the UAE in the recent past, including private equity and sovereign wealth funds. The country's removal from the grey list will only help bolster such investment, especially in regulated sectors such as NBFCs," said Parul Jain, Head of Fund Investments Practice at Nishith Desai Associates.

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**Engineering exports may turn positive for 2023-24 despite weak demand: EEPC**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Engineering goods exporters, who have had a difficult year thanks to weak global demand, are still hopeful of ending 2023-24 in the black, with shipments to 13 major markets growing in January. Exports of engineering goods, which have accounted for a quarter of India's merchandise exports in recent years, rose for the second straight month in January, albeit at a slower pace of 4.2% compared to 9.8% in December. Cumu-

**Exports of engineering goods rose for the second straight month in January**

lative exports so far this year now stand at \$88.1 billion, just 0.2% below the \$88.27 billion recorded between April 2022 and January 2023. Last month, the value of shipments to about a dozen major markets clocked significant growth, including the United States (6%), China (15.1%), Russia

(30.8%) and the UAE (5.8%). The major drivers for the growth were iron and steel products, copper products and electric machinery, with demand from South Asia and Europe also propping up volumes. "The disruption in trade routes has hindered potential growth, but there remains optimism that by the end of the fiscal year, India will see positive growth in this sector," Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) India chairman Arun Kumar Garia said on Saturday.

**Do a case study on how govt. works: FM**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday asked students of BITS Pilani to undertake case studies on five projects of the Union government's functioning with regards to governance and management of the economy, Quantico Research economists said they expect the current fiscal year's CAD at 1.3% of GDP, \$47 billion, but flagged the possibility of a downward trend, owing to the turbulent disruptions to trade flows through the Red Sea.



Nirmala Sitharaman

simultaneously, and also to overcome the Russia-related uncertainties to emerge as the world's fastest growing economy, she told students while inaugurating the BITS Pilani Mumbai Campus at Kalyan in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

**CUB eyes 16-17% growth in two years**

**N. Anand**  
CHENNAI

City Union Bank Ltd. (CUB) is betting big on the newly introduced digital lending to achieve 16-17% credit growth rate over the next two years, said MD & CEO N. Kamakoti. "My focus in the next four to eight quarters will be to reach growth rate of about 16-17% so that it increases return on equity and ploughs back profit to take care of our growth," he said in an interview. The private sector lender said it is likely to end the current fiscal with high single-digit credit growth against its earlier target of 12-14%, due to stoppage of Kissan Credit Card's gold loan following regulatory observation and divergence issue last



year. "Due to these disturbances, our daily average advance growth started reducing from 12-14% in December 2022 to 3-4% in September 2023," he said. "We started the digital lending practices. Things are settling down and this process should surpass this growth," the CEO added. According to him, since November, the bank was able to see a monthly credit growth of 1%, or more than 4000 crore.

**UAE's exit from FATF grey list may spark surge in FPI flows into Indian NBFCs**

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Strategic partners India and UAE recently signed eight pacts, including a bilateral investment treaty.

**The exit will boost inflows and catapult UAE to the list of top 10 regions for FPI flows into India over the next two years**

posed on UAE investors looking to invest in India-based PE/VC funds and the financial services sector are now eased," said Nishith Ashar, Partner, Illume Advisory. "Similarly, India-based PE/VC funds that want to invest in portfolio companies located in the UAE can now do so with fewer obstacles, especially as they likely lead to an increase in cross-border investments and collaborations between the two countries," he added. This may ease KYC requirements for FPIs from the region, boost inflows and catapult UAE to the list of top 10 regions for FPI flows into India over the next two years, according to experts. "The UAE-India agreement, trade between the two jurisdictions have increased," Friday's note said. "The restrictions im-

**'Gemini not reliable in responding to prompts'**

**Reza Trivedi of India**  
NEW DELHI

Under fire over AI tool Gemini's 'objectionable' response to a question on PM Narendra Modi, Google on Saturday said it had worked quickly to address the issue and conceded that the chatbot "may not always be reliable". Google further said Gemini was built as a creativity and productivity tool and might not always be reliable, especially when it came to responding to some prompts on political topics or evolving news.

**FinMin notifies Akasa Air as 'designated Indian carrier'**

**Shubhi Sinha**  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Finance has recognised Akasa Air as a "designated Indian carrier", facilitating the carrier's international flights. "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (3) of section 5 of the Central Sales Tax Act, 1956, the Central Government hereby specifies SIV Aviation Private Limited (Akasa Air) as 'designated Indian carrier' for the purpose of the said sub-section," the ministry said. The mentioned sub-section in the law says if any designated Indian carrier purchases aviation turbine fuel for its international flight, such purchase will be deemed to take place in the course of the export of goods out of the territory of India. In other words, no tax is to be payable on fuel for international flights to ensure no tax is exported. Last week, Akasa Air announced international operations with the addition of Doha, capital of Qatar, as the first international destination to its rapidly expanding network. Starting 28 March 2024, Akasa Air will operate four non-stop flights a week connecting Mumbai with Doha.

According to Akasa Air, it has become the first Indian airline to fly overseas in a record period of 19 months since inception. The airline has 22 Boeing 737 Max aircraft. Besides Qatar, it has granted rights to fly to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. (The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

# UAE's exit from FATF grey list may spark surge in FPI flows into Indian NBFCs

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**Strategic partners:** India and UAE recently signed eight pacts, including a bilateral investment treaty. VIJAY SONEJI

**The exit will boost inflows and catapult UAE to the list of top 10 regions for FPI flows into India over the next two years**

tential of doubling the number of FPI registrations and bringing in larger ticket size inflows," said Viraj Kulkarni, Founder, Pivot Management Consulting.

The UAE had 143 FPIs registered in India two

tion, were restricted from gaining 'significant influence' directly or indirectly. Additionally, new investors were prohibited from holding more than 20 per cent voting power.

"India has seen an increase in investment from the UAE in the recent past, including private equity and sovereign wealth funds. The country's removal from the grey list will only help bolster such investment, especially into regulated sectors such as NBFCs," said Parul Jain, Head of Fund Formation Practice at Nishith Desai Associates.

### **Curbs eased**

In 2020, the RBI had rejected several applications for greenfield investments or acquisitions in NBFCs routed through private equity and venture capital funds (PE/VC) domiciled in Mauritius after the latter was put on the FATF's grey list.

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### **THE NEXT TWO YEARS**

posed on UAE investors looking to invest in India-based PE/VC funds and the financial services sector are now eased," said Yashesh Ashar, Partner, Illume Advisory.

"Similarly, India-based PE/VC funds that want to invest in portfolio companies located in the UAE can now do so with fewer obstacles. This could potentially lead to an increase in cross-border investments and collaborations between the two countries," he added. The exit may ease KYC requirements for FPIs from the region, boost inflows and catapult UAE to the list of top 10 regions for FPI flows into India over the next two years, according to experts.

"Post the UAE-India agreement, trade between the two jurisdictions have increased. Friday's announcement has the po-

consulting.

The UAE had 143 FPIs registered in India two years ago. That number has swelled to 198, the majority of which are Category II investors, NSDL data showed.

Mr. Kulkarni believes the exit will lower funding costs for UAE-based banks and lessen their reliance on affluent regional clients. As costs decrease and fund inflows from other countries increase, a portion is likely to be directed towards India as FDI or portfolio investments.

The exit could enhance or reinstate UAE's reputation as a fund jurisdiction, potentially creating competition for the Gift IFSC, said Mr. Ashar.

India and the UAE recently signed eight pacts, including a bilateral investment treaty and a framework deal to foster regional connectivity.

*(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)*

## Financial Action Task Force



Financial Action Task Force Membership Map

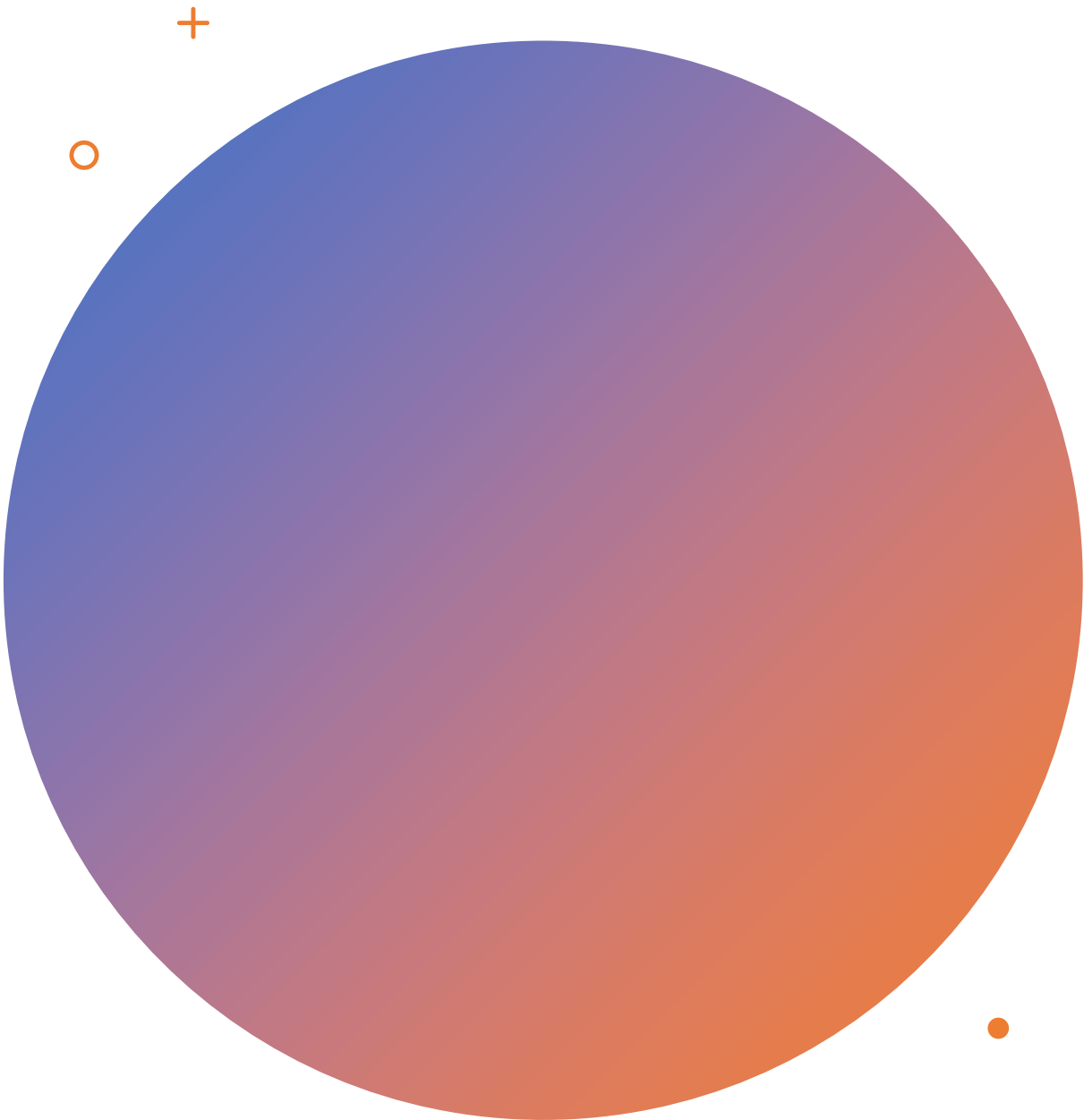
<b>Abbreviation</b>	FATF
<b>Formation</b>	1989; 35 years ago
<b>Type</b>	<a href="#">Intergovernmental organisation</a>
<b>Purpose</b>	Combat <a href="#">money laundering</a> and <a href="#">terrorism financing</a>
<b>Headquarters</b>	<a href="#">Paris</a>
<b>Region served</b>	Europe
<b>Membership</b>	40
<b>Official language</b>	<a href="#">English</a> , <a href="#">French</a>
<b>President</b>	T Raja Kumar <sup>[1]</sup>

FATF is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog set up in 1989 out of a G-7 meeting of developed nations in Paris.

