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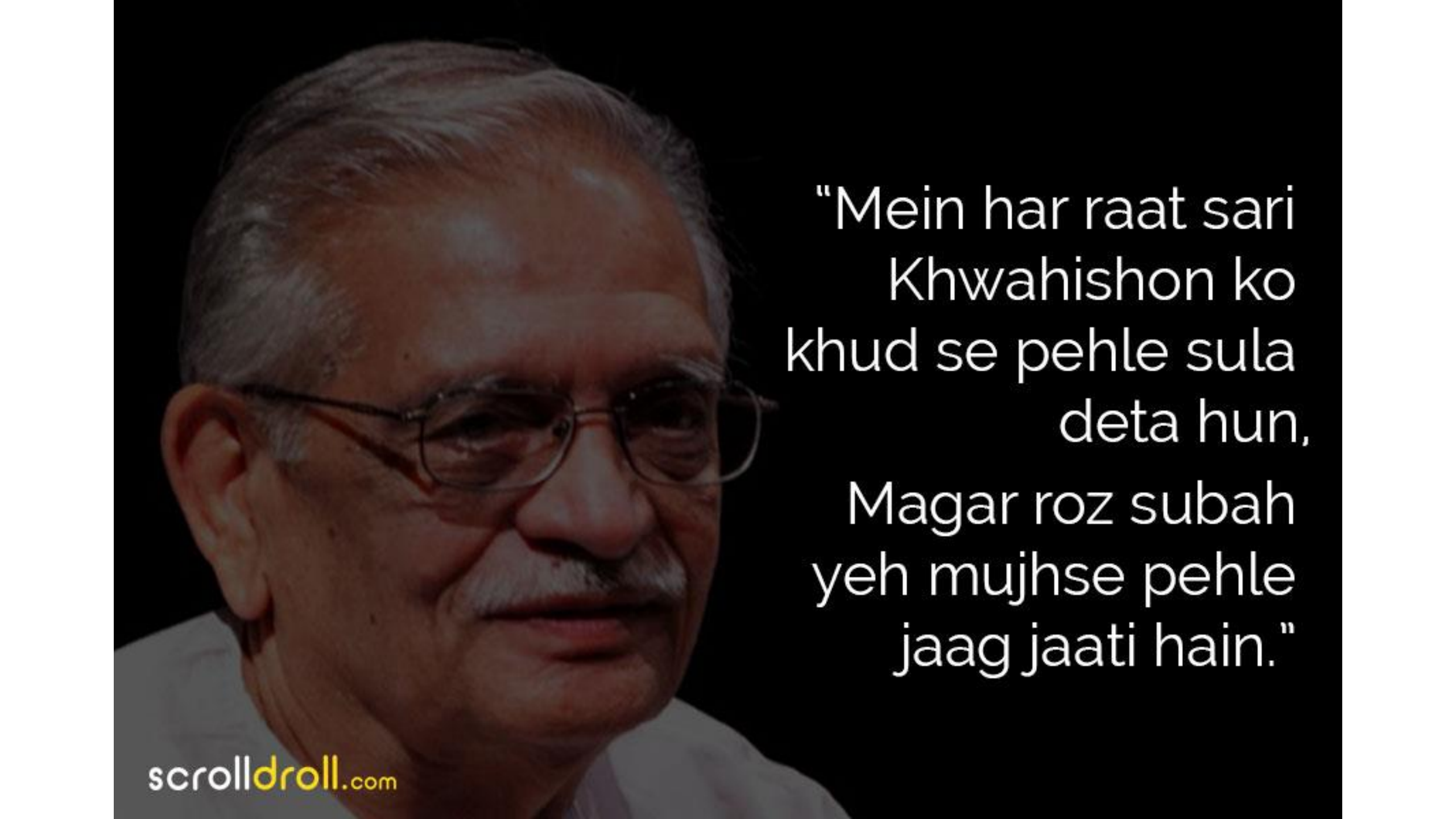
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A close-up portrait of an elderly man with short, graying hair, wearing glasses and a mustache. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

“Mein har raat sari
Khwahishon ko
khud se pehle sula
deta hun,
Magar roz subah
yeh mujhse pehle
jaag jaati hain.”

FINANCIAL EMERGENCY
SC asks Kerala to meet Centre's team again
STATES » PAGE 3

ROAD TO WHITE HOUSE
Biden, Trump dominate races, Nikki steps down
WORLD » PAGE 12

SEAHAWKS ON DUTY
Navy commissions its first MH-60R squadron
NEWS » PAGE 6

DATA POINT
Crimes against foreigners rarely get punished
One in 20 rape cases result in convictions
OPINION » PAGE 9

MILESTONE MAN
All eyes on Ashwin in Dharamshala Test
SPORT » PAGE 16

INSIDE

Sanatana row: Madras HC calls remarks 'divisive'
CHENNAI
The Madras High Court on Wednesday observed that the statements made against Sanatana Dharma last year by State Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin and M.P.A. Raja were "perverse, divisive". » PAGE 4

Hundreds rally in Ladakh seeking Statehood
SRINAGAR
Ladakh witnessed a shutdown and a protest rally on Wednesday calling for granting of statehood to the newly-created Union Territory and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. » PAGE 4

Congress drafts manifesto with focus on jobs
NEW DELHI
A copy of the draft manifesto was presented to Congress party president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday by party leader P. Chidambaram. It will now be placed before the Congress Working Committee for final approval. » PAGE 5

U.S. is using the Philippines as a pawn: Beijing
BEIJING
China on Wednesday accused the United States of using the Philippines as a "pawn" in the South China Sea, as hostilities between the two Asian nations escalate over their territorial dispute in the region. » PAGE 12

Trees in Corbett fell prey to nexus of greed, says SC

Court 'amazed at audacity' of former Minister and officials involved in felling of 6,000 trees | **Bench approves CBI probe initiated into the case and directs agency to submit report in 3 months** | **Court wants panel to study if tiger safaris should be allowed in buffer zones of animal reserves**

