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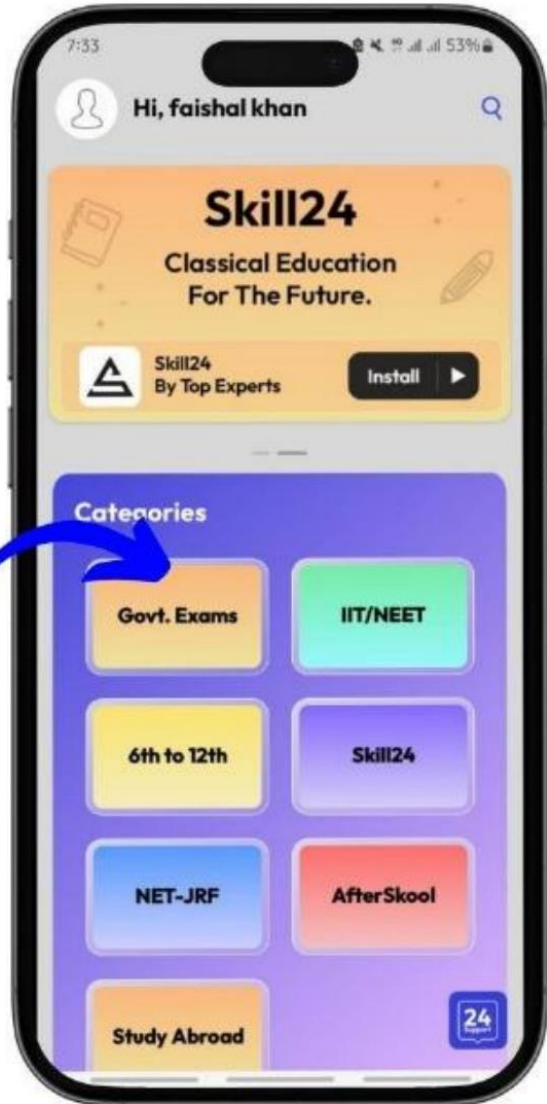
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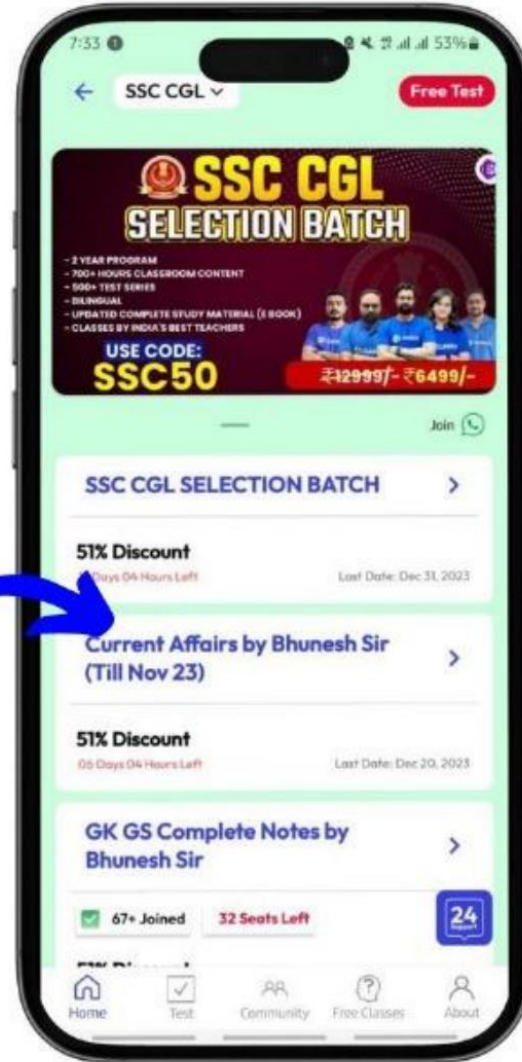
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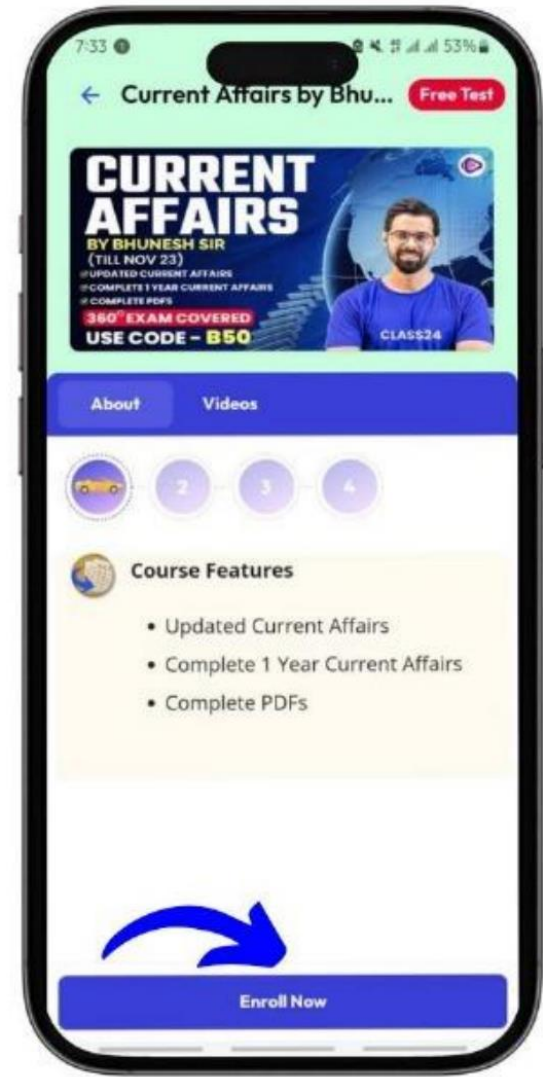
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Embrace every new
day with gratitude,
hope and love.

~ Lailah Gifty Akita



Time has come to drive out DMK from T.N.: PM

Narendra Modi says the Centre could not implement many of its ambitious projects in the State, including AIMS in Madurai, because of the State government's non-cooperation with it

L. Srikrishna
TIRUNELVELI

The time has come to drive out the DMK from Tamil Nadu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in Tirunelveli on Wednesday.

Speaking at a public meeting, he said the Centre could not implement many of its ambitious projects in the State, including the AIMS in Madurai, because of the non-cooperation of the DMK government.

He said the BJP, under the leadership of its State president K. Annamalai, would replace the DMK and deliver good governance. "This is Modi's guarantee," he added.

The DMK and its allies were keen on promoting their own interests, unmindful of the need to take development to the nook and corner of the State. "For instance, Likewise, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin is anxious to promote his own as the next political heir," but the BJP would protect the interests of your [people's] children," he said.

Mr. Modi said the BJP had made a ball functionary from Tamil Nadu (L. Murugan) as Union Minister. He could not win in an election from Tamil Nadu, but in a gesture of affection towards the people of Tamil Nadu, the party had nominated the Rajya Sabha from the Hindi heartland (Madhya Pradesh), and "the BJP is se-



For the people! Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets the public at a meeting held at Palayamkottai in Tirunelveli on Wednesday. (PI)

ing the country efficiently", he said. The BJP's 10-year rule raised the country's image among world leaders, he said.

Indian Air Force Group Captain Pilot Abinandan Varthaman was held captive for about 60 hours by Pakistan, but he was freed unharmed, he said. Likewise, eight former Indian naval officers were awarded death penalty in Qatar, but the Union government got them released.

He also touched on the diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka, explaining how Indians secured the release of five fishermen.

Development of T.N. The Prime Minister said the Union government had brought new infrastructure to the State. The Tirunelveli-Chennai (Vande Bharat) Express was a classic example, he said. Virudhunagar district had been earmarked for development of a PM-MITRA Textile Park.

Many more southern districts, including Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Ramanathapuram, and Virudhu-

nagar, which had not witnessed any substantial progress would have world-class infrastructure soon, he added.

The country was inching closer to many developed nations in many areas, including renewable energy. In the next five years, he wished to see India among the top three nations. Hence, Tamil Nadu should not be lagging behind any more and join mainstream development, he said.

The BJP had a comprehensive plan for the country for the next five years and Tamil Nadu is on the list for a massive changeover. The party would cross the 400-mark in the Lok Sabha election with the support from the electorate here, Mr. Modi said.

Thanking BJP workers and members of the public for their support to his 'En Mann, En Makkal' yatra he said, during the last two days of his tour in Tamil Nadu, he was able to observe that the people from different walks of life came closer to the BJP in a sign that the other parties (DMK) did nothing tangible, but only enriched themselves, he said.

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PM Modi inaugurates country's first indigenous hydrogen fuel cell ferry

The Hindu Bureau
KOCCHI

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The vessel has been built at the Cochin Shipyard. The pilot vessel is a 24-metre catamaran which can carry 50 passengers. It also has a fully air conditioned space for passengers. It will make urban mobility smooth and easy, according to a release issued by the Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL).



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To boost connectivity The hydrogen fuel vessel has fully home-grown technology and it can be replicated in other parts of the country for urban mobility application, according to the CSL.

Mr. Modi also said that the various rail projects launched on Wednesday will further boost connectivity between south Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

'Can't compare Singur, Nandigram protests'

Press Trust of India
BANGKUR

Rubbishing the BJP's attempts to draw parallels between anti-land acquisition agitations in Nandigram and Singur in the past and those currently taking place in Sandeshkhali, Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal Minister Mamata Banerjee insisted that the two cannot be conflated. Ms. Banerjee was however careful not to name Sandeshkhali directly while making the observation.