Objective: Initially, its objective was to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.  
After the 9/11 attacks on the US, the FATF in 2001 expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing.

In April 2012, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).





- **FATF Sessions:**
  - **The FATF Plenary is the decision making body of the FATF.**
  - **It meets three times per year.**

## India and FATF:

India joined with 'observer' status in 2006 and became a full member of FATF in 2010.

India is also a member of its regional partners, the Asia Pacific Group (APG) and the Eurasian Group (EAG).

What is the FATF Secretariat?

The FATF Secretariat is located at the **OECD headquarters in Paris.**

The Secretariat supports the substantive work of the FATF membership and global network.

**The funding for the FATF Secretariat and other services is provided by the FATF annual budget to which members contribute.**

**Grey List:** The Grey List includes countries that are **considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering.**

- It serves as a warning that the country may enter the blacklist.

**Black List:** The Black List includes **Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs)** that support terror funding and money laundering activities.

- As of now, **Iran, North Korea and Myanmar** are the three black listed countries.

- **Consequences of Being Enlisted in FATF Lists:** The enlisted countries are subjected to:

- **Economic sanctions** from financial institutions affiliated with FATF (IMF, World Bank, ADB etc.)
- **Problem in getting loans** from such financial institutions and countries
- **Reductions in international trade**
- **International boycott**

-

## MEASURE TO EASE RESCUE OPERATIONS ON WORLD'S HIGHEST PEAK

# Nepal to make electronic chips must for Everest climbers

**SHIRISH B PRADHAN**

KATHMANDU, FEBRUARY 24

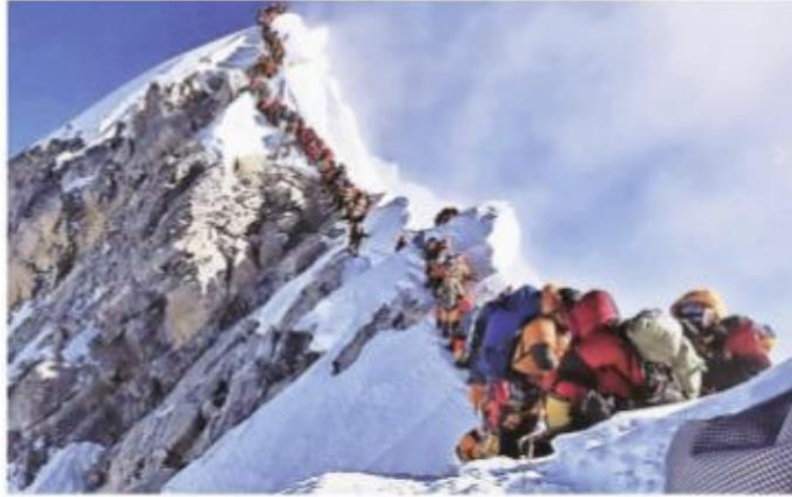
NEPAL WILL soon be making it mandatory for all climbers headed to Mount Everest to carry an electronic chip that would be helpful in rescue in case of any emergency at the world's highest peak.

The government will soon be formulating a rule for making such a chip mandatory starting from Spring this year when the climbing season starts for Mt. Everest with the opening of the narrow window available to climb

extremely high altitudes.

Thousands of climbers from all over the world, including India and Nepal, are attracted to the 8,849 metres (29,032 feet) high Mt Everest, a.k.a. Sagarmatha in Nepali. While scores of them do reach the summit, some either lose their lives or are seriously injured during the ascent or descent.

Since 1953, 300 persons have lost their lives, according to Nepal government data. In the 2023 Spring season, till May 22, Nepali officials said, as many as 12 climbers, including four Nepalese, one Indian, and one Chinese, died



A line of climbers on Mount Everest. AP file

**Since 1953, 300 persons have lost their lives while climbing Everest, according to Nepal government data**

during their respective expeditions to Mt Everest.

The Everest base camp is situated at an altitude of 18,000 feet. Any search and rescue operation from the base camp onwards to the Summit becomes a tedious job because of the snow storms, avalanches, and other

extreme weather events.

"All the climbers to Everest would be provided the electronic chip by the government after paying a certain amount. It will be fitted in the climber's jacket," Rakesh Gurung, Director at the Department of Tourism told PTI.

The chips would cost around USD 10 to USD 15, he said.

According to Gurung, the chip will help make the expeditions safe and facilitate emergency rescue operations.

Some reputed climbing agencies have already provided the electronic chips to their climbers, Gurung said. **PTI**



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Modern farming ensuring empowerment of farmers  
'NAMO Drone Didi' connects farming with technology; 80% relief on purchase of drone  
Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat  
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**EXPRESS NETWORK**  
UTTAR PRADESH CANCELS POLICE RECRUITMENT EXAM AFTER PROTESTS  
NEW CRIMINAL LAWS TO COME INTO FORCE FROM JULY 1: GOVT  
PAGES 6, 7

**HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE SURVEY 2022-23**  
**In 11 years, rural consumption spend rises more sharply than urban; share on food falls**  
Average monthly rural spend Rs 3,773; average monthly urban spend Rs 6,459  
ALL-INDIA TREND IN LEVEL OF CONSUMPTION  
Average Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPC)  
Rural: ₹ 486 (2011-12), ₹ 1,430 (2022-23), ₹ 3,773 (2023-24)  
Urban: ₹ 855 (2011-12), ₹ 2,630 (2022-23), ₹ 6,459 (2023-24)  
Difference as % of Rural MPC: 75.9 (2011-12), 83.9 (2022-23), 71.2 (2023-24)

**URGES COOPERATIVES TO DIVERSIFY**  
**PM launches 'world's largest agri storage plan'; Rs 1.25 lakh cr outlay over 5 years**  
Will enable farmers to store and sell at right time, avail loans from banks  
VIKAS PATHAK  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24  
AT A TIME when farmers in Punjab are demanding a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price for 23 crops and trying to march towards Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday announced a plan to set up the world's largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector.

**Late night violence rocks Imphal, 1 dead in blast at university**  
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
IMPHAL, FEBRUARY 24

**Cong and AAP seal LS pact in Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Goa, Chandigarh**  
Cong gives up Bharuch, Patel's daughter apologises to cadre  
JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24  
INDIA BLOC partners Congress and AAP announced Saturday a seat-sharing agreement in Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Goa and Chandigarh for the Lok Sabha polls.  
The two parties sealed the

**HALDWANI VIOLENCE MAIN ACCUSED ARRESTED IN DELHI**  
AVANEESH MISHRA  
DEHRADUN, FEBRUARY 24  
THE UTTARAKHAND police said Saturday that they had arrested Abdul Malik who allegedly led the violent protests in Haldwani on February 8 in which four persons were killed.  
Speaking to The Indian Express,

**'Can Opp politics address aspirations expressed by Modi with national pride?'**  
Politics of hope has to address spiritual sources that move people: Sandel  
UDBHAV SETH  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24  
A POLITICS of hope can't just be about technocratic things and the economy, but has to address the "deeper cultural and spiritual sources that move people," that fuel their anger and resentments but also their aspirations, said Michael Sandel, one of the world's foremost political philosophers, speaking at Express Adda Friday.  
"For the most part, mainstream, liberal, elite technocratic

**Govt clipped powers of IIM Board, rejected Niti advice against doing so**  
Niti said Board must be able to order probe, Govt put Board under Visitor (President)  
RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24  
WHEN THE Union Government amended the law last August to erode the autonomy of the 20 Indian Institutes of Management, by giving primacy to itself over the IIM Board, not only did it go against its own stand, it also rejected feedback from NITI Aayog that had advised against doing so, The Indian Express has learnt.  
Early last year, when the Education Ministry was finalising amendments to the Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) Act, the NITI Aayog, in a note to the Education Ministry in March 2023, cautioned against stripping the IIM Boards of all consequential powers, including a crucial one — the ability to initiate inquiries against the institute.  
NITI Aayog, the apex public policy think tank of the Union government, urged the Education Ministry in its comments to retain Section 17 of the Act. This section empowers the

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Stops hair fall • Promotes growth of new hair  
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• Makes the scalp dandruff free

**On India trip, Spanish hockey legend lives a special feeling: 'It is my daughter's home'**  
PAGE 1 ANCHOR  
MIHIR VASAVDA  
ROJURKELA, FEBRUARY 24  
SHE LIVED in an orphanage for four years after she was found abandoned at a railway station in Delhi, aged just two. Now 12, Saumya Escarri Garcia-Solera is living a happy life with her adoptive parents in Spain, even harbouring a dream to play hockey.  
Why not? For, it was a

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# PM launches 'world's largest agri storage plan'; Rs 1.25 lakh cr outlay over 5 years

Will enable farmers to store and sell at right time, avail loans from banks

VIKAS PATHAK

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24

AT A TIME when farmers in Punjab are demanding a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price for 23 crops and trying to march towards Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday announced a plan to set up the "world's largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector".

Inaugurating a pilot project being undertaken in 11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in 11 states under the largest grain storage plan, Modi said farmers incurred losses due to lack of storage infrastructure. "Earlier governments never focused on storage of agricultural

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED

**E** Co-ops, the new engine

THE GOVERNMENT seems to be increasingly emphasising the role of cooperatives in agricultural marketing and storage. This is reflected in the creation of a full-fledged Ministry of Cooperation under Amit Shah and routing of non-basmati rice and sugar exports on government account through the newly-registered National Cooperative Exports Ltd. **PAGE 2**

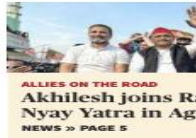
produce. Our plan is to set up a storage infrastructure of 700 lakh metric tons over the next five years at a cost of Rs 1.25 lakh crore. This will enable farmers to store their produce and sell it at the right time according to their own needs. This will also help them to avail loans from banks."