Krishnadass Rajasgopal
NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Wednesday condemned the illegal felling of over 6,000 trees to construct buildings, ostensibly for "eco-tourism" at the Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand, as a "classic case" of nexus between politicians and officials working to ransack the environment for short-term commercial ends.
"The present case depicts a sorry state of affairs of human greed devastating one of the most celebrated abodes of tigers i.e. the Corbett Tiger Reserve," a three-judge Bench headed by Justice B.R. Gavai observed.
The court also directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate

Change to form a specialised committee to study and recommend whether tiger safaris should be permitted in the buffer areas of a tiger reserve.
"Laws ignored"
On the "huge devastation" caused by the illegal felling, the court said it was "amazed at the audacity" of former Uttarakhand Forest Minister and Congress leader Harak Singh Rawat and former Divisional Forest Officer Kishan Chand for giving forest and wildlife conservation laws a complete go-by and throwing the public trust doctrine "into the dustbin".
"The judgment approved the Central Bureau of Investigation probe initiated into the case and directed the agency to submit a report in three months.



The Bench said the State could not 'run away' from its responsibility to restore the forest. GETTY IMAGES

of trees like the one in Corbett cannot be ignored," he said.
The court said the proposed specialised committee of the Ministry would comprise representatives of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Wildlife Institute of India, Central Empowerment Committee and a Joint Secretary from the Ministry.
Assessing damage
The panel would assess the extent of damage done to the Corbett reserve's green cover, quantify the cost of restoration and identify the "delinquent" persons and officials responsible for the damage.
The court said the cost of restoration would be recovered from these errant individuals and officials.
The money would be used exclusively for forest restoration.
The Bench said in case the committee's recommendations were in favour of having tiger safaris in peripheral areas of tiger reserves, it should recommend guidelines for their operation. The guidelines would be applied on a pan-India basis.
The committee has to file its report in three months.
The court said safaris already existing like the one in Pakhro zone at Corbett, need not be disturbed. It, however, directed the Uttarakhand government to establish an animal rescue centre in the vicinity of the safari.
TROUBLE WITH RESORTS
» PAGE 6

New frontier



Tunneling through: India's first underwater Metro train, plying the Howrah Maidan-Expitavade section of Kolkata Metro's East West Corridor, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. The section was developed at a cost of ₹4,965 crore. PTI (PAGE 4)

Hyderabad man forced to fight for Russia, loses life

Syed Mohammed
HYDERABAD
Mohammed Asfan, a Hyderabad man forced to fight for Russia, has died. Though information about his death was received on Wednesday, it is unclear when he died.
Speaking to *The Hindu*, All India Muslim-Urdu-Hindal Muslim president Asaduddin Owaisi, who has been in contact with Mohammed Imran, the victim's brother, said that after several attempts to reach him, his family received news of his death on Wednesday. "An Indian Embassy staffer confirmed that Asfan passed away," Mr. Owaisi said.
The victim, who tra-



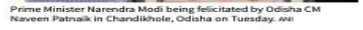
Mohammed Asfan

velled to Russia in search of a better livelihood, is one of several Indian youth who themselves are fighting on the frontlines against Ukraine. The victim is survived by his wife and two children.
"An Indian Embassy staffer confirmed that Asfan passed away," Mr. Owaisi said.
The victim, who tra-

BJD, BJP hold parallel meetings to discuss alliance ahead of elections

Satyajyotir Barik
BILUPATNAPUR
Amid reports of the BJP and the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) forging a formal alliance in Odisha for the coming elections, both parties on Wednesday held hectic deliberations at their own levels to smooth on rough edges.
Both parties, however, did not come out with a clear statement on the proposed alliance.
After a meeting of senior BJD leaders that went on for nearly four hours at Navesth Nivas, the residence of Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Pattnaik here, the regional party left enough indications about the proposed formal alliance.
"In the discussions, it was resolved that since by 2036, Odisha will complete 100 years of its Statehood,

about the BJP and the BJD returning to the alliance, it gathered momentum recently.
Since February first week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made two visits to Odisha, addressing public gatherings each time. Notably, he had chosen to refrain from attacking the State government during these visits. Mr. Pattnaik had shared the stage with the Prime Minister on two separate official functions during the visits adding fuel to the rumours.
During his visit on Tuesday, Mr. Modi paid glowing tributes to the late Biju Pattnaik on the leader's 108th birth anniversary. He did not utter a single word on the failures of the State government. Instead, Mr. Modi called Mr. Pattnaik the best Chief Minister of the State.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated by Odisha CM Naveen Pattnaik in Chandikhole, Odisha on Tuesday. ANI

Ensure Pakistan does not use loans to foot defence bills, India tells IMF

Vikas Dhot
NEW DELHI
Taking a tough stance, India has batted for "stringent monitoring" of any emergency funds provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to its financially beleaguered neighbour Pakistan, stressing that such funds must not be redeployed towards defence bills or repayment of loans from other countries.
India's position was put across to the IMF's executive board by its nominee, executive director Krishnamurthy Subramanian, during a recent review of an ongoing \$3 billion short-term Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) granted to Pakistan by the Fund last July. Modi called Mr. Pattnaik on voting on loans sought by Pakistan, and

Cup of woes

Pakistan's new government's efforts to acquire international funds may come with some strings



This week, IMF Sheebaz Sharif has mooted monitoring of IMF money's end-use by Pakistan

the time of going to press.
The development assumes significance as Pakistan's newly formed government, led by Prime Minister Sheebaz Sharif, is pursuing immediate talks with the IMF to seek additional financing support, including the \$1.2 billion residual balance under the SBA which expires next month, and beyond.
The IMF's support had helped cash-strapped Pakistan stave off an imminent external crisis that it faced last June when forex reserves had dwindled to just \$2.5 billion, barely enough to pay a month's import bill.
Pakistan's economy — hit by severe floods in 2022, external debt utilisation and sharp inflation — had contracted in 2022-23.
The country's financial year runs from July to June.
Following the 2022 floods and external shocks, the IMF shared in 2023; forex reserves collapsed.
The IMF okayed a \$3 billion standby arrangement that ends next month; India also shares that amount from vote.
In loan review this January, India seeks stringent monitoring of IMF money's end-use by Pakistan.
India's government requested Mr. Subramanian to convey to the IMF board the need to put in place "checks and balances and ensure a stringent monitoring of Pakistan's utilisation of IMF money."
The IMF and Mr. Subramanian did not respond to queries from *The Hindu* till

Trees in Corbett fell prey to nexus of greed, says SC

Court 'amazed at audacity' of former Minister and officials involved in felling of 6,000 trees

Bench approves CBI probe initiated into the case and directs agency to submit report in 3 months

Court wants panel to study if tiger safaris should be allowed in buffer zones of animal reserves

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"The present case depicts a sorry state of affairs of human greed devastating one of the most celebrated abodes of tigers i.e. the Corbett Tiger Reserve," a three-judge Bench headed by Justice B.R. Gavai observed.

