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Jansatta



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INDIAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
SANDESHKALI CASE
CBI will probe attack on ED officers, says HC
NEWS > PAGE 4

SPARRING PARTNERS
Philippine and Chinese vessels collide
WORLD > PAGE 12

PLATFORM FEE ISSUE
Google to restore delisted Indian apps
NEWS > PAGE 6

LOK SARNA POLLS
Heady electoral rhetoric
As the NDA seeks another term there is a shift in its pitch
EDITORIAL > PAGE 8

Ashwini100
Scan the QR code or use the link for a data-driven interactive story on spin lynchpin R. Ashwin — who recently claimed his 500th Test wicket — as he embarks upon his 100th Test (think.in/Ashwin)

INSIDE
4 new Ministers are inducted into U.P. Cabinet
LAKHNOW
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday expanded his Cabinet for the first time in his second term inducting four new Ministers — two from the BJP and one each from allies, the SBSP and the RLD. > PAGE 2

Karnataka CM, Deputy CM get threat emails
BENGALURU
Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar received emails on March 2, warning them of "more bomb blasts" in the State. This comes after a low-intensity blast at a cafe here on March 1. > PAGE 4

Govt. using SBI to hide dubious deals: Kharge
NEW DELHI
A day after the State Bank of India sought time from the Supreme Court to submit details of the electoral bond scheme, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge accused the Centre of using the bank as a "shield". > PAGE 5

Meta suffers global outage of its platforms
WASHINGTON
Meta faced a highly unusual outage of all its social media platforms on Tuesday with users of Facebook, Instagram and Threads locked out of their accounts. The sites seemed to be returning to normal, about two hours later. > PAGE 12

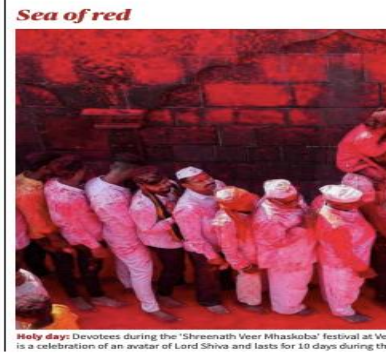
HC acquits academic, 5 others in 'Maotist link' case

Relief for former DU professor G.N. Saibaba and 5 others in case under UAPA for alleged Maotist link | The Nagpur Bench of Bombay High Court sets aside the life sentence awarded to all accused | Hearing the case afresh, Bench holds sanction for prosecution under UAPA as 'null and void'

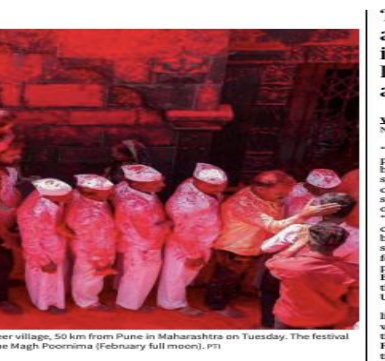
Purnima Sah
MUMBAI
The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court on Tuesday acquitted former Delhi University Professor G.N. Saibaba and five others in a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for alleged Maotist links, saying the prosecution could not prove the case against them beyond reasonable doubt.
Within hours, the Maharashtra government approached the Supreme Court seeking an urgent hearing, after it failed to convince the High Court to stay the implementation of the judgment.
A Bench of Justice Vinay Joshi and Justice Valmiki

Long wait
A timeline of events in the case against Delhi University former professor G.N. Saibaba and five others
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March 29, 2017: Appeal filed in the Bombay High Court against conviction and the sentence
October 14, 2022: All six acquitted in the case by the HC. The Maharashtra government approached the Supreme Court challenging the decision
Bureau, in a case pertaining to ties with Maotist organisations. He has been lodged in the Nagpur Central Jail. In March 2017, a sessions court in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, convicted Prof. Saibaba and five others accused of indulging in activities amounting to waging war against the country. They were also held guilty of possessing Naxal literature that they planned to circulate

Maharashtra drags Saibaba to top court again
NEW DELHI
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'No legal seizures'
Noting that the prosecution had failed to "establish any legal seizure or any incriminating material against the accused", the court said. "The trial court judgment is not sustainable in the hands of law. We, therefore, allow the appeals and set aside the impugned judgment. All the accused stand acquitted."
The Maharashtra government subsequently filed an appeal in the Supreme Court on Tuesday. (With inputs from New Delhi Bureau and PTI)
Court to stay the operation of its judgment for six weeks to allow the government to approach the Supreme Court. However, the bench refused to grant a stay. "We have already acquitted the accused and di-



Holy day: Devotees during the 'Shree Nath Vihar Mhashoka' festival at Veer village, 50 km from Pune in Maharashtra on Tuesday. The festival is a celebration of an avatar of Lord Shiva and lasts for 10 days during the Magh Poonima (February full moon). PTI



Foreign state actors stashed illicit funds in Paytm bank accounts'
NEW DELHI
"Extensive illegal activity" perpetrated by multiple businesses managed by "a syndicate of individuals connected to a foreign state" who cheated lakhs of Indians by offering "fraudulent services, including prohibited gambling activities and dating services" was the trigger for the ₹5.49 crore fine imposed on Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PMBL) by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) last week.
The matter first came to light over two years ago with the Cyber Crime Division of Hyderabad lodging FIRs under relevant sections of the Information Technology Act and the Telangana State Gambling Act.
The FIRs flagged certain business entities and their network of businesses engaging in a number of illegal acts such as organising online gambling, routing the proceeds of such criminal activities through bank accounts they maintained with the payments bank.
The agency also listed out payout-related charges against the bank, which included its failure to put an internal mechanism in place to detect and report suspicious transactions in the manner prescribed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and PML rules.
The March 1 order against PMBL does not indicate which foreign state was involved.
The order also criticised the bank's responses to its show-cause notices. The FIU contended that it had violated the law by failing to exercise due diligence with reference to the accounts of 34 beneficiaries in the suspicious transaction reports regarding those accounts.

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SC dismisses money laundering case against Shivakumar

Supreme Court dismisses money laundering case against D.K. Shivakumar and his associates. The court held that the case was based on an I-T complaint filed in 2018 and was motivated by political reasons.

Krishnadas Rajasrpal
NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the proceedings instituted by the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) against Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and Congress president D.K. Shivakumar under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on the basis of an Income Tax department complaint filed in 2018.
The complaint was filed following searches on the premises of Mr. Shivakumar and his associates. The Income Tax department had alleged that Mr. Shivakumar, who ran businesses, "hatched a criminal conspiracy" and engaged "different people for the purpose of concealing and laundering and illegal money, and projecting an internal mechanism to evade income tax."
Mr. Shivakumar had maintained that the case based on an I-T complaint filed in 2018 was motivated by political reasons. ANI
The Maharashtra government subsequently filed an appeal in the Supreme Court on Tuesday. (With inputs from New Delhi Bureau and PTI)

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Kerala man killed in rocket attack on Israel; Indian Embassy issues advisory

Kalaid Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI
An Indian national was killed and two were injured in a rocket attack by Hezbollah, the Shia militant organisation of Lebanon, in northern Israel on Monday.
In an announcement, the Embassy of Israel said on Tuesday that the incident took place in an orchard in Margalot, located along the Lebanese border.
The Times of Israel said that seven people had been hit in Hezbollah's anti-tank rocket attack. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Mithun Maxwell of Kerala was among those hit and killed in the attack. He hailed from Kollam district.
This is the first reported death of an Indian near Israel's border with Lebanon
The two Indians who were injured in the attack hail from Idukki in Kerala, but their injuries are not as serious as earlier feared, the officials said.
Helpline number
The Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv, in an advisory, urged all Indians staying in the border areas of northern and southern Israel to move to more secure locations. The Indian mission also gave a helpline number +972-35226748 for those seeking emergency assistance.
The embassy blamed the incident on "Shia terrorist organisation Hezbollah" and said that the men alleged to be the Indians were purposefully hit by Hezbollah.
Maxwell's body is likely to be flown to Kerala by the Wednesday or Thursday.
The two Indians who were injured in the attack hail from Idukki in Kerala, but their injuries are not as serious as earlier feared, the officials said.

More Indians held up in Russia seek help to return

Vijaya Singh
NEW DELHI
A group of seven more Indians stuck on the Russian-Ukraine border released their visas and returned to India. The Indian mission also gave a helpline number +972-35226748 for those seeking emergency assistance.
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HC acquits academic, 5 others in 'Maoist link' case

Relief for former DU professor G.N. Saibaba and 5 others in case under UAPA for alleged Maoist link

The Nagpur Bench of Bombay High Court sets aside the life sentence awarded to all accused

Hearing the case afresh, Bench holds sanction for prosecution under UAPA as 'null and void'

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The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court on Tuesday acquitted former Delhi University Professor G.N. Saibaba and five others in a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for alleged Maoist links, saying the prosecution could not prove the case against them beyond reasonable doubt.

Within hours, the Maharashtra government approached the Supreme Court seeking an urgent hearing, after it failed to convince the High Court to stay the implementation of the judgment.

A Bench of Justice Vinay Joshi and Justice Valmiki

S.A. Menezes also set aside the life sentence awarded to Prof. Saibaba and the other accused – Mahesh Tirki, Hem Mishra, Pandu Narote, Vijay Tirki and Prashant Rahi – by a sessions court in 2017, and held the sanction for prosecution under UAPA as “null and void”.

Earlier acquittal

A Bombay High Court Bench too had acquitted him and the other accused on October 14, 2022, only for the Supreme Court to stay the verdict and ask for the case to be heard afresh.

Prof. Saibaba, who is wheelchair-bound, was arrested in 2014, by a joint team of the Maharashtra Police, Andhra Pradesh Police, and the Intelligence

Long wait

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March 29, 2017: Appeal filed in the Bombay High Court against conviction and the sentence

October 14, 2022: All six acquitted in the case by the HC. The Maharashtra government approached the Supreme Court challenging the decision

October 15, 2022: Acquittal stayed by the SC

April 2023: The SC directed the HC to hear the appeal filed by Saibaba afresh

March 5, 2024: HC acquits Saibaba and five others



Bureau, in a case pertaining to ties with Maoist organisations. He has been lodged in the Nagpur Central Jail. In March 2017, a sessions court in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, convicted Prof. Saibaba and five oth-

ers accused of indulging in activities amounting to waging war against the country.

They were also held guilty of possessing Naxal literature that they planned to circulate

among underground Naxalites and the residents of Gadchiroli to provoke the people to resort to violence.

Advocate-General Birendra Saraf, on behalf of the State, requested the High

Maharashtra drags Saibaba to top court again

NEW DELHI

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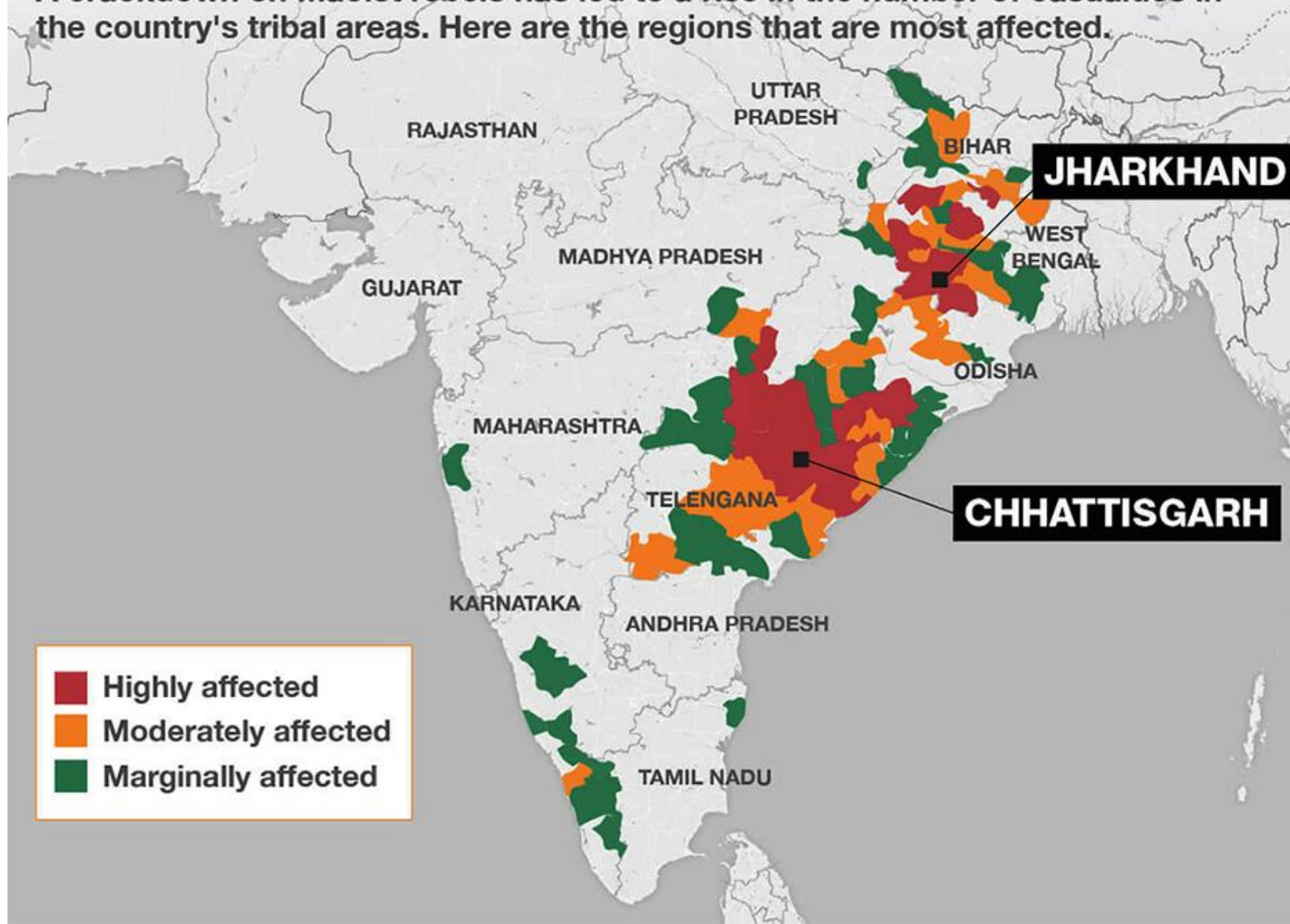
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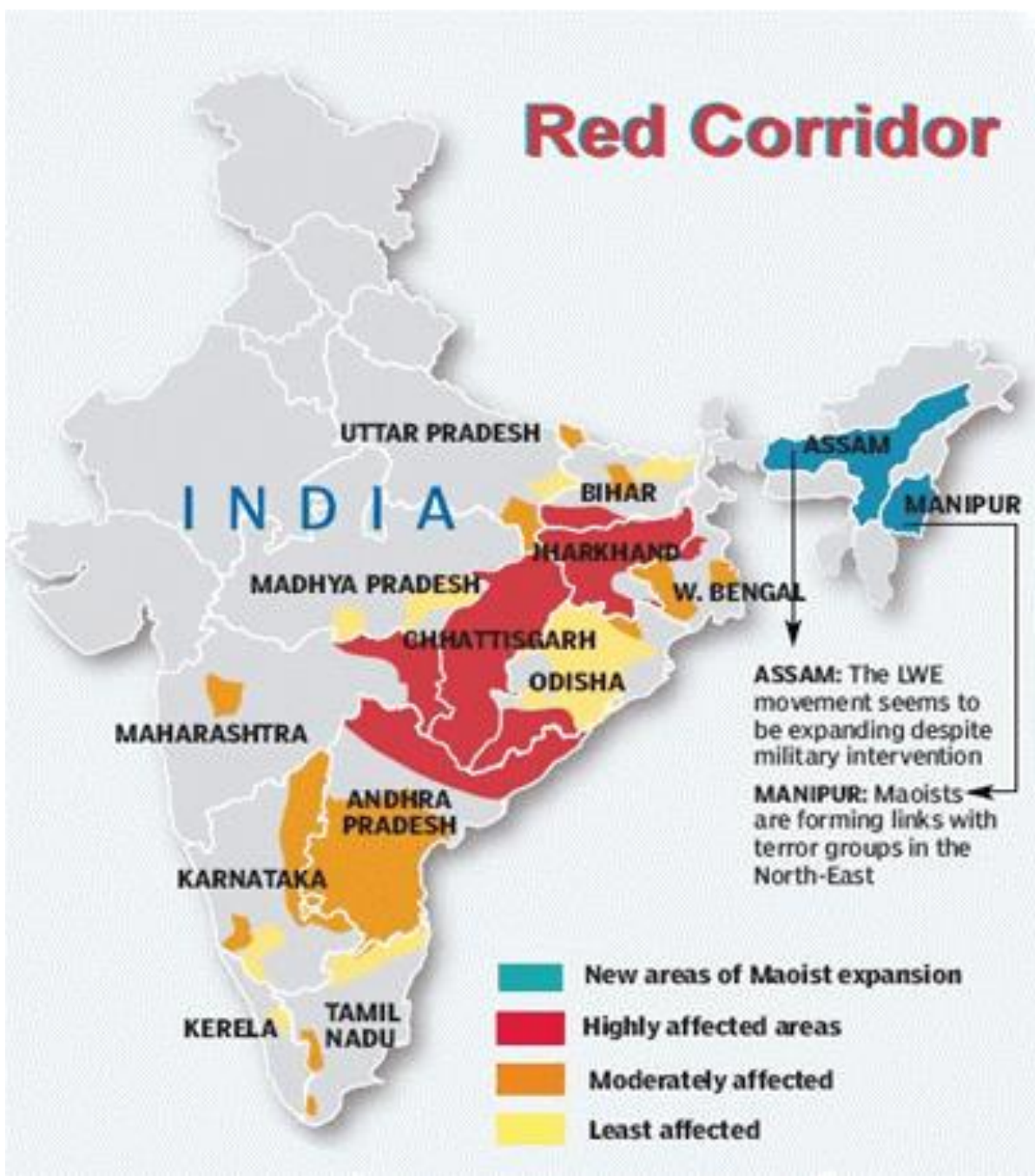
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A map of India's Maoist conflict

A crackdown on Maoist rebels has led to a rise in the number of casualties in the country's tribal areas. Here are the regions that are most affected.



Red Corridor



RED TERROR

CHHATTISGARH HAS THE HIGHEST BURDEN OF MAOIST ATTACKS IN INDIA

Chhattisgarh

INCIDENTS	DEATHS
255	101

Madhya Pradesh

INCIDENTS	DEATHS
19	3

Maharashtra

INCIDENTS	DEATHS
31	6

Bihar

INCIDENTS	DEATHS
26	7

Jharkhand

INCIDENTS	DEATHS
130	26

Odisha

INCIDENTS	DEATHS
32	3

Andhra Pradesh

INCIDENTS	DEATHS
11	01



Note: Data from 2021
Source: Government response to the Parliament



Deadly attacks

Sukma has witnessed several Maoist attacks in the past. A look at some of the previous encounters



MARCH 23, 2021: Five DRG personnel of the Chhattisgarh police killed after their bus is blown up by a powerful bomb in Narayanpur district

MAY 9, 2020: A sub-inspector of the Chhattisgarh police killed in an encounter with the Maoists in Rajnandgaon

MARCH 22, 2020: 17 members of a police patrol killed in an ambush in Sukma

OCT. 27, 2018: Four CRPF personnel killed in an ambush in Bijapur district

MARCH 11, 2017: 12 CRPF personnel killed in an ambush in Sukma district

Ques 1: What is Maoism?