Modi also laid the foundation stone for additional 500 PACS for construction of godowns and other agri infrastructure. Further, he inaugurated a project for computersation in 18,000 PACS across the country, aligning farming with cutting edge technology and shifting to fully digital payments.

The launch of multiple initiatives for the cooperative sector at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi is intended to address one of the key farmer concerns of storage, and comes days ahead of the expected announcement of dates for the Lok Sabha elections and the kicking in of the Moral Code of Conduct.

"The vision of Sahakar se Samridhhi (prosperity through cooperatives) is to rejuvenate the cooperative sector and empower small and marginal farmers. Cooperatives have a great role in strengthening farming. That is why we have set up a separate Cooperation Ministry," Modi said.





**ALLIES ON THE ROAD**  
Akhilesh joins Rahul's Nyay Yatra in Agra  
NEWS > PAGE 5



**ON A SPREE**  
PM unveils projects worth ₹48,100 cr.  
NEWS > PAGE 5



**PATH TO NOMINATION**  
Trump beats Haley in South Carolina race  
WORLD > PAGE 12



**INTERIM BUDGET WOES**  
A disservice to the education sector  
Institutions and students stand to lose  
OPINION > PAGE 9



**STRIKING BACK**  
Ashwin, Kuldeep and Jurel tilt India's way  
SPORT > PAGE 16

**INSIDE**



**INLD Haryana president Rathee, aide shot dead**

**GURUGRAM**  
The Indian National Lok Dal's Haryana president and two-time former MLA Nafe Singh Rathee and his aide were shot dead by unidentified assailants on Sunday. Two others travelling with the duo also sustained bullet injuries. > PAGE 8

**Congress, IUMML hold seat-sharing talks in Kerala**

**KOCHI**  
The Congress and the Indian Union Muslim League concluded a crucial seat-sharing discussion in Kerala ahead of the Lok Sabha election. The IUMML is a constituent of the Congress-led Opposition grouping, in the United Democratic Front in the state. > PAGE 3

**Maryam files nomination for Punjab CM post**

**LAHORE**  
Senior PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz, the daughter of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on Sunday submitted her nomination papers for the post of Chief Minister of Pakistan's politically crucial Punjab province. She is set to become the first woman Chief Minister of Punjab province. > PAGE 12

**'Ceasefire deal will only defer Rafah offensive'**

**TEL AVIV**  
An Israeli military offensive in the southernmost city of Rafah could be "delayed somewhat" if a deal for ceasefire between Israel and Hamas is reached, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday, but claimed that total victory in Gaza is "weeks away" on the offensive begins. > PAGE 12

# Poverty levels below 5%, claims chief of Centre's think tank

**NITI Aayog CEO extrapolates Household Consumption Expenditure Survey findings to argue that growth is broad-based, while urban-rural inequality is shrinking, says destitution almost extinct; suggests lower weightage for food in CPI**

**Vikas Dhotot**  
NEW DELHI

Less than 5% of Indians are now expected to be below the poverty line, and extreme destitution has almost gone away, a top government official asserted on Sunday, citing the findings of the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) for 2022-23. Retail inflation has also likely been overstated in recent years, he added. Dismissing the narrative that rural economy is weak and India's growth story is "restricted to a few people", B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, chief executive officer of the Centre's think tank NITI Aayog, averred that growth is "broad-based" with rural Indians' incomes and spending rising faster than their urban peers. The urban-rural consumption divide has narrowed to 73% in 2022-23 from a peak of 95% in 2004-05, so inequality is declining, the official said, even as rural households'



**Expert view**  
NITI Aayog CEO presents his take on consumption trends

Inequality between rural and urban India declining; Gini coefficient will drop too  
Rural economy is not weak; growth is broad-based, not 'limited to few'  
Share of food spending down sharply; retail inflation may be overstated  
Caring the Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) averages across fractile classes in 2022-23, Mr. Subrahmanyam noted that ₹1,373 was the average consumption level for the bottom 5% of rural households, while it was ₹1,782 for the next 5% of households. "Poverty lines and estimates are derived from this. We have had four, five different estimates for poverty in the absence of the 2017-18 Survey findings. If we go by ₹32 a day, which was the last accepted poverty line as of 2011-12, and factor in inflation trends since then to get a sharp rise in urban and rural consumption by over 2.5 times from ₹12 to ₹30, and inflation prices, and the big story is that India's growth is not restricted to a few, but is very broad-based," Mr. Subrahmanyam said.

was much-awaited as there were inconsistencies in the 2017-18 Survey data, which was "just preceded by demonetisation". Caring the Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) averages across fractile classes in 2022-23, Mr. Subrahmanyam noted that ₹1,373 was the average consumption level for the bottom 5% of rural households, while it was ₹1,782 for the next 5% of households. "Poverty lines and estimates are derived from this. We have had four, five different estimates for poverty in the absence of the 2017-18 Survey findings. If we go by ₹32 a day, which was the last accepted poverty line as of 2011-12, and factor in inflation trends since then to get a sharp rise in urban and rural consumption by over 2.5 times from ₹12 to ₹30, and inflation prices, and the big story is that India's growth is not restricted to a few, but is very broad-based," Mr. Subrahmanyam said.

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# Uttarakhand to bring in damage recovery Bill

**The Bill to recover damages to public property comes after violence in Haldwani earlier this month**

**Jahira Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

The Pushkar Singh Dhami government is set to introduce the Uttarakhand Public and Private Property Damage Recovery Bill during the Budget Session of Assembly that begins on Monday. The bill provides for recovery of cost of damage to public and private property during protests. From those involved in the incidents, similar laws have been enacted in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. An official involved in the drafting of the Bill said that the Bill is headed by a retired judge, would investigate the charges against the protesters. It would handle assessments and orders for damage recovery after the district administration with the affected parties. "Those guilty of causing riots and other disturbances will be liable to pay compensation under this Bill," the official said.

The Uttarakhand Public and Private Property Damage Recovery Bill is likely to be discussed by the State's Business Advisory Committee over the next two-three days. Later, it will be tabled in the Assembly, sources said. The decision to have a Bill to recover damages to public property came after violence in Haldwani in Uttarakhand earlier this month. Violence ensued after the district administration and civic body, as part of the anti-encroachment drive, demolished a mosque and madrasa built by the protesters. It would handle assessments and orders for damage recovery after the district administration with the affected parties. "Those guilty of causing riots and other disturbances will be liable to pay compensation under this Bill," the official said.

## Cattle boss



**Right of way:** A nomadic shepherd herds his cows along the National Highway near Behror in Rajasthan on Friday. (PTI)

## Elderly T.N. couple run on rail tracks to avert accident

**S. Sundar**  
TENKASI

Displaying extraordinary guts, an elderly couple ran for a few metres on the railway track near the Bhagavathipuram station to stop an approaching train, missing a truck fall on the track between Bhagavathipuram and Aryanankatu in the early hours of Sunday. The couple, Shanmuga and Kuruthamma, were woken by the sound of the truck falling on the track after hitting a barrier on the Ghat Road. After it fell from a height of 18 feet around 12.50 a.m., the couple tried to get away with a torchlight. On seeing its mangled remains obstructing the track, they realised that a train was fast approaching.

will continue to make clear to the Houthis that they will bear the consequences if they do not stop their illegal attacks, which harm West Asian economies, and other countries. The U.K. Ministry of Defence said four Royal Air Force Typhoon FGR4s targeted "several very large and other drones, with a Houthi for both reconnaissance and attack missions" on Saturday, at a site northeast of Sanaa.

## Freight train runs 70 km minus loco pilot, probe on

**The Hindu Bureau**  
JAMMU

The Indian Railways on Sunday ordered a probe after a freight train travelled more than 70 km from Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir to Hoshiarpur district of Punjab without its drivers.

An official said the S3-wagon diesel locomotive train pulled away from the Kathua station without its drivers. "An inquiry has been ordered into the incident that took place between 7.25 a.m. and 8.15 a.m.," the Divisional Traffic Manager said in a statement. Officials said no casualty or damage to property was reported. Preliminary reports suggested that the train was halted at the Kathua station for a driver change and began rolling down a slope towards Pathankot. It was later stopped near Uicchi Bassi at Mithian in Punjab by railway staff who placed wooden blocks on the tracks to slow the train. Both the locopilot and assistant locopilot were not onboard, officials said. Official sources suggested that the driver may have forgotten to pull the handbrake before disembarking from it. Government Railway Police (Jalandhar) Sub-Inspector Anok Kumar said upon receiving information about the runaway train, he immediately called on the Jalandhar-Pathankot section where cured. (With PTI inputs)

# U.S., U.K. launch fresh strikes against Houthis, as rebels escalate attacks on Red Sea shipping

**Associated Press**  
WASHINGTON

American and British forces carried out fresh waves of strikes on Saturday against 18 Houthi targets in Yemen, following weeks of unrelenting attacks on Red Sea shipping by the Iran-backed rebels. The strikes "specifically targeted 18 Houthi targets across eight locations in Yemen", including weapons storage facilities, attack drones, air defence systems, radars and a helicopter, a joint statement said. It was co-signed by Aus-



A Royal Air Force Typhoon fighter jet set for a raid on Houthi positions on Friday. REUTERS

tralia, Bahrain, Denmark, Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand, which gave unspecified "support" to the new round of strikes, the second this month and fourth since the rebels began their attack on ships in the region. "The Houthis" now more than 45 attacks on

commercial and naval vessels since mid-November constitute a threat to the global economy, as well as regional security and stability, and demand an international response," the statement said. Houthi-run Al-Masirah television reported "a series of raids on the capital Sanaa". The United States will not hesitate to take action, as needed, to defend lives and the free flow of commerce in one of the world's most critical waterways, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin said in a separate statement after the strikes. "We



Act of courage: Shanmuga and Kuruthamma averted a locopilot after a truck fell on the track. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

### BSP leader resigns from party, joins BJP in U.P.

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Ritesh Pandey, the MP from Ambedkar Nagar constituency in Uttar Pradesh, resigned from the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and joined the ruling BJP on Sunday.

He was inducted into the BJP in the presence of Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak and other senior leaders.

In his resignation letter addressed to BSP president Mayawati, Mr. Pandey said that he had not been called to party meets "for a long time", nor had the leadership spoken to him.

Ms. Mayawati – without directly referring to himself – said that the party was more than just a political outfit, and was rather a movement inspired by B.R. Ambedkar. "In such a situation, LS MPs should self-examine whether they have acted in such a manner, and whether they have followed the tasks given by the party," she said.