"Each place has its own characteristics. In Sandeshkhali, agitation compare one with the other," she said while speaking at the administrative view meeting held at Kolkata in Bankura.

"Do not make the mistake of inciting violence. I do not want any bloodshed or any incident of torture anywhere. I have never supported any wrongdoer and I never will. Even if some wrong was unknowingly committed somewhere, I don't support that either," she said.

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IUML announces its candidates in Kerala

The Hindu Bureau
MALAPPURAM

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) here on Wednesday announced its candidates for the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

While the incumbent Lok Sabha member from Ponnani, E.T. Mohammed Basheer will contest from Malappuram, M.P. Abdusamad Samadani, who now represents Malappuram, will contest from Ponnani.

I.U.M.L. State president Syed Sadikbill Shihab Thangal announced the candidates after a high-level party meeting here on Wednesday. The IUML is contesting the polls in an

alliance with the 29 Lok Sabha seats in Kerala. The Congress in Kerala is contesting 16. The seats announced with the IUML, while the Kerala Congress and the Revolutionary Socialist Party are contesting one each.

The IUML decided to drop its strident demand for a third Lok Sabha seat and instead accepted a Rajya Sabha seat. A decision on the Rajya Sabha seat would be taken later, Mr. Thangal said.

He said that sitting MP Nawas Kani will contest from Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu.

Party workers who gathered at Panakkal welcomed the announcement.

IN BRIEF

Forest dept. officials rescue sloth bear in Shivamogga city

Karnataka Forest department officials successfully rescued a sloth bear, aged about six to eight years, that was spotted strolling in the residential locality of Vishwantha Basavane in Gopala, Shivamogga city, on Wednesday morning. Local people spotted the animal in the area around 5.30 a.m. A resident suffered minor injuries when the animal pounced on him. The officials captured the animal after firing a tranquillizer dart at it. A decision to release the animal back to the forest area would be taken after assessing its health condition.

ED attaches assets of 'antique dealer' Monson Mavunkal

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has provisionally attached movable and immovable properties worth around ₹1.88 crore of alleged common and self-styled antique dealer Monson Mavunkal and his family members. The assets were attached for being proceeds of crime under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002. The ED probe revealed that he had cheated various persons in the guise of a collector of antiques and artefacts, which did not have the antique value as claimed by him.

Denying entry to farmer: NHRC issues notice to Metro

The National Human Rights Commission on Wednesday issued notice on Karnataka Chief Secretary and Managing Director of Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited over the case of a farmer who was stopped from boarding a Metro train by an official at the Rajajinagar station, citing his 'untidy' clothes. According to reports, the farmer arrived with a sack of goods on his head at the security point for the Metro station, where an official stopped him. The NHRC's action comes after a video of the incident went viral on social media.

Kerala HC refuses to cancel actor Dileep's bail

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday declined to interfere with an order of the Ernakulam Additional Sessions Court which rejected a plea of the Crime Branch for cancelling the bail granted to actor Dileep, accused in the 2017 actor sexual assault case.

Justice Sophy Thomas, while disposing of the petition, observed that "if the bail is cancelled at this juncture, it may lead to further litigation which may frustrate the trial which is about to be completed. Let the trial be completed and the case be disposed of at the earliest."

'Age of admission to Class 1 in Kerala will remain 5 years'

The Minister for General Education V. Sivankutty has said. Any sudden change in the minimum age of admission to six years will create social problems, the Minister said at a press meet here on Wednesday. The Union Ministry of Education has a few days ago written to States and Union Territories to treat six years as the minimum age of admission to Class 1 this year. The Ministry's latest missive, dated February 15, is the third time that States and Union Territories have been asked to align the age

Water woes



Tough times: Children on their way to fetch drinking water, supplied by Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board at Rajarajeshwari Nagar zone in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Many areas in the city are facing severe water shortage. (K. N. SUDHAKAR)

Will adopt declaration on Special Category Status for A.P.: Cong.

The Congress in Andhra Pradesh will adopt a declaration on Special Category Status (SCS) at its proposed Tirupati meeting scheduled on March 1, to bring the crucial issue back into focus, says the party president Y.S. Sharmila. Addressing the media here on Wednesday, Ms. Sharmila said the party would delay the declaration at the same place and venue from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made a promise to the people of the State on granting the SCS and other projects that find mention in the A.P. State Reorganisation Act, 2014. "The Congress believes in balancing welfare and development," Ms. Sharmila said, pointing to the 'Indira Aahayan' scheme announced by the party at its recent Anantapur meeting. "The SCS is important for the development of our State, it is our right," she said, launching a scathing attack on the YSR Congress Party and the Opposition Telugu Desam Party "for placing the crucial issue on the backburner to further their selfish motives."

SC extends protection to BRS leader from coercive action by ED

The Supreme Court on Wednesday extended till March 13 the protection it had granted to Bharat Rashtira Samithi leader K. Kavitha from any coercive action in a money laundering case lodged by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

A bench comprising justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mishra extended the protection to Ms. Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana Chief Minister and BRS chief K Chandrababbar Rao. She approached the apex court with an application seeking under section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) during the pendency of her petition.

Excise policy case

The ED has alleged that Kavitha was a part of liquor cartel "The South Group" which had a kickback of ₹100 crore to Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in return for favours under the now-scrapped excise policy for 2022-23. The top court had on February 5 extended the protection to Ms. Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana Chief Minister and BRS chief K Chandrababbar Rao. She approached the apex court with an application seeking under section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) during the pendency of her petition.

PM Modi inaugurates country's first indigenous hydrogen fuel cell ferry

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The vessel has been built at the Cochin Shipyard. The pilot vessel is a 24-metre catamaran which can carry 50 passengers. It also has a fully air conditioned space for passengers. It will make urban mobility smooth and easy, according to a release issued by the Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL).



Brand new: Built by the Cochin Shipyard, the hydrogen fuel cell ferry boat can carry up to 50 passengers. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The launch of the vessel was part of a major programme organised in Thoothukudi in Tamil Na-

du to mark the laying of the foundation stone for a ₹17,300-crore project in the district. The vessel

built at the CSL underscores the pioneering step for embracing clean energy solutions and aligning with the nation's net-zero commitments, he said.

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The hydrogen fuel vessel has fully home-grown technology and it can be replicated in other parts of the country for urban mobility application, according to the CSL.

Mr. Modi also said that the various rail projects launched on Wednesday will further boost connectivity between south Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

India's fight against rare diseases

The tragic death of 19-year-old child actress Sahani Ithammar from dermatomyositis, a rare disorder that causes inflammation to muscles, came in the same month as Rare Disease Day, which is marked today. The last day of February every year is consecrated to support crores of individuals who, because of their rare medical conditions, have long been neglected and stigmatised. According to the World Health Organization, rare diseases afflict 1 or lesser 1,000 population. Barely 5% of the over 7,000 known diseases worldwide are treatable. Most patients typically receive only basic treatment that alleviates symptoms. Some require drug and experimentally priced antibodies and supportive medication throughout their lives, which they can't afford.

Shashi Tharoor
is a three-term MP (Congress) for Thiruvananthapuram in the Lok Sabha and the Sahitya Akademi Award winner of 25 books



Shashank Shekhar
is his Legislative and Legal Advisor

Rare diseases in India accounts for one-third of the global rare disease incidence, with over 450 identified conditions. These range from widely known ones such as Spinal Muscular Atrophy and Gaucher's disease to lesser-known ones such as Mucopolysaccharidosis I and Whipple's disease. Roughly about 8 crore-10 crore Indians suffer from one rare disease or another; over 75% are children. Yet these diseases are largely overlooked. Resource constraints apart, India languishes near the bottom on awareness, diagnosis and drug development for rare diseases. After many nudges from the courts, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare formulated a national policy to treat rare diseases in 2017 but withdrew it in 2018 owing to "implementation challenges" and confusion regarding disease coverage, patient eligibility and cost-sharing. A revised policy, the National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD), was announced in 2021, but problems persist. We still don't define "rare diseases", a failure the policy attributes to a lack of sufficient data, as if regular data collection and epidemiological assessments are

not the government's job. Timely and accurate diagnosis is indispensable for the robust management of any disease, yet for rare disease patients, it takes an average of seven years for the conditions to be diagnosed (if at all). Physicians are generally unaware of how to interpret the signs and symptoms; healthcare professionals must be trained to improve their diagnostic accuracy. Expectant mothers with a history of approved by the Drugs Controller General of India are available for just about 20 rare diseases and can be availed only from Centres of Excellence (CoEs). Since CoEs are few (12), unevenly distributed, and uncoordinated, late diagnosis, inadequate therapies and lack of timely availability are the norm. Funds are a major challenge too. The Budget's allocation for rare diseases, although increasing over the years, remains low at ₹93 crore for 2023-2024, with previous years having seen reductions of up to 75% from the Budget Estimate and the Revised Estimate and an even worse reduction of 90% in the current year. The NPRD guidelines, up to ₹50 lakh is allowed per patient, which will be disbursed to the concerned CoE. As chronic rare diseases usually require lifelong management and care, this amount is woefully inadequate. Consequently, the CoEs are wary of beginning any treatment that they may need to suspend later, leaving them unable to initiate judicial action from patients and their kin. The confusion shows in the fund utilisation. For instance, more than ₹47 crore of the ₹71 crore financial assistance allocated to the 11 CoEs for the current year remains unused. There is no CoE for beginning any treatment. Mumbai exhausting all its funds while treating only 20 of 107 patients) and Delhi utilising less

than 20%. And in a classic case of abdication of governmental responsibility, NPRD has urged the CoEs to crowdfund to treat rare disease patients. A portal with over 1,400 registered patients has collected less than ₹3 lakh in three months. Crowdfunding can be a sustainable national policy?