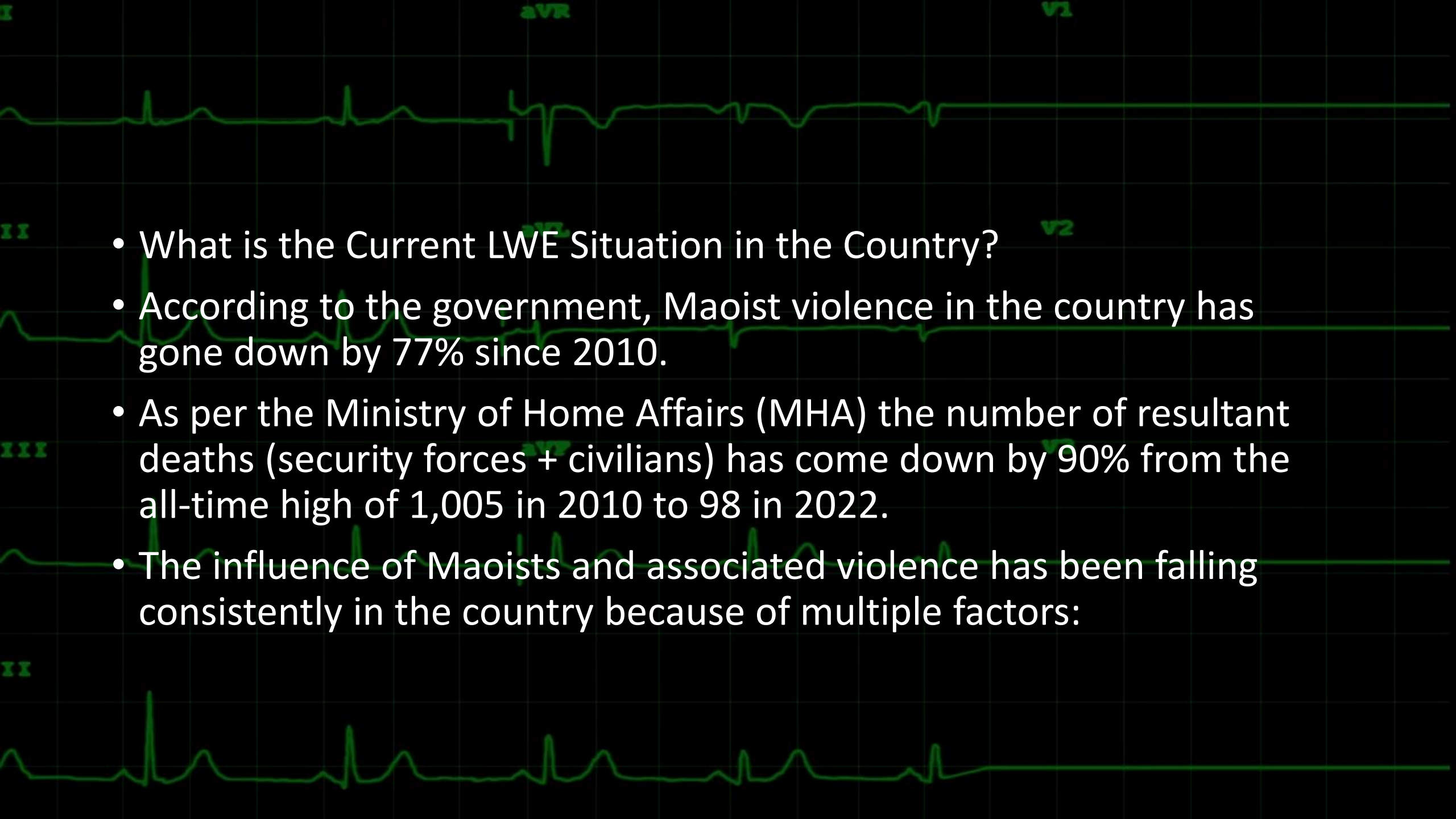
Answer: Maoism is a form of communism developed by Mao Tse Tung. It is a doctrine to capture State power through a combination of armed insurgency, mass mobilization and strategic alliances. The Maoists also use propaganda and disinformation against State institutions as other components of their insurgency doctrine. Mao called this process, the 'Protracted Peoples War', where the emphasis is on 'military line' to capture power.


Ques 2: What is the central theme of Maoist ideology?

Answer: The central theme of Maoist ideology is the use of violence and armed insurrection as a means to capture State power. 'Bearing of arms is non-negotiable' as per the Maoist insurgency doctrine. The maoist ideology glorifies violence and the 'Peoples Liberation Guerrilla Army' (PLGA) cadres are trained specifically in the worst forms of violence to evoke terror among the population under their domination. However, they also use the subterfuge of mobilizing people over issues of purported inadequacies of the existing system, so that they can be indoctrinated to take recourse to violence as the only means of redressal.

Ques 3: Who are the Indian Maoists?

Answer: The largest and the most violent Maoist formation in India is the Communist Party of India (Maoist). The CPI (Maoist) is an amalgamation of many splinter groups, which culminated in the merger of two largest Maoist groups in 2004; the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), People War and the Maoist Communist Centre of India. The CPI (Maoist) and all its front organizations formations have been included in the list of banned terrorist organizations under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

- 
- What is the Current LWE Situation in the Country?
 - According to the government, Maoist violence in the country has gone down by 77% since 2010.
 - As per the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) the number of resultant deaths (security forces + civilians) has come down by 90% from the all-time high of 1,005 in 2010 to 98 in 2022.
 - The influence of Maoists and associated violence has been falling consistently in the country because of multiple factors:

- 
- **A stronger push by security forces in Maoist strongholds.**
 - **Roads and civic amenities reach the interior to a greater extent than earlier.**
 - **A general disenchantment with the Maoist ideology among the youth, which has deprived the insurgent movement of new leadership.**

Differences in Maoism & Naxalism

Maoism

- Wants to take **control of government and run their own government** to enforce their ideology on whole country
- Aim was to fundamentally **transform country towards socialism**
- Political guiding ideology
- 'Power flows from the barrel of gun'

naxalism

- It was a workers(rural area) revolt against their masters and landlords **against marginalization of the poor or rural areas**
- Showed **anger of worker class people**
- Military guiding Ideology**
- Power flow the hands of people

Sea of red



Holy day: Devotees during the 'Shreenath Veer Mhaskoba' festival at Veer village, 50 km from Pune in Maharashtra on Tuesday. The festival is a celebration of an avatar of Lord Shiva and lasts for 10 days during the Magh Poonima (February full moon). PTI

Synergy among armed forces must, says Rajnath

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

In a projection of India's growing maritime power, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday addressed the top naval commanders onboard aircraft carrier *INS Vikramaditya* in the Arabian Sea and witnessed a mega wargame amid China's increasing military assertiveness in the Indian Ocean region.

Mr. Singh also witnessed the combat prowess of aircraft carriers *INS Vikrant* and *INS Vikramaditya* in a "twin-carrier" operation that the Navy said was a demonstration of a "powerful testament" to the crucial role of sea-based air power in maintaining maritime superiority.

In his address to the commanders, the Defence Minister said jointness and synergy among the armed forces is crucial in today's ever-changing geopolitical scenario even as he lauded the Navy for continuously emerging in a leadership role in the Indian Ocean region with its increasing multi-dimensional capabilities.

Mr. Singh highlighted the Navy's important role in maritime security and maintaining India's sovereignty and urged the commanders to remain prepared to deal with all kinds of challenges while assur-



Power play: Rajnath Singh aboard *INS Vikramaditya* at the first Naval Commanders' Conference 2024 on Tuesday. ANI

ing the government's all-possible support. The wargame in the Arabian Sea also came against the backdrop of increasing global concerns over Houthi militants targeting various cargo ships in the Red Sea and adjoining areas in the last few months.

In March last year, Mr. Singh attended the inaugural session of the naval commanders conference onboard *INS Vikrant*.

"If India's reputation has increased in the Indian Ocean Region and wider Indo-Pacific, it is due to the bravery and promptness of our Navy," he said.

"It has become synonymous with credibility in the Indo-Pacific region. The Navy is a reflection of India's growing stature on the global canvas," he said.

The defence minister underscored the importance of jointness and synergy of the three services amidst the constantly-evolving geopolitical scenario including increasing use of drones in modern-day warfare.

Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said the "twin-carrier" demonstration served as a "powerful testament" to the crucial role of sea-based air power in maintaining maritime superiority.

In remarks at the commanders' conference, the defence minister commended the Navy for increasing its multi-dimensional capabilities in the Indian Ocean region and continuously emerging in a leadership role.



VIKRAMADITYA: SYMBOL OF POWER AT SEA

COMMISSIONED | **Nov 2013**
DISPLACEMENT | **44,500 tonne**
MAX SPEED | **30 knots**
MAX RANGE | **7,000 nautical miles**
at economical 18 knots speed
CAPACITY | 24 MiG-29K supersonic fighters & 10 helicopters (anti-submarine Ka-28s, early-warning KM-31s, Dhruv ALH & Chetaks)

CREW »
110 officers,
1,500 sailors



LENGTH
284 metre

HEIGHT
60 metre
(20-storey tall,
with 22 decks)



COST » **\$2.33 billion**
(for Admiral Gorshkov's refit),
plus \$2 billion (for 45 MiG-29Ks)

POWER PLAY

A carrier battle group is the most visible symbol of raw combat power prowling on the high seas

US has 11 Nimitz-class nuclear-powered "super-carriers". Each over **94,000-tonne** & capable of **carrying 80-90 fighters**

China inducted its first **65,000-tonne** carrier Liaoning in Sept 2012. Second one under construction, with **2 more in the pipeline**

India & Italy have **2 carriers** each

UK, France, Russia, Spain, Brazil & Thailand have **1 carrier** each

₹4,881.67cr

or \$974 mn (approx.) was the original cost estimate of Vikramaditya. It will now cost us \$2.3 bn

VIKRAMADITYA

INS Vikramaditya, scheduled to arrive in India by early '14, will boast of a wide variety of features

ISLAND STRUCTURE



- The bridge
- Flight control compartment
- Aerial surveillance radar
- Air direction radar
- Aircraft direction room
- All the navigational and communication antennae

THE DETAILS

■ INS Vikramaditya can sail at speeds of up to

30 knots

a speed usually resorted to in an emergency

■ It has a length of about **284 metres** — nearly the same as about 12-and-a-half pitches of a cricket field

2,300 km

of cabling on Vikramaditya — the cable could be stretched from Delhi to Bangalore, with 150 km to spare



SKI-JUMP

ANGLE DECK

TOTAL LENGTH
284 metres

nearly the same as 4 Airbus A380s stacked together nose-to-tail

60 metres

is the height of the ship, about 2/3rd the height of the Statue of Liberty





HEIGHT
59 METRES

CARRIER STATS

Crew **1,700**

Compartments **2,300**

PERFORMANCE

Top Speed **28 knots**

Cruising Speed **18 knots**

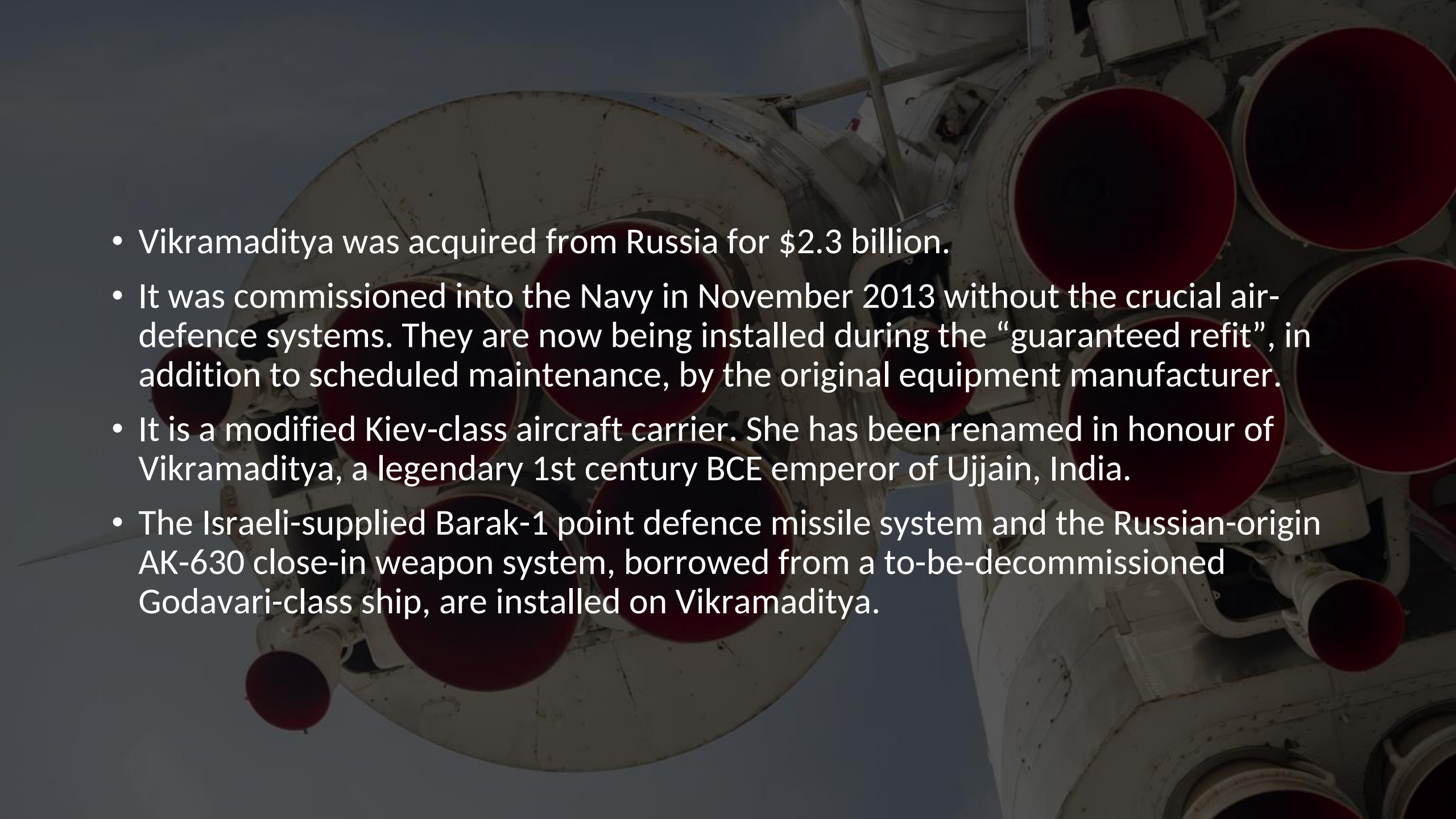
Endurance **7,500
nautical miles**

WEAPONRY*

- 34 fixed wing and rotary aircraft
- MiG-29K fighter aircraft
- Kamov-31 Air Early Warning Helicopters
- American-built MH-60R multirole helicopters
- Indigenously built Advanced Light Helicopters

**The Navy has not specifically revealed yet what weapons and equipment INS Vikrant will have. Expected list based on earlier statements and weaponry on board the comparably-sized INS Vikramaditya.*



- 
- Vikramaditya was acquired from Russia for \$2.3 billion.
 - It was commissioned into the Navy in November 2013 without the crucial air-defence systems. They are now being installed during the “guaranteed refit”, in addition to scheduled maintenance, by the original equipment manufacturer.
 - It is a modified Kiev-class aircraft carrier. She has been renamed in honour of Vikramaditya, a legendary 1st century BCE emperor of Ujjain, India.
 - The Israeli-supplied Barak-1 point defence missile system and the Russian-origin AK-630 close-in weapon system, borrowed from a to-be-decommissioned Godavari-class ship, are installed on Vikramaditya.

IN BRIEF



U.P. Police Recruitment Board chief made scapegoat: activists

Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment Board Chairperson Kamala Mishra has been made a scapegoat to hide the morass of the recent... The decision to remove the Chairperson of the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment and Promotion Board was taken amid rising public pressure.

INS urges govt. to scrap 5% Customs duty on newsprint

The Indian Newspaper Society has urged the government to scrap the 5% Customs duty on newsprint to allow publishers to manage their operational costs more effectively. In a statement, the INS said a combination of factors affecting the price and availability of newsprint has created a formidable burden for publishers in the country.

6 disqualified Himachal MLAs move Supreme Court for relief

Six Congress MLAs who were disqualified after they cross-voted in the recent Rajya Sabha polls in Himachal Pradesh moved the Supreme Court on Tuesday against their disqualification. The former MLAs have filed a plea against the February 29 decision of the State Legislative Assembly Speaker, Kuldeep Singh Pathania.

Tejashwi Yadav calls for issue-based debate with PM

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday hit back at the BJP's 'Modi Ka Parivar' (Modi's family) campaign, which came about as a response to his father Lalu Prasad's recent remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi having 'no family'.

Indian troops out, Maldives inks defence pact with China

The agreement says Beijing will provide free military assistance to Maldives to foster ties between the two nations; Muizzu says no Indian troops to remain on island, 'in uniform or in civil clothes'

Meera Srinivasan COLCOBBO

Days after a technical team from India arrived in the Maldives to replace troops that President Mohamed Muizzu wanted removed, the Maldivian Defence Ministry announced signing a military pact with China.

Maldives's Minister of Defence Mohamed Ghasan Maumoon and Major General Zhang Baogun, Deputy Director at China's Office for International Military Cooperation, on Monday signed an agreement on "China's provision of military assistance gratis to the Republic of Maldives, fostering stronger bilateral ties", the Maldivian Defence Ministry said.

The Ministry's post on social media platform X did not mention details of what the agreement entails. Further, China donated 12 green ambulances to the Maldives's Health Ministry on Monday.



Mohamed Ghasan Maumoon and Zhang Baogun at China's Office for International Military Cooperation. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Maldivian Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer posted on X, "Delighted to host the China EXIM Bank delegation, and the Chinese military delegation for lunch today. We had fruitful discussions on bolstering our economic and security partnerships between the two countries.

Looking forward to continued collaboration." It also coincides with New Delhi's apparent compromise with Male, agreeing to withdraw its troops stationed in the island nation in civil attire.

Bitter back and forth Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's recent comments at an event in New Delhi where he said that "big

bullies don't provide USD 4.5 billion in aid when the neighbours are in trouble", referring to Indian assistance to Sri Lanka during its crisis in 2022, have drawn wide attention in Maldives.

Interpreting it as a "snipe at" Mr. Muizzu, several Maldivian media outlets reported the remarks, linking them to Mr. Muizzu's media comments soon after his return from China in January.

"Maldives may be small, but that doesn't give others the licence to bully the country", Mr. Muizzu had said. During his China visit, the Maldivian leader also urged Chinese travellers to reclaim their top spot as tourist arrivals to the island nation.

Addressing a public event on Monday, Mr. Muizzu reassured his supporters that Indian troops will no longer be stationed in the Maldives after the date, "either in uniform or in civil clothes".

According to the Maldivian Tourism Ministry's latest figures, China accounts for 12.8% of the total number of visitors - 4,31,002 as of March 3 recorded in 2024, while India accounts for 6.4%. Earlier this year, Beijing said, "The relations between China and the Maldives now stand at an even higher starting point."

Bengal officials have been warned to curb poll violence: CEC

The Hindu Bureau KOLKATA

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar said on Tuesday that the Election Commission has issued strict instructions to the West Bengal bureaucracy to contain violence and ensure a level-playing field during the Lok Sabha elections.