## With seat-sharing deal, Akhlesh joins Niyay Yatra in U.P.

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

SP chief says anti-people policies of the BJP government has adversely affected youth and farmers of the country; talking about the paper leak in the State police recruitment exam, he says the govt. was not interested in 'providing jobs to youth'

Amajwadi Party (SP) president Akhlesh Yadav joined Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in the Bharat Jodo Niyay Yatra in Agra on Sunday.

Raising the slogan "BJP hatao, Desh bachhao" (remove BJP, save the country), the SP president said the BJP had done "unimaginable damage" to the country in the past 10 years.

"From youth and farmers to women and traders all sections have been adversely affected by the BJP's anti-people policies. Today, farmers are standing up against the government. The government is scared of the power of the farmers. Soon, the BJP will be removed and an Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA)



Joining hands: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra with Samajwadi party chief Akhlesh Yadav at the Bharat Jodo Niyay Yatra in Agra, Uttar Pradesh on Sunday. SANDEEP SAKENA

government will give due respect to farmers. It is high time that the autocratic regime is removed," said Mr. Yadav.

He also touched upon the paper leak in the U.P. police recruitment examination and accused the BJP government of deliberately leaking question papers to avoid "providing employment to youth".

"Young men are committing suicide and burning their degree certificates. There is no government recruitment exam in which the poor and backward rights and respect has not been achieved because they do not want to provide employment," he said. Mr. Yadav stressed the



need to defeat the BJP in U.P. so that it is ousted at the Centre. "This is the challenge of saving democracy and the Constitution. The dream of Babasaheb Ambedkar that the poor and backward rights and respect has not been achieved because they do not want to provide employment. We send out only one message

through this programme, remove the BJP, save the country. In U.P. it is 'the feat in 80 (seats), remove BJP', added Mr. Yadav.

The SP chief joined the yatra only after a seat-sharing agreement was reached on February 21 between the Congress and the SP, both partners in the INDIA bloc. The Congress will fight 17 seats in the State while the SP will contest from the remaining 63.

### IN BRIEF



### Cong. flays BJP for cancelling U.P. police recruitment exam

Congress leader P. Chidambaram on Sunday slammed the BJP after the police constable recruitment exam in Uttar Pradesh was cancelled. He said the move would "rob the poor and leave them unemployed" for a long time. The State on Saturday cancelled the exam following allegations of a question paper leak and ordered a retest within six months. It also announced a probe. In a post on X, Mr. Chidambaram said, "Over 43 lakh candidates wrote the examination for selection to 60,400 posts of police constables in Uttar Pradesh. They travelled long distances in crowded buses and trains, spent money, and braved many difficulties. The exam was cancelled yesterday. This is the 'Best-governed State', according to PM and CM." #11

### Cong. 'well placed' in Punjab for LS polls: Manish Tewari

Congress leader Manish Tewari on Sunday dismissed the BJP's 370 seats pitch for the Lok Sabha election as "hubris and arrogance" and claimed that there was "pain and misery" on the ground after 10 years of the Narendra Modi government. While attacking the BJP over its performance in the last 10 years in government, Mr. Tewari kept cards about the choice of his constituency for the Lok Sabha election close to his chest. Asked if he would be contesting from Anandpur Sahib, the Congress leader simply said, "I am the MP from Anandpur Sahib." Mr. Tewari also said the Congress was "very well placed" in Punjab for the Lok Sabha election. Asked about the speculation and rumours doing the rounds that he may switch to the BJP, the Congress MP said, "I do not dignify rumours with a response." #11

### Four MLAs from NPP, Cong. join BJP in Arunachal Pradesh

Ahead of the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh, two MLAs each from Congress and the National People's Party (NPP) joined the ruling BJP on Sunday. They joined the party in the presence of Chief Minister Pema Khandu in Itanagar. The MLAs are Ninong Ering and Wanglin Lowangdong of the Congress, and Mithu Mithi and Gokul Prasad of the NPP. Headed by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, the NPP is an ally of the BJP in the region. "This coalition underlines the policies and performance of the BJP under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Mr. Khandu said. With the new joiners, the strength of the BJP in the 60-member House increased to 53. The Congress and the NPP have two MLAs each, while three are Independents.

### TDP activists miffed at JSP leader getting Anakapalli seat

The selection of senior political leader Konathala Kamalarishna as the Jana Sena Party (JSP) candidate from Anakapalli Assembly constituency has ruffled the feathers of a few leaders in the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). The seat has gone the JSP way as part of the TDP's alliance with it, causing heartburn among the followers of senior TDP leader and former MLA Pesla Govinda Sanyanarayana. Staging a sit on Sunday, they said it was shocking to hear that Mr. Sanyanarayana was denied ticket despite efforts to strengthen the party in the region.

## Ahead of Lok Sabha election, Modi launches projects worth ₹48,100 cr.

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Facing his third Lok Sabha election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose Rajkot, the city where he was first elected an MLA, to launch projects worth ₹48,100 crore across the country.

This included the inauguration of five All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in five States and India's longest half-day-long bridge at Dwaraka in Gujarat.

Recalling his long association with Rajkot, Mr. Modi mentioned that 22 years ago he had taken oath as an MP on the same day, after being elected from Rajkot II Assembly seat. "I have done my best to live up to the trust of the people of Rajkot. I can see that generations have changed but affection for Modi is beyond any age limit," he said in his address.

Mr. Modi's trip to Gujarat followed his past pattern of 'Vikas aur Virasat' (development and heritage). He had, earlier in the day inaugurated the Sudarshan Setu, India's longest cable-stayed bridge around 2.3 km linking Okha mainland to Bekt Dwaraka, built at a cost of around ₹980 crore. After offering prayers at the Dwarakadheesh temple, he also went underwater



Grand launch! Sudarshan Setu, India's longest cable-stayed bridge that will connect Okha mainland and Bekt Dwaraka island in Gujarat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the bridge on Sunday. PPT

in the Arabian Sea, to pay obeisance at the submerged remains of Old Dwaraka, which he referred to in his speech.

"In those depths I was wondering about the glorious past of India. When I came out, I was carrying the blessings of Bhagwan Krishna as well as the inspiration of Dwaraka. This gave new strength and energy to my resolution of work, inaugurations, and laying of foundation stones in many cities across the country," he said.

He inaugurated AIIMS at Rajkot in Gujarat and e-dedicated to the nation four more AIIMS at Bathinda (Punjab), Rae Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh), Kalyani (West Bengal), and Mangalagiri (Andhra Pradesh). "For 50 years after independence, there was

only one AIIMS in the country, and that too in Delhi. In the seven decades since independence, only seven AIIMS were approved but even these were never completed," he said. "But now, in just 10 days, seven new AIIMS have been inaugurated or foundation stones laid. That is why I say we are developing the country at a pace much faster than it had in the past six to seven decades," he said.

The projects include 200 healthcare infrastructure work worth ₹1,500 crore across 23 States, and 21 projects of the Employees State Insurance Corporation worth around ₹2,280 crore.

## DMK sacks leader amid reports of 'links' with drug cartel

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

The ruling DMK on Sunday sacked its NEP wing Chennai West district deputy organiser Jaffer Sadiq, also a Tamil film producer, from the party's primary membership amid reports of his alleged links with an international drug cartel that was jointly busted by the Delhi Police and the NCB recently.

Sadiq was arrested in the joint operation, which brought to light an international network where pseudoephedrine, disguised as health mix powder and desiccated coconut, was trafficked through air and sea cargo.

Information was received from New Zealand customs on the spot. After sustained interrogation, they revealed that 45 consignments had been sent over past three years, which contained approximately 3,500 kg of pseudoephedrine valued at over ₹200 crore in international market. "The mastermind behind this nexus has been identified as a Tamil film producer, who has been trafficking," an NCB official said, without naming him.

DMK general secretary Duraimurugan, in a state-of-the-art address, was being "dismissed" from the party's primary membership with immediate effect and bringing disrepute to the party. The Special Cell, which eventually led to their godown in Ba-

### An international drug cartel was jointly busted by the Delhi Police and the NCB recently

sai Darapur in west Delhi. On February 15, when the operation was trying to pack the pseudoephedrine in a cover consignments of multigrain food mix, joint teams of Special Cell and the NCB raided the compound and recovered 50 kg of pseudoephedrine.

Sadiq and Gokul Prasad of this cartel – all of whom belong to Tamil Nadu – were arrested on the spot. After sustained interrogation, they revealed that 45 consignments had been sent over past three years, which contained approximately 3,500 kg of pseudoephedrine valued at over ₹200 crore in international market. "The mastermind behind this nexus has been identified as a Tamil film producer, who has been trafficking," an NCB official said, without naming him.

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## Tejashwi raises queries over delay in Cabinet expansion

The Hindu Bureau  
PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday raised questions over the delay in Cabinet expansion in Bihar.

Mr. Yadav, while talking over the second phase of his Jan Vishwas Yatra, said it had been almost one month since the formation of the new government as a Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had not yet expanded his Cabinet.

"What is the reason behind the delay? Due to non-expansion of the Cab-

### Delay in expansion is affecting development work in Bihar, says the RJD leader

net, the developmental work related to the people of Bihar is also getting affected. The Chief Minister should explain the reason why Cabinet expansion is not taking place. This is a big issue," Mr. Yadav said. On January 28, Mr. Kumar took oath for the ninth time as the Chief Minister of Bihar after snipping ties with Mahagor-

bandhan comprising the RJD and the Congress and forming the government with the BJP. Apart from Mr. Kumar, two Deputy Chief Ministers – Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha had taken oath along with six others as Cabinet Ministers.

Both Deputy Chief Ministers have been allocated nine departments each and 22 other departments have been distributed among the six Ministers.

Mr. Yadav also said that he had not been arrested because the party was not shielding its absconding leader Shahjahan Sheikh.

Both Deputy Chief Ministers have been allocated nine departments each and 22 other departments have been distributed among the six Ministers.

The Hindu Bureau  
KOLKATA

A local Trinamool Congress leader was chased by angry villagers and took shelter at the house of another resident at an area in West Bengal on Sunday.

The party's leadership continues to grapple with the allegations of land grab and anti-people policies. Trinamool general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said that the party was not shielding its absconding leader Shahjahan Sheikh.

Both Deputy Chief Ministers have been allocated nine departments each and 22 other departments have been distributed among the six Ministers.



On edge: Members of an independent fact-finding were stopped by the police from visiting Sandeshkhali on Sunday. PPT

"We have taken action against Ministers Partha Chatterjee and Jyotipriya Chatterjee who is shahjahan or Sheikh? We have a zero-tolerance policy against anyone committing any crime," Mr. Banerjee said, without naming him. He said that the judiciary was guarding Mr. Sheikh and the High Court had tied the hands of the State police.

On the boil Sandeshkhali has been on the boil since the first week of February, after the villagers, alleging land grab and sexual assault on women, began targeting party leaders.

Two local Trinamool leaders, Shibprasad Hazra and Uttam Sardar, against whom charges of sexual assault were made, have been arrested.