The way forward Admittedly, the situation is not easy for the government, and to its credit, India has at least recognised rare diseases. However, the efforts are far from satisfactory. It is imperative that the Central government to frame a standard definition of rare diseases, increase budgetary outlays, dedicate funding for drug development and therapy, and increase the number of CoEs while also ensuring better coordination and responsible utilisation of funds. State governments must introduce social welfare programmes and develop satellite centres under the CoEs. Public and private companies could be co-opted for funding. CSR activities and partnerships can be leveraged to meet shortfalls.

Finally, the issue of exorbitant drug prices and availability must be addressed. Last year, the government waived GST and customs duty on medicines for rare diseases. But this exemption applies only to drugs which are to be "imported for personal use" and not to the ones commercially available in India. Given the exorbitant prices, how many patients can afford to import these life-saving drugs? Rare diseases can't be left to market forces; there just aren't enough market incentives for drug manufacturers. The government must incentivise domestic manufacturers under the Production-Linked Incentive Scheme, reduce clinical trial requirements in appropriate cases, and look into options such as repurposed drugs and bulk import. But first, it must withdraw GST on life-saving drugs. DPRD-29 reminds us that we can't find a way around the rarest of problems.

The nagging problem of Katchatheevu

Though fisherfolk want to resume fishing in the islet, India cannot allow it

STATE OF PLAY

L. Srikrishna
is a three-term MP (Congress) for Tamil Nadu

Katchatheevu islet, a part of Sri Lanka and located about 14 nautical miles from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu, is back in the limelight for the wrong reasons. On February 17, fishermen associations in Ramanathapuram district announced that they were boycotting the annual two-day festival, scheduled for February 23 and 24, at the St. Anthony's Church in the uninhabited islet. Every year, this event brings together the people from both sides of the Palk Bay separating India and Sri Lanka. The fisherfolk also announced that they would observe an indefinite strike. These decisions were a mark of protest against the Sri Lankan government's continuing claims and partnerships with men on charges of poaching.

Shift in approach Though the response of the Sri Lankan authorities is not new, there seems to be a shift in the way the island nation's judiciary treats the accused of poaching. In February, Sri Lanka Navy personnel arrested 42 fishermen belonging to Rameswaram and Thangachadam in Ramanathapuram, as well as other regions in India, in two separate incidents. A Sri Lankan court sentenced five of those fishermen to prison terms of between six months and two years, for the repeat offence of poaching. While ordering the release of the rest, the court warned that they would have to serve a jail term if they were caught again. The fishing community of Ramanathapuram district was shocked by this," said fisheries minister L. Srikrishna. According to one version,

the original shrine of the Church was built by the Rameswaram Diocese nearly 100 years ago. As per the Sri Lankan Navy records, it was constructed in 1901. Though it was taken over by the Jaffna diocese after India ceded Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in 1974, the two countries organised the festival together. In recent years, people from other States such as Karnataka have also been attending it. Over the last few odd years, it has been a practice for the Church authorities to extend an invitation to the Verelkodu parish, which, in turn, sends applications from pilgrims. On producing valid documents, pilgrims are allowed to cross the Palk Strait using travellers. Their actions are monitored by the Central and smaller agencies such as the Customs and the Police. Apart from exchanging pleasantries and gifts, pilgrims from both sides also pray for improved relations between the two countries. This year, the agitating fishermen and their families in Ramanathapuram argued that it wouldn't be fair for them to participate in a festival held in Sri Lanka when their own "brothers" were in jail in the neighbouring country. They were staying away from the celebrations to show solidarity, they said.

However, fishermen from Tamil Nadu are arrested in Sri Lanka, India's High Commissioner in Colombo and Consulate in Jaffna provide consular

and legal assistance to the imprisoned fishermen and work towards their early release. New Delhi has been sending loblolo to treat the fishermen purely humanistic and humanitarian concern." It says both sides should ensure that force is not used under any circumstance. Even though the Sri Lankan authorities release the fishermen as a matter of routine, they do not return the impounded fishing vessels. The Ramanathapuram fishermen believe that this adds insult to injury. This time too, vessels were impounded and not returned.

Resolving the Issue For about 10 years, the fishermen have been hoping that their issue will get resolved. Sushma Swaraj, Union External Affairs Minister, had even organised a high-level meeting of fishermen from both the countries to work out a solution. However, the earlier efforts result fully due to various developments. Mr. Jessu Raja said,

Now, sections of the fisherfolk expect the Indian government to impress upon the Sri Lankan government to allow fishing activity in Katchatheevu, as was the practice in the past. But the former minister, who assured Sri Lanka that it would abolish bottom trawling in a phased manner, hopes that the fishermen in jail in the neighbouring country. They were staying away from the celebrations to show solidarity, they said. However, fishermen from Tamil Nadu are arrested in Sri Lanka, India's High Commissioner in Colombo and Consulate in Jaffna provide consular

Luxury cars in India saw a 30% increase in the last 5 years

In recent years, the preferred brands are BMW, Lamborghini, Porsche, Jaguar Land Rover, and Mercedes-Benz

REBECCA ROSA VARGHESE & VIGNESH RADHAKRISHNAN

The number of luxury cars in India recorded a sharp increase in the last five years, an analysis of vehicle registration data shows. Nearly 5 lakh luxury cars have been registered till date in India across various Regional Transport Offices according to the Vaahan portal. Of them, close to 30% were registered in the 2020-24 period. This number is significantly high considering that the first two years in this period coincided with the pandemic and various sections of the economy were still in the recovery phase in the following two years. For this analysis, certain manufacturers were termed luxury brands based on reports published in various credible portals. The selection includes the following manufacturers: Lamborghini, BMW India, Porsche, Jaguar Land Rover, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, Bentley Motors, Lexus Motors, Rolls Royce, Ferrari India, Audi AG, Aston Martin, Maserati, Acura Legend and Alfa Romeo. In some cases, the price of cars was also considered.

The corresponding numbers were 10% for Rolls Royce cars, 13% for Bentleys, 8% for Ferraris, and 4% for Aston Martins. This shows that preferences have gone through a significant change in the past four years. There were also significant variations among States. Chart 2 shows the number of luxury cars registered till date across various States along the horizontal axis. The further to the right, the higher the number of luxury cars registered in the State. Maharashtra leads the list by a wide margin with 1,35,95,339 cars registered in the State till date. This is followed by Karnataka (56,39,6 cars), Delhi (49,59,7), Gujarat (42,10,1), and Tamil Nadu (40,42,9).

While absolute numbers are important, a comparison with non-luxury cars registered in the States provides a better picture. For this purpose, one luxury car registered in a State for every 1 lakh non-luxury cars is plotted on the vertical axis of Chart 2. The higher the State in the chart, the higher the luxury car concentration. Cars manufactured by Maruti Suzuki, Tata, Honda, Hyundai, and Toyota were considered non-luxury. For instance, in Maharashtra, for every 1 lakh non-luxury cars registered, there are 1,200 luxury cars. Notably, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, and Goa had a similar concentration of luxury cars. In the Union Territories of Chandigarh and Puducherry, the concentration was much higher. This was due to lower road tax and other fees which significantly reduced the prices of such cars.

Table 3 shows the same information as in Table 1 for States with a high number of luxury cars. Of the 104 Maseratis registered in India, 78 are in Tamil Nadu. Of the 723 Aston Martins registered in the country, 618 are in Karnataka. Maharashtra leads in registrations of Rolls Royce cars and Delhi leads in registrations of Alfa Romeo and Acura Legend.

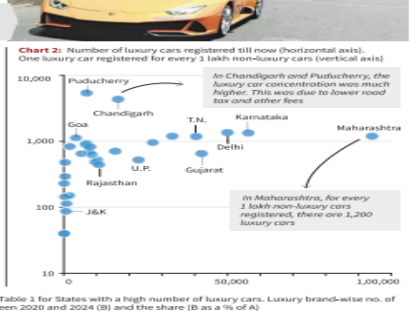
Hot wheels

The data for the charts were sourced from the Vaahan Dashboard

Speed and comfort! Luxury cars manufactured by Lamborghini passing through ECR in Chennai. M. KARUNAKRAN

Table 1: The table lists, luxury brand-wise, the number of cars registered in India till date (A), no. of cars registered between 2020 and 2024 (B) and the share (B as a % of A)

Luxury car	A	B	%
Lamborghini	918	269	29.2%
BMW India	1,35,95,339	68,056	0.05%
Porsche	6,813	2,263	33.2%
Jaguar	35,406	10,473	29.6%
Audi AG	4,94,067	1,42,523	28.8%
Mercedes	1,74,187	49,562	28.4%
Volvo	47,621	10,819	22.7%
Bentley	1,046	139	13.3%
Lexus Motors	38	1	2.6%
Rolls Royce	962	92	9.6%
Ferrari India	878	72	8.2%
Audi AG	66,282	4,639	7%
Aston Martin	723	12	1.7%
Maserati	154	3	2%
Acura Legend	42	0	0%
Alfa Romeo	60	0	0%



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO FROM THE FEBRUARY 28, 1974 EDITION. A.S. 1974 WAS NOT A LEAP YEAR

Facelift for Rly. stations

New Delhi, Feb. 27: The Railway Minister, Mr. L.N. Mishra, in his budget speech in the Lok Sabha to-day said that a special programme of improving the cleanliness and appearance of important stations was in progress. This would be done by the Railways present an image worthy of its being the premium public sector undertaking in the country.