Mr. Kumar said adequate personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) would be deployed in the State. The CAPF personnel would be jointly deployed by the local officer of the State police, the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Central

On previous failures to curtail violence during polls, Mr. Kumar said, "Incidents will not be that widespread this time. If violence does happen to spread, the district administration will take action. If they do not take action then we will make them take action."

Law enforcement agencies have been directed to monitor inter-State boundaries and inter-district borders to curb flow of in-



Rajiv Kumar

ductions, especially drugs, gold, and counterfeit Indian currency, he added. "All enforcement agencies will coordinate closely and not operate in silos and will ensure not only violence-free elections but also prevent any incident," he said.

The CEC said there were 7.58 crore voters - 3.85 crore men and 3.73 crore women - in the State. The number of first-time voters stood at 15.25 lakh.

The electoral gender ratio in the State stood at an impressive 968 women voters for 1,000 men voters, with 90 Assembly seats having a gender ratio of over 1,000. The full bench of the Election Commission has been in Kolkata for two days and held meetings with political parties and officials of the State government.

Mr. Kumar said the commission had taken steps to prevent any form of violence. It has launched an integrated mechanism system and a toll-free number to register complaints.

INDIA bloc leaders not able to digest success of govt.: PM

Satyajouadar Barik

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday strongly criticised the Indian National Development Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), asserting that its nepotistic leaders intensified their doubts on him due to their inability to counter his government's accomplishments.

Addressing a public meeting in Odisha's Jajpur district, he said, "Corrupt leaders of INDIA are do not like the developments and transformations in the country. These dynasts do not have any answer to our commitments, achievements, policies, and dedication. INDIA alliance has now stepped up its attack on our country. We are implementing a

Every farmer, son, and daughter refers to themselves as part of Modi's family, the Prime Minister says

free-ration programme for the poorer section of society. This is the reason why we continue to get blessings of people. We have extended the scheme by another five years. We are also executing Har Ghar Jal Yojana to make provision for tap water supply to every rural household. I am not bragging, my family and three crore lakshpati did (women self-help group leaders)", he said.

"Now, corrupt INDIA alliance leaders are saying Modi does not have any family and they want to oust

Google reinstates Indian apps 'in spirit of cooperation'

The Hindu Bureau

Google is reinstating dozens of apps that were delisted by the company on March 3, after the firm's platform fees on in-app payments, the tech company said in a statement on Tuesday.

"In the spirit of cooperation, we are temporarily reinstating the apps of the developers who are pending in the Supreme Court," a Google spokesperson said. The apps by developers like Bharat Matrimony and Kuku FM.

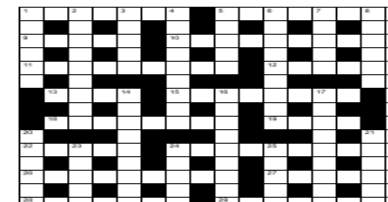
"Google maintains its right to implement and enforce its business model, as established in various court cases. We will involve our full applicable services fees

what they characterised as high fees that Google conditioned on their products being available on the company's Android application store. The tech firm collected 30% of the transaction in platform fees, which an emerging class of app developers complained about. Their services in India - such as in the dating, matrimonial or OTT streaming space - are trying to advance.

"Google has been supporting our technology development journey and we believe that in the coming months, but a collaborative effort to find solutions that respect the needs of all parties."

The announcement remains a setback for the apps' developers, who have moved the court to avoid

THE CROSSWORD 14115 (Set by Arden)



- 13 Crucial time lost, the medicine may be inside this (4)
14 Still it's missing in the dark night (8)
15 Attack the study on animal (8)
16 Still not seen, still I follow (4)
17 Ban it, reportedly some of it can explode (5)
18 Madras refused to entertain reggie for the carnival (5,4)
19 Cut, but in turn does spin (9)
20 It doesn't make sense to restrict travel (5)
21 Study - even Israeli follows another country (7)
22 Most sample in a different game (7)
Down
1 Well known, but not universal tree (8)
2 Some smaller version in lieu of fancy car (8)
3 Suffering, not something unknown for a skinniflin (5)
4 Extremely careful with the work done, many crosses at the minister (5)
5 Part of lunch, may be after one? (5)
6 Live with doubt - need gas to become a big corporation (4,5)
7 Open at the centre, volume goes up somewhat (5)
8 Old woman's happiness cut short in the bargain (8)
9 Free tips on how to tie them up and break the job (5,4)
10 Gum used o'er insole? (9)
11 Function perhaps without a wind down (5)
12 Synchronised with a part inside pumps, say... (6)
13 ...like money growth? (6)
14 Terrible torture to be left out, when one is more faithful (5)
15 Honour to get a date for say, dinner outside (5)
16 Starts investigating nine different reserves involving these grids (5)

SUDOKU

4 3 3
6 5 3 4 8
7 7 2 6 8 8
7 1 5 4 3 1
6 2 7 9 1 8
2 1 5 1 7 8

Solution to previous puzzle
Solution to yesterday's Sudoku
6 1 4 7 8 3 2 5 9
2 3 9 5 1 6 4 8 7
5 3 8 2 9 6 7 4 1
3 5 2 1 6 9 8 4 7
9 4 1 8 7 2 3 6 5
7 2 4 6 1 5 9 3 8
1 4 8 6 5 3 9 7 2
2 9 5 6 3 8 4 1 4

FAITH Gratitude to parents

The sacrifices that parents make for their children can never be wholly described. Aitareya Brahmana points out why such a description is difficult, said Vakkattu Krishnan in a discourse. Aitareya Brahmana first talks of what the earth, fire and water do for us. The earth gives us the food we need to sustain ourselves.

Can we ever repay her for what she gives us? Fire is essential for cooking our food. Can we repay the fire for all this? We need water to bathe, to quench our thirst, etc. Can we repay water for its many uses? The answer to all the above questions is a 'no'. Now, place the benefits of these elements give us, on one plate of a balance, and on the other, place all the things our parents do for us.

The Vedas say that a man's lifespan is 100 years. Even if we call 100 births, and live for 100 years in each birth, we cannot repay our parents for their affection. The least we can do is to look after them when they are alive, and then do the prescribed rituals for them after they have departed from this world. In fact, rituals such as tarpana, shravatha and mahalaya puja are all observed keeping in mind our ancestors. That's the only way we can show our gratitude to our ancestors.

- Controversy on European rodent, it's detailed (7)
Order nb chop and highland music (7)
Questions young ones getting married (5)
Eats spread before horse as festive offering (6,3)
Consume stuff, for example in tanks (4,5)
"Live on rent" - backs up and leaves (5)

Indian troops out, Maldives inks defence pact with China

The agreement says Beijing will provide free military assistance to Maldives to foster ties between the two nations; Muizzu says no Indian troops to remain on island, 'in uniform or in civil clothes'

Meera Srinivasan
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The Ministry's post on social media platform X did not mention details of what the agreement entails. Further, China donated 12 green ambulances to the Maldives's Health Ministry on Monday. The development is in line with the two countries agreeing to "elevate" China-Maldives relations to a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership", during Mr. Muizzu's five-day state visit to China in January.



Mohamed Ghasan Maumoon and Zhang Baoqun at China's Office for International Military Cooperation. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Maldivian Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer posted on X, "Delighted to host the China EXIM Bank delegation, and the Chinese military delegation for lunch today. We had fruitful discussions on bolstering our economic and security partnerships between the two countries. Looking forward to continued collaboration."

It also coincides with New Delhi's apparent compromise with Male, agreeing to withdraw its troops stationed in the island nation, instead replacing them with a technical team to help operate India-gifted aircraft. The decision was made amid Mr. Muizzu's persistent calls for the removal of Indian troops, a campaign promise-turned-official pledge made by the leader.

Following bilateral discussions between a high-level core group, the two sides in early February reached a consensus on Indian troops leaving the Indian Ocean archipelago by May 10, in phases.

Addressing a public event on Monday, Mr. Muizzu reassured his supporters that Indian troops will no longer be stationed in the Maldives after the date, "either in uniform or in civil clothes". He appeared to be responding to critics claiming that Indian soldiers had returned to the island nation in civil attire.

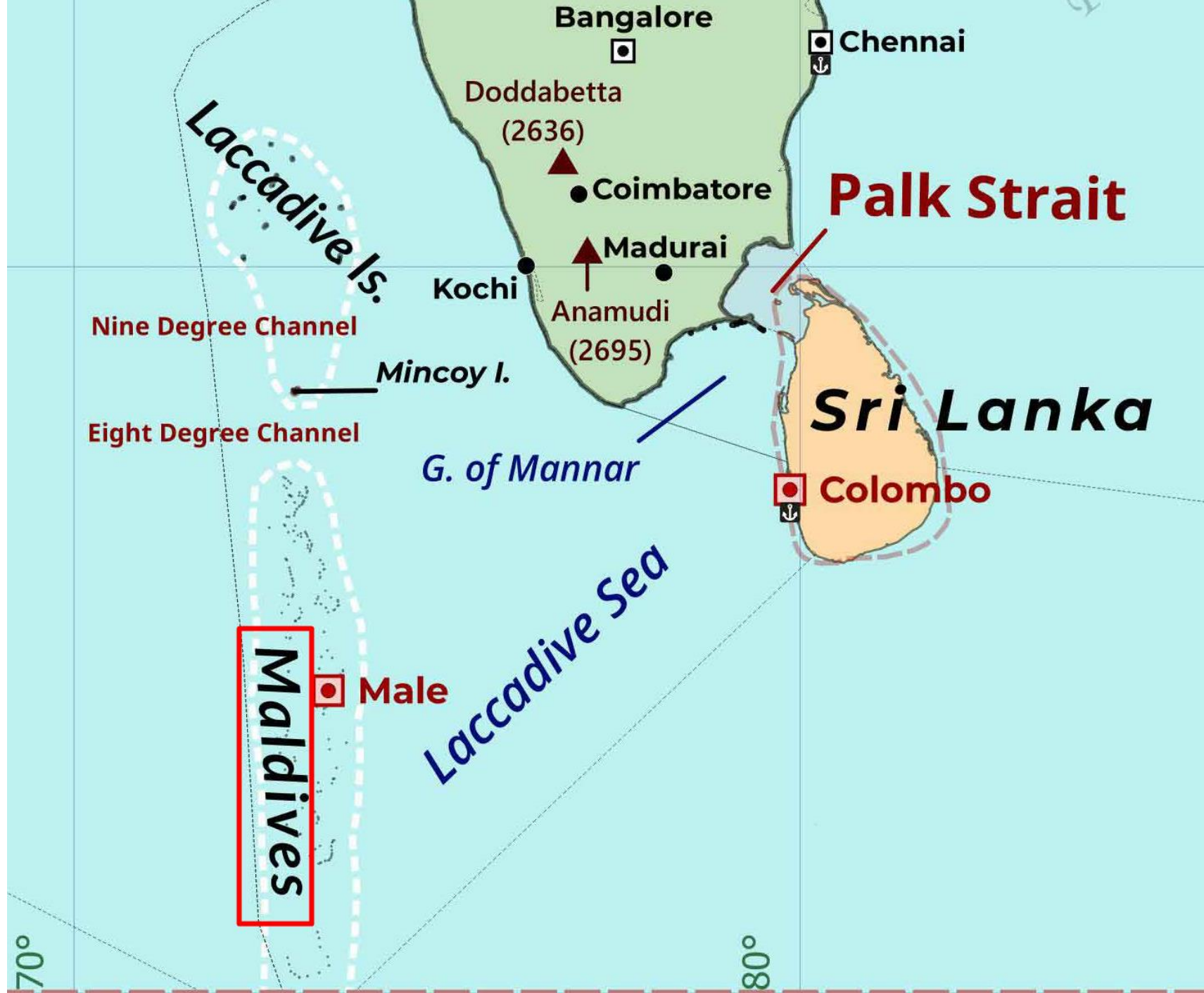
Bitter back and forth
Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's recent comments at an event in New Delhi, where he said that "big

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Interpreting it as a "swipe at" Mr. Muizzu, several Maldivian media outlets reported the remarks, linking them to Mr. Muizzu's media comments soon after his return from China in January.

"Maldives may be small, but that doesn't give others the licence to bully the country," Mr. Muizzu had said. During his China visit, the Maldivian leader also urged Chinese travellers to reclaim their top spot in tourist arrivals to the island nation. India was the largest source market last year, but has since moved to the sixth spot, following the "boycott Maldives" campaign that went viral on Indian social media earlier this year.

According to the Maldivian Tourism Ministry's latest figures, China accounts for 12.8% of the total number of visitors – 4,31,002 as of March 3 – recorded in 2024, while India accounts for 6.4%. Earlier this year, Beijing said, "The relations between China and the Maldives now stand at a new historical starting point."





Gender inequality persists in top jobs, researches show

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

More women are taking top management jobs but inequality persists, with men still dominating business leadership roles, research showed ahead of International Women's Day on March 8.
Despite some high-profile exceptions and laws helping to boost quotas for women board members and executives, it remains a slow march to the top. A survey published last week by Equileap, which researches data on diversity, found only 7% of CEOs and 17% of finance directors in big companies in developed countries were women. "The battle for gender equality remains ongoing," said Equileap's CEO Diana van Marwijk.

A 2023 report by the World Economic Forum noted that "women's share of senior and leadership roles has seen a steady global increase over the past five years," with the proportion of women hired into leadership roles rising from just over 33% in 2016 to nearly 37% in 2022.
But the overall figures for women's representation at companies show they are still in a minority at the top level. "Work structures have been built up over the last 200 years to accommodate men's needs," said Tara Cemlyn-Jones, the CEO of 25x25, a not-for-profit organisation that aims to improve the gender balance in executive leadership roles.

"The only way that you can get around that is being consciously aware that you have to make sure the structures are equally fair to women," she said.
A Deloitte survey of 10,500 companies in 51 countries last year from 2021 found that while about one in five board members were women, just one in 20 chief executives were.

Russia hacks unsecured German line discussing Ukraine arms aid

The fallout from the leaked audio tape, which features four high-ranking German officers hypothetically discussing how Taurus long-range missiles could be used by Kyiv against Russian forces, has increased tensions between the two countries

Associated Press
BERLIN

A German military officer used an unsecured phone line at a Singapore hotel to join a conference call that was hacked by Russians and leaked to the public, Germany's Defence Minister said on Tuesday.
The fallout from the leaked audio tape, which features four high-ranking German air force officers discussing hypothetically how Taurus long-range cruise missiles could be used by Kyiv against invading Russian forces, has embarrassed the German government and further increased tensions between the two countries.

"Not all participants adhered to the secure dialing procedure as intended," German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said as he briefed presspersons in Berlin on the initial results of an ongoing investigation.

"The Minister said that the officers in the conversation whose name was withheld, had participated in the Singapore Air Show, which was attended by high-ranking military officers from across Europe, and then dialed into the WebEx call using either his mobile phone or the hotel's Wi-Fi but not a secured line as is considered mandatory for such calls. "For the Russian secret services, it was a real find. ... Targeted



Support call: A demonstrator holds a placard calling on the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to supply Ukraine with Taurus air-to-surface cruise missiles, during a rally in Berlin on February 24, AFP.

hacking took place in the hotels used across the board," Mr. Pistorius said. "It must therefore be assumed that the access to this (phone) conference was a chance hit as part of a broad, scattered approach."

"No severe action" Mr. Pistorius said the investigation was ongoing, overall security had been increased and preliminary disciplinary proceedings were being considered, but that severe personal consequences were unlikely.
"I will not sacrifice any of my best officers to Putin's games, to put it very clearly," he said, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The 38-minute audio leak was posted by Margarita Simonyan, chief editor of the Russian state-funded television channel RT, on social media on Friday, the same day that Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was laid to rest after his still-unexplained death two weeks ago in an Arctic penal colony. The recording also surfaced just weeks before Russia's presidential election.

While German authorities have not questioned the authenticity of the recording, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said last week that early delivery and rapid deployment of Taurus missiles to Ukraine was not an option — and that he does not want Germany to be drawn into the war directly.

However, Russia's Foreign Ministry on Monday threatened Germany with "dire consequences" in connection with the leak. It did not elaborate.
Relations between the two countries have steadily eroded since Russia invaded Ukraine two years ago.
In the leaked audio, four officers, including the head of Germany's air force, Ingo Gerhartz, can be heard discussing deployment scenarios for Taurus missiles in Ukraine before a meeting with Mr. Pistorius.
The officers said that early delivery and rapid deployment of Taurus missiles to Ukraine was not an option — and that he does not want Germany to be drawn into the war directly.

nian soldiers to deploy the Taurus on their own would be possible, but it would take months.

"More important tasks" The recording also shows the German government has not given its OK for the delivery of the cruise missiles sought by Ukraine. Mr. Pistorius said on Tuesday that while the damage caused by the leak was severe, "the mistake is still being worked through and we must now turn our attention back to more important tasks," such as how Germany and its allies can continue to help Ukraine fight Russia.

There had been a months-long debate in Germany about whether to supply the Taurus missiles to Ukraine as Kyiv faces the Russian onslaught. Mr. Scholz said last week that Germany would not deliver the missiles. With military aid from the United States held up in Congress, Germany is now the second-biggest supplier of military aid to Ukraine after the U.S., and it is further stepping up its support this year.
Mr. Pistorius pointed out that while the damage done by the actual content of the leaked audio was "manageable," Russia's real success was that with the leak it set the agenda for what will be discussed in Ukraine, and "that's exactly what Putin wants to achieve."

EU officials propose to boost bloc's defence

Associated Press
BRUSSELS

Top European Union officials on Tuesday outlined ambitious plans to boost its defence industry at an unprecedented pace as the bloc seeks to respond to the threat posed by Russia's war on Ukraine and a trans-Atlantic partner that could be wavering on its commitments to Europe.
For decades, EU nations have shunned under the protective nuclear cover of the United States through the NATO alliance while their defence spending and crisis preparedness withered.

A first warning under former U.S. President Donald Trump highlighted a lack of coordination and a need for more defence support for Ukraine has focused minds in Europe.
Now, with an increasing need to beef up defence is becoming clearer.

"After decades of under-spending, we must invest more on defence, but we need to do it better and together," said EU Foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. "A strong, resilient, and competitive European defence industry is a strategic imperative."
EU heavyweights France and Germany have warned that the bloc must do more to protect itself.

Taiwan deputy FM visits Tuvalu to firm up ties

Agence France-Presse
TAIPEI

Taiwan's deputy Foreign Minister has embarked on a visit to diplomatic ally Tuvalu, officials said on Tuesday, after the Pacific island nation's new government affirmed its "special" relationship with Taipei.
Tien Chung-kuang left for the visit on Monday as special envoy for President Tsai Ing-wen to congratulate and show support for Tuvalu's new government, said Foreign Ministry official Eric Chen.
Mr. Tien will attend celebrations for the new government and meet top officials including new Prime Minister Felicitas Taitano before returning on Saturday, added Mr. Chen.

"The visit 'demonstrates the solid ties between the two countries... as this year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Taiwan and Tuvalu,'" the Foreign Ministry said in a separate statement.
"In the future, Taiwan and Tuvalu will continue to work together... to promote sustainability, peace, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region."
The visit comes after Tuvalu's new government vowed last week to keep up its "special" relationship with Taiwan, ending speculation that the Pacific island nation was poised to switch diplomatic recognition to Beijing.
Tuvalu, with a population of 11,000, is one of just 12 countries, including three in the Pacific — that still maintain formal diplomatic relations with Taipei rather than Beijing.