However, Mr. Sheikh remains on the run more than 50 days after his supporters assaulted ED officials.

Six members of an independent fact-finding committee were by former Chief Justice of Patna High Court L. Narasimha Reddy who stopped the police from visiting Sandeshkhali. The members of the committee were taken to Lalbazar Police Headquarters in Kolkata and released later in the day.

# Ahead of Lok Sabha election, Modi launches projects worth ₹48,100 cr.

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Facing his third Lok Sabha election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose Rajkot, the city where he was first elected an MLA, to launch projects worth ₹48,100 crore across the country.

This included the inauguration of five All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in five States and India's longest cable-stayed bridge at Dwarka in Gujarat.

Recalling his long association with Rajkot, Mr. Modi mentioned that 22 years ago he had taken oath as an MLA on the same day, after being elected from Rajkot II Assembly seat. "I have done my best to live up to the trust of the people of Rajkot. I can see that generations have changed but affection for Modi is beyond any age limit," he said in his address.

Mr. Modi's trip to Gujarat followed his past pattern of "*Vikas aur Virasat*" (development and heritage). He had, earlier in the day inaugurated the Sudarshan Setu, India's longest cable-stayed bridge of around 2.3 km linking Okha mainland to Beyt Dwarka, built at a cost of around ₹980 crore. After offering prayers at the Dwarakadheesh temple, he also went underwater



**Grand launch:** Sudarshan Setu, India's longest cable-stayed bridge that will connect Okha mainland and Beyt Dwarka island in Gujarat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the bridge on Sunday. PTI

in the Arabian Sea, to pay obeisance at the submerged remains of Old Dwarka, which he referred to in his speech.

"In those depths I was wondering about the glorious past of India. When I came out, I was carrying the blessings of Bhagwan Krishna as well as the inspiration of Dwarka. This gave new strength and energy to my resolution of '*Vikas aur Virasat*'. A divine belief has become associated with my goal for *Viksit Bharat*," he said.

He pointed out that in the past, all major government events used to take place largely in Delhi, but it had been a conscious attempt on his government's

part to take such events across the country. "Today's programme is a testament to this effort. Through this single programme, we are continuing a new tradition of development work, inaugurations, and laying of foundation stones in many cities across the country," he said.

## Five AIIMS

He inaugurated AIIMS at Rajkot in Gujarat and dedicated to the nation four more AIIMS at Bathinda (Punjab), Rae Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh), Kalyani (West Bengal), and Mangalagiri (Andhra Pradesh).

"For 50 years after Independence, there was

only one AIIMS in the country, and that too in Delhi. In the seven decades since Independence, only seven AIIMS were approved but even these were never completed," he said. "But now, in just 10 days, seven new AIIMS have been inaugurated or foundation stones laid. That is why I say we are developing the country at a pace much faster than it had in the past six to seven decades," he said.

The projects include 200 healthcare infrastructure work worth ₹11,500 crore across 23 States, and 21 projects of the Employees State Insurance Corporation worth around ₹2,280 crore.



**Sudarshan Setu between Okha and Beyt Dwarka island in Gujarat ahead of its inauguration by PM Narendra Modi on Sunday.**

IN BRIEF

Deputy CM Fadnavis plotted to kill me, says Jarange-Patil

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil on Sunday alleged that Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis wants to rid the State of the Maratha community and its influence. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis wants to finish the Maratha influence and community in the State. He wants my sacrifice. I march towards his residence, Sagar Bungalow, right now," Mr. Jarange-Patil said, addressing supporters gathered in large numbers. His declaration of a march to the Deputy CM's residence resulted in chaos. "I will march alone with the support of a stick," he said, even as his supporters tried to pacify him and take the microphone away from him.

ED issues summons to Hiranandani in FEMA case

The Enforcement Directorate has summoned Niranjan Hiranandani and his son Darshan Hiranandani, the promoters of real estate developer Hiranandani Group, for questioning in a foreign exchange violation case on Monday, sources said on Sunday. The Hiranandanis have been asked to deposit at the ED's office in Mumbai but they may choose to submit their primary responses through a representative, they said. Mr. Darshan has been living in Dubai for several years. Nearly four premises of the Hiranandani Group were searched by the ED last week under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

IGNCA's 'language atlas' to shine a light on India's linguistic diversity

Reeparna Chakrabarty

NEW DELHI

As India makes efforts towards imparting education in the mother tongue, especially at the primary level, a crucial question remains on the actual number of languages that can be considered to be "active" in the country. A proposed linguistic survey across the country by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), which aims to enumerate how many languages are spoken and in which States and regions, can provide the answer. The IGNSA is an autonomous body under the Union Culture Ministry.



The IGNSA is an autonomous body under Culture Ministry.

IGNCA is an autonomous body under the Union Culture Ministry. India recognises 22 languages officially, which are part of Schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution. According to Census data, 97% of the Indian popula-

Railways brings down the curtain on 'passenger trains'

They have been redesignated as express specials; the 'second class ordinary fare' meant for passenger trains has been dispensed with and commuters are being charged express fares

S. Vijay Kumar

CHENNAI

The era of passenger trains seems to have come to an end with the Indian Railways redesignating them as 'express specials'. 'Second class ordinary fare' meant for passenger trains has been dispensed with and commuters travelling in the express specials are charged express fares which are almost double the earlier rates.



At the MGR Chennai Central station, booking clerks said the ordinary fare structure was no more applicable to suburban trains.

According to railway sources, the passenger trains are being operated as express specials with the same old rakes and on the same routes and stopping. While in the Chennai Division, the passenger trains have been replaced with Mainline Electric Multiple Units (MEMUs), some pairs of trains in Tiruchirappalli and Madurai divisions are operating Diesel Electric Multiple Units (DEMUs).

Passenger trains which stop at almost all the stations are patronised by poor passengers, especially small vendors, farmers, workers and daily wage labourers among others, as the fares are the cheapest in railway network. But the express specials are now

being charged on a par with express trains. At MGR Chennai Central, one of the busiest railway stations in the country, booking clerks said the ordinary fare structure was no more applicable to suburban urban trains. The fares had doubled in some routes. For instance, the cost of travelling from Chennai to Tirupattur on passenger or DEMU train was ₹55 before the COVID-19 pandemic. But after the COVID lock-down, the fare increased to ₹70. Similarly, the cost of tickets from Chennai Beach to Vellore and Chennai Egmore to Rudrachery, which was ₹30 and ₹45, has increased to ₹65 and ₹80, respectively, the sources said.

Asked whether the speed of the passenger trains had increased warranting levying of express fares, senior railway officials said the ordinary fare structure was dependent on the classification of the train - whether it was an passenger or express train. "The railways have dispensed with second class ordinary fare applicable to passenger trains post the COVID-19 pandemic. There are no more passenger trains."

**Fare chart** However, the railway has displayed a fare chart at the booking counters, which still shows the pre-pandemic tariff or second-class ordinary fare structure, is no longer valid. "On several occasions, the travelling public can-

the fare displayed on the board and argue with us as to why they have to pay double the price. They are not aware or willing to understand that passenger trains don't exist any more. There are many complaints that the UTS App is also showing the old fares, a ticket booking clerk said.

Following complaints, the South Western Railway restored the pre-COVID fare structure in its zone. In an order issued on February 22, the Principal Chief Commercial Manager or instructed authorities in Hubballi, Bengaluru and Mysuru that all MEMU/DEMU and passenger trains were to be treated as suburban route from originating point to destination, and second class ordinary passenger fare as it was done during the pre-COVID period with immediate effect, the sources said.

Senior officials said the slow-moving trains were still called passenger trains on record but operated as express specials with enhanced fares. "In the daily punctuality reports of divisions, we still call them as passenger trains only," an official said.

Significant risk found in primary dengue infection, says study

Hindu Shajan Perappadan

NEW DELHI

Primary dengue virus infections constitute a substantial fraction of severe disease cases and fatalities, states a newly published study questioning the currently widely held belief that severe dengue disease is mainly due to secondary dengue infections.

Patients who are infected by any dengue virus for the first time are known as cases of primary dengue infection. Patients who were previously infected by another dengue virus and then present with infection from a new serotype are known as cases of secondary dengue infection. The study, published in *Nature Medicine* recently, is an analysis of severe dengue cases in a large group of children in India and found that more than half could be attributed to primary rather than secondary infection.

Amol Chandel, group leader of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) Emory Vaccine Program at ICGEB New Delhi in collaboration with Emory School of Medicine, Atlanta, U.S., the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (Delhi), and St. John's National Academy of

Health Sciences, (Bengaluru) authored the paper on "Severe disease during both primary and secondary virus infections in paediatric populations." "This finding has very important implications for public health across the world and also in developing and implementing effective and safe strategies for controlling dengue. These findings are highly relevant not only in the Indian context where dengue disease burden is considerable but also on a global scale," said Dr. Chandel.

"Our study shows that primary infections constitute a substantial fraction of severe disease cases and fatalities," she adds.

**'Case increase in India'** The paper notes that over the past two decades, dengue infection and mortality increased in India and that the country now has one of the largest number of infection cases globally. "With the serotype of the dengue virus, typically, dengue patients fall into two categories - one, those experiencing the infection for the first time, known as primary infections and those, who get re-infected after a previous exposure, known as secondary infections," the paper explains.

Kumar Shahani, pole star of parallel cinema movement, passes away

Anuj Kumar

NEW DELHI

Kumar Shahani, the pole star of the parallel cinema movement in India, passed away in Kolkata on Sunday due to age-related illness. He was 83. Always a critic's choice, the influential filmmaker strived to capture the truth in every frame and his distinct portrayal of the changing human condition in *Maya Durpan* (1972), *Taranga* (1984), and *Kasba* (1998) has stood the test of time.

His work, apart from the temptations of popular taste, he would build half the bridge, offering humanity and then expect his audience to embrace his unique point of view. For him, it was not just the individuality of a person that had to be respected and realised but also that of the objects that surrounded him and the events that he



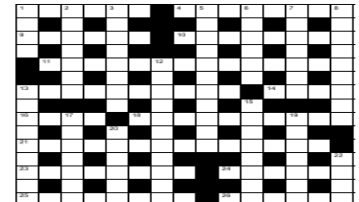
Kumar Shahani

was part of. He would not come from taking a selfie. Born in 1940 at Larkana in the Sindh region of undivided India, Shahani's family shifted to Mumbai after partition via Karachi. He found his voice in the Pune Film Institute under the guidance of the maverick-turned-critic and Marxist historian D.D. Kosam-

bi, who helped shape his worldview. A strong critic of the manipulative power and capitalism, his works exposed the concerns and compromises of the working class, without being too brackets of socialism.