The court also directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate

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'Laws ignored'

On the "huge devastation" caused by the illegal felling, the court said it was "amazed at the audacity" of former Uttarakhand Forest Minister and Congress leader Harak Singh Rawat and former Divisional Forest Officer Kishan Chand for giving forest and wildlife conservation laws a complete go-by and throwing the public trust doctrine "into the dustbin".

The judgment approved the Central Bureau of Investigation probe initiated into the case and directed the agency to submit a report in three months.



The Bench said the State could not 'run away' from its responsibility to restore the forest. GETTY IMAGES

The Bench said Uttarakhand could not "run away" from its responsibility to restore the forest to the last tree. Justice Gavai said the tigers needed the forest as

much as the forest depended on the tigers.

"The presence of tigers in the forests is an indicator of the well-being of the ecosystem. Unless steps

are taken for the protection of tigers, the ecosystem which revolves around tigers cannot be protected... Events like illegal construction and illicit felling

of trees like the one in Corbett cannot be ignored," he said.

The court said the proposed specialised committee of the Ministry would comprise representatives of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Wildlife Institute of India, Central Empowered Committee and a Joint Secretary from the Ministry.

Assessing damage

The panel would assess the extent of damage done to the Corbett reserve's green cover, quantify the cost of restoration and identify the "delinquent" persons and officials responsible for the damage.

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TROUBLE WITH RESORTS
» PAGE 6

CASE TIMELINE

Sept, '21: Activists flag rampant illegal tree felling in Corbett for tiger safari project, say state govt sought permission to chop 163 trees but cut thousands

Oct, '21: National Tiger Conservation Authority team visits Corbett, finds allegations to be true



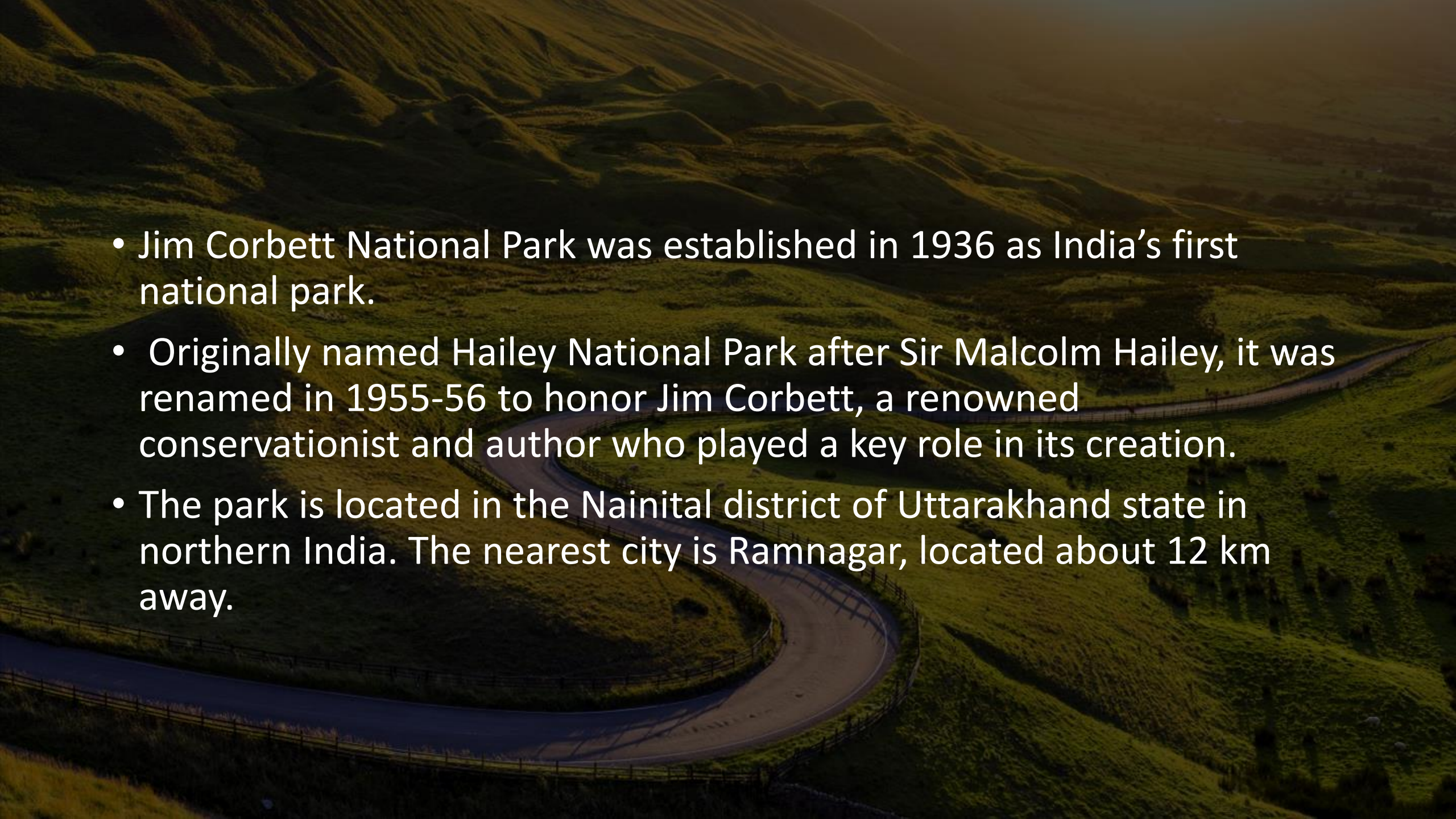
Oct 2, '22: Forest Survey of India submits report to Central and state governments, saying over 6,000 trees over 16 hectares had been felled. U'khand government questions report, insists 'only 97 more trees had been cut'