Whimsical approach



Canmed protest: A man wearing a mask made out of a plastic can takes part in a protest, organised by Extinction Rebellion against South African gov't's commitment to use fossil fuels, outside the venue for the Africa Energy Indaba conference in Cape Town on Tuesday, AFP.

North Korea threatens military response to U.S.-South Korean armed drills

Associated Press
SEOUL

Defence Ministry said it "strongly denounces the reckless military drills of the U.S. and (South Korea) that getting more undisciplined in their military threat to a sovereign state and attempt for invading it."
"Responsible activities" An unidentified Ministry spokesman said South Korea's military will "continue to watch the adventurous acts of the enemies and conduct responsible military activities to strongly control the unstable security environment on the Korean Peninsula."
The spokesperson did not say what measures North Korea would take, but observers say North



Peace rally: Protesters at rally demanding to stop the joint military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea, in Seoul on Monday, AP.

Korea will likely carry out missile tests or other steps to bolster its war capability, make an overwhelming response if North Korea launches a nuclear provocation against it during the drills. North Korea views its "robust" military drills as an invasion rehearsal, though South Korean and U.S. officials often repeatedly said they have no

Australia proposes to grow trade ties at ASEAN forum

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Australia unveiled plans to ramp up investment in Southeast Asia on Tuesday, setting aside \$1.3 billion to bolster trade in a region of rising economic importance.
Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced the funding as leaders from the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) forum met in Melbourne for a three-day summit.
"The government I lead has made it clear. More than any other region, Southeast Asia is where Australia's future lies," Mr. Albanese told a business forum on the summit's first day.
Following a series of bruising disputes, Australia has increasingly looked



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, left, with leaders and representatives of ASEAN members in Melbourne on Tuesday, AFP.

to build economic ties outside of major trading partner China.
Fuelled by years of swift and sustained population growth, the ASEAN bloc is widely seen as an emerging economic powerhouse, with vast deposits of critical minerals and a booming appetite for electric cars.
Australia is also poised to play a major

role in the global push for clean energy.
Australia's new funding package will provide export financing and loan guarantees largely toward infrastructure and renewable energy projects.
Mr. Albanese said it was "the most significant economic commitment with ASEAN for a generation."

North Korea threatens military response to U.S.-South Korean armed drills

intentions of attacking the North. North Korea has previously reacted to U.S. and South Korean-U.S. exercises with launching a barrage of missiles into the sea.
South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said last week that the U.S. military drills with the U.S. were designed to neutralise North Korea's nuclear threats and would involve live-firing, bombing, air support and missile interception drills.
Comments about North Korea's nuclear programme have grown in the past year, as the North has test-launched missiles and openly threatened to use nuclear weapons

preemptively. The U.S. and South Korea have expanded their military exercises and increased the deployment of powerful U.S. military assets like aircraft carriers and nuclear-capable bombers in response.
This year, North Korea peaked six rounds of missile tests and artillery firing drills.
"No reconciliation" North Korea leader Kim Jong-un also declared his country will not seek reconciliation with the U.S. and vowed to scrap the country's long-running policy of peaceful unification with South Korea. Mr. Kim said the U.S. would take a more aggressive military posture along the dis-

puted sea boundary with South Korea.
Experts say North Korea could believe a bigger weapon arsenal would provide it with a greater leverage in future diplomacy with the U.S. They say North Korea is desperate to win an international recognition as a nuclear state, a status that it would think helps it win better economic sanctions.
North Korea is expected to further dial up tensions with more missile tests and warlike rhetoric in the year as the U.S. and South Korea head into major elections.
North Korea has also limited provocation near the military border with South Korea this year, experts say.

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Australia’s Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, left, with leaders and representatives of ASEAN members in Melbourne on Tuesday. AFP

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Fuelled by years of swift and sustained population growth, the ASEAN bloc is widely seen as an emerging economic powerhouse.

With vast deposits of critical minerals and a booming appetite for electricity, Southeast Asia is also poised to play a major

role in the global push for clean energy.

Australia’s new funding package will provide export financing and loans geared largely toward infrastructure and renewable energy projects.

Mr. Albanese said it was “the most significant upgrade of Australia’s economic engagement with ASEAN for a generation”.




Member states shown in dark green.

Headquarters ^[6]	Jakarta, Indonesia ^[a]  6°14′20″S 106°47′57″E
Largest city	Jakarta, Indonesia
Working language	English ^[7]
Official languages of contracting states	Burmese · Chinese · English · Filipino · Indonesian · Khmer · Lao · Malay · Tamil · Thai · Vietnamese
Membership	10 member [show] states 2 observer [show] states
Leaders	• Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn • Chairmanship of ASEAN  Laos
Establishment	• Bangkok Declaration 8 August 1967 (56 years ago) • Charter 16 December 2008 (15 years ago)
Area	• Total 4,522,518 ^[8] km ² (1,746,154 sq mi)


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Population	• 2023 estimate 683,290,000 ^[9] • Density 144/km ² (373.0/sq mi)
GDP (PPP)	2024 estimate • Total ▲ \$12.007 trillion ^[9] • Per capita ▲ \$17,528 ^[9]
GDP (nominal)	2024 estimate • Total ▲ \$4.248 trillion ^[9] • Per capita ▲ \$6,201 ^[9]
HDI (2021)	▲ 0.726 ^[b] high


The 44th ASEAN Summit will take place in **April or May 2024 in Indonesia**. The summit will include leaders of ASEAN Dialogue Partners (China, Japan, and South Korea) and ASEAN Dialogue Partners (Australia and New Zealand). The summit will address issues such as:

- The aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami
- COVID-19
- The Thai government's handling of the insurgency in south Thailand 

 Wikipedia

ASEAN Summit - Wikipedia

In addition, the Australian government is hosting a special ASEAN summit from March 4–6, 2024 in Melbourne to mark the 50th anniversary of Australia becoming the association's first dialogue partner. The summit will take place at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. 

UBS Singapore is also hosting its 12th edition of its OneASEAN Summit on March 4, 2024 in Singapore. 

Bigbasket eyes IPO in 2025



Delivering profit: bigbasket hopes to become profitable in the next 6-8 months, says Menon. THE HINDU

Janaki Krishnan
MUMBAI

Online grocer bigbasket is targeting an initial public offering (IPO) of its shares in 2025, CEO and Co-founder Hari Menon said.
"Probably 2025 is the date. We are leaving this to the Tatas, but I think we are gunning for 2025," Mr. Menon told *Businessline* on the sidelines of an event to unveil a frozen food line in collaboration with celebrity chef Sanjeev Kapoor. Next year is set to be busy for the Tatas, with group holding firm Tata Sons and Tata Capital set to introduce IPOs having been classified as upper-tier NBFCs, as per Reserve Bank of India guidelines.
The grocery platform is expected to end FY24 with revenue in the region of \$1.5 billion and hopes to become profitable in the next 6-8 months, Mr. Menon said.
He said the capital requirements were much lower than what they had been earlier. "We don't need as much money as we needed five years ago. It has come down quite a bit," he said, adding the business still required capital. He indicated the IPO would comprise fresh and a secondary issuance. In 2021, Tata Digital acquired more than 64% of its stake with investors such as Alibaba and Actis exiting. There are PE firms such as U.K.'s CDC Group and Silicon Valley's Bessemer Venture Partners that hold minority stakes in it.
Profitability factor
Of bigbasket's three business lines — bb daily, the slotted business and bb now — the first two are already stable and profitable, while the third bb now, the quick commerce vertical, is expected to be profitable in the next six-eight months.
(The writer is with *The Hindu Businessline*)

Strong U.S. economy sends dollar bears into hibernation for now

Strategists are still broadly bearish on the dollar, though the dollar's persistent strength is testing their outlook; signs that the Federal Reserve is sticking with its 'higher for longer' messaging on rate cuts or that the U.S. economy continues to stay strong could further support the dollar's rally

NEWS ANALYSIS
Reuters
NEW YORK

A stronger-than-expected United States economy is buoying the dollar, frustrating investors who had bet the currency would wilt under a barrage of interest rate cuts that have yet to materialize.
The dollar index, which measures the buck against a basket of its peers, is up 2.4% year-to-date. Net bets on the dollar in futures markets swung positive last month for the first time since late November, Commodity Futures Trading Commission data showed.
Driving the U.S. currency's stubborn strength is a robust U.S. economy that has made the Federal Reserve hesitant to ease monetary policy too quickly and risk an inflationary rebound.
U.S. gross domestic product grew at a 3.2% annualized rate in the fourth quarter. By contrast, the eurozone's economy stagnated last year, China faced at the end of the week. Signs that the Federal Reserve is sticking with its "higher for longer" messaging on rate cuts or that the U.S. economy continues to stay strong could support the dollar's rally.
Investors are pricing in some 85 basis points of



Strong comeback: The dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of its peers, is up 2.4% year-to-date. AP

formance even though he believes it has grown expensive relative to other currencies.
"Our call right now is purely a relative growth type of call," he said.
Getting the dollar's trajectory right is important for investors, given the currency's central role in global finance.
A strong dollar could weigh on the outlook for U.S. multinationals as it makes it more expensive to convert their foreign profits into dollars, while also making exporters' products less competitive abroad. About a quarter of S&P 500 companies generate more than 50% of revenues outside the U.S., FactSet data showed.
Dollar strength could al-

so complicate other central banks' efforts to fight inflation as it makes their currencies cheaper. The European Central Bank, which concludes its monetary policy meeting on Thursday, has also pushed back against rate cut talk due to sticky inflation. Signs that the euro zone's policymakers might further delay easing could boost the euro at the dollar's expense.
Strategists are still broadly bearish on the dollar, though the dollar's persistent strength is testing their outlook. While the median forecast among currency strategists is for the dollar to weaken over the rest of the year, some 80% believed there was a risk of the dollar exceeding their target
While the median forecast among currency strategists is for the dollar to weaken over the rest of the year, some 80% believed there was a risk of the dollar exceeding their target

their target, a Reuters poll showed in February.
Paul Mielczarski, head of macro strategy at Brandywine Global, sees the dollar's recent rebound as more of a "tactical rally as opposed to a change in the underlying trend overall."
Mr. Mielczarski is encouraged by nascent signs of improving growth outside the U.S., including strength in the global semiconductor cycle, which benefits currencies like the Korean won.
Others, however, see more reasons for dollar strength—especially if former U.S. President Donald Trump gains the upper hand in a presidential reelection race that has been deadlocked for months.
Analysts at Capital Economics wrote that Mr. Trump's proposed tariff increases could shift the Fed back to a tightening bias on monetary policy and set off a wider trade war that could have a negative impact for the U.S. currency. The dollar initially rallied after Mr. Trump won the 2016 election but fell 10.5% during the year.
While that may be far off, investors will still likely be hesitant to return to cash bets against the greenback, Macquarie's Wiszman said.
"I think it's a 'show me' story," he said, "and the amount of skepticism on the part of traders is high."

Uber technology



Robotic touch: Members of the media and passersby walk next to an unmanned robot as it crosses the street during a demonstration of a robot delivery service by Uber Eats Japan, Mitsubishi Electric and robot developer Cartken in downtown Tokyo. AP

India firms look to bet big on coal-fired power after long absence

Reuters
SINGAPORE/NEW DELHI

Private Indian firms have expressed interest in building at least 10 gigawatts (GW) of coal-fired power capacity over a decade, four sources familiar with the matter said, ending a six-year drought in significant private involvement in the sector.
Adani Power, JSW Group and Essar Power are among the companies that have told India's Power Ministry they would be keen to expand old plants or develop stalled projects facing financial stress, as per according to the sources and a government presentation seen by Reuters.
The potential investments, which have not been previously reported,

could cumulatively cost billions of dollars and demonstrate renewed appetite in an industry seen by many as financially unattractive. But they also threaten to undermine progress made by the world's No.3 greenhouse gas emitter in weaning its economy off carbon.
PM Narendra Modi's government, which has cited energy security concerns and low per-capita emissions to defend India's coal dependence, has been trying to attract private investment to boost coal-fired capacity by 80 GW by 2032.
Half the capacity
Coal-fired power plants and a government presentation seen by Reuters, which has cited energy security concerns and low per-capita emissions to defend India's coal dependence, has been trying to attract private investment to boost coal-fired capacity by 80 GW by 2032.

hydro making up 47 GW. A spokesperson for the Power Ministry said the private sector had agreed to invest in the coal-fired power sector "in line with the energy requirements of the nation," adding India was ahead of international commitments to cut emissions.
"The private sector is now expressing interest because of financial viability and assurance that payments will be made on time," he said. The companies did not respond to requests seeking comment.
India's association of Power Producers (APP), which represents coal-fired power developers, told Power Minister K. K. Singh its members were eager to boost capacity, according to a December 4 letter reviewed by Reuters.
Among the new proposals, Adani Power plans to add 4.8 GW and JSW 1 GW, according to three sources and a government presentation dated November 21 reviewed by Reuters.
Essar Power plans 1.6 GW of new domestic coal-based power generation in Gujarat state by 2029, one of the sources said. Another source said Vedanta will add 1.9 GW of capacity.
The sources — two government officials and two industry executives — declined to be named as the discussions are not public. The presentation, made

U.N. warns of climate change impact on women run farms in poor nations

Associated Press
ROME

Women who run farms and rural households in poor countries suffer more from climate change and are discriminated against as they try to adapt to other sources of income in times of crises, the United Nations warned Tuesday.
A new report by the Food and Agriculture Organization, "The Unjust Climate," found female-headed rural households lose on average 8% more of the income during heat waves and 3% more during floods, compared with male-headed households.
That disparity translates into a per capita reduction of \$83 due to heat stress



Bearing the brunt: Female-headed rural households lose 8% more of income during heat waves and 3% more during floods, AP

and \$35 due to floods — coming up to an annual total of \$37 billion and \$16 billion respectively in poor countries, the U.N. agency said in the report.
"Confronted with the significant existing differences in agricultural productivity and wages between women and men, the study suggests if not addressed, climate change will greatly widen these gaps in the years ahead," FAO said. The Rome-based FAO

came up with the statistics by surveying 1,000,000 rural households across 24 poor and middle-income countries around the world. The agency then integrated that data with 70 years of precipitation and temperature data.
Few plans
Significantly, the report noted few government plans to address climate change and promote adaptation strategies to take into account the specific vulnerabilities of rural women and youth.
Only 6% of the more than 4,000 proposals contained in the national climate adaptation plans of the countries surveyed mentioned women.

+ *Uber technology*



Robotic touch: Members of the media and passersby walk next to an unmanned robot as it crosses the street during a demonstration of a robot delivery service by Uber Eats Japan, Mitsubishi Electric and robot developer Cartken in downtown Tokyo. AFP

Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

Means Guarantee of fulfilling dreams of 140 crore Indians

Modi greets Shehbaz, first Indian response on new govt in Pak

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

IN THE first Indian government response on the new dispensation in Islamabad, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday congratulated Shehbaz Sharif, the new Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The brother of former Prime Minister and PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif was administered the oath of office as Prime Minister — for the second time — Monday, nearly a month after an election marred by controversy, allegations of rigging, and protests by the party of the jailed PTI leader Imran Khan.

“Congratulations to PML-N Shehbaz on being sworn in as the Prime Minister of Pakistan,” Modi posted on X.

This message from Modi is different from the one he posted in April 2022 when he said India desired peace and stability in a

Wait and watch

FOR NOW, Delhi has a wait-and-watch policy on the new coalition in Islamabad where, with the Pakistan Army's backing, the PML-N and PPP have come to power to keep out Imran Khan's PTI amid protests, rising allegations. India too is headed to polls and army movement on resumption of ties will happen only after the new government takes charge.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



PM IN VALLEY TOMORROW

Preparations are underway in Srinagar for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit Thursday, his first to the Valley since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. He will be addressing a public rally at the Balshahi Stadium. **ANI**

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

Save time. Spend smart. Invest intelligently.

Training for space at ISRO: Survival lessons, simulators, yoga, engineering

After Russian leg, the four IAF officers are preparing for the mission in Bengaluru

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

LAST WEEK, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi bestowed them the “astronaut wings”, the four Indian Air Force officers, Group Captain Prasanth Balar Krishnan, Major Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Anand Pratap and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla, were a picture of confidence and determination.

Behind this is a rigorous training regimen the four astronauts-designate for Gaganyaan, India's first crewed space mission, have been undergoing at the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) new astronaut training facility in Bengaluru. This includes training in engineering disciplines with a focus on spacecraft, propulsion and aerodynamics.

Further, referring to supporters of the Bilkees Bano gangrape victims chanting “Jai Shri Ram” when they were released, Raja said, “If this is the god you are talking about, if this is your ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’, we will never accept your ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and ‘Bharat Mata’.” Tamil Nadu cannot accept that. You go and tell everyone that we are

MISSION GAGANYAAN

TWO-PHASE TRAINING

GENERIC SPACEFLIGHT TRAINING IN RUSSIA

- Training to get used to weightlessness, motion sickness, and living in isolation
- Parabolic flights — aircraft that fly up and down at 45-degree angles
- Survival training for terrains such as mountains, woodlands, the Arctic, and the sea

MISSION SPECIFIC TRAINING IN INDIA

- Training on four sets of simulators, including one that will mimic jerks, vibrations, acceleration, and shocks
- Basics of spacecraft, propulsion and aerodynamics
- Psychological and physical training, including yoga

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

DAV'S BEFORE the deadline set for the withdrawal of the first batch of Indian military personnel, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has said that no Indian military personnel, whether in uniform or “civilian clothing”, will be present in the island country after May 10.

“There will be no Indian troops in the country come May 10. Not in uniform and not in civilian clothing. Indian military will not be residing in this country in any form of clothing. I state this with confidence,” Muizzu said, according to a Maldives news portal.

He was responding to the Opposition's criticism that the Indian technical personnel who are replacing the military personnel without their uniforms.

“According to the report, while addressing the residential community of Eyebahisi during his tour across Baal Atoll on Monday, Muizzu said that these people (Indian military) are not departing, that they are returning after changing their uniforms into civilian clothing... We must not indulge such thoughts that instil doubts on our hearts,” he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPRESS NETWORK

Save time. Spend smart. Invest intelligently.

NAVEEN A LOKPRIYA CM, ODISHA HAS KEY ROLE IN ECONOMY: PM

SHOWN DANGER, BEATEN, RAPED, SPANISH VLOGGER TO POLICE

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, MARCH 5

DMK LEADER and former Union Minister A. Raja has said India is not a nation in conventional terms with one language, one culture and one tradition. It was not a country, but a subcontinent, he said.

Addressing a function in Coimbatore to celebrate Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's birthday on March 1, Raja said,

Raja: India a subcontinent, not a country

“One country means one language, one culture, one tradition, one culture and one tradition. India was not a country, but a subcontinent. Here, there are many languages, with one language, and one culture. Mahatma is another language and a culture... Keeping

DMK Raja's remarks on India, Ram: BJP hits back, his allies urge restraint

them all together is what made India — this makes India a subcontinent, not a country.”

Further, referring to supporters of the Bilkees Bano gangrape victims chanting “Jai Shri Ram” when they were released, Raja said, “If this is the god you are talking about, if this is your ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’, we will never accept your ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and ‘Bharat Mata’.” Tamil Nadu cannot accept that. You go and tell everyone that we are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

HC acquits Saibaba, others in Maoist case; Maharashtra moves SC

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, MARCH 5

NOTHING THAT the prosecution failed to prove its case against former Delhi University professor C.N. Saibaba, sentenced to life in an alleged Maoist links case, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court Tuesday acquitted him and five other co-accused

Saibaba was sentenced to life term in jail

and allowed their appeals against their conviction in 2017.