Shahani went to Paris on a French government scholarship and assisted Robert Bresson on *Une femme douce* (1962). He experienced the student unrest of May 1968 against capitalism, consumerism, and American imperialism. He was directly against the commodification of emotions. He was inspired by the minimalism of European masters but did not shun decorative metaphors that defined the Indian tradition altogether. His distinct voice was recognised as a breakthrough in cinematic language in the European and American circuits.

THE CROSSWORD 14107



- Across
1 Private, through road across Monaco's outskirts (6)
4 Most helpless bees left struggling (8)
9 One running errands in US auto company hired by Bank (3-3)
10 Move by doctor to increase reach (6,2)
11 Scrap gold transacted on emerald market is put on a pedestal (4-10)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site: [bit.ly/crosswordpuzzles](http://bit.ly/crosswordpuzzles)

- 13 Attributes shown by expert training Republican on alliances (10)
14 Nairo's backing international test venue (4)
15 Catch the butt of friendly snail (4)
16 Free charitable activity's starting off outside President's hometown (10)
21 Driver software? (9,5)
22 Nairo's present in bar ahead of time (8)
24 Netar is invited by nurse for ill in destitute (7)
25 Settle software assurance process before portals of every department get installed (8)
26 Tag carrying details embedded in hybrid car digitally (2,4)
Down
1 Having nothing to do, I start to doodle on walls of lobby (4)
2 Electric generator's silver mesh secured by tip of metal ring (7)
3 Saw Europe's nervous after US dropped naval strength (3,5)
5 Brexit supporter set occupier on fire (11)
6 Criminal wished to entertain cop (6)
7 Anecdotes from retired legislator about ending in trouble near US city? (7)
8 Following report's closure, doctor saves copy on, say, Amazon's unlimited file storage (4,5)
12 Revealed steps to obtain first and surpass others (11)
13 Big-like animals - species mostly moving around peaks of Chile, Argentina and south end of Ecuador (9)
15 Broken lock? (5,2)
17 Bar's taken up most recent random criticism (7)
18 Condition affecting sense of smell weakened havoc in Samoa (7)
19 Small bird crossing river in European city (6)
22 Cross-bar is pressed down (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to previous puzzle
4 8 9 2 3 1 6 2 7 9 4
6 5 7 3 1 4 8 5 2 1 6 0
2 2 7 9 6 8 1 5 4 4 8 3
3 6 6 5 8 1 2 5 4 1 7 2
7 9 2 3 4 2 1 5 6 3 8 0
5 0 3 4 6 2 1 8 9 7 1 5
7 9 2 3 4 2 1 5 6 3 8 0
4 1 6 4 8 1 2 5 4 1 7 2
7 9 2 3 4 2 1 5 6 3 8 0

FAITH Ravidas, social reformer

Unwavering faith in the Lord and a staunch commitment to uplifting the lot of fellow human beings is the hallmark of Guru Ravidas. The most significant aspect as we commemorate Ravidas Jayanti is his contemporary relevance, lectures. He visualised an idea society of Begampura where no sorrow, discrimination, differences and oppression exist.

A 15th-century Bhakti poet, Guru Ravidas is regarded as a contemporary of Kabir and is believed to have met Gurbaksh Singh. Ravidas firmly and steadfastly stood up for the marginalised and the oppressed and fought superstition and ritualism. Born in a family of leather tanners, a profession he nobly practised and considered his keeva (vocation), his thoughts, poetry and everyday life reflected the constant struggle to bring about an equitable society by striving for social consciousness of the masses. He was consumed by the love of the divine. He says, "meri preet Gobind sio ji na ghatat, main mol mehngi lai jiu satya (my love for the Lord of the universe does not decrease, I paid for it dearly in exchange for my soul). Forty-one shabads of Ravidas bani have been included in the Guru Granth Sahib. Similarly, the Panchvachans of the Dadupanthi tradition have incorporated some of Guru Ravidas' teachings. His works contain the common thread of an unflinching devotion to God who is projected in an abstract form as Nirguna (without attributes). It is believed that Meera Bai, Queen Jhannai Bai of Chitorgarh and Raja Nagar (and of Benaras) were his devotees.

# Kumar Shahani, pole star of parallel cinema movement, passes away

## Anuj Kumar

Kumar Shahani, the pole star of the parallel cinema movement in India, passed away in Kolkata on Sunday due to age-related illness. He was 83. Always a critic's choice, the influential filmmaker strived to capture the truth in every frame and his distinct portrayal of the changing human condition in *Maya Darpan* (1972), *Tarang* (1984), and *Kasba* (1990) has withstood the test of time.

Having resisted the temptations of popular taste, he would build half the bridge, offer his hand, and then expect his audience to embrace his unique point of view. For him, it was not just the individuality of a person that had to be respected and reflected but also that of the objects that surrounded him and the events that he



Kumar Shahani

was part of. He would often say self-realisation did not come from taking a selfie.

Born in 1940 at Larkana in the Sindh region of undivided India, Shahani's family shifted to Mumbai after partition via Karachi. He found his voice at the Pune Film Institute under the guidance of the maverick Ritwik Ghatak and Marxist historian D.D. Kosam-

bi, who helped shape his worldview. A strong critic of the manipulative power of capitalism, his works echoed the concerns and compromises of the working class, without being didactic.

Shahani went to Paris on a French government scholarship and assisted Robert Bresson on *Une Femme Douce* (1969). He experienced the student unrest of May 1968 against capitalism, consumerism, and American imperialism. Strictly against the commodification of emotions, he was inspired by the minimalism of European masters but did not shun decorative metaphors that defined the Indian tradition altogether. Having studied the epic tradition in Hindu and Buddhist mythology and iconography as part of the Homi Bhaba scholarship,

the amalgam of European formalism and Indian mythology and music resulted in a unique visual signature where no ism screamed for attention. Against putting cinema into brackets of parallel and commercial, Shahani often praised the contribution of Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar but maintained that popular cinema should make an effort to look beyond the image.

The connoisseurs of cinema loved to engage with his contemplative imagery, brought to life by his friend and trusted cinematographer K.K. Mahajan, that was not bound by geographical boundaries. When he emerged on the scene with *Maya Darpan*, his distinct voice was recognised as a breakthrough in cinematic language in the European and American circuits.

# Text & Comment

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Number of nuclear power reactors India will add by 2032

**18** The nuclear power reactors will have a surplussive capacity to generate 13,600 MWe of electricity, taking the total share of atomic power in the energy mix to 22,480 MWe by 2031-32. **PH**

### The economic aid Ukraine expects from the U.S. in 2024

**11.8** in \$ billion. Kyiv faces a \$37-billion budget gap as it funds off the Russian invasion and on the West for aid. Ukraine also expects to receive 18 billion euros from the EU's Ukraine facility. **NEWS**

### The amount FPIs infused in the debt market in February

**18,500** in ₹ crore. This came following a net investment of over ₹19,836 crore in January, making it the highest monthly inflow in more than six years. **PH**

### The fall in merger and acquisition deals in India in 2023

**10** in percentage. The number of merger and acquisition (M&A) deals during 2023 dropped on an annual basis to 793, said a PwC report. The report observed that private equity investments totalled \$36 billion. **PH**

### The share of Reliance in a merged entity with Disney

**61** in percentage. Walt Disney and the industrial conglomerate Reliance Industries signed a pact to merge their media operations in India, *Bloomberg* reported. **NEWS**

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## Why were surrogacy rules modified?

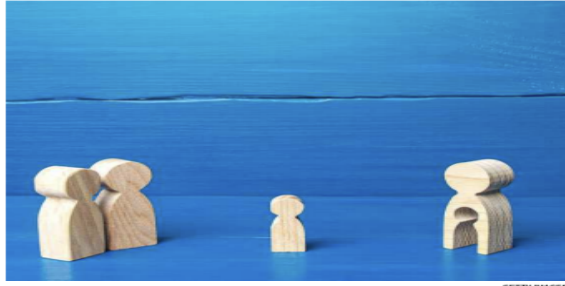
Why was the Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022 challenged? What does the new amendment stipulate? Why were the modifications deemed necessary by the Supreme Court? Can single unmarried women also avail of the same relief?

### EXPLAINER

#### Aaratrika Bhaumik

**The story so far:** The Union government on February 21 modified the Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022, to permit married couples to use donor eggs or donor sperm for surrogacy — a move that provided a big relief to those with medical complications. This revoked a previous amendment made in March 2023 that banned the use of such donor gametes. The modification in the surrogacy rules came more than a month after Additional Solicitor General Ashwarya Bhatti apprised the Supreme Court that the government was considering changes in the amendment brought in last year to allow married couples to use donor gametes for surrogacy in case they suffered from medical ailments that made it difficult to conceive.

**What does the new amendment state?** On March 14 2023, Form 2 (Consent of the Surrogate Mother and Agreement for Surrogacy) of the Surrogacy Rules read with Rule 7 was amended to stipulate that donor eggs could not be used for gestational surrogacy of an intending couple. This has now been amended by a notification of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare allowing married couples to use a donor gamete on the condition that a District Magistrate Board certifies that either the husband or the wife suffers from a medical condition. However, the notification outlines that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending parents. This implies that a married couple where both partners are unable to use their gametes due to an existing medical condition cannot opt for surrogacy. The change is however not applicable to widowed or divorced women. The modified rules state — "Single woman (widow or divorcee) undergoing



surrogacy must use self-eggs and donor sperm to avail surrogacy procedure."

**What did the Supreme Court say?** Last year, the 2023 amendment was challenged before the Supreme Court by a woman suffering from the Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) Syndrome. Medical board records reflected she was unable to produce her eggs due to absent ovaries or a uterus. The petition contended that the amendment violated a woman's right to parenthood and contradicted Sections 2(r) and 4 of the Surrogacy Act, 2021 (2021 Act) which recognised the situation when a medical condition would require a couple to opt for gestational surrogacy to become parents. It was also pointed out that the petitioner had begun the surrogacy process months before the

amendment, which cannot be implemented retrospectively. The Centre, on the contrary, argued that the use of donor eggs was exempted since surrogacy cannot be availed of under existing laws unless the child is "genetically related" to the intending couple.

Staying the operation of the law, a bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan highlighted that it prevents intending couples from achieving parenthood through surrogacy which is *prima facie* contrary to the objective of the parent law — the 2021 Act. The court also recognised that the law permitting gestational surrogacy was "woman-centric". It was a woman's choice to have a surrogate child owing to existing medical or congenital conditions. Such conditions included the "absence of a uterus or repeatedly failed pregnancies,

multiple pregnancies or an illness which makes it impossible for her to carry a pregnancy to term or would make the pregnancy life-threatening". Agreeing with the petitioner's submissions, the court acknowledged that Rule 14(a) specifically recognises the absence of a uterus or any allied condition as a medical indication necessitating gestational surrogacy. While addressing the government's objections, the Bench underscored — "In this regard, it may be noted that the expression 'genetically related' to the intending couple has to be read as being related to the husband unless Rule 14(a) applies".