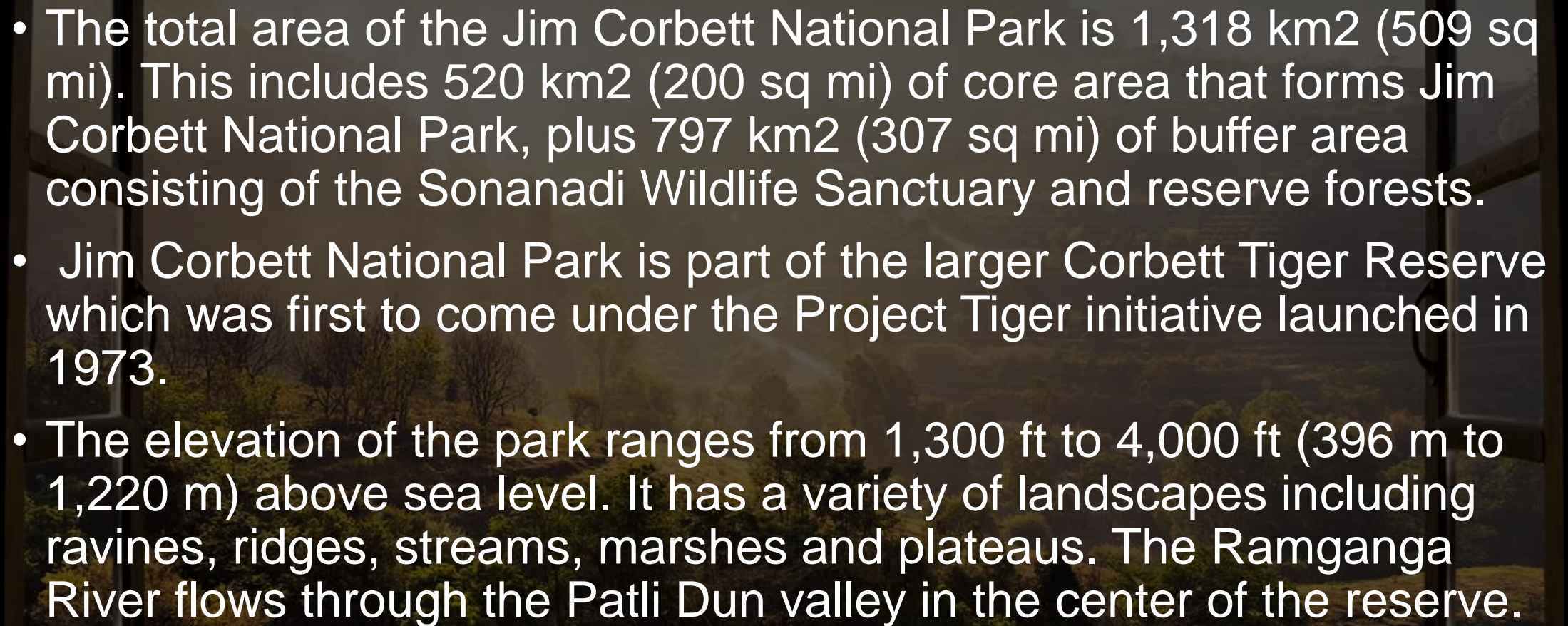
Nov 3, '22: NGT halts work on safari, forms three-member committee to look into FSI's charges

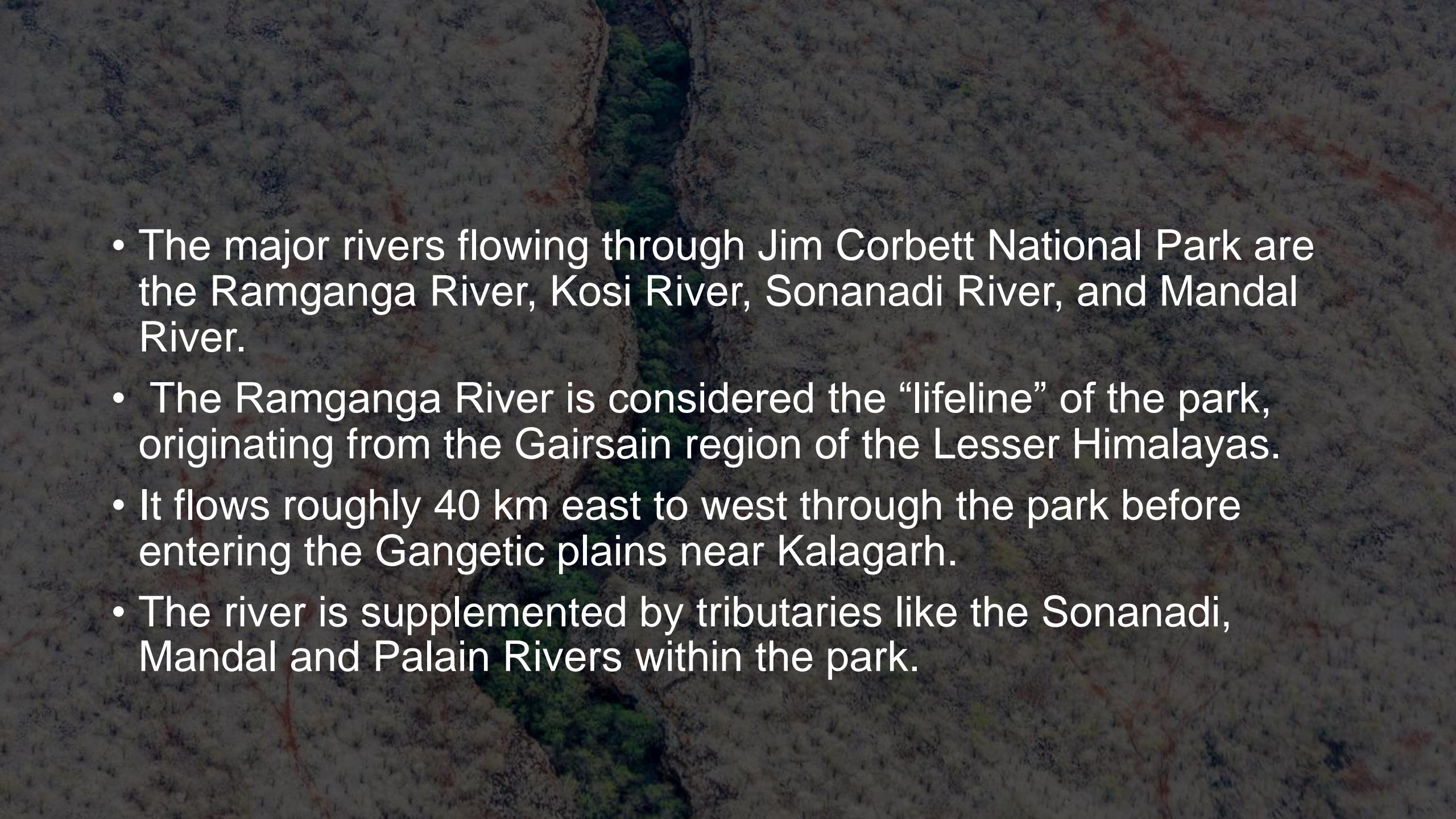
April, '23: Committee submits report, confirms FSI claims. State government questions validity of this report too