Varanasi station, one of the important centres of pilgrimage, is being given a facelift at an estimated cost of Rs. 65 lakhs. Some of the other important stations on which work is in progress are Bombay VT., Bombay Central, New Delhi and Delhi, Kanpur, Madras Central, Bangalore, Gauhati, Nagpur, Aligarh, Rae Bareilly, Gorakhpur, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Patna and Darbhanga and Patna.

Mr. Mishra said that a number of amenities for passengers at stations and in trains have also been proposed in the budget. The expenditure on passenger amenities and other services has been maintained at Rs. 4 crores per year. He said the travel concessions available to the students, teachers, athletes and sportsmen continue to be provided during the current year. The running of special trains for educational tours, started in May 1973, had been made a regular feature. A concession of 50 per cent in first class fare, free kitchen cars, free travel for cooks was provided in such trains.

The Railway Minister said that provision for a number of amenities for the passengers had also been made in the budget. About 5000 porters were being recruited for the current year staff. For this purpose Rs. 7,96 crores had been provided for 1974-75, he said.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 29, 1924

Belgian Premier's resignation

London, Feb. 28: The fall of the Belgian Government which has caused consternation in Government circles in Paris, creates an interesting European situation. A significant part of its international implications just when reparations seem to be entering a decisive phase. The Opposition came from different quarters and was based on diverse grounds, but the most formidable assault proceeded from the combination of Socialists and Flemish Democrats who for a long time have decried the occupation of Ruhr and feared the convention would lead to further subservience to France.

Hot wheels

The data for the charts were sourced from the Vahan Dashboard

Speed and comfort: Luxury cars manufactured by Lamborghini passing through ECR in Chennai. M. KARUNAKARAN



Table 1: The table lists, luxury brand-wise, the number of cars registered in India till date (A), no. of cars registered between 2020 and 2024 (B) and the share (B as a % of A)

Luxury car	A	B	B/A (%)
Lamborghini	518	269	52%
BMW India	1,59,539	64,056	40%
Porsche	6,811	2,263	33%
Jaguar	35,406	10,473	30%
India	4,94,067	1,42,523	29%
Mercedes	1,74,187	49,662	29%
Volvo	47,621	10,819	23%
Bentley	1,046	139	13%
Lexus Motors	38	4	11%
Rolls Royce	962	92	10%
Ferrari India	878	72	8%
Audi AG	66,082	4,639	7%
Aston Martin	723	32	4%
Maserati	154	3	2%
Acura Legend	42	0	0%
Alfa Romeo	60	0	0%

Chart 2: Number of luxury cars registered till now (horizontal axis). One luxury car registered for every 1 lakh non-luxury cars (vertical axis)

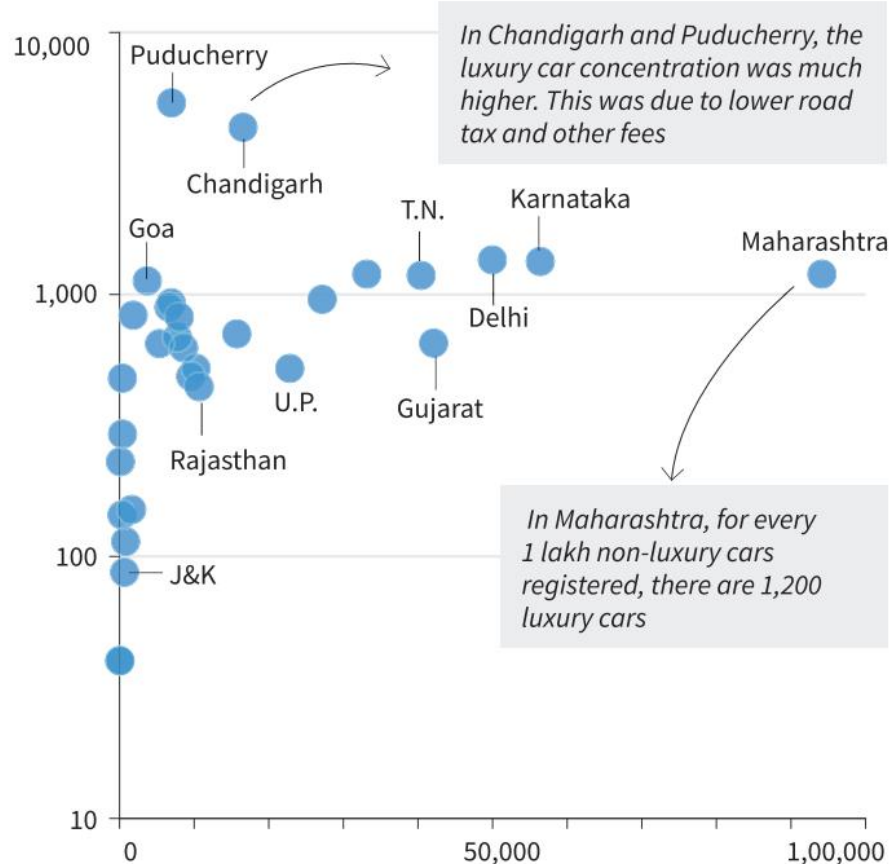


Table 3: This table shows the same information as in Table 1 for States with a high number of luxury cars. Luxury brand-wise no. of cars registered till date (A), no. of cars registered between 2020 and 2024 (B) and the share (B as a % of A)

	Delhi			T.N.			Maharashtra			Karnataka			Gujarat		
Luxury car	A	B	%	A	B	%	A	B	%	A	B	%	A	B	%
Audi AG	5326	416	8	6047	385	6	11679	580	5	9679	451	5	7098	452	6
BMW India	13872	4708	34	15994	6709	42	32912	12492	38	18659	7951	43	12700	4608	36
Jaguar	4826	774	16	1293	620	48	6016	1889	31	4154	1042	25	2765	1170	42
Mercedes	22821	4718	21	12833	3612	28	37390	10458	28	15243	4805	32	14760	4444	30
Volvo	1758	451	26	2981	0	0	4488	1724	38	6537	1228	19	4099	1335	33
Ferrari India	71	6	8	591	4	1	87	44	51	14	2	14	5	3	60
Rolls Royce	179	13	7	82	2	2	240	54	23	55	5	9	17	3	18
Bentley	218	22	10	49	13	27	156	64	41	38	11	29	37	4	11
Porsche	715	226	32	416	228	55	968	425	44	1331	248	19	595	196	33
Lamborghini	48	19	40	49	21	43	159	109	69	49	22	45	20	0	0
Maserati	11	0	0	78	1	1	12	0	0	11	0	0	1	0	0
Aston Martin	24	11	46	8	3	38	26	7	27	618	3	0	3	0	0
Acura Legend	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alfa Romeo	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lexus Motors	0	0	0	2	0	0	13	4	31	8	0	0	1	0	0



Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Freedom from colonial mindset

Rajpath now becomes Kartavyapath, Mughal Garden becomes Amrit Udyan, new epaulettes of Indian Navy to be based on the naval ensign of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

IE 100

IE 100 2024
THE LIST OF MOST POWERFUL INDIANS

BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY

Best hope for Congress in the 2024 Lok Sabha election

DAY AFTER RS POLLS: BJP MLAs SUSPENDED, BUDGET PASSED

Congress firefights in Himachal, rebellion against CM out in open

Vikramaditya quits as minister; talks to observers; Sukhu says govt will last full term

MANOJ CG & NAVJEEVAN GOPAL
NEW DELHI, CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 28

A DAY after its official candidate suffered an embarrassing defeat in the Rajya Sabha elections in Himachal Pradesh, the Congress central leadership on Wednesday scrambled to avert crisis and save the state government even as six party MLAs and three independents, who cross-voted for the BJP nominee, remained out of the party's reach. While young minister,



Chief Minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu with AICC observers Bhupesh Baghel, D K Shivakumar, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Rajeev Shukla in Shimla on Wednesday. (Left) Vikramaditya Singh after quitting as minister. (Right) Vikramaditya Singh announced his resignation from the Cabinet in the morning, the central leadership managed to pacify him by the end of the day. After a meeting with AICC observers D K Shivakumar, Bhupesh Baghel and Bhupinder Singh Hooda late in the evening, Vikramaditya

Interim unity govt, common voter list: Law panel readies report on simultaneous polls

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 28

FROM MAKING express provisions for simultaneous polls, prescribing a common electoral roll to formation of a unity government in case a government falls before the end of its five-year tenure, the Law Commission of India has worked out three major Constitutional amendments to set the ball rolling for the 'One Nation, One Election' project in 2025. The Indian Express has source.

The 22nd Law Commission, headed by former Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, is set to recommend the addition of a new chapter on simultaneous polls in the Constitution, source said. Currently, Part XV of the Constitution deals with elections. It prescribes the role of the Election Commission and for elections to be based on adult suff-

A BJP promise

THE IDEA of simultaneous polls, for long a BJP promise, has been amplified in recent years by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In its 2019 poll manifesto, the BJP said simultaneous polls were needed to reduce expenditure, ensure efficient utilisation of government resources and security forces and for effective policy planning. It said a common voter list will ensure every citizen gets the right to exercise his/her franchise for all public bodies.

"examine and make recommendations for holding simultaneous

In first visit to Valley since Art 370 move, PM to address Srinagar rally

NAVEED IQBAL & LIZ MATHEW
SRINAGAR, NEW DELHI, FEB 28

IN WHAT would mark his first visit to Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to address a public rally in Srinagar on March 7.

The Prime Minister has been on a whirlwind tour of the country ahead of the announcement of Lok Sabha polls, with his speeches focusing on how his government's schemes have touched the lives of beneficiaries.