Last month, the Centre informed a bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Sanjiv Karol that following its observations, the amendment barring married couples from availing donor gametes was under active reconsideration.

#### Can single women avail of the same?

The regulatory change is however not applicable for single women as it specifies that a widow or a divorcee undergoing surrogacy must use self-eggs and donor sperm. This comes even after questions are being raised in Indian courts over the exclusion of single women from using surrogacy to have children and the resultant discrimination. A petition has been filed in the Delhi High Court by a 44-year-old unmarried woman challenging provisions of the 2021 Act on the ground that the restrictions are violative of her fundamental rights under Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (right to life) of the Constitution. Questioning the association of marital status with the eligibility for surrogacy, the petitioner has pointed out that at her age, the use of donor eggs is recommended by medical practitioners. To be genetically connected, the petitioner's brother has consented to donate his male gametes, the court was told. Experts have also criticised the restrictions on access to surrogacy by single persons, live-in couples, and LGBTQ couples.

### THE GIST

The Union government on February 21 modified the Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022, to permit married couples to use donor eggs or donor sperm for surrogacy — a move that provided a big relief to those with medical complications.

Last year, the 2023 amendment was challenged before the Supreme Court by a woman suffering from the Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser Syndrome. Medical board records reflected she was unable to produce her eggs due to absent ovaries or a uterus.

The regulatory change is however not applicable for single women as it specifies that a widow or a divorcee undergoing surrogacy must use self-eggs and donor sperm.

## Can the IMEC address the Red Sea crisis?

How important is the Red Sea trading route to India? Has China offered an alternative route?

#### Afaq Hussain, Akhtar Malik

#### The story so far:

The Red Sea crisis enters its fourth month, global supply chains are increasingly grappling with inflated freight, delayed vessel schedules, and product shortages. It has once again brought to the fore the vulnerabilities of global supply chains, highlighting the need to revisit alternate routes for global trade.

#### Why is the Red Sea route important?

The Red Sea owes its strategic importance for global trade to the Bab el-Mandab Strait which lies between Yemen and Djibouti. It is one of the world's busiest cargo and oil transit points with almost 12% of international merchandise trade passing through it. An immediate consequence of the Red Sea conflict has been that major container and oil carriers have been forced to re-route shipments via the Cape of Good Hope. The

re-routing has led to rising ocean freight, inflated insurance costs, and longer voyage times leading to delays and shortage of products. It has also driven up transportation costs. The higher shipping costs will be passed on to consumers in the form of increased commodity prices.

#### How has it affected India?

India's trade with European and North African countries flows entirely through the Red Sea route which is almost 24% of its exports and 14% of its imports. In the year 2022-23, India's bilateral trade with Europe and North Africa stood at \$189 billion and \$15 billion respectively. The rising fears among traders have already seen a drop in Indian shipments. As per the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), rising threats have prompted Indian exporters to hold back around 20% of their cargo ships transiting through the Red Sea.

As global supply chains are battling delayed shipments and rising costs, China is actively projecting China-Europe freight

trains, which are part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as an alternate route.

#### What about the IMEC?

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), which was announced during the G-20 summit in 2023, is another alternative which is not receiving much attention. Part of the problem is that apart from the MoUs, there have not been any investments or operational commitments on any of the signatories of the corridor. Furthermore, the Israel-Palestine conflict has put a pause on the normalisation of Arab-Israeli relations which is a key element of the multi-nation initiative. Another major challenge is the vulnerability of the Strait of Hormuz. The entire trade of the IMEC architecture flows through the Strait of Hormuz and with Iran's proximity and control over the strait, the risk of disruptions remain very high. Some experts argue that the Strait of Hormuz problem can be avoided by including Oman in the IMEC architecture and keeping the supply chain away from Iran's

reach. However, that would mean further delays, as new ports and railway links will have to be developed across Oman connecting it to Saudi Arabia.

#### How can the IMEC be made viable?

Despite such challenges, the economic logic of the corridor holds, which should encourage stakeholders to keep working towards it. First, an empirical study on the economic benefits of the corridor needs to be conducted. The corridor is estimated to cut the journey time from India to Europe by 40% and slash transit costs by 30%. However, there are speculations that multiple handling of cargo and multi-nation transit would increase carrier and compliance costs. Therefore, it is critical to quantify the economic advantages of the corridor to attract more stakeholders. Secondly, a robust financial framework needs to be in place to ensure the binding financial commitments on any of the signatories of the corridor, investments will have to be attracted from governments, international organisations, and private sector entities. Thirdly, a comprehensive international operational framework is needed. As the corridor involves facilitating trade across different legal systems, a multi-national framework is necessary. A forum for the corridor needs to be constituted to undertake such initiatives.

Afaq Hussain is Director and Akhtar Malik is Managing Director at Bureau of Research on Industry and Economic Fundamentals (BRIEF), New Delhi.

### THE GIST

The Red Sea owes its strategic importance for global trade to the Bab el-Mandab Strait which lies between Yemen and Djibouti.

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## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Number of nuclear power reactors India will add by 2032

**18** The nuclear power reactors will have a cumulative capacity to generate 13,800 MWe of electricity, taking the total share of atomic power in the energy mix to 22,480 MWe by 2031-32. PTI

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# 22 NUCLEAR REACTORS OF INDIA 2021