JIM CORBETT

- 
- An aerial photograph showing a winding road that curves through lush green hills. The road is paved and has a dark surface, contrasting with the vibrant green vegetation. The hills are rolling and covered in dense grass or low-lying plants. The lighting suggests a bright day, with some shadows cast across the terrain.
- Jim Corbett National Park was established in 1936 as India's first national park.
 - Originally named Hailey National Park after Sir Malcolm Hailey, it was renamed in 1955-56 to honor Jim Corbett, a renowned conservationist and author who played a key role in its creation.
 - The park is located in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand state in northern India. The nearest city is Ramnagar, located about 12 km away.

- 
- The total area of the Jim Corbett National Park is 1,318 km² (509 sq mi). This includes 520 km² (200 sq mi) of core area that forms Jim Corbett National Park, plus 797 km² (307 sq mi) of buffer area consisting of the Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary and reserve forests.
 - Jim Corbett National Park is part of the larger Corbett Tiger Reserve which was first to come under the Project Tiger initiative launched in 1973.
 - The elevation of the park ranges from 1,300 ft to 4,000 ft (396 m to 1,220 m) above sea level. It has a variety of landscapes including ravines, ridges, streams, marshes and plateaus. The Ramganga River flows through the Patli Dun valley in the center of the reserve.

- 
- An aerial photograph showing a deep, narrow river valley cutting through a rugged, mountainous landscape. The river is visible as a dark, winding line at the bottom of the valley, surrounded by lush green vegetation. The surrounding terrain is rocky and steep, with some patches of forest. The overall scene is a natural, mountainous environment.
- The major rivers flowing through Jim Corbett National Park are the Ramganga River, Kosi River, Sonanadi River, and Mandal River.
 - The Ramganga River is considered the “lifeline” of the park, originating from the Gairsain region of the Lesser Himalayas.
 - It flows roughly 40 km east to west through the park before entering the Gangetic plains near Kalagarh.
 - The river is supplemented by tributaries like the Sonanadi, Mandal and Palain Rivers within the park.

Detailed Table of Animal Species in Jim Corbett

Species Type	Examples
Mammals	Royal Bengal Tiger, Asiatic Elephant, Leopards, Sloth Bears, Deers (Sambar, Chital, Hog Deer), Otters, King Cobra.
Birds	Over 580 species including great pied hornbill, white-backed vulture, Hodgson's bushchat.
Reptiles	Ghariales, Mugger Crocodiles, King Cobra.

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New frontier



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Ensure Pakistan does not use loans to foot defence bills, India tells IMF

Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

Taking a tough stance, India has batted for “stringent monitoring” of any emergency funds provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to its financially beleaguered neighbour Pakistan, stressing that such funds must not be redeployed towards defence bills or repayment of loans from other countries.

India’s position was put across to the IMF’s executive board by its nominee, executive director Krishnamurthy Subramanian, during a recent review of an ongoing \$3 billion short term Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) granted to Pakistan by the Fund last July. India has usually abstained from voting on loans sought by Pakistan, and

Cup of woes

Pakistan’s new government’s efforts to acquire international funds may come with some strings



■ This week, PM Shehbaz Sharif has mooted immediate talks with the IMF for extended support

■ Following the 2022 floods and external shocks, the economy shrank in 2022-23; forex reserves collapsed

■ The IMF okayed a \$3 billion stand-by arrangement that ends next month; India abstained from vote

■ In loan review this January, India seeks stringent monitoring of IMF money’s end-use by Pakistan

did the same last July when the SBA was approved.

In mid-January this year, when the board reviewed the loan, India’s representative abstained from voting again, following which the multilateral lender released a \$700 million tranche to Pakistan.

However, this time, the

Indian government requested Mr. Subramanian to convey to the IMF board the need to put in place “checks and balances and ensure a stringent monitoring” of Pakistan’s utilisation of IMF money.

The IMF and Mr. Subramanian did not respond to queries from *The Hindu* till

the time of going to press.

The development assumes significance as Pakistan’s newly formed government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, is pursuing “immediate talks” with the IMF to seek additional funding support, including the \$1.2 billion residual balance under the SBA which expires next month, and beyond.

The IMF’s support had helped cash-strapped Pakistan stave off an imminent external payments crisis that it faced last June when forex reserves had dwindled to just \$3.5 billion, barely enough to pay a month’s import bill.