In Srinagar, too, he is expected to address beneficiaries of the Centre's schemes, sources said.

"There is a demand for a public rally in the Valley — it is going to be held at Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Center. The final details are being worked out," said a source. "He may address beneficiaries from far-flung areas virtually."

Modi, who visited Jammu last week and inaugurated a series of development initiatives totalling over Rs 32,000 crore, has not visited Jammu since. During his second term as Prime Minister, during his Jammu visit, he had termed Article 370 the "biggest impediment" to development in J&K.

The last time he visited Jammu in February 2019, ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, as part of his tour to all three regions of the former state — Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh. He had also



INSIDE

CB1 SUMMONS ABHILESH IN 2019 MINING CASE

RELIANCE, DISNEY SIGN MEDIA DEAL TO CREATE MEDIA GIANT

3,300 KG NARCOTICS SEIZED OFF GUJARAT COAST PAGE 6, 11 & 15

In CONVERSATION WITH THE FM

Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman in conversation with Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group, and P Vaidyanathan Iyer, Executive Editor, The Indian Express, and Express Adda in Bengaluru on Wednesday.



In Kamal Nath bastion of Chhindwara, BJP on prowl, Congress tries to herd its leaders

ANAND MOHAN J
CHHINDWARA, FEBRUARY 28

A TEAM of senior Congress leaders, including former general secretary, youth presidents and councillors, have taken a break from politics and are enjoying a game of cricket at the Indira Gandhi Cricket Stadium in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district, where posters of Kamal Nath and his son Nakul Nath dominate the landscape.

Adish Tripathi, a key election strategist for the Congress and a



The Congress office in Chhindwara. Over 1,500 party workers here switched to the BJP this month. (Anand Mohan J)

ABHINAV HARI GOVIND

ABHINAV HARI GOVIND
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 28

THREE MONTHS ago, Vaqeeel Hasan spotted a broad smile as he returned home after his team of "rat-hole" miners played a starring role in rescuing 41 workers who had been trapped for 17 days in the collapsed Siltayara-Bakot tunnel in Uttarakhand.

On Wednesday, he came home to find that it was being demolished as part of an anti-encroachment drive by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) at Sri Ram Colony in Northeast Delhi's Khajuri Khas area.

"The (authorities) came for demolition today morning; my wife and I were not at home, only my children were there. I rushed back, tried telling them not to go ahead, but they didn't listen," Hasan, 45, who also owns a real estate agency, said. The company that employed the "rat-hole" miners, said.

DDA said, "On 28.02.2024, a consultation drive was conducted to remove encroachment from acquired land in village Khajuri Khas. The land was part of planned development land."

Hasan claimed his house was the only one targeted in the locality. "There are other houses in the same line, it's a colony. They said it is DDA land. In the area, only my house was demolished. The registry is from 1987, and we have been living here since 2012. It is an 80 sq plot," he said.

Recalling the rescue mission in November, Hasan, the father of three minor children, said, "We didn't think about our fees and got the work done. We are not asking for money, all I ask for is that I have the house I was living in. Where do we go with the children?"



Vaqeeel Hasan and his house that was razed in Khajuri Khas

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

DEEPTIM TIWARY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 28

WITH the Belgian Malinois becoming the most common companion of special forces in the United States, the Indian Army's anti-terrorist unit, the National Security Guard (NSG), hopes to soon deploy the ferocious four-legged fighting force in its future operations in the of the adorable Labrador.

During the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, the Belgian Malinois — a canine breed especially trained by the Israeli forces to not just sniff out Hamas mili-

NSG's Labradors set to make way for the more versatile Belgian Malinois

tants in their underground tunnels in Gaza, but also track and attack them — was among Israel's most valued fighting units.

The NSG's Labrador squad will gradually make way for the highly intelligent Belgian Malinois. While earlier Labradors were used for sniffing out and tracking and German Shepherds for attacking, the NSG is now training its Malinois dogs to carry out all three tasks.

Sources said the Malinois squad will help NSG's Black Cat commandos with their anti-terror operations. "The operational squads will become leaner. Else, we would have to take two sets of

dogs along with their trainers and other logistics. It impacts mobility and stealth," NSG Director General MA Ganapathy said.

Lieutenant Colonel R B Sharma, in charge of NSG's K9 canine unit, said training for the new inductees started in August 2023. "At present, the squad has Labradors, cocker spaniels and Belgian Malinois. We have 20 Labradors and are not acquiring more Labradors since we plan to retire them gradually. As their replacement, we have acquired 14 Belgian Malinois and they are now our lead dog squad. Belgian Malinois is the preferred breed of the best forces in the world.

The US forces that hunted down al-Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan had Malinois dogs in tow," Lt Col Sharma said.

In 2019, a Belgian Malinois played an important role in a military strike by the US that resulted in the death of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Lt Col Sharma said unlike Labradors, who have great olfactory senses but are docile, the more capabilities since we are only slightly lower. However, they are more alert and possess the ability to attack and paralyse their targets, giving security forces "golden moments" before their intervention.

"Labradors get tired easily and can get playful during operations. These are not issues we face with the Malinois. Labradors are constantly looking for affection and are eager to please their masters. They also want treats constantly. Malinois are more professional that way," he adds.

NSG section in-charge Major Rishi, the main dog trainer, said, "The Malinois can also be trained to follow laser beams. So a bag can be pointed out with a laser beam at a distance; the dog can reach it without the in-person assistance of its handler, thus reducing the risk to the soldier."

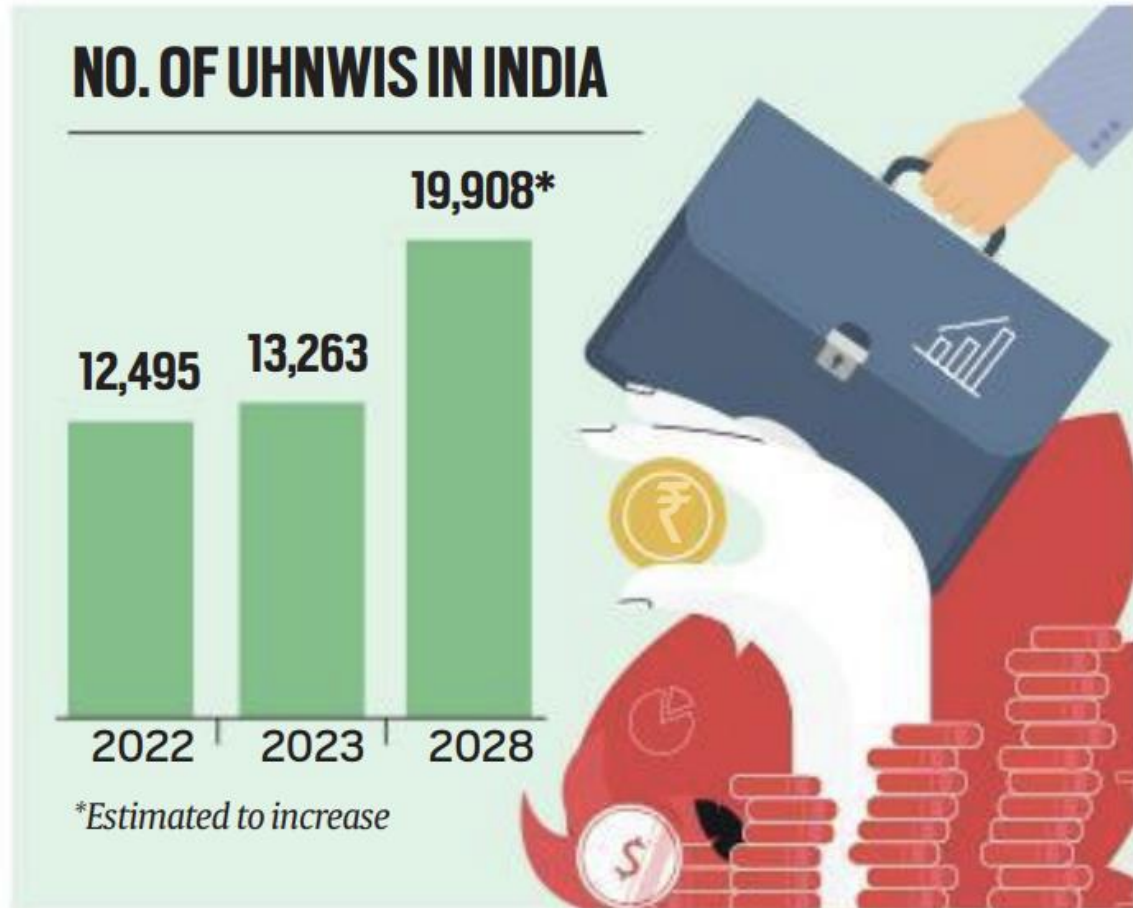
The NSG has also acquired the Canine Reward Delivery Systems (CRDS) designed for dog squads. These are not issues we face with the Malinois. Labradors are constantly looking for affection and are eager to please their masters. They also want treats constantly. Malinois are more professional that way," he adds.

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The NSG has also acquired the

Number of ultra-rich in India rises 6% in '23: Knight Frank

Ultra-high Net Worth Individuals (UHNWIs) are defined as individuals having a net worth of \$30 million and above.