RAWATBHATA  
RAJASTHAN



NARORA  
UTTAR PRDESH



KAKRAPAR  
GUJARAT



TARAPUR  
MAHARASHTRA



KALPAKKAM  
TAMIL NADU



KAIGA  
KARNATAKA

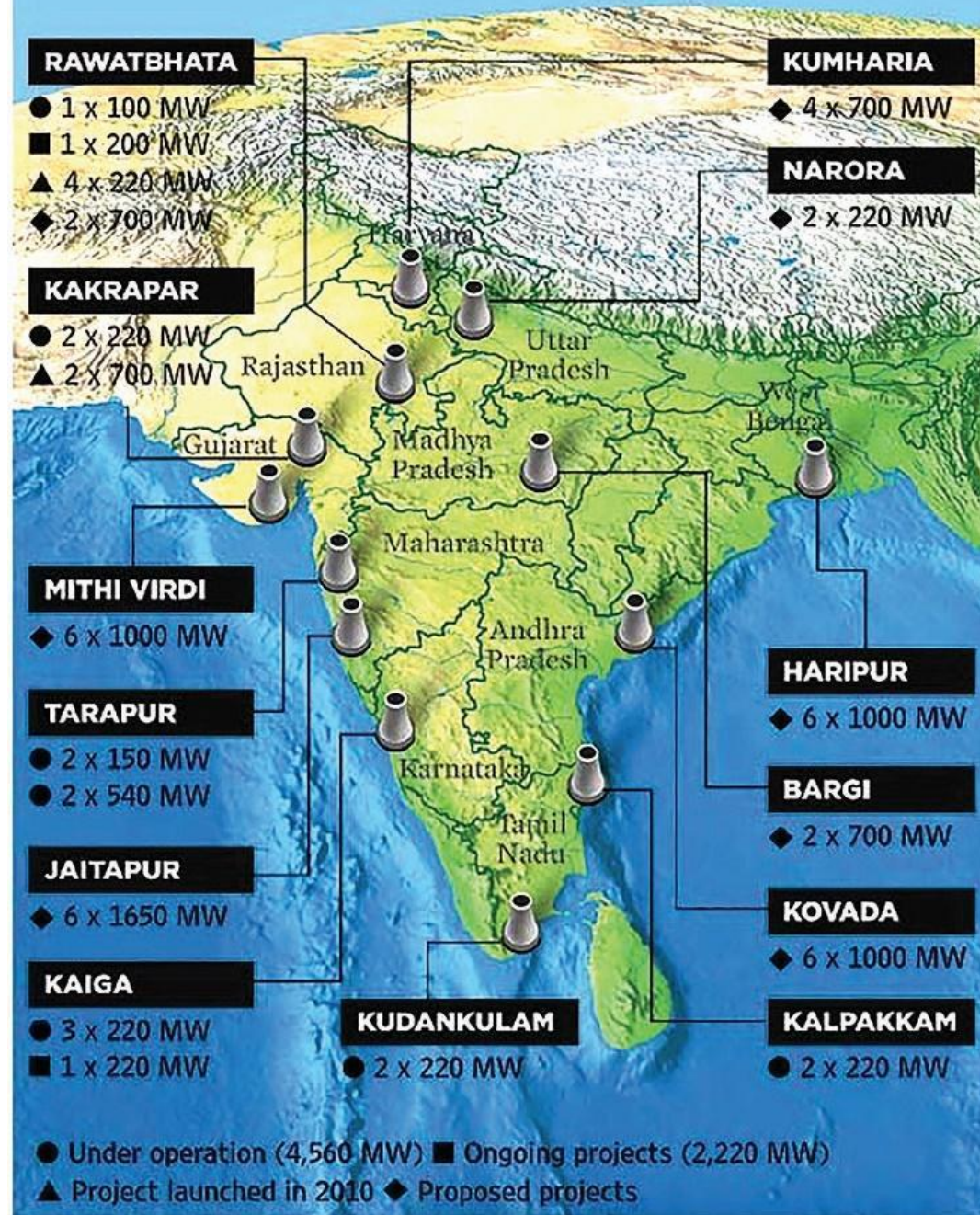


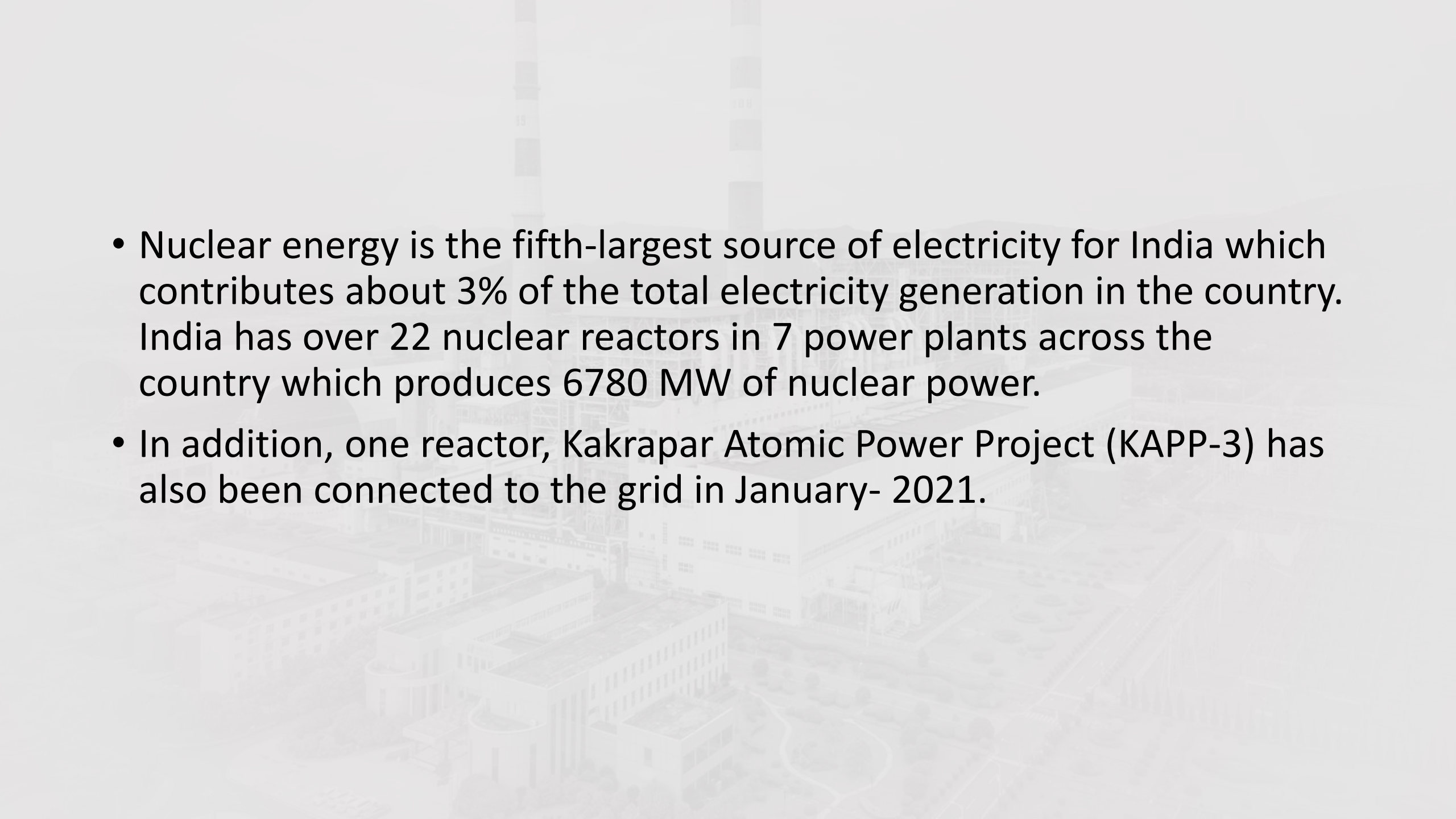
KUDANKULAM  
TAMIL NADU



**TOTAL CAPACITY OF  
6780 MW**

# THE NUCLEAR ENERGY SPREAD



- 
- Nuclear energy is the fifth-largest source of electricity for India which contributes about 3% of the total electricity generation in the country. India has over 22 nuclear reactors in 7 power plants across the country which produces 6780 MW of nuclear power.
  - In addition, one reactor, Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP-3) has also been connected to the grid in January- 2021.

**18 reactors are Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) and 4 are Light Water Reactors (LWRs).**

**KAPP-3** is the India's first 700 MWe unit, and the biggest indigenously developed variant of the PHWR.

- 
- **India's Indigenous Move:**
  - **The world's first thorium-based nuclear plant, "Bhavni," using Uranium-233, is being set up at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu.**
  - **This plant will be entirely indigenous and will be the first of its kind. The experimental thorium plant "Kamini" already exists in Kalpakkam.**



# The share of Reliance in a merged entity with Disney

**61** in percentage. Walt Disney and the industrial conglomerate Reliance Industries signed a pact to merge their media operations in India, *Bloomberg* reported. REUTERS

1

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## PARIS

# Eiffel Tower reopens after a six-day closure due to an employee strike



AFP

▲ The Eiffel Tower reopened to visitors on Sunday after a six-day closure because of striking employees demanding better maintenance of the historic landmark, showing traces of rust, and salary hikes. The operator of the 330 m tower said it will allocate an “ambitious 380 million euro investment by 2031” for renovation. AP



## BUSHFIRES RAZE AUSTRALIAN HOMES

Smoke from bushfires rises north of Beaufort, near Ballarat in Victoria, Australia on Saturday. Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese pledged on Sunday to provide whatever support was needed to assist Victoria state in a days-long wildfire emergency that has razed homes after authorities warned extreme heat could fan the blazes this week. *Reuters*



ONE OF WORLD'S MOST DENSELY POPULATED COUNTRIES HAS NO NATURAL WATER RESOURCES

# Water-stressed Singapore searches for solutions to keep taps flowing

VICTORIA MILKO  
& DAVID GOLDMAN  
SINGAPORE, FEBRUARY 25

A CRACK of thunder booms as dozens of screens in a locked office flash between live video of cars splashing through wet roads, drains sapping the streets dry, and reservoirs collecting the precious rainwater across the tropical island of Singapore. A team of government employees intently monitors the water, which will be collected and purified for use by the country's six million residents.

"We make use of real-time

data to manage the storm water," Harry Seah, deputy chief executive of operations at PUB, Singapore's National Water Agency, says with a smile while standing in front of the screens. "All of this water will go to the marina and reservoirs."

The room is part of Singapore's cutting-edge water management system that combines technology, diplomacy and community involvement to help one of the most water-stressed nations in the world secure its water future. The country's innovations have attracted the attention of other water-scarce nations seeking solutions.



Water consumption has increased by over 12 times since the nation's independence from Malaysia in 1965. AP

Singapore is one of the most densely populated countries on the planet. In recent decades the island has also transformed into a modern international business hub, with a rapidly developing economy. The boom has caused the country's water consumption to increase by over twelve times since the nation's independence from Malaysia in 1965.

With no natural water resources, the country has relied on importing water from Malaysia via a series of deals allowing inexpensive purchase of water drawn from the its Johor River. But the deal is set to expire in 2061, with uncertainty over its renewal.

For years Malaysian politicians have targeted the water deal, sparking political tensions with Singapore. T

And climate change, which brings increased intense weather, rising seas and a rise in average temperatures, is expected to exacerbate water insecurity, according to research done by the Singaporean government.

Seeking solutions to its water stresses, the Singaporean government has spent decades developing a master plan focusing on what they call their four "national taps": water catchment, recycling, desalination and imports.

Across the island, seventeen

reservoirs catch and store rainwater, which is treated through a series of chemical coagulation, rapid gravity filtration and disinfection.

Five desalination plants, which produce drinking water by pushing seawater through membranes to remove dissolved salts and minerals, operate across the island, creating millions of gallons of clean water every day.

Water technology developed and used in Singapore, such as portable water filters, water testing technology and flood management tools, have been exported to over 30 countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal.

AP





**BUSINESS AS USUAL**  
By UNNY



**UK prof invited by Karnataka says detained at airport, sent back on 'Delhi orders'**



**AKRAM**  
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 25

**NITYASHA KAUL**, a professor of Indian origin at the University of Westminster who was invited for an event organised by the Congress government in Karnataka, has alleged that she was detained at Bengaluru's international airport by immigration authorities and sent back to London on "orders from Delhi". Kaul, an author and a faculty

**EXPRESS NETWORK**  
**FILMMAKER KUMAR SHAHANI DIES AT 83**  
PAGE 10

**HCES 2022-23 DATA**

## Indians spending more on milk, fruits and veg than foodgrains

Rising expenditure on eggs, fish and meat across rural, urban households

**HARISH DAMODARAN**  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 25

THE LATEST Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) for 2022-23 does not only point to a continuing decline in the share of food items in the total spending basket of Indians. Equally revealing is a shift in the composition of food expenditure itself — from foodgrains and sugar to animal and horticulture products. In other words, from foods basically delivering

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**DEMAND**

for a "legal guarantee" to MSP is mainly from farmers of 23 crops, including foodgrains and sugarcane. But farm sector's growth is being led by livestock, fisheries and horticulture crops outside MSP purview. Their growth is largely market demand-driven, which is also borne out by HCES data.

## Monthly spend of farm families below rural avg

**HARIKISHAN SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 25

FOR THE first time, the average monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) of agricultural households has fallen below the overall average of rural households, according to the latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23 released by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) on Saturday. The survey report shows that

the average MPCE of families "self-employed in agriculture" was ₹3,762 in 2022-23 (August-July), while the overall average of rural households was ₹3,773. The gap between the MPCE of agricultural families and the overall average of rural households has been narrowing over the years. In 1999-2000, the MPCE of agricultural families was ₹520, while the overall average of rural households was ₹486. In 2004-05, the MPCE of agricultural households was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



## SP, Cong show of strength as Akhilesh joins Rahul yatra

**ABHINAV HARI GOVIND**  
AGRA, FEBRUARY 25

FOUR DAYS after his party sealed a seat-sharing pact with the Congress, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday joined Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Agra. Both leaders addressed the gathering, which included students and job aspirants, targeting the BJP government at the Centre and the state. "The message from here is BJP hatao, desh ko bachao (remove BJP, save the country)," Yadav said, urging the people to



Rahul, Priyanka, Akhilesh in Agra on Sunday. *Anil Mehta*

## 'A DIVINE EXPERIENCE'

PM Narendra Modi offers prayers on the seabed at the site of the ancient city of Dwarka on Sunday. It was a "very divine experience", he said. *PMO*

REPORTS, PAGE 6

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**Date :** 27, 28, 29 Feb. & 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 & 21, 30 March 2024  
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## WHAT RURAL INDIA EATS

### Composition of food consumption expenditure (%)

	1999-00	2004-05	2011-12	2022-23
Cereals	37.42	32.86	20.32	10.59
Pulses	6.63	5.84	5.48	4.33
Milk	14.73	15.38	15.2	17.96
Vegetables	10.39	11.07	12.51	11.6
Fruits	2.9	3.39	5.35	8
Egg, fish, meat	5.59	6.04	9.05	10.59
Edible oil	6.3	8.36	7.07	7.74
Spices	4.61	4.16	6.62	6.43
Sugar & salt	4.38	4.67	3.46	2.01
Beverages, etc*	7.05	8.25	14.93	20.74

## WHAT URBAN INDIA EATS

### Composition of food consumption expenditure (%)

	1999-00	2004-05	2011-12	2022-23
Cereals	25.78	23.77	15.63	9.29
Pulses	6.14	5.28	4.79	3.55
Milk	18.06	18.61	16.45	18.43
Vegetables	10.67	10.47	10.86	9.7
Fruits	5.04	5.28	8.02	9.73
Egg, fish, meat	6.51	6.37	8.56	9.11
Edible oil	6.53	8.12	6.24	6.05
Spices	4.31	3.63	5.68	5.44
Sugar & salt	3.75	3.88	2.7	1.53
Beverages, etc*	13.21	14.59	21.07	27.16

Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, National Sample Survey Office. \*Includes processed foods and purchased cooked meals.

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A group of people are clapping in a dimly lit room. The focus is on the hands and forearms of several individuals, some wearing suits. The background is blurred, showing more people and a window. The overall mood is celebratory and professional.

Thank you  
guys.

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