Pakistan’s economy – hit by severe floods in 2022, external shocks, and sharp inflation – had contracted in 2022-23.

The country’s financial year runs from July to June.



\$126.9 billion

Pakistan's external debt
in September 2022

\$3.09 billion

Forex reserves held by
central bank

\$30 billion

Pakistan's debt to China

\$1.18 billion

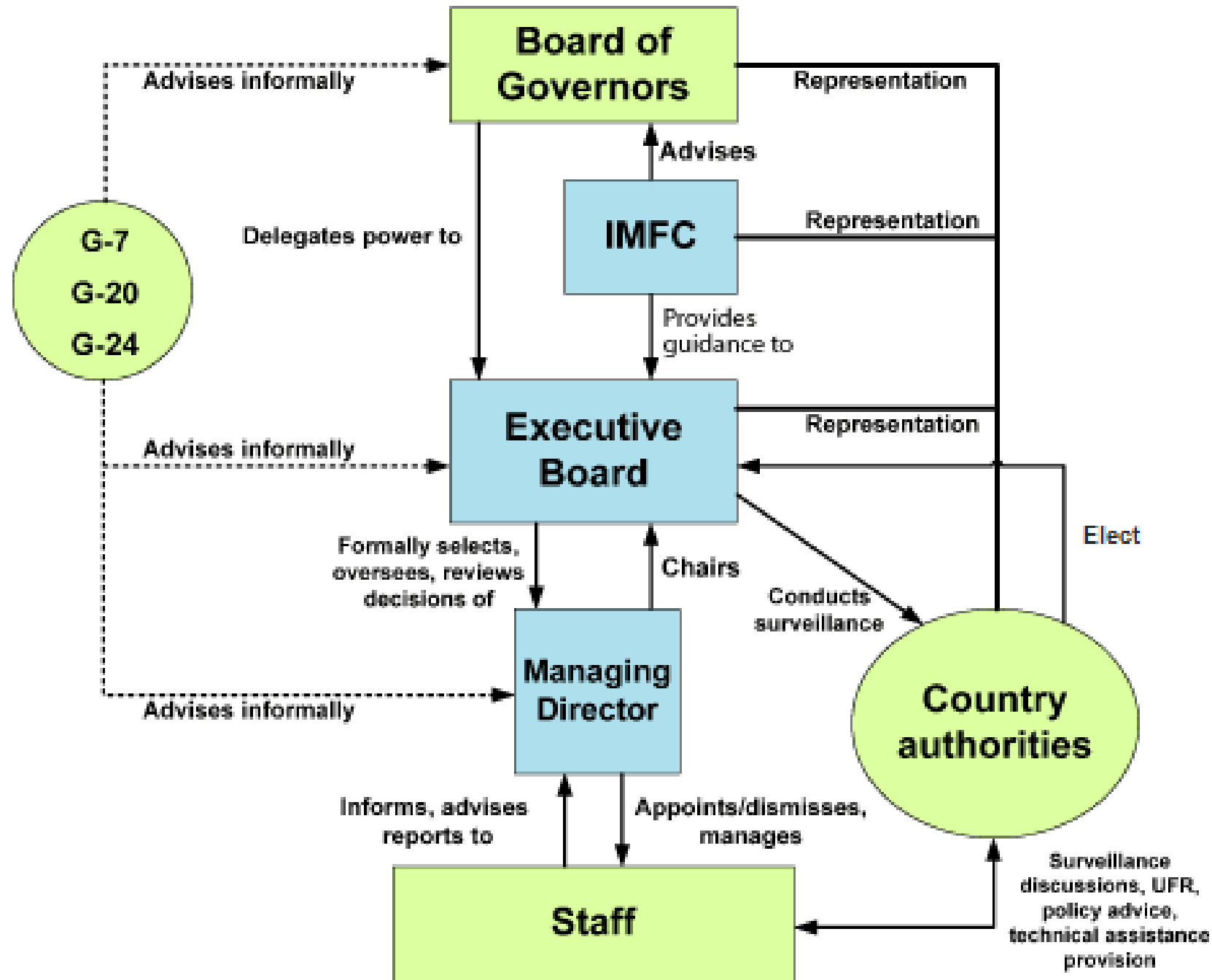
The funds IMF could release

23

The number of
times Pakistan
has gone to
IMF since 1958

27.55%

Pakistan
inflation,
highest in
48 years



Abbreviation	IMF
Formation	27 December 1945; 78 years ago
Type	International financial institution
Purpose	Promote international monetary co-operation, facilitate international trade , foster sustainable economic growth, make resources available to members experiencing balance of payments difficulties, prevent and assist with recovery from international financial crises ^[1]
Headquarters	700 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. , U.S.
Coordinates	 38°53′56″N 77°2′39″W
Region	Worldwide
Membership	190 countries (189 UN countries and Kosovo) ^[2]
Official language	English ^[3]
Managing Director	Kristalina Georgieva
First Deputy Managing Director	Gita Gopinath ^[4]
Chief Economist	Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas ^[5]
Main organ	Board of Governors
Parent organization	 United Nations ^{[6][7]}
Budget (2022)	\$1.2 billion USD ^[8]
Staff	2,400 ^[1]

Take ₹13,608 cr. on offer, SC advises Kerala

SC brokers a second meet between Kerala and Centre to resolve the financial emergency faced by State; Bench asks Centre if it is fair to compel a State to withdraw its suit as a precondition for fund release; as an interim measure, State had sought ₹26,226 crore to clear 'immediate obligations'

Krishnanadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday nudged Kerala to meet the Centre's team a second time and accept the ₹13,608 crore on offer to tide over the immediate financial emergency looming in the State.

"Let the Chief Secretary, Finance Secretary and the Advocate-Genera, with a financial adviser, meet the Centre team. Take ₹13,608 crore. Make out a case for the remaining amount. Accept the conditions, except withdrawal of this suit filed in the Supreme Court, to resolve the immediate emergency," Justice Surya Kant, heading a Bench comprising Justice K.V. Viswanthan, orally advised

the State of Kerala, represented by senior advocate Kapil Sibal and advocate C. K. Sas

First meet inconclusive
The first round of talks between the Centre and the State on February 14 proved inconclusive when the former insisted that Kerala withdraw its suit as a precondition for the release of ₹13,608 crore.