No. of UHNWIs globally

2022:	6,01,300
2023:	6,26,619
2028:	8,02,891*

Indian UHNWIs in 2024

90% To witness an increase in their wealth during the year 2024

63% To see a significant increase of more than 10% in their wealth value

Knight Frank's country rankings: (Year-on-year expansion)

Turkey:	9.7%
The US:	7.9%
India:	6.1%
South Korea:	5.6%
Switzerland:	5.1%

*Estimated to increase
Source: Knight Frank/PTI

COUNTRY FACES TWIN DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES: PERSISTENTLY LOW FERTILITY RATE, AGEING POPULATION

Singapore's shrinking population: Fertility rate below 1% for first time

GURDIP SINGH

SINGAPORE, FEBRUARY 28

SINGAPORE, FACING a dwindling population and a manpower shortage, has seen its resident total fertility rate (TFR) drop to an estimated 0.97 per cent in 2023, the first time it has dropped below one per cent in the country's history.

The TFR, which refers to the average number of babies each woman would have during her reproductive years, fell from 1.04 in 2022 and 1.12 in 2021, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Indranee Rajah told Parliament on Wednesday.

The birth rate remains below the replacement rate of 2.1 – the level at which a population replaces itself. The latest figure places Singapore among countries with the lowest birth rates globally, with South Korea topping the list at 0.72 in 2023, The Straits Times newspaper reported on Wednesday.

There were 26,500 resident marriages and 30,500 resident births in 2023, said Indranee, who oversees the National Population and Talent Division, which is under the Strategy Group in the PMO.

“Overall, however, there were fewer resident marriages and births annually on average



With fewer births, Singapore will face a shrinking workforce, which will affect attracting global business in the future. Reuters

over the last five years, compared to the preceding five-year period,” she said.

Singapore is confronted with the “twin demographic challenges of a persistently low fertility rate and an ageing population”, the daily quoted the minister as saying. These challenges are not unique to Singapore, she added. Neighbouring Malaysia and Thailand also saw their fertility rates fall in 2022.

Indranee gave various reasons for Singapore's low fertility, including the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting some couples' marriage and parenthood plans.

She added, “Others cite concerns about the financial costs of

child-raising, pressures to be an excellent parent, or difficulties managing work and family commitments.” Indranee said the falling numbers reflect a generational change in priorities, and young people may not even see marriage or parenthood as important life goals.

The falling TFR has serious implications for Singapore's future, she cautioned. She said, “With fewer births, we will face a shrinking workforce. It will be increasingly challenging to maintain our dynamism, attract global businesses and create opportunities for the next generation.” She said countries such as South Korea and Italy have already experi-

enced this, and they are grappling with economic slowdowns and falling wages.

In 2023, the government announced various measures to support marriage and parenthood, including doubling the government-paid paternity leave and increasing Baby Bonus benefits. It has also supported the adoption of flexible work arrangements as part of efforts to help working parents manage jobs and families.

A tripartite work group is developing guidelines on flexible work arrangements that will be compulsory for employers to follow once they are implemented later in 2024, the *Singapore daily* reported. **PTI**

Viacom18 to merge into Star India; Ambanis to infuse \$1.4 bn

RIL, Disney form \$8.5 bn entertainment giant

VIVEAT SUSAN PINTO
Mumbai, February 28

RELIANCE INDUSTRIES AND Walt Disney on Wednesday announced the merger of their television and streaming media companies in India — Viacom 18 and Star India — creating an \$8.5-billion entertainment juggernaut. The move has been in the works since December 2023.

INSIDE

How media landscape will change

PAGE 4

As part of the transaction, the media undertaking of Viacom18 will be merged into Star India through a court-

approved scheme of arrangement. In addition, RIL has agreed to invest \$1.4 billion (₹11,500 crore) into the JV for its growth strategy. While RIL will own a 16.34% stake in the combined entity, Viacom18 and Disney will have 46.82% and 36.84%, respectively. Nita Ambani will be the chairperson of the JV and Uday Shankar will be the vice-chairperson.

The transaction is expected to be com-

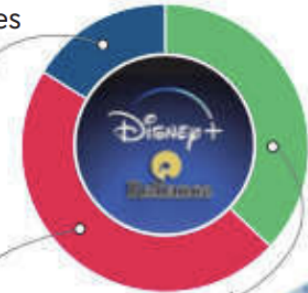
MEGA MERGER



■ Reliance Industries to own **16.34%** in the combined entity

■ Viacom18 and Disney to own **46.82%** & **36.84%**, respectively

Nita Ambani to be the chairperson of the JV



Uday Shankar to be vice-chairperson

pleted by the last quarter of calendar year 2024 or by early 2025, the companies said, subject to regulatory and shareholder approvals.

Disney will provide a content licence to the JV and may also contribute certain additional media assets to the JV, it said. This will include a licence to more than 30,000 Disney content assets apart from

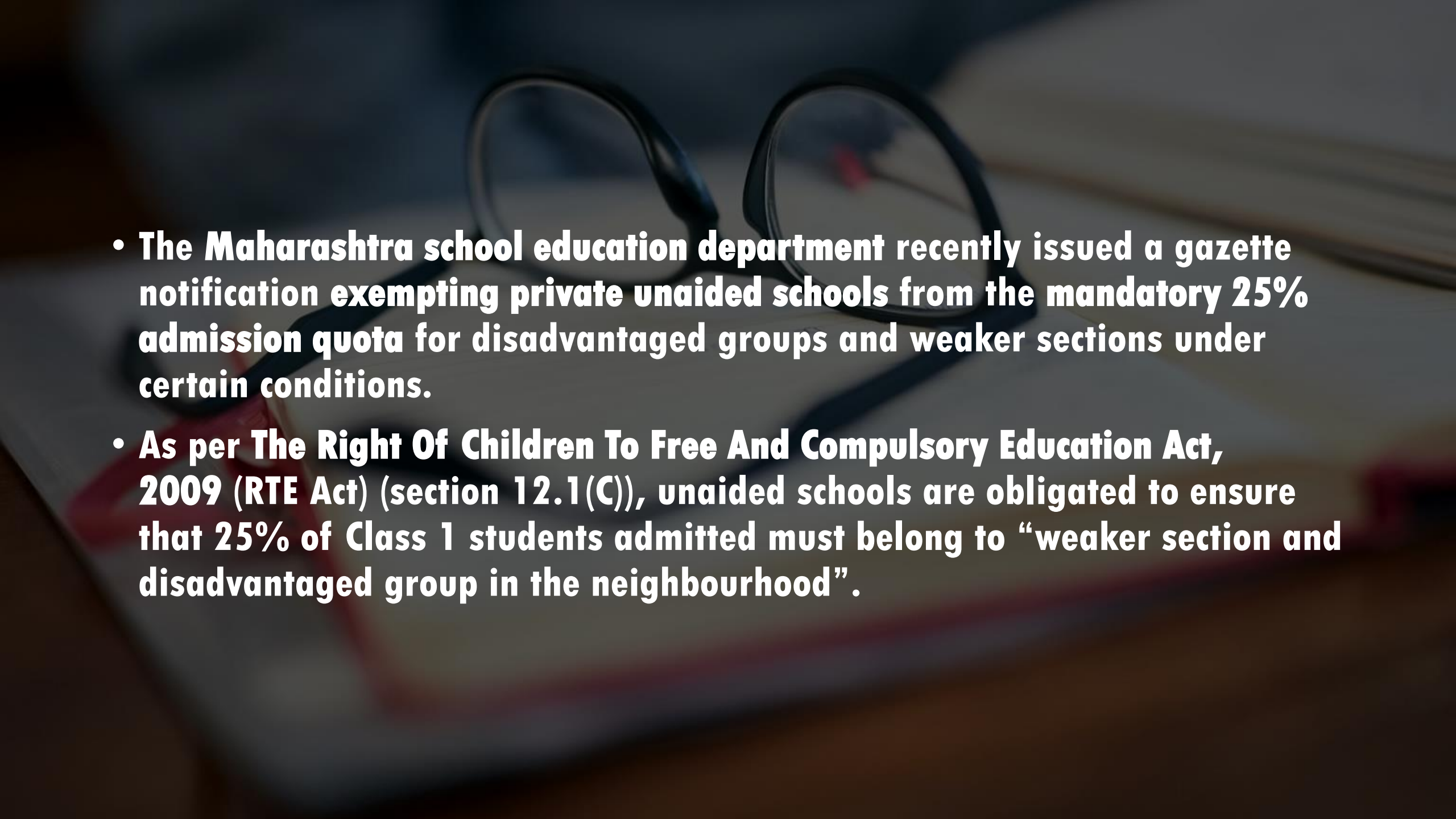
the exclusive rights to distribute Disney films and productions in India.

At a broader level, the JV will be one of the leading TV and digital streaming platforms for entertainment and sports content in India, with more than 100 TV channels like Star Plus, Colors and Star Sports.

Continued on Page 13



Maharashtra Exempts Private Schools from RTE Quota Admissions

- 
- **The Maharashtra school education department recently issued a gazette notification exempting private unaided schools from the mandatory 25% admission quota for disadvantaged groups and weaker sections under certain conditions.**
 - **As per The Right Of Children To Free And Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) (section 12.1(C)), unaided schools are obligated to ensure that 25% of Class 1 students admitted must belong to “weaker section and disadvantaged group in the neighbourhood”.**

- 
- **With this move, Maharashtra joins Karnataka and Kerala in exempting private schools from RTE admissions, following Karnataka's 2018 rule and Kerala's 2011 rules which allow fee concession only if no government or aided schools are within walking distance, set at 1 km for Class 1 students.**


- **Right to Free and Compulsory Elementary Education: Children aged 6-14 years are entitled to free, compulsory education in local schools, with enrollment in an age-appropriate class for those above 6 not in school.**
 - **Aided schools must also offer education for free, proportionate to their funding, but not less than 25%.**

-



Steadfast Defender

The North Atlantic Treaty Council (NATO) has started its largest military exercise in Europe, the Steadfast Defender 2024.



Steadfast Defender - It is a military exercise which incorporates land, air, sea, cyber, and space operations to enhance civil-military cooperation, by [NATO](#).



It is the largest exercise conducted by the NATO since the Cold War.

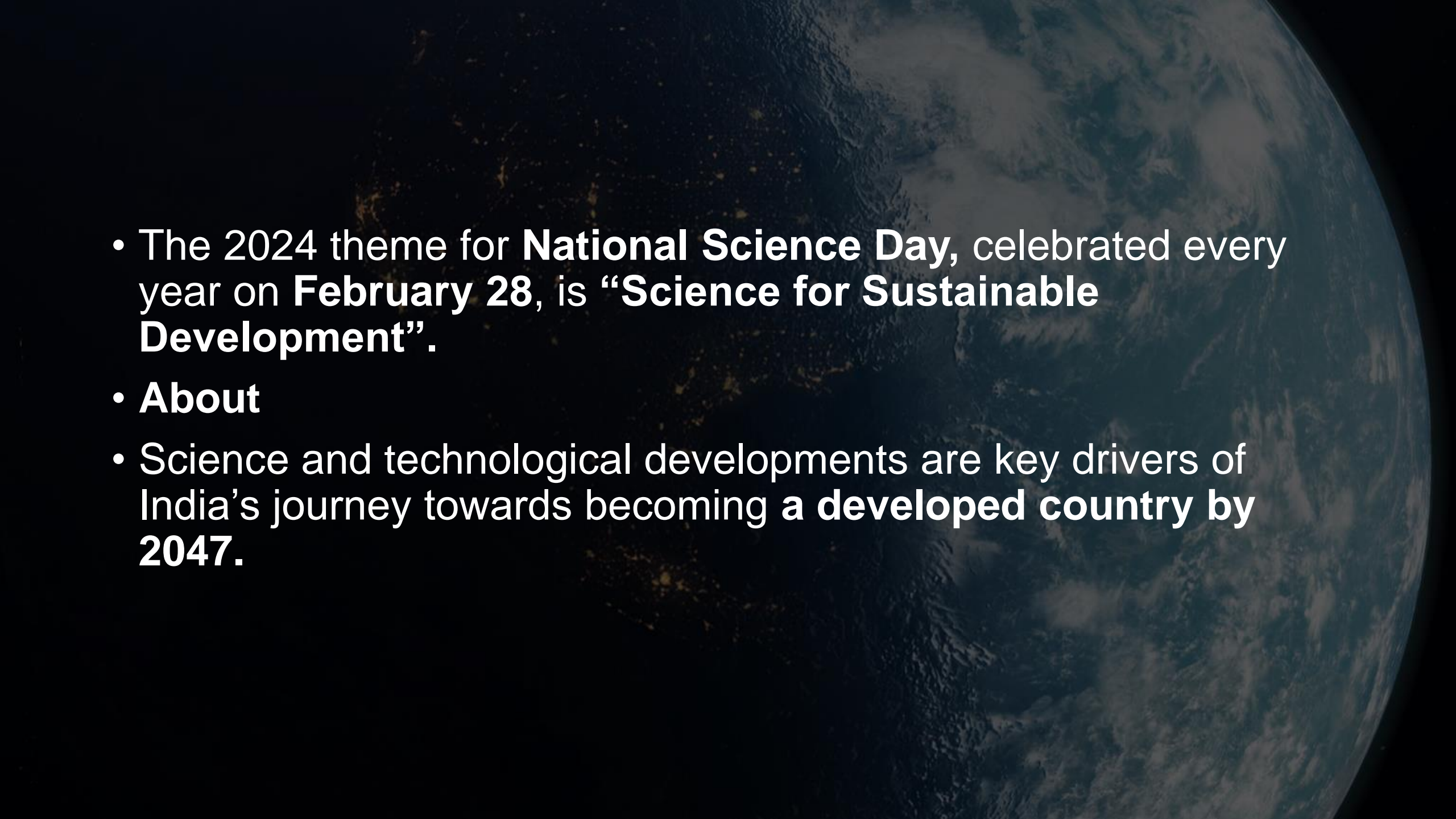
The last exercise on a similar scale to Steadfast Defender 24 was REFORGER 88.

Aim - To highlight its collective military might and commitment to the security of its members in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

- 
- **Participants** - Over 90,000 troops from 31 NATO allies as well as special invitee Sweden will participate in the exercise.
 - *Russian exclave **Kaliningrad** is situated between EU and NATO members Lithuania and Poland, and is also the headquarters of Russia's Baltic Sea fleet, and the country's only ice-free European port.*



Funding for Research and Development in India

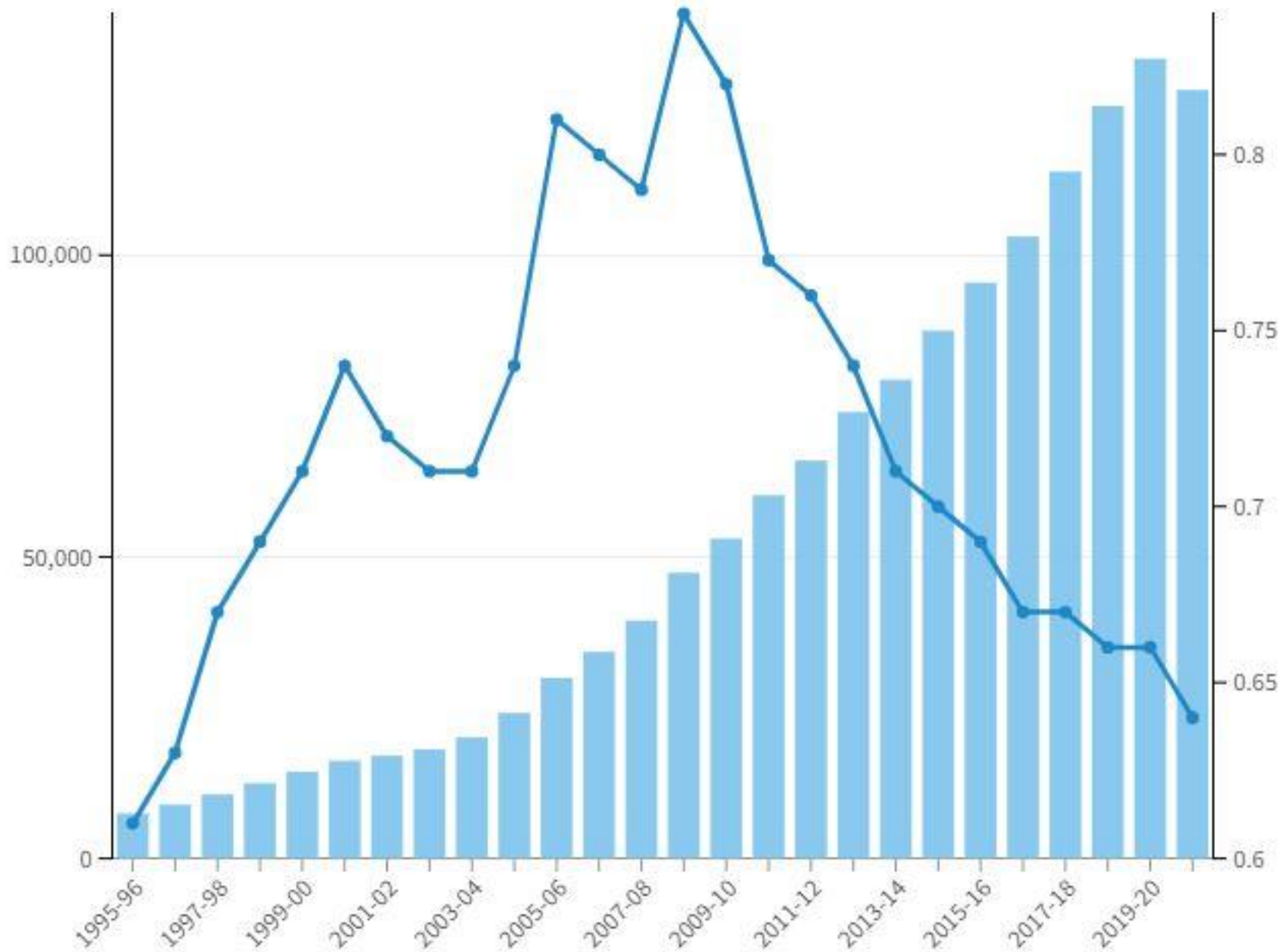
- 
- The 2024 theme for **National Science Day**, celebrated every year on **February 28**, is “**Science for Sustainable Development**”.
 - **About**
 - Science and technological developments are key drivers of India’s journey towards becoming a **developed country by 2047**.

- **Funding for R&D in India**

- Funding for fundamental research in India is amongst the **world's lowest**.
- In the recent past, India's R&D expense has dropped to the **current 0.64-0.65%** of GDP from 0.8% in 2008-2009 and 0.7% in 2017-2018.