Hours later, the Maharashtra High Court acquitted him and five other co-accused

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 5

THE PROSPECT of a better life in Israel ended bitterly for a family as a 31-year-old Kerala man was killed in a missile strike in the northern part of the country, leaving behind his pregnant wife and a five-year-old child.

Nibin Maxwell, who came from Kakkulangara in Kerala's Kollam, was killed and two people from the state were injured on Monday when an anti-tank missile fired by Hezbollah hit a paper mill in Northern Israel where

Weeks after moving to Israel for work, Kerala man killed in shelling

they were employed. The incident took place at an orchard at Margalit, a “moshav” (collective agricultural community), sources said.

The injured men were identified as Joseph and Paul Melvin. Two weeks ago, Nibin Maxwell, Antony, the incident took place in the northern part of the country, leaving behind his pregnant wife and a five-year-old child.

Nibin Maxwell, who came from Kakkulangara in Kerala's Kollam, was killed and two people from the state were injured on Monday when an anti-tank missile fired by Hezbollah hit a paper mill in Northern Israel where

youngest son works in the UAE.

Sources in Israel said the injured men were working in Margalit, a “moshav” (collective agricultural community), especially in border areas, to relocate to safe areas within the country. The Embassy said they are in touch with the Israeli authorities to ensure the safety of all its nationals. The Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv has a telephone number and email address for any help.

In a post on X, the Israeli Embassy wrote: “We are deeply shocked and saddened by the death of one of our Indian citizens. The injury of two others due to a terrorist attack leaves a heavy heart. We stand in solidarity with the families of the injured and the bereaved,” it wrote



JAN 5 ATTACK ON ED TEAM CBI takes over Sandeshkhali probe, Bengal Govt goes to SC

Calcutta HC says police biased, orders transfer of probe, custody of Sheikh

ATRI MITRA & SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, MARCH 5

COMING DOWN heavily on the West Bengal Police, which called “totally biased”, the Calcutta High Court on Tuesday ordered the transfer of the probe into the January 5 attack on Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials in Sandeshkhali, as well as custody of main accused Shahjahan Sheikh, to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Hours later, the state government moved the Supreme Court against the HC's order.

Meanwhile, taking over the investigation, the CBI registered an FIR in the case. A CBI team, escorted by paramilitary personnel, reached the CID office in Kolkata to take custody of Sheikh. But the police refused to hand him over, saying the matter was sub-judice.

In its order, the HC had directed that the custody of Sheikh, the suspended former wood Congress leader who was arrested by the West Bengal

Police refused to hand over Sheikh custody to the CBI

ED ATTACHES PROPERTIES

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate Tuesday said it has attached assets worth Rs 12.78 crore of suspended TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh, including bank deposits, an apartment, and agricultural and fishery land in Sandeshkhali and Kolkata, under PMLA. **ENS**

Police on February 29 in connection with the attack on the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Will join BJP, says Gangopadhyay after quitting as HC judge

SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, MARCH 5

HOURS AFTER he resigned as a judge of the Calcutta High Court, Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay announced Tuesday that he will be joining the BJP on March 7 and it was up to the party to decide if he should contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

“I will join the BJP on March 7. It is the only national party which is fighting against Trinamool Congress's corruption,” said the former judge, who was making critical remarks against the ruling TMC and its leader Abhishek Banerjee.

“I have been forced to take this step due to taunts by the ruling party. Their taunts and statements inspired me to take this step. The ruling party taunts me many times. Their spokespersons attacked me with unnecessary words. I think they have a problem with their



Will join BJP, says Gangopadhyay after quitting as HC judge

education,” he told reporters at his Salt Lake residence.

Responding to a question on when the BJP approached him and how long he took to take call on joining political party, Gangopadhyay said he did not

Justice Gangopadhyay at his residence in Kolkata on Tuesday. Photo: Anil

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Nibin Maxwell, 31, was killed in a Hezbollah missile strike

Why Lakshadweep base INS Jatayu matters

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

ON WEDNESDAY, Naval Detachment Minicoy will be commissioned as INS Jatayu, an upgraded naval base, marking an important milestone in the Indian Navy's resolve to incrementally augment security infrastructure at the strategic Lakshadweep Islands.

While India has had a naval detachment in Minicoy on the southernmost atoll of the archipelago since the 1980s, INS Jatayu will effectively be the country's second naval base in Lakshadweep. The Navy's first base on the islands, INS Dweep prakshak in Kavaratti, was commissioned in 2012.

INS Jatayu will be commissioned days after Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Pravind Jugnauth of Mauritius jointly inaugurated an airstrip and a jetty that India has built on the Mauritian island of Agaléga off the coast of Africa in the western Indian Ocean.

Names of ships, bases, and detachments of the Indian Navy carry the prefix INS.

The Lakshadweep Islands

Lakshadweep, "a hundred thousand is-



lands" in Sanskrit and Malayalam, is an archipelago of 36 islands located between 220 km and 440 km from Kochi. The islands, only 11 of which are inhabited, have a total area of only 32 sq km.

The Lakshadweep are part of a chain of coralline islands in the Indian Ocean that includes Maldives to the south, and the Chagos archipelago farther beyond. Given their location in the Indian Ocean, the Lakshadweep are of huge strategic importance to India.

Minicoy straddles vital Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) – the world's main maritime highways – including the Eight Degree Channel (between Minicoy and Maldives) and the Nine Degree Channel (between Minicoy and the main cluster of Lakshadweep Islands). In consequence, the Lakshadweep Islands are also vulnerable to marine pollution.

INS Jatayu naval base

The existing Naval Detachment Minicoy, which is under the operational command of the Naval Officer-in-Charge (Lakshadweep), will be commissioned as INS Jatayu.

A naval detachment has administrative, logistics, and medical facilities. INS Jatayu will be upgraded to a naval base with additional infrastructure such as an airfield, housing, and personnel, after obtaining the requisite environmental and other clearances.

While the fragile ecology of the island may pose challenges for the construction of a jetty, there are plans to construct a new airfield that will be capable of operating both military and civil aircraft.

Teeth to Navy operations

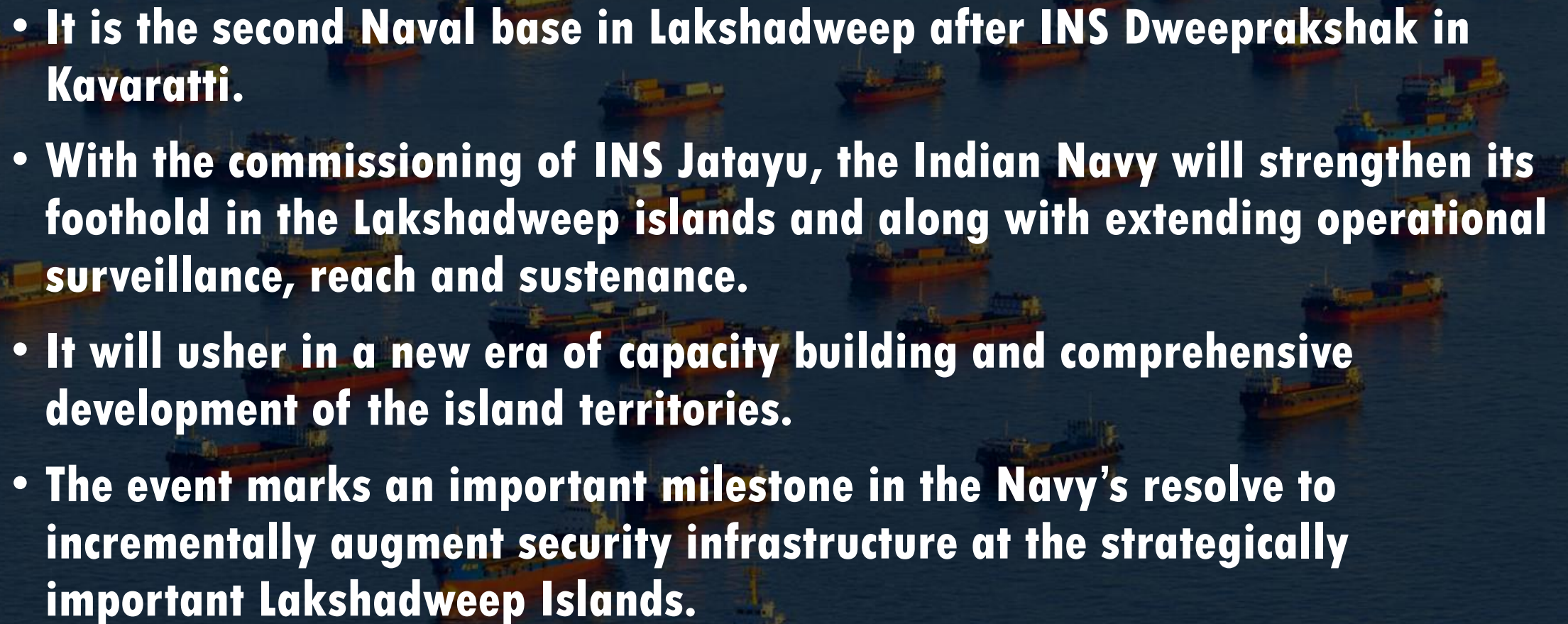
The basing of an independent unit with requisite infrastructure and resources will enhance the overall operational capability of the Navy in the islands. The establishment of the base is in line with the government's focus on comprehensive development of the islands.

The Navy has also said that the base will enhance its operational reach, facilitate its anti-piracy and anti-narcotics operations in the western Arabian Sea, and augment its capability as the first responder in the region.

With the commissioning of INS Jatayu, the Navy will add to its strength on the western seaboard. The proposed airfield will allow operations for a range of aircraft, including P8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft and fighter jets, and extend the Navy's reach and operational surveillance capabilities at a time when India is seeking to counter the growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean Region.

This has an immediate bearing at a time when India's relations with the Maldives have come under strain since the election of the pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu.

**EXPLAINED
DEFENCE**

- 
- An aerial photograph showing a large number of Indian Navy ships, including frigates, corvettes, and support vessels, dispersed across a vast expanse of blue water. The ships are viewed from a high angle, and their colors (red, white, and blue) are visible against the sea. The background is a clear, light blue sky.
- **It is the second Naval base in Lakshadweep after INS Dweep prakshak in Kavaratti.**
 - **With the commissioning of INS Jatayu, the Indian Navy will strengthen its foothold in the Lakshadweep islands and along with extending operational surveillance, reach and sustenance.**
 - **It will usher in a new era of capacity building and comprehensive development of the island territories.**
 - **The event marks an important milestone in the Navy's resolve to incrementally augment security infrastructure at the strategically important Lakshadweep Islands.**

Google blinks, relists apps

Move temporary, says tech giant

JATIN GROVER
New Delhi, March 5

AFTER COMMUNICATIONS AND IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's intervention, Google on Tuesday reinstated all the apps it had removed on March 1. These apps were removed from Play Store over non-payment of commission charges for in-app purchases.

INSIDE
Rolls out new user, app rules in EU

PAGE 7

The development is significant because the reinstatement is on the same terms and conditions which existed as on March 1. Now the

WHAT'S IN STORE

■ Tech giant to continue to bill app developers at **11-26%** commission for in-app purchases; can be paid later

■ App developers concerned over potential financial burden at a later stage due to the pile up of in-app invoicing

■ A forum comprising app developers and Google likely in

120 days

to reach a sustainable and non-monopolistic solution



On March 1, Google **delisted apps** of

10 companies, including InfoEdge, Shaadi.com, Bharat Matrimony, Kuku FM, among others

users of these apps can make in-app purchases either by using Google's payment system or third-party billing.

Google had reinstated several apps between March 2-4, but these were on consumption-only basis — purchases could be made outside the Play Store.

“Google and startups met with us. We have had very constructive discussions and finally, Google has agreed to list all the apps with same status as on Friday, March 1,” Vaishnaw said on Tuesday.

Continued on Page 12

Musk loses world's richest person title to Jeff Bezos

TOM MALONEY & ANNIE MASSA
March 5

FOR THE FIRST time in more than nine months, Elon Musk is no longer the world's richest person. Musk lost his position atop the Bloomberg Billionaires Index to Jeff Bezos after shares in Tesla tumbled 7.2% on Monday. Musk now has a net worth of \$197.7 billion; Bezos' fortune is \$200.3 billion.

It's the first time that Bezos, 60, the founder of Amazon, has topped Bloomberg's ranking of the richest people since 2021.

The wealth gap between Musk, 52, and Bezos, which at one point was as wide as \$142 billion, has been shrinking as Amazon and Tesla shares move in opposite directions. While both are among the so-called Magnificent Seven stocks that have propelled US equity markets, Amazon shares have more than doubled since late 2022 and are within striking dis-



tance of a record high. Tesla is down about 50% from its 2021 peak.

Tesla shares fell on Monday after preliminary data showed shipments from its factory in Shanghai slumped to the lowest in more than a year. Amazon, meanwhile, is coming off its best online sales growth since early in the pandemic.

Pay Package

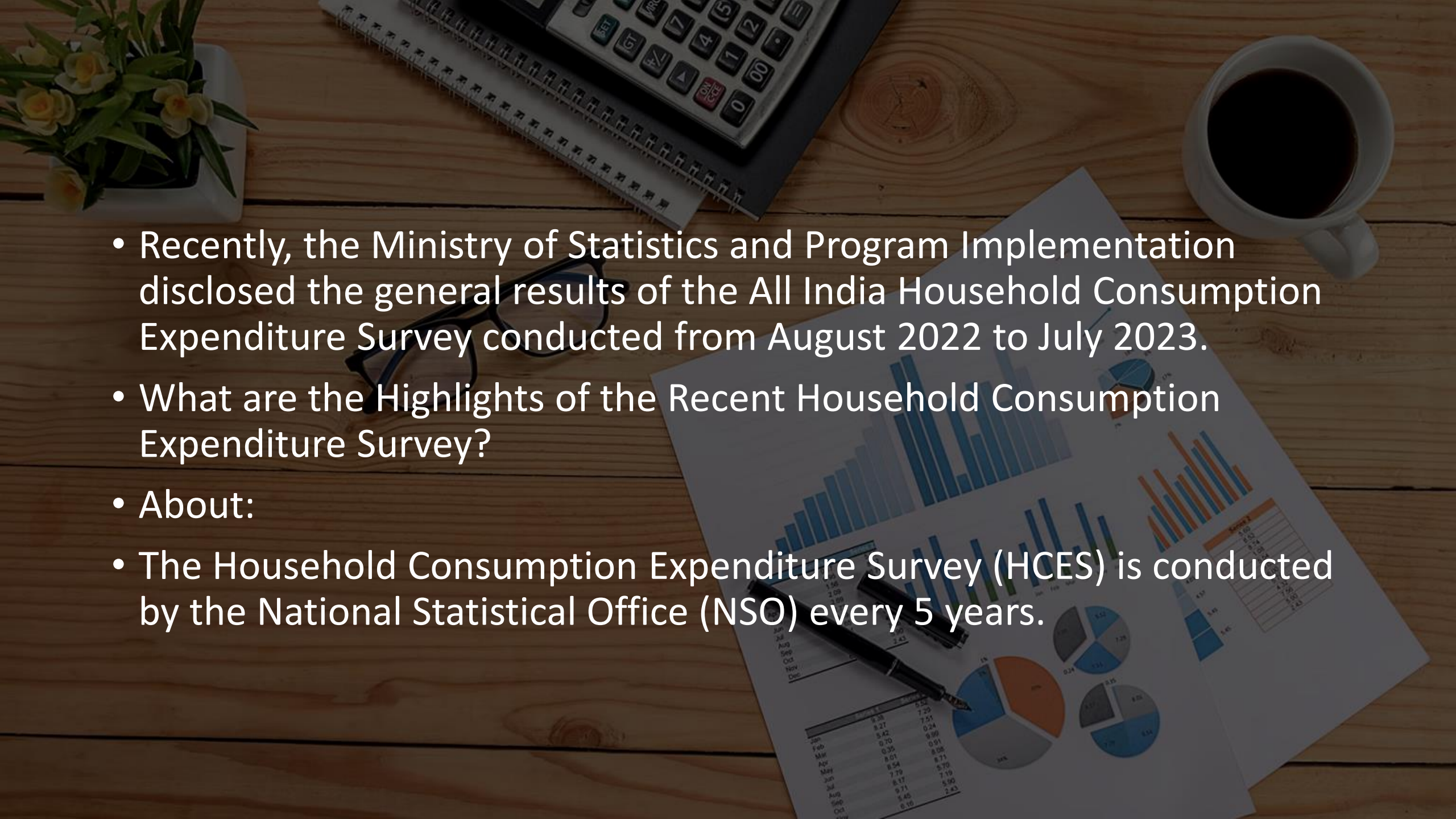
Musk's wealth could take a further hit after a Delaware judge struck down his \$55 billion pay package at Tesla, where he's chief executive. The decision took the side of an investor who'd challenged Musk's compensation plan, which had been the largest in history.

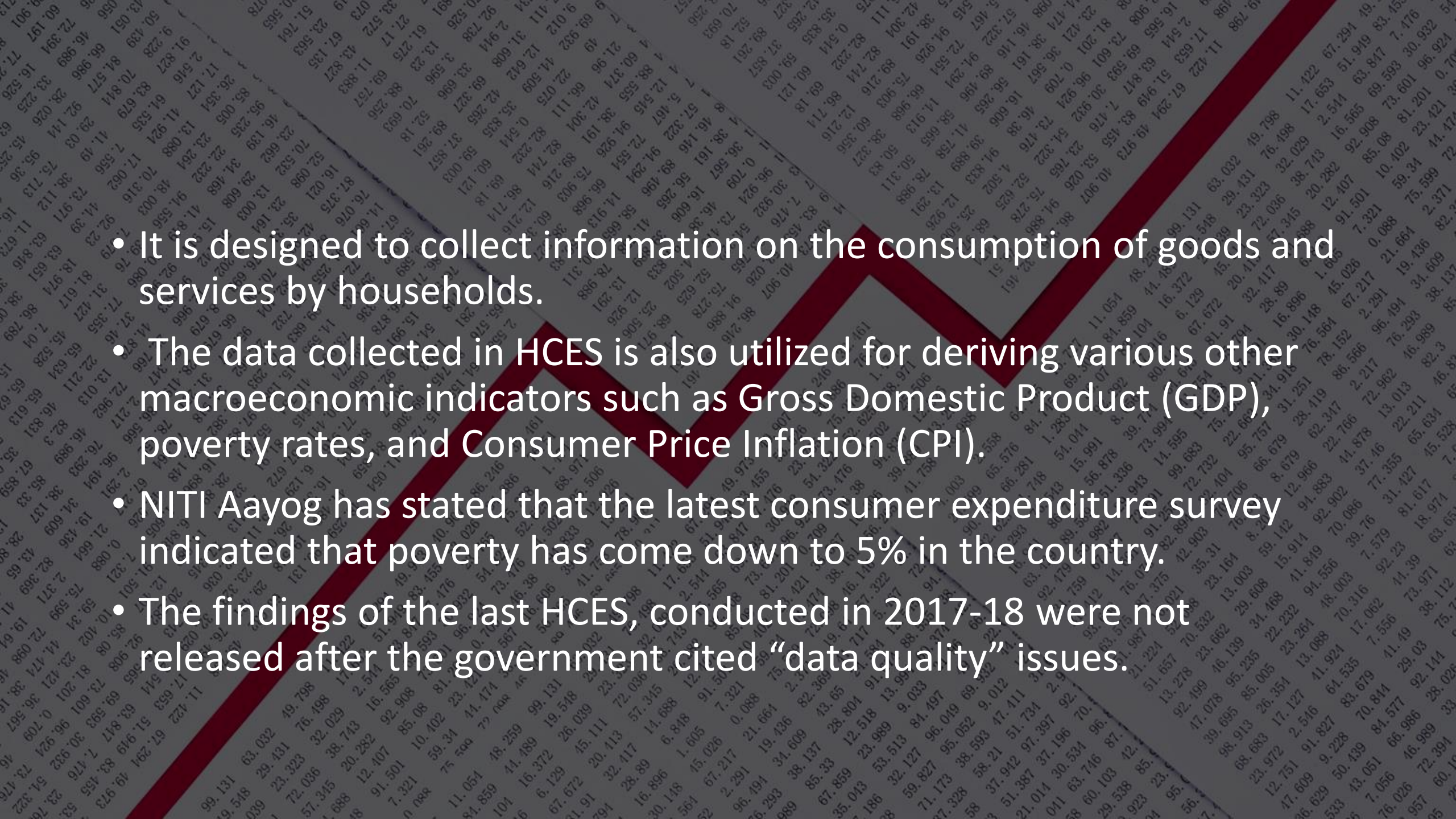
Options that were included in the voided plan are one of Musk's largest assets, alongside his stakes in Tesla and SpaceX. The Bloomberg index continues to include them in its calculations of his wealth. The vast majority of Bezos's fortune comes from his 9% stake in Amazon. He's the online retailer's largest shareholder.