The Bench did not pass any interim orders on Kerala's original suit. It gave Kerala liberty to mention whenever there was a need for a hearing. The court did not fix a time for the meeting between the Centre and Kerala, leaving it to the discretion of the officials on both sides.

The suit filed by the State had accused the Un-



JUSTICE SURYA KANT

ion government of violating the federal structure of governance and causing "severe damage to the economy of a small State with meagre resources" by limiting its borrowing powers. As an urgent interim measure, Kerala had sought ₹26,226 crore to clear its "immediate arrears and immediate obligations".

"We cannot pay out of public funds. We cannot

We would like to hear the issue. We want to find a structured solution to it. If you both can resolve the immediate emergency, there will be time for the court to hear the suit

JUSTICE SURYA KANT

pay other allowances like pension, dearness allowance, pay revision. The impact of all this is only a few months away. There is a critical overdraft position," Mr. Sibal had informed the court.

On Centre's condition
On Wednesday, Justice Viswanthan asked the Centre, represented by Attorney-General R. Venkata-

ramani and Additional Solicitor-General N. Venkataraman, whether it was fair to compel the State to withdraw a suit filed in exercise of its right to approach the Supreme Court directly against the Centre under Article 131 of the Constitution.

"They [Kerala] cannot have it both ways. It was not to twist somebody's arms that the condition of withdrawal of the suit was imposed," Mr. Venkataraman countered.

Justice Kant observed that by asking the State to withdraw its suit, the Union government was actually asking the Supreme Court not to judicially review the issue. The suit, Justice Kant noted, was the "first of its kind".

"We would like to hear

the issue. We want to find a structured solution for it. If you both can resolve the immediate emergency, there will be time for the court to hear the suit," Justice Kant told both sides.

Massive relief: Kerala
Kerala Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal termed the Supreme Court observation a "massive relief" for the State.

He said the State would be allowed to borrow ₹13,600 crore to clear "immediate arrears and immediate obligations" despite the Union government's strident objection.

He said the State would continue its legal battle for "fiscal federalism" in the Supreme Court. (With inputs from Thiruvananthapuram)

Fresh complaint filed against Delhi CM for skipping ED summons

Ishta Mishra
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday filed a fresh application in the court on the due date against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for non-compliance with its summons in the excise policy scam. The move came after Mr. Kejriwal skipped the court of Additional Judge for interrogation, on March 4.

The fresh complaint against Mr. Kejriwal for non-compliance with a summons issued to an individual has been filed before the court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Divya Malhotra.

The ED, on February 3, had approached this court with a complaint against Mr. Kejriwal for not complying with its summons for five consecutive times. The court had noted that the court had not after the AAP Party (AAP) chief was "legally bound" to comply with the summons but he "purportedly failed to do so".

The ED is probing a money laundering case in the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy. The original FIR in the matter was registered in 2022 and had skipped all summons alleging that the



Arvind Kejriwal

Bharatiya Janata Party's central government is using the ED to topple the Delhi government.

Mr. Kejriwal appeared in the court on the due date via video conferencing and expressed his inability to be personally present there due to the scheduled floor test during the Assembly session. He apologised to the court for the same and sought another date for a physical appearance after March 10 citing Budget Session.

The court had listed the matter for March 15 but after the fresh complaint, it will hear the matter on Thursday.

Commenting on the fresh application by ED, AAP said that several court rulings have repeatedly held that ED must inform in what capacity a person is being summoned. Unfortunately, the central government refuses to follow court orders and considers itself above the law, the party said.

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NIA announces cash reward for tip on blast case accused

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Two days after taking over the probe into the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has announced a reward of ₹10 lakh for any information on the suspect seen in CCTV footage. Nine people were injured in the blast on March 1.

On Wednesday, the NIA posted on social media platforms a CCTV grab of

The agency posted a picture of the suspect from CCTV footage on social media platforms

the suspect and announced the reward. It has also assured that the identity of the informant will be kept confidential.

The suspect is seen getting down a BMTCL bus and walking to The Rameshwaram Cafe in Brookfield and

having food at the restaurant. The improvised Explosive Device kept in a bag exploded about an hour after he left the restaurant.

The NIA has begun its investigation into the case and a team of officials visited the restaurant on Wednesday and met sleuths from the Central Crime Branch, who have been probing the case.

Meanwhile, State Home Minister G. Parameashwaram said that the CCB will continue to assist the NIA.

Human-wildlife conflict a State-specific disaster: Kerala

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Cabinet on Wednesday declared human-wildlife conflict a State-specific disaster.

The decision comes in the wake of increasing deaths, injuries, and crop and property loss caused by recurrent wildlife incursions into human habitations, including forests in the State.

The Cabinet's declaration has opened the door

for the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority to play a vital role in mitigating such conflicts.

Panel headed by CM
The Cabinet also created a committee headed by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to alleviate the threat from the loss caused to humans, especially plantation workers and tribal communities.

The committee, comprising the Chief Secretary and other officials, will work out the modalities.

The government also decided to form neighbourhood watch groups to increase grassroots vigilance in localities plagued by wildlife ingress. The groups will work with officials to mitigate the problem and give advance warnings.

It also announced an inter-State coordination committee involving Karnataka and Tamil Nadu for sharing information and officials to police the border areas.

The committee will work out the modalities.

Watermelon days



Signs of summer: Watermelons arrive in abundance at the fruit market in Batasingaram, Hyderabad on Wednesday. NAGARA GOPAL



Signs of summer: Watermelons arrive in abundance at the fruit market in Batasingaram, Hyderabad on Wednesday. NAGARA GOPAL



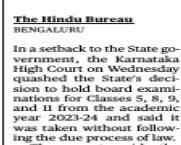
Signs of summer: Watermelons arrive in abundance at the fruit market in Batasingaram, Hyderabad on Wednesday. NAGARA GOPAL

HC quashes Karnataka's decision to hold board exams for Classes 5, 8, 9, 11

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a setback to the State government, the Karnataka High Court on Wednesday quashed the State's decision to hold board examinations for Classes 5, 8, 9, and 11 from the academic year 2023-24 and said it was taken without following the due process of law.