-

■ Gross domestic expenditure on R&D as a % of GDP ■ R&D expenditure (in Rs. crore)



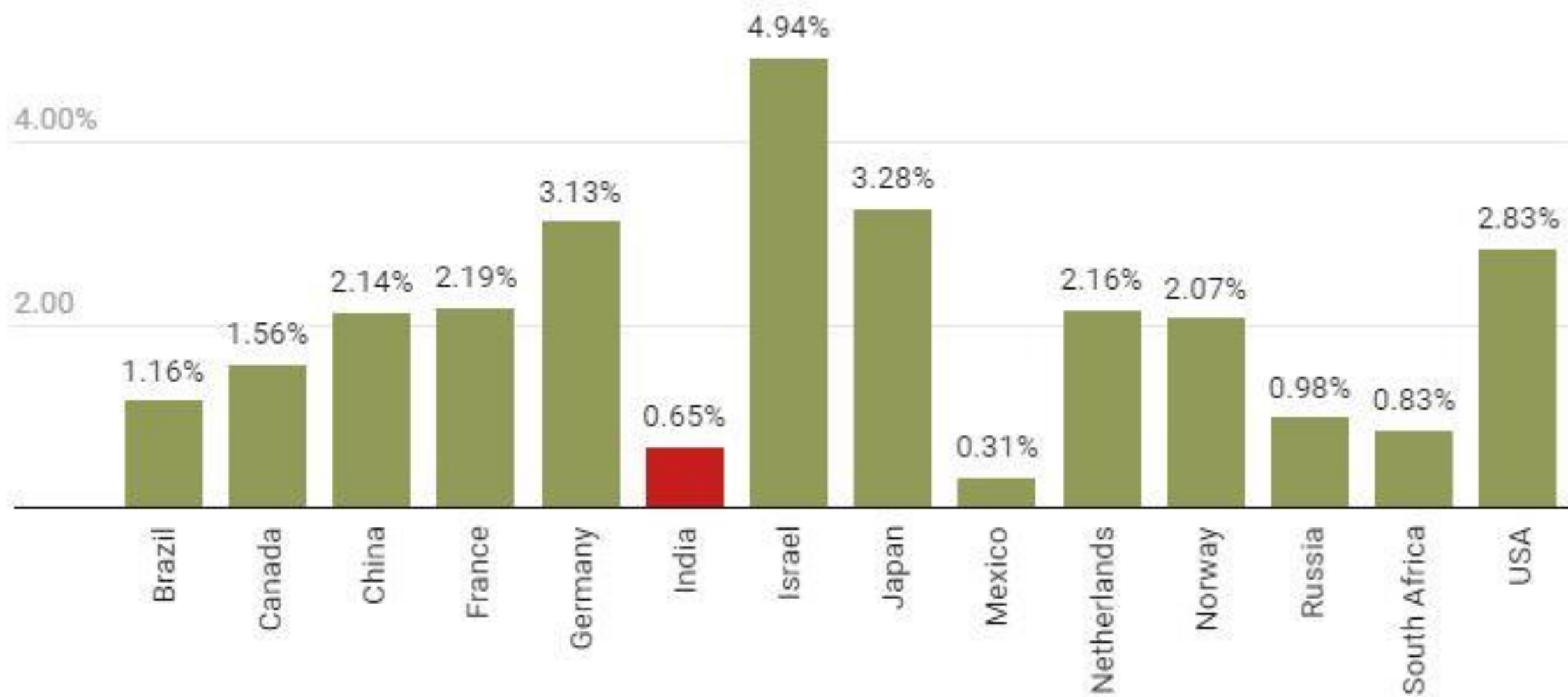
India's Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD) is lower than the other BRICS nations.

- Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa spend around 1.2%, 1.1%, above 2% and 0.8% respectively. The world average is around 1.8%.

Developed countries the United States, Sweden, and Switzerland spend about 2.9%, 3.2% and 3.4%, respectively. **Israel spends approx. 4.5% of its GDP** on R&D, the highest in the world.

Countries with higher per capita GDP invest more in R&D

R&D as a % of GDP India

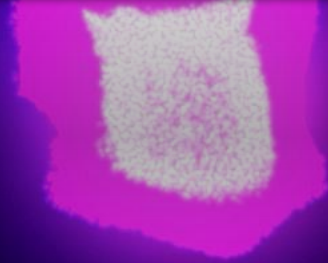




- **Brain Drain**

- Lower spending on R&D, and less innovative opportunities may lead people to move from one region to another region – state/ country for better opportunity.
- This phenomenon is known as brain drain and reduces the competitive edge of a state, further impacting the country's overall economy.

Purple Fest 2024



The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, organized Purple Fest 2024 at Rashtrapati Bhawan, celebrating diversity and unity.

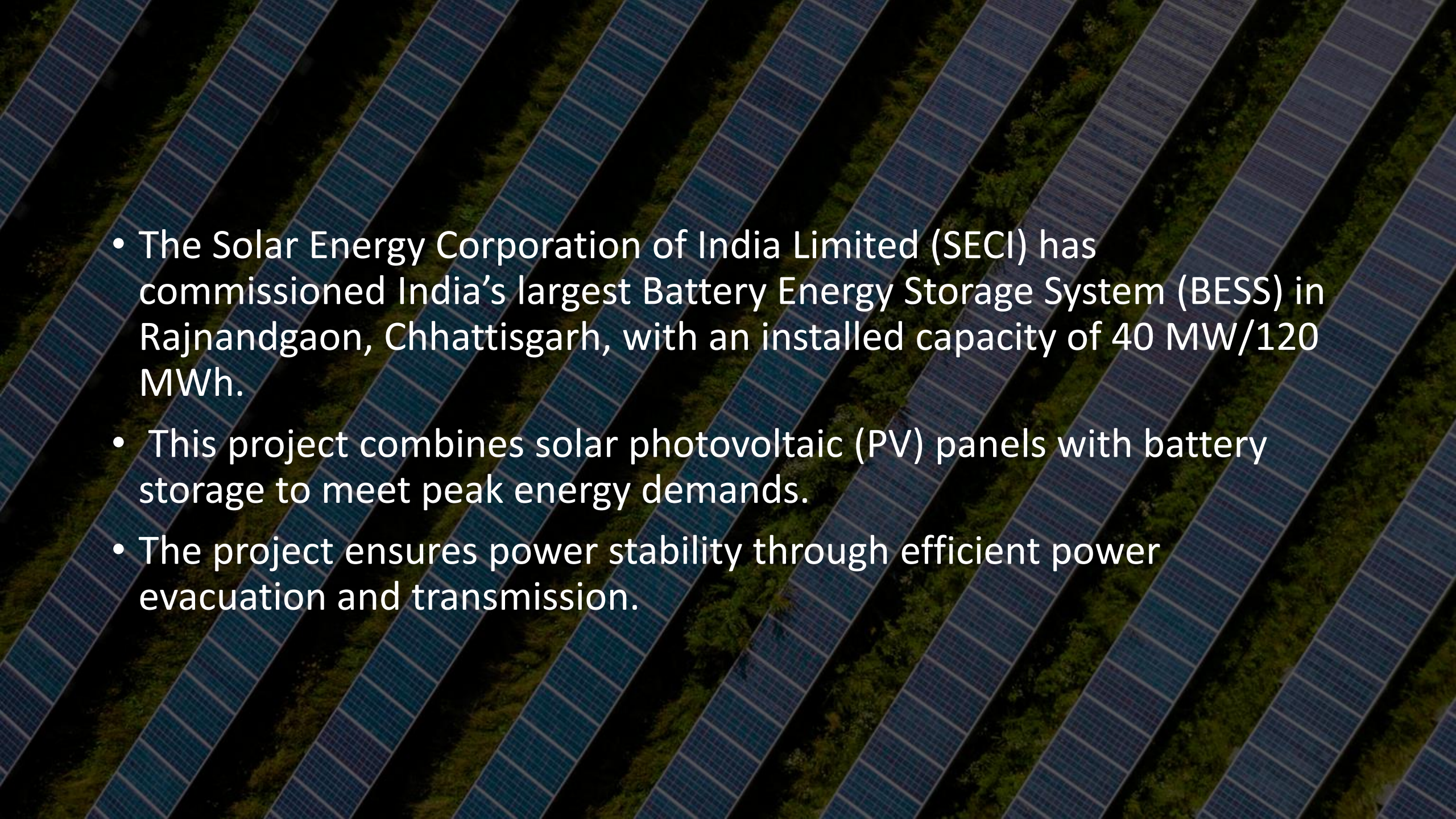
Major launches included the “INDIA NEURODIVERSITY PLATFORM” and a handbook **addressing language barriers**.

- The 'Purple Fest', organised by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, aims to raise awareness about different disabilities and their impact on people's lives and to promote understanding, acceptance and inclusion of persons with disabilities within society.

-



India's largest solar-battery project.

- 
- The Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited (SECI) has commissioned India's largest Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh, with an installed capacity of 40 MW/120 MWh.
 - This project combines solar photovoltaic (PV) panels with battery storage to meet peak energy demands.
 - The project ensures power stability through efficient power evacuation and transmission.

- 
- It is estimated to save tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually and is financially supported by the World Bank, Clean Technology Fund, and domestic lending agencies, demonstrating collaborative efforts to drive sustainable financial arrangements.

-

SELF IMPROVEMENT LANGUAGE SPEAKING

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- Student Handouts
- Industrial Projects
- 100% Career Assistance
- Industry Based Trainers

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- Live Online
- Student Handouts
- Industrial Projects
- 100% Career Assistance
- Industry Based Trainers

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- Live Online
- Student Handouts
- Industrial Projects
- 100% Career Assistance
- Industry Based Trainers

Data Science Course

Skill24 ₹59999

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- Live Online
- Student Handouts
- Industrial Projects
- 100% Career Assistance
- Industry Based Trainers

Blockchain Course

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LET'S START TO LEARN SALESFORCE

Salesforce Admin

Salesforce Admin Course

Skill24 ₹20999

LET'S START TO LEARN SALESFORCE

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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, with some wearing suits. The background is blurred, showing more people and a window. An orange horizontal bar is located in the top left corner.

Thank you
guys.