For Bezos, being atop the wealth rankings is a familiar perch. He first overtook Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates as the world's richest person in 2017. But a massive rally in Tesla shares left Bezos jockeying with Musk for much of 2021 for the top spot.

—BLOOMBERG

Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23

- 
- Recently, the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation disclosed the general results of the All India Household Consumption Expenditure Survey conducted from August 2022 to July 2023.
 - What are the Highlights of the Recent Household Consumption Expenditure Survey?
 - About:
 - The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) is conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) every 5 years.

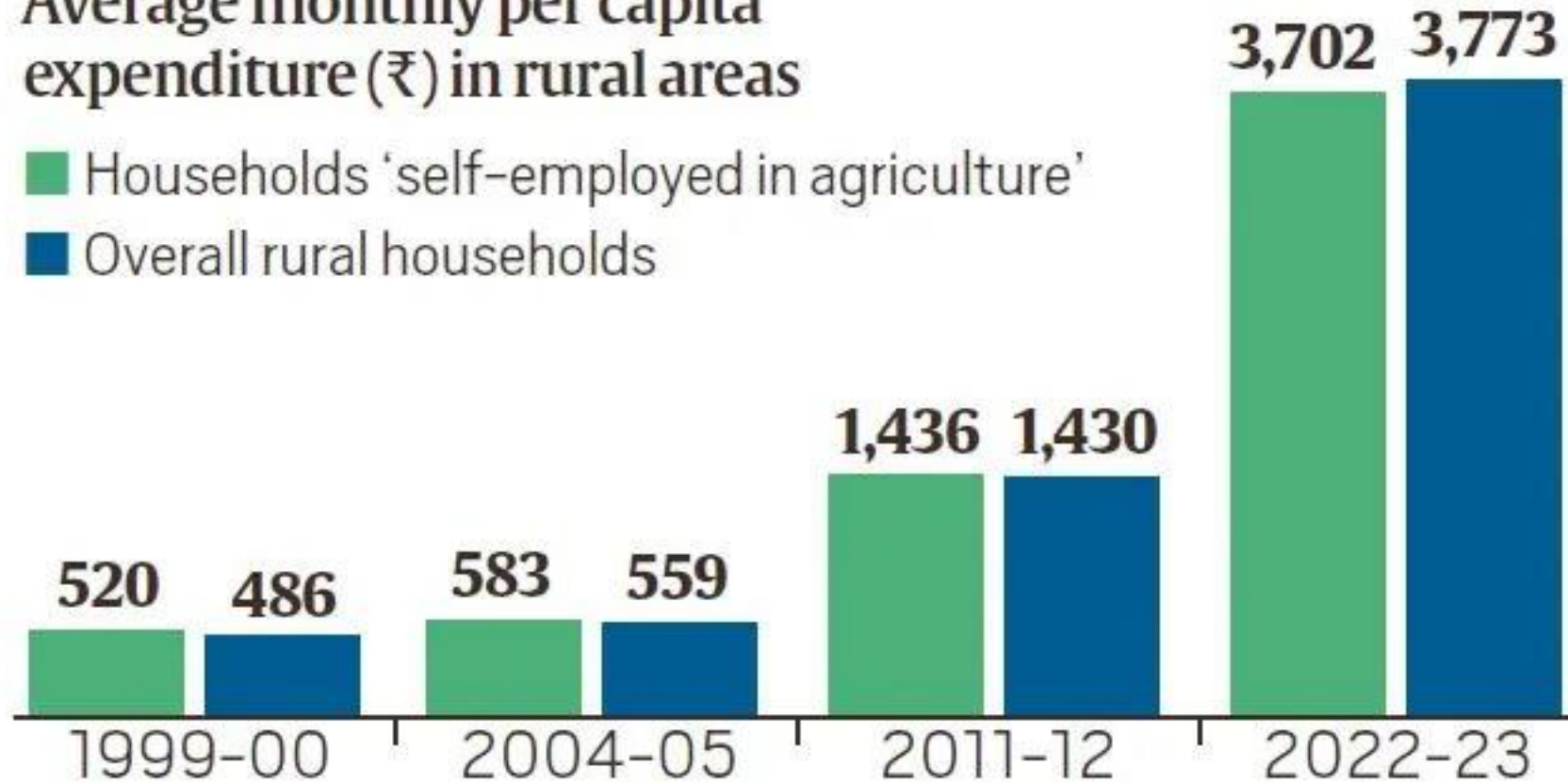
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- It is designed to collect information on the consumption of goods and services by households.
 - The data collected in HCES is also utilized for deriving various other macroeconomic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), poverty rates, and Consumer Price Inflation (CPI).
 - NITI Aayog has stated that the latest consumer expenditure survey indicated that poverty has come down to 5% in the country.
 - The findings of the last HCES, conducted in 2017-18 were not released after the government cited “data quality” issues.

- **Increase in MPCE:**
 - **It reveals a 33.5% increase in MPCE in urban households since 2011-12, reaching ₹3,510, while rural India's MPCE increased by 40.42% to ₹2,008.**
 - **In 2022-23, 46% of rural household expenditure and 39% of urban household expenditure were on food items.**
- 

CONSUMPTION IN RURAL AREAS

Average monthly per capita expenditure (₹) in rural areas

- Households 'self-employed in agriculture'
- Overall rural households



Distribution of MPCE by Population Percentiles:

The bottom 5% of India's rural population, ranked by MPCE, has an average MPCE of Rs. 1,373 while it is Rs. 2,001 for the same category of population in the urban areas.

- The top 5% of India's rural and urban population, ranked by MPCE, has an average MPCE of Rs. 10,501 and Rs. 20,824, respectively.

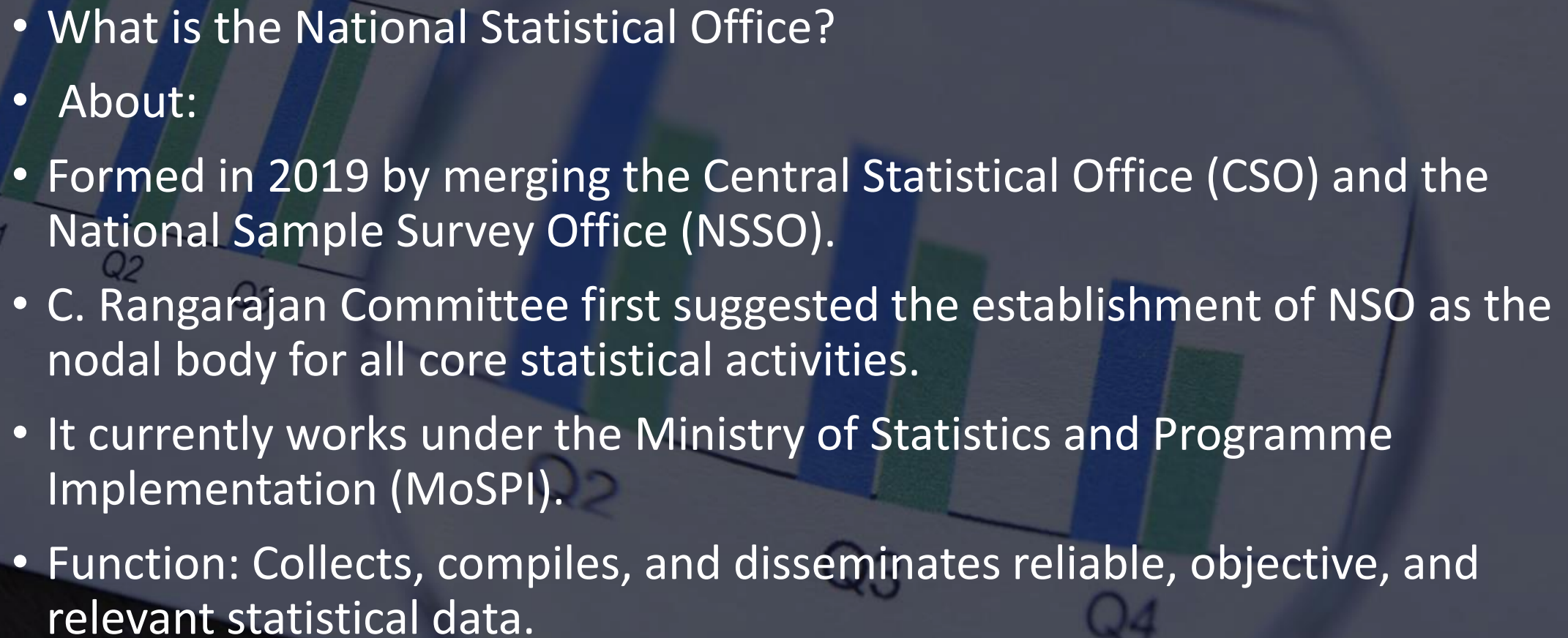
- **State-wise MPCE Variations:**
- **Sikkim has the highest MPCE in both rural (₹7,731) and urban areas (₹12,105), while Chhattisgarh has the lowest with ₹2,466 for rural households and ₹4,483 for urban households.**
 - **The rural-urban difference in average MPCE, among the states is the highest in Meghalaya (83%) followed by Chhattisgarh (82%).**

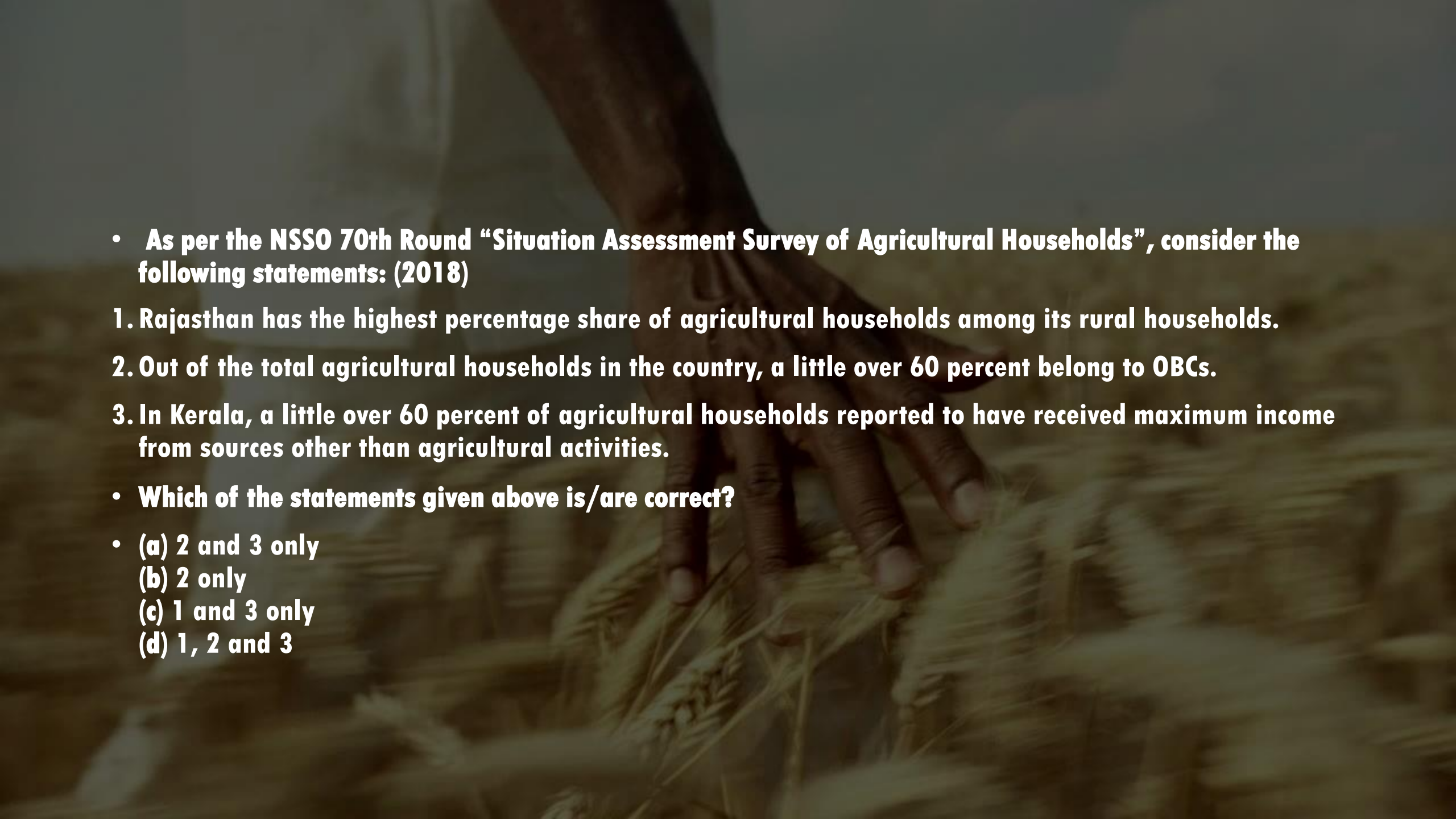


UT-wise MPCE Variations:



Among the UTs, **MPCE is the highest in Chandigarh** (Rural Rs. 7,467 and Urban Rs. 12,575), whereas, it is the **lowest in Ladakh** (Rs. 4,035) and Lakshadweep (Rs. 5,475) for rural and urban areas respectively.

- 
- What is the National Statistical Office?
 - About:
 - Formed in 2019 by merging the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).
 - C. Rangarajan Committee first suggested the establishment of NSO as the nodal body for all core statistical activities.
 - It currently works under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
 - Function: Collects, compiles, and disseminates reliable, objective, and relevant statistical data.

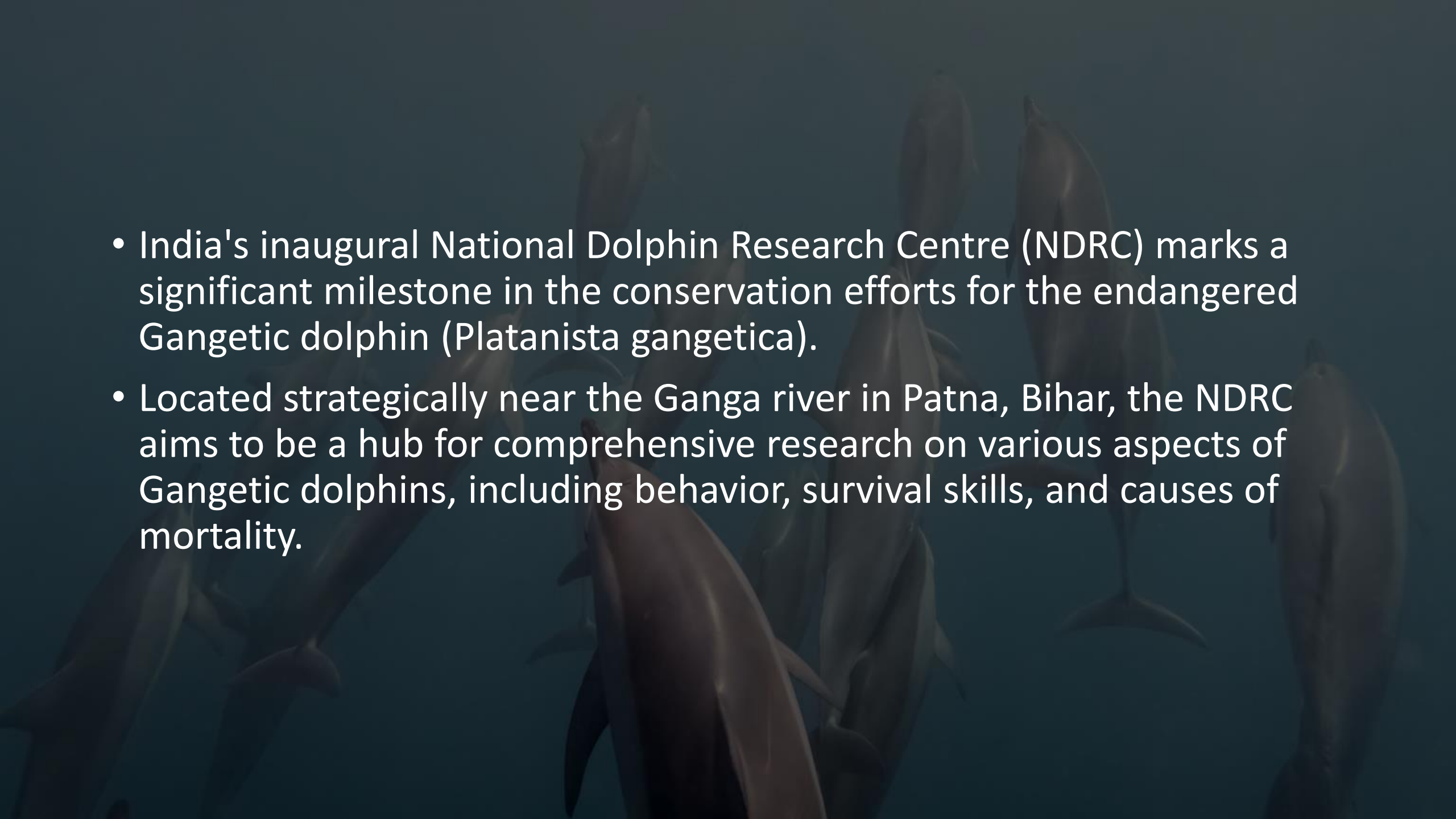
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- **As per the NSSO 70th Round “Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households”, consider the following statements: (2018)**
 - 1. Rajasthan has the highest percentage share of agricultural households among its rural households.**
 - 2. Out of the total agricultural households in the country, a little over 60 percent belong to OBCs.**
 - 3. In Kerala, a little over 60 percent of agricultural households reported to have received maximum income from sources other than agricultural activities.**
 - **Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**
 - **(a) 2 and 3 only**
 - **(b) 2 only**
 - **(c) 1 and 3 only**
 - **(d) 1, 2 and 3**