The court said the scheme of holding board exams was taken without framing the rules under Sections 22 and 145 of the Karnataka Education Act, 1963, which mandates that the government will have to bring changes to the implementation of the exami-



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nating such a large number of students, it would be desirable as well as mandatory to follow the democratic procedure stipulated under Section 22 of the Act, through which the government decided to introduce board exams for Classes 5, 8, 9 and 11 to be conducted by the Karnataka State Examination Board. The court said that the object behind such measures taken in place of the regular exams through the respective educational institutions was to ensure the quality of the examinations, however laudable, cannot constitute procedural defects in issuing the impugned notifications, the court observed.

Recognised schools, Bengaluru.

IIS' in Kerala a potential location for semiconductor research centre: Minister

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST) at Vallabhampattanam in Thiruvananthapuram is being considered as a possible location for the proposed Bharat Semiconductor Research Centre, Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar has said.

Mr. Chandrasekhar was giving a special address at "Semicon India 2024: Future Design - Catalysing India's Semiconductor Ecosystem" organised by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the IIST at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) here



Rajeev Chandrasekhar

on Wednesday. "I hope we can make that come true in the coming months," he said. The IIST is one among "four or five" locations in the fray, according to him.

The existing capabilities of the IIST and the presence of ISRO facilities like

In a move to counter Centre, Kerala set to launch Sabari K-Rice

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

In what is widely perceived as a move to counter the Union government's distribution of 'Bharat Rice', the Kerala government has decided to introduce 'Sabari K-Rice'.

Announcing the decision at a press conference here on Wednesday, State Food and Civil Supplies Minister G.R. Anil said K-Rice is being launched with an intention to provide good quality rice at affordable rates to the public through Supplyco outlets.

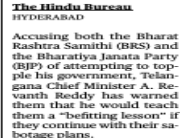
Revanth hits out at BRS, BJP; says Congress will win 14 out of 17 LS seats in Telangana

The Hindu Bureau
HYDRABAD

Accusing both the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of attempting to topple his government, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has warned them that he would teach them a "hard lesson" if they continue with their sabotage plans.

Addressing a massive public meeting titled "Palamuru Pralaya" in Mahabubnagar on Wednesday, Mr. Revanth Reddy excluded confidence that the Congress would win 14 out of 17 seats in the coming Lok Sabha elections. He asserted that the

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A. Revanth Reddy

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HC quashes Karnataka's decision to hold board exams for Classes 5, 8, 9, 11

The Hindu Bureau

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The court said the scheme of holding board exams was taken without framing the rules under Sections 22 and 145 of the Karnataka Education Act, 1983, which mandates that the government will have to frame rules for the implementation of the exami-



The court said the decision of holding board exams was taken without framing the rules.

nation system besides seeking views from stakeholders prior to finalising such rules.

“When the government intends to bring changes to the examination system af-

fecting such a large number of students, it would be desirable as well as mandatory to follow the democratic procedure stipulated,” the court said. In case of failure to follow the stipulated procedure, the court said, “there need be no further justification to set such faulty measures at naught, regardless of merit of the policy and the object behind such measures”.

Justice Ravi V. Hosmani delivered the verdict while allowing the petitions filed by the Registered Unaided Private Schools' Management Association-Karnataka and Organisation for Unaided Recognised Schools, Bengaluru.

The petitioner-associations had questioned the legality of the government's October 6 and 9, 2023, notifications issued under Section 22 of the Act, through which the government decided to introduce board exams for Classes 5,8,9 and 11 to be conducted by the Karnataka State Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB) in place of holding regular exams through the respective educational institutions.

“The object of new examinations, howsoever laudable, cannot cure procedural defects” in issuing the impugned notifications, the court observed.

In a move to counter Centre, Kerala set to launch Sabari K-Rice

The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

In what is widely perceived as a move to counter the Union government's distribution of 'Bharat Rice', the Kerala government has decided to introduce 'Sabari K-Rice'.

Announcing the decision at a press conference here on Wednesday, State Food and Civil Supplies Minister G.R. Anil said K-rice is being launched with an intention to provide good quality rice at affordable rates to the public through Supplyco outlets.

The existing supply of subsidised rice from Supplyco of 10 kg per card will continue, with K-rice too forming a part of it, the

State Minister said.

Differentiating K-Rice from Bharat Rice, Mr. Anil said that while high-quality varieties are being sold at subsidised rates under the K-Rice brand, rice that is available at ₹18.59 per kg through National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation Of India Limited (NCCF) is being sold as Bharat Rice at ₹29 per kg.

"While the Bharat Rice is being sold to the public with the Union government making a profit of ₹10 per kg, the State government is shouldering an additional burden of ₹9.5 to ₹11.11 per kg to distribute K-rice," said Mr. Anil.

- 
- **The Union government announced retail sale of rice at Rs 29 per kg under ‘Bharat Rice’ through three cooperatives.**
 - **The move is aimed at controlling the rise in rice prices, which have risen by 14.5 per cent in retail and 15.5 per cent in the wholesale markets in the last one year.**

- **India is the largest rice exporter globally with a 45% share in the world rice market.**
- **Overall rice exports in April-May of 2023 were 21.1% higher compared with the same period last financial year.**
 - **In May 2023 itself, export of Basmati rice was 10.86% higher than its exports in May 2022.**
- **The shipment of non-Basmati rice has been on the rise for the last three years and the export of Basmati rice in 2022-2023 was higher than the previous year.**

Safeguarding local democracy

In February 20, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud issued its lengthy orders to declare Kuldeep Kumar, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate, as the validly elected Mayor of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation...

Matthew Idiculla is a legal consultant based in Bengaluru and a visiting faculty member at Aseem Prjem University. Views expressed are personal.

a nominated councillor, was