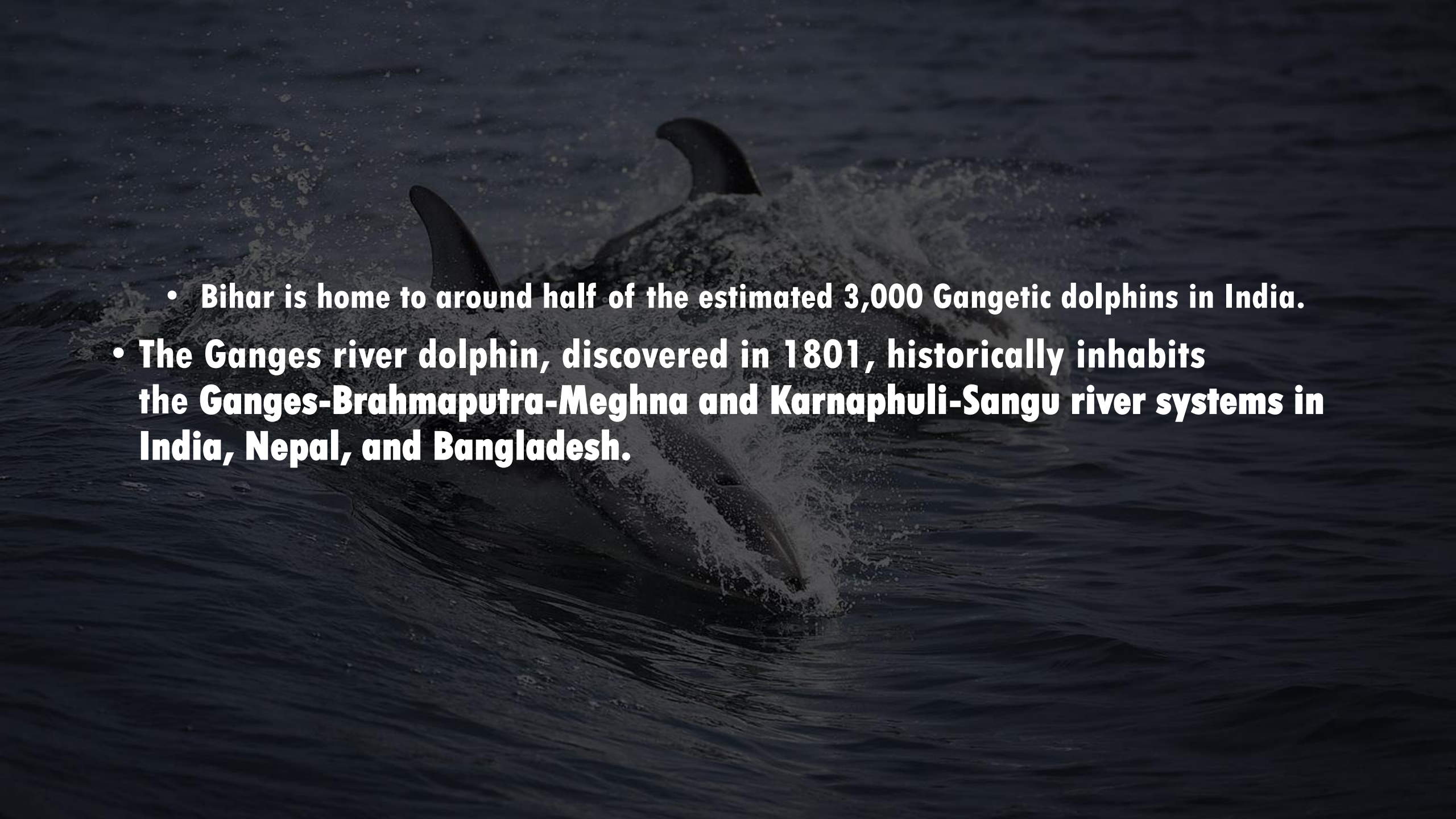
In a given year in India, official poverty lines are higher in some States than in others because (2019)

- (a) poverty rates vary from State to State**
- (b) price levels vary from State to State**
- (c) Gross State Product varies from State to State**
- (d) quality of public distribution varies from State to State**

A large school of fish swimming in deep blue water, with the text "India's First Dolphin Research Centre" overlaid in white.

India's First Dolphin Research Centre

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- India's inaugural National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC) marks a significant milestone in the conservation efforts for the endangered Gangetic dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*).
 - Located strategically near the Ganga river in Patna, Bihar, the NDRC aims to be a hub for comprehensive research on various aspects of Gangetic dolphins, including behavior, survival skills, and causes of mortality.

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- A Ganges river dolphin is captured mid-leap from the water, its body arched and its dorsal fin visible. The dolphin is dark in color, and the water around it is splashing and white with foam. The background is a dark, rippling surface of water.
- Bihar is home to around half of the estimated 3,000 Gangetic dolphins in India.
 - The Ganges river dolphin, discovered in 1801, historically inhabits the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

National aquatic animal of India

Facts

- ▶ Can only live in freshwater; prefer deep water
- ▶ Essentially blind; hunts by emitting ultrasonic sound
- ▶ Can't breathe in water; must surface every 30-120 seconds for air
- ▶ Also called 'susu' because of sound they make while breathing

Habitat & Distribution

- ▶ Distributed in Ganges and Brahmaputra River basins of India, Nepal and Bangladesh.
- ▶ Distribution range in India covers 7 states namely, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Protection Status

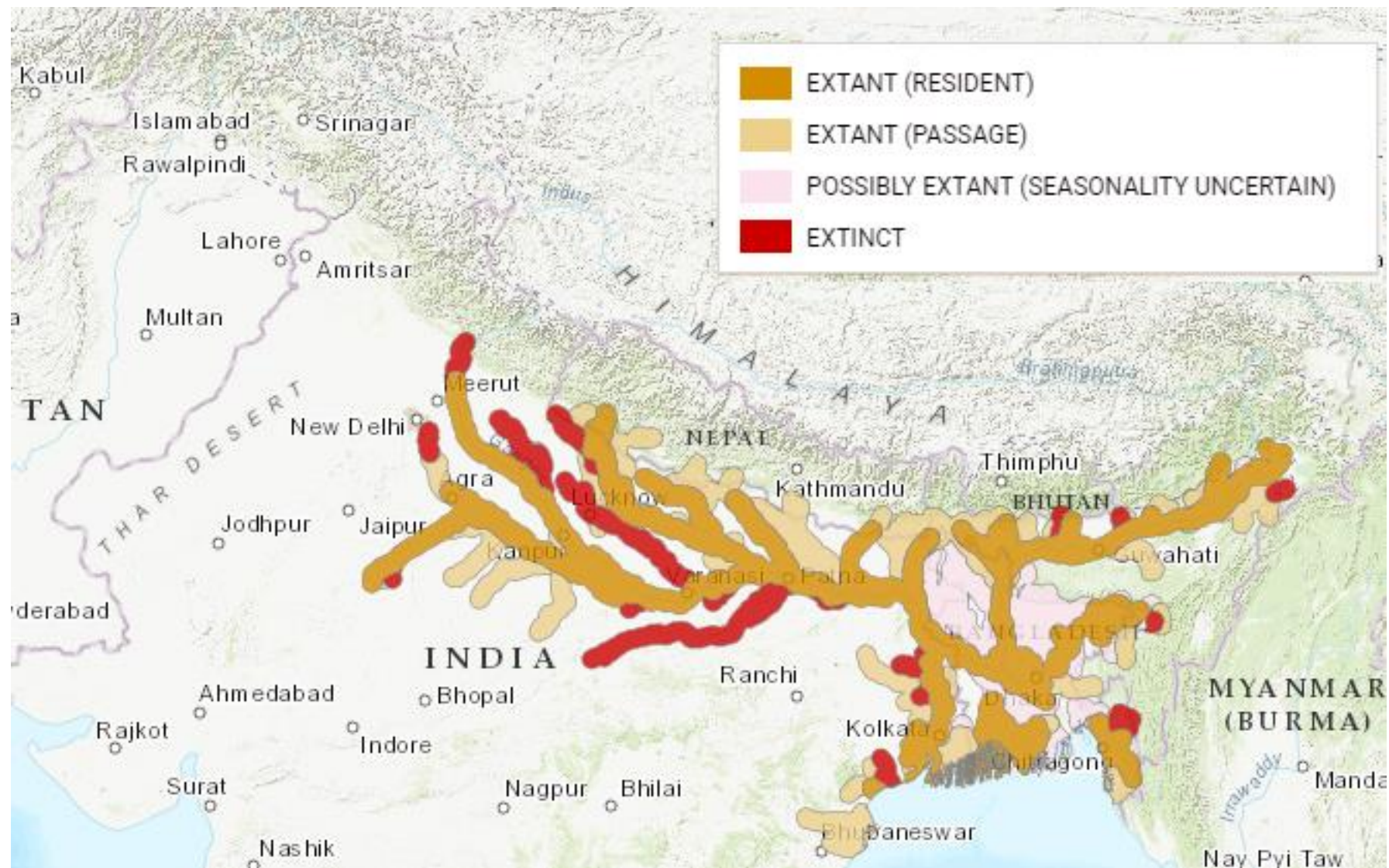
- ▶ **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
- ▶ **CITES:** Appendix I
- ▶ **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule I

Threats

- ▶ Habitat destruction
- ▶ Pollution
- ▶ Bycatch
- ▶ Climate Change
- ▶ Hunting

Conservation Efforts

- ▶ **Project Dolphin (2021):** On lines of project Tiger
- ▶ **National Dolphin Research Centre (2021):** India's and Asia's First; in Patna University (Bihar)
- ▶ **Dedicated Dolphin Sanctuary:**
 - ▣ Vikramshila sanctuary (Bihar) – 1991
 - ▣ Hastinapur sanctuary (UP) – Proposed









Cavum Cloud

The image shows a large industrial facility, possibly a power plant or refinery, with numerous tall smokestacks. Several of these stacks are actively emitting thick, dark plumes of smoke or steam that rise into the sky. The sky is filled with a dense, hazy layer of smoke, giving it a yellowish or sepia tone. The foreground is a flat, light-colored surface, likely snow or a dry field, with some utility poles and power lines visible. The overall atmosphere is one of heavy industrial activity and air pollution.

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- Recently, **NASA's Terra satellite** captured a cluster of **cavum clouds** over the Gulf of Mexico off Florida's west coast.
 - **About the Cavum Clouds**
 - These clouds appear as if a large circle or ellipse has been neatly cut from the clouds, leaving feathery wisps in the middle of the hole.

Common types of clouds in the troposphere



Cirrocumulus
(mackerel sky)
above 18,000 feet



Cirrus
above 18,000 feet



Cumulonimbus
from near the ground
to above 50,000 feet



Altostratus
6,000 to 20,000 feet



Altostratus
6,000-20,000 feet



Stratocumulus
below 6,000 feet



Stratus
below 6,000 feet



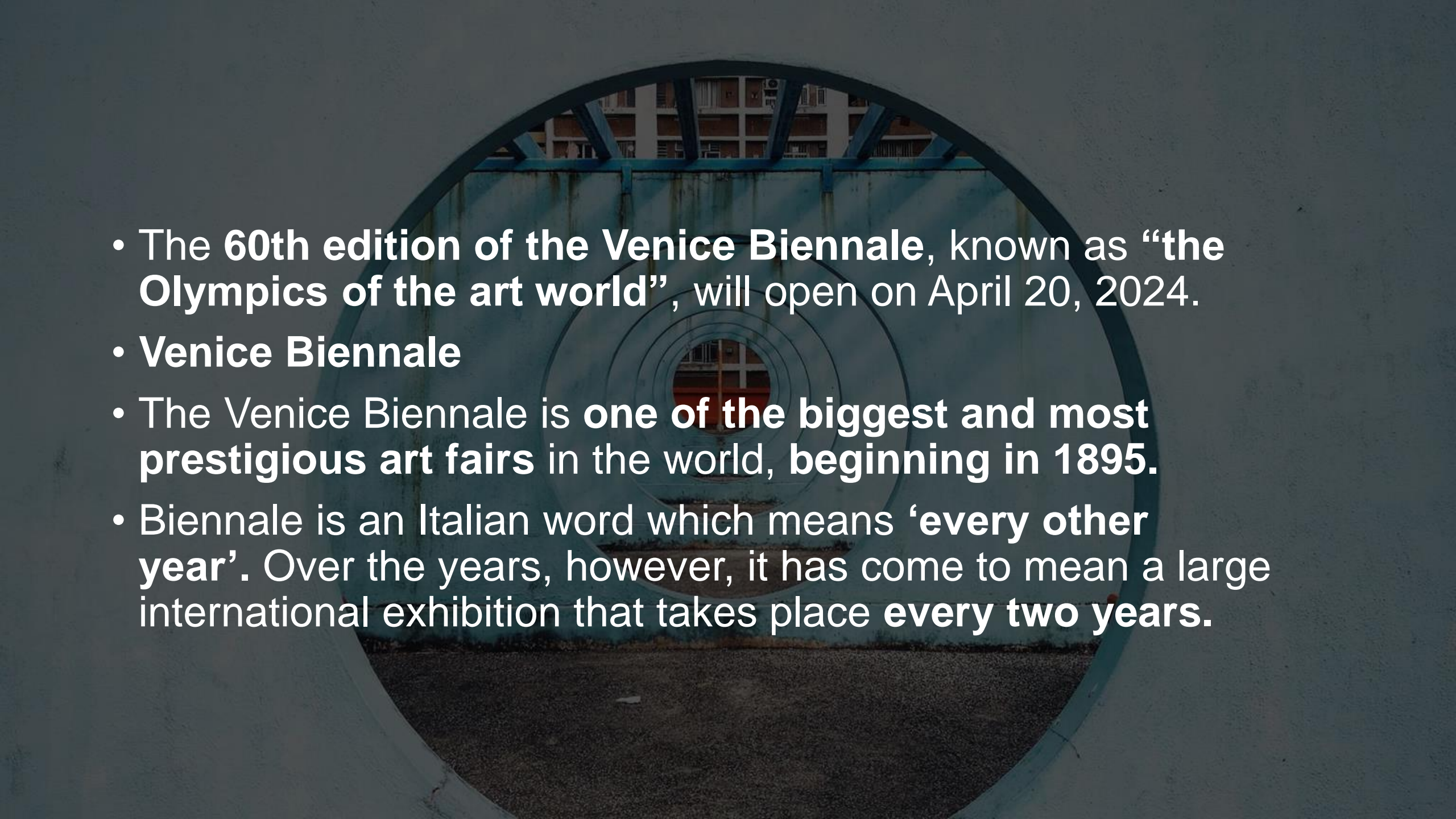
Cumulus
below 6,000 feet



- **Formation:**
- Cavum clouds are formed when **aeroplanes fly through banks of altocumulus clouds**, mid-level clouds that contain supercooled water droplets.
- As air moves around the plane, a process called **adiabatic expansion** can make the droplets freeze into ice crystals.
- The ice crystals eventually grow heavy and fall out of the sky, leaving a hole in the cloud layer.
- The **falling ice crystals** are visible in the centre of the holes as **wispy trails of precipitation that never reach the ground** – features called **virga**.



Venice Biennale

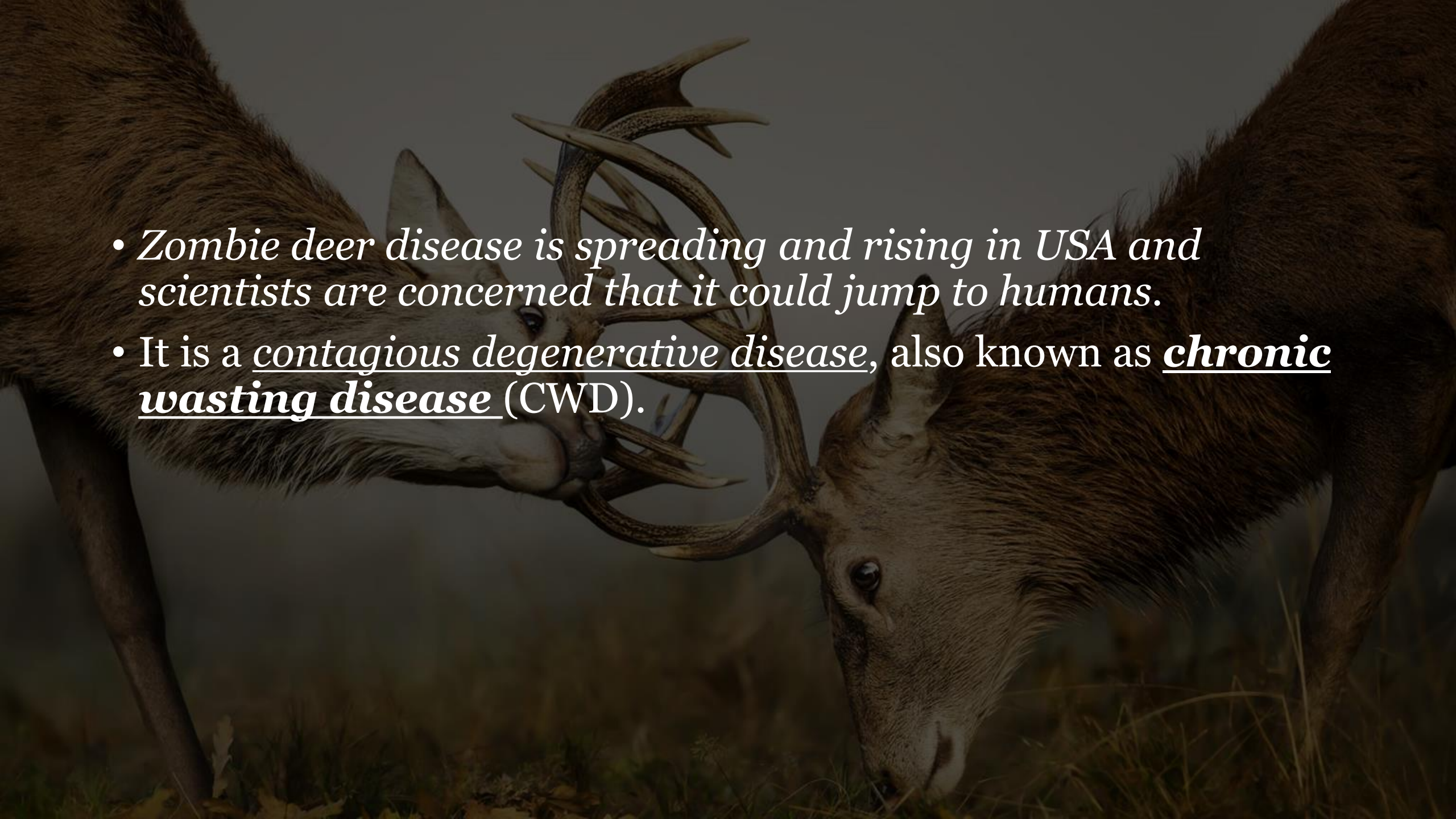
- 
- A circular opening in a wall, looking out onto a building and a courtyard. The opening is framed by a dark blue metal structure. The background shows a multi-story building with windows and a courtyard area.
- The **60th edition of the Venice Biennale**, known as “**the Olympics of the art world**”, will open on April 20, 2024.
 - **Venice Biennale**
 - The Venice Biennale is **one of the biggest and most prestigious art fairs** in the world, **beginning in 1895**.
 - Biennale is an Italian word which means ‘**every other year**’. Over the years, however, it has come to mean a large international exhibition that takes place **every two years**.

- Biennales feature **contemporary art by artists** from various countries that are usually linked by a common curatorial theme, providing a framework for exploring contemporary social, economic and political ideas in an international context.

- **India's participation**
- **India made its debut at the Biennale in 1954.** Recording robust sales, the exhibition comprised over 50 paintings of masters such as M F Husain, S H Raza, Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil, and Francis Newton Souza.
- **After 1954, the country officially participated in the event in 2011.** The exhibition was organised by Lalit Kala Akademi and curated by Ranjit Hoskote. It featured works by artists like Zarina Hashmi, Gigi Scaria, Praneet Soi, and the Desire Machine Collective.

A large buck with impressive, multi-tined antlers stands in a snowy field. The buck is facing right, and its fur is a mix of brown and tan. The background is a dark, blue-tinted sky with falling snow, creating a wintry atmosphere. The ground is covered in a layer of snow.

Zombie Deer Disease

- 
- A photograph of two deer with large, multi-tined antlers in a field. The deer are facing each other, and the image is dimly lit, giving it a somber or mysterious atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.
- *Zombie deer disease is spreading and rising in USA and scientists are concerned that it could jump to humans.*
 - It is a contagious degenerative disease, also known as **chronic wasting disease** (CWD).

The 1st case of chronic wasting disease (CWD) was discovered in Colorado in 1967.

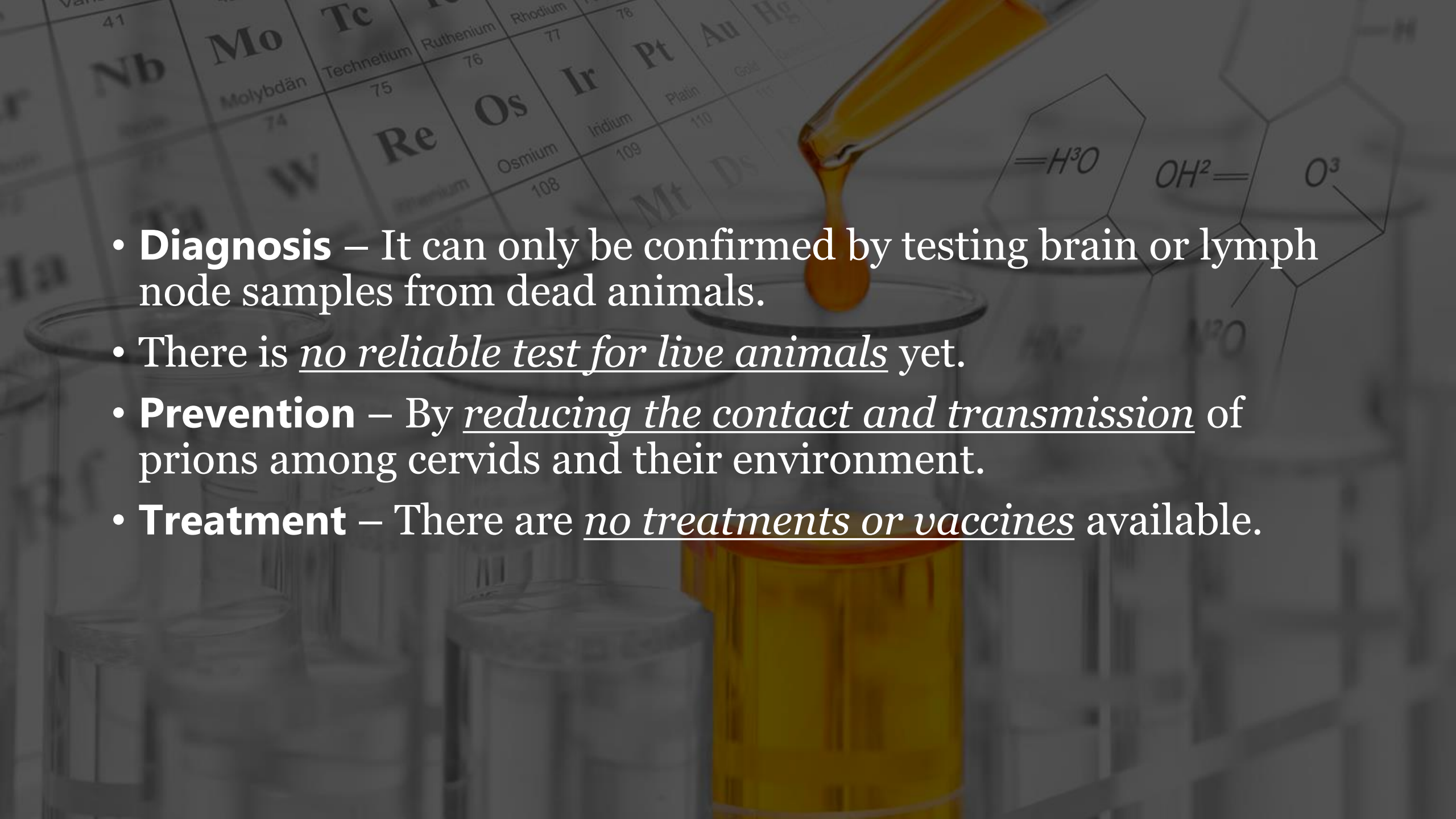
Caused by – A prion.

Prions are misfolded proteins that can cause normal proteins in the brain to misfold as well, leading to neurological degeneration.



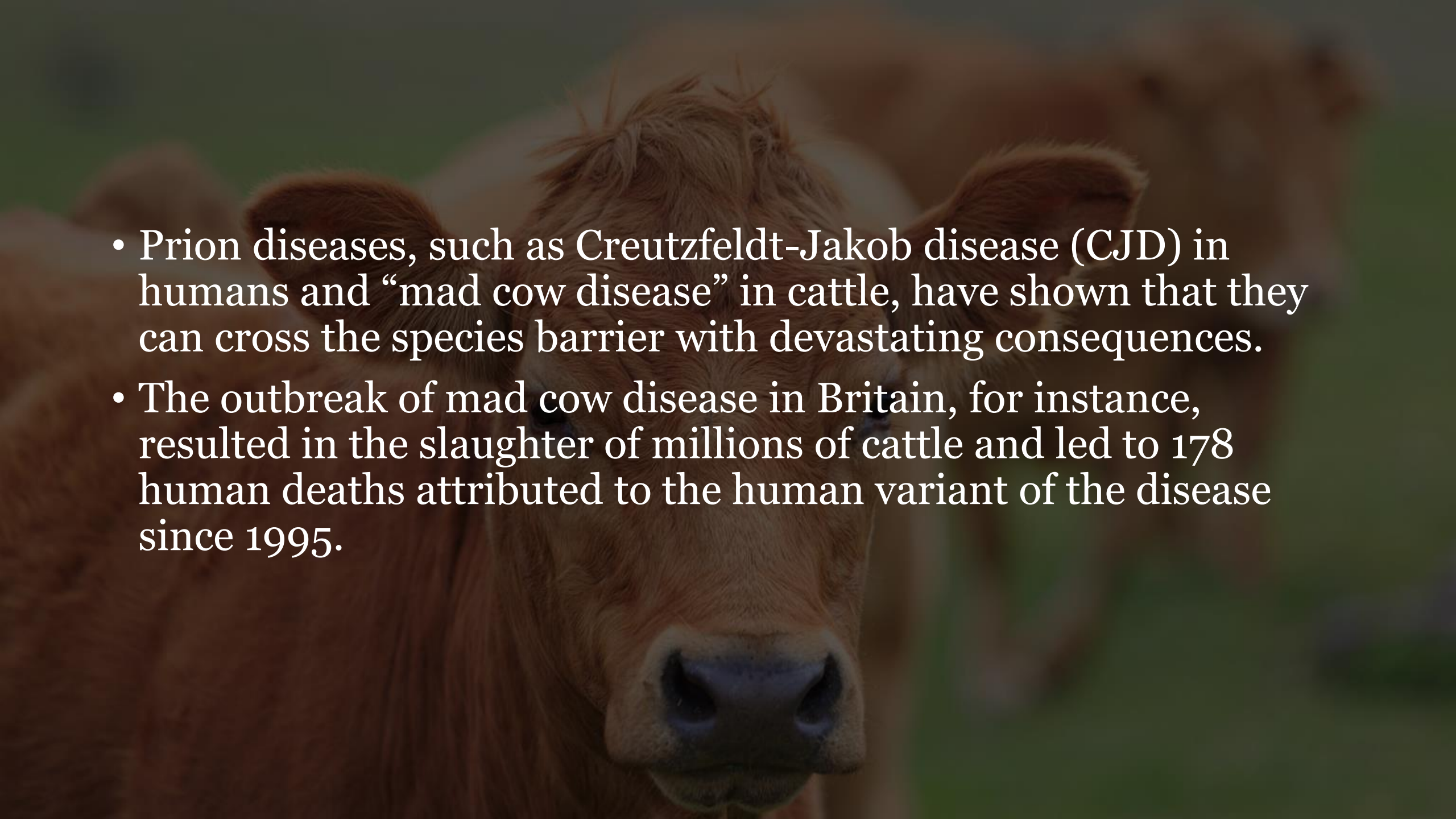
Zombie Deer Disease Found In Many US Animals, Scientists Worried Of Potential Spread To Humans. Here's Why

- 
- An aerial photograph showing a complex network of winding rivers and streams flowing through a dense, dark green forest. The water bodies are a light, silty brown color, contrasting with the surrounding greenery. The rivers meander across the landscape, creating a web-like pattern.
- As the degeneration continues, the afflicted animal's brain cells die, ultimately resulting in its death.
 - **Vulnerable species** – deer, elk, reindeer, sika deer, and moose.
 - **Spread** – So far in Canada, the US, Norway, Sweden and South Korea.
 - **Transmission** – They are reportedly spread via bodily fluids like saliva, urine, blood, or feces.

- 
- **Diagnosis** – It can only be confirmed by testing brain or lymph node samples from dead animals.
 - There is no reliable test for live animals yet.
 - **Prevention** – By reducing the contact and transmission of prions among cervids and their environment.
 - **Treatment** – There are no treatments or vaccines available.

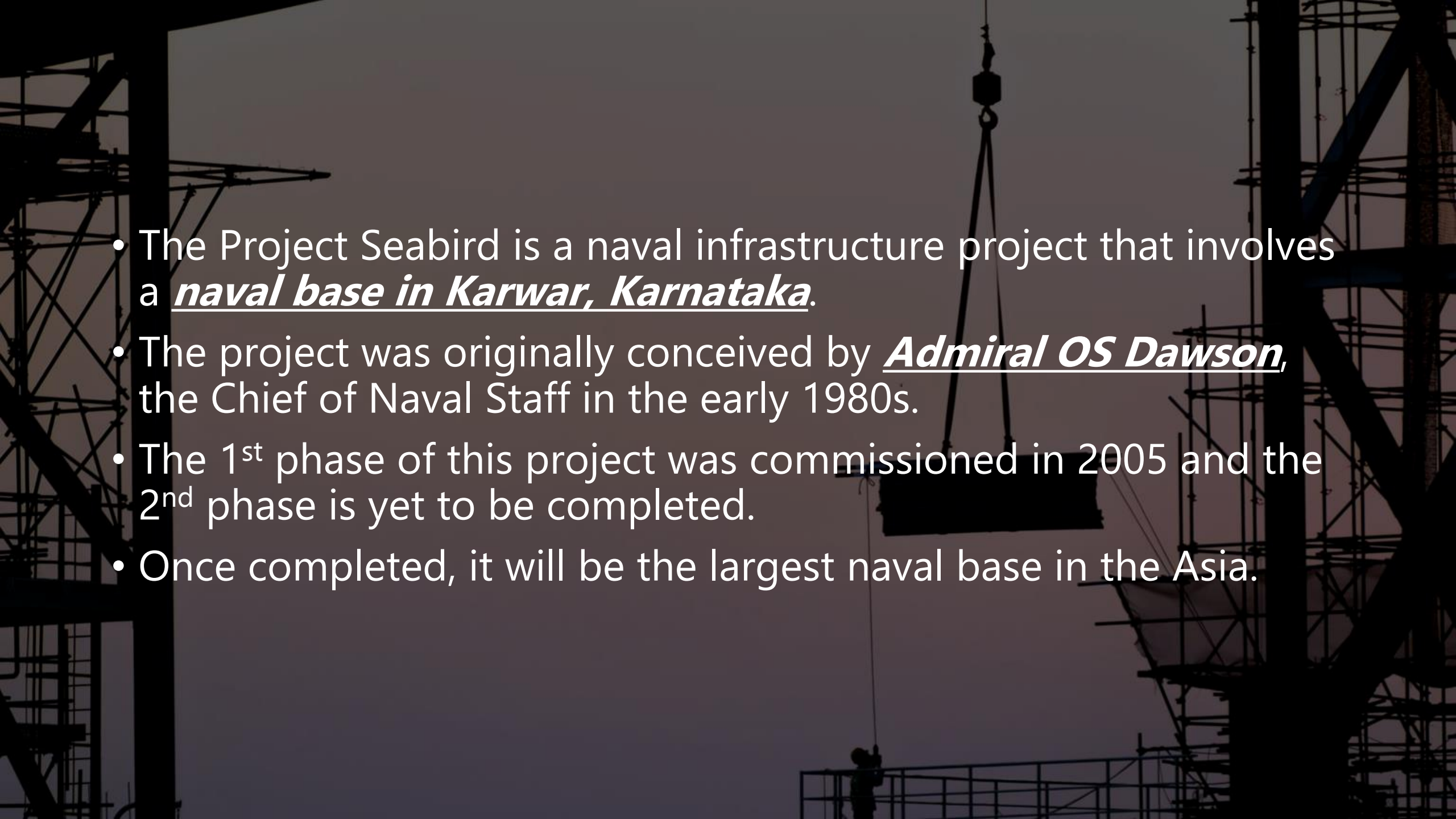
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- **In Humans** – While there is *no conclusive evidence that CWD can directly infect humans*, the possibility remains a point of concern.

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- Prion diseases, such as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in humans and “mad cow disease” in cattle, have shown that they can cross the species barrier with devastating consequences.
 - The outbreak of mad cow disease in Britain, for instance, resulted in the slaughter of millions of cattle and led to 178 human deaths attributed to the human variant of the disease since 1995.



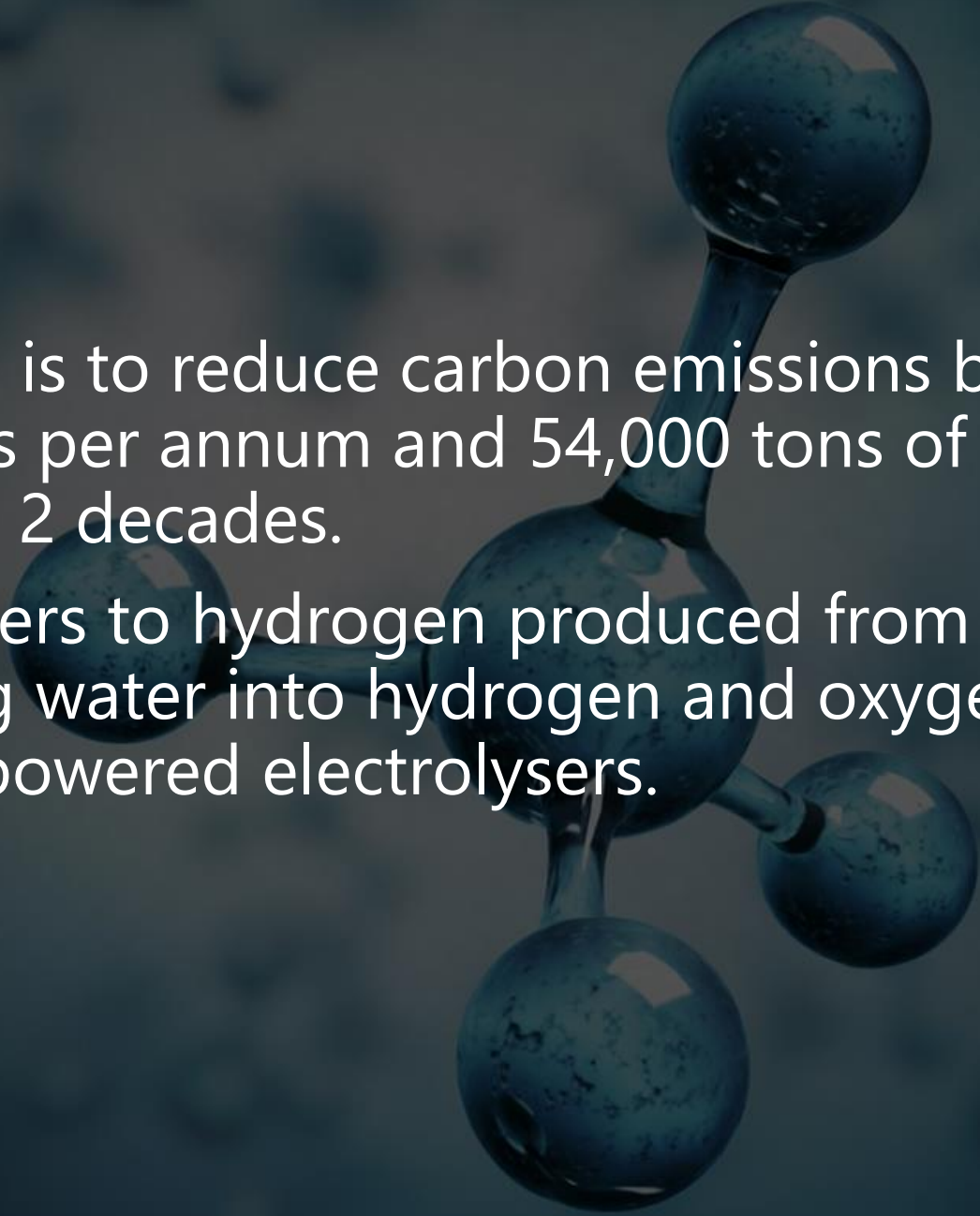
PROJECT SEABIRD

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- The Project Seabird is a naval infrastructure project that involves a *naval base in Karwar, Karnataka.*
 - The project was originally conceived by *Admiral OS Dawson,* the Chief of Naval Staff in the early 1980s.
 - The 1st phase of this project was commissioned in 2005 and the 2nd phase is yet to be completed.
 - Once completed, it will be the largest naval base in the Asia.



India's 1st Green Hydrogen plant in
stainless steel sector

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- An aerial photograph of a large industrial facility, likely a steel plant, featuring several large circular tanks arranged in a grid pattern. The tanks are connected by a network of pipes and walkways. The image is overlaid with white text on a dark background.
- *Union Minister for Steel and Civil Aviation recently inaugurated India's 1st Green Hydrogen Plant in Stainless Steel Sector in Haryana.*
 - It will be the world's 1st off-grid Green Hydrogen plant for the stainless-steel industry and the world's 1st Green Hydrogen plant with rooftop & floating solar.

- 
- This project's target is to reduce carbon emissions by around 2,700 Metric Tonnes per annum and 54,000 tons of CO₂ emissions over next 2 decades.
 - Green hydrogen refers to hydrogen produced from water electrolysis, splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen by using renewable energy-powered electrolyzers.



C4IR

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) Centre for the 4th Industrial Revolution (C4IR) was recently launched in Hyderabad.

It is the 1st thematic centre focused on healthcare and life sciences in Telangana.

The C4IR focuses on 3 key areas - real-world evidence, healthcare analytics and informatics, and software as a medical device.

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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 in the foreground and some blurred in the background. The lighting is soft and moody, with a blueish tint. In the top left corner, there is a solid orange horizontal bar.

Thank you
guys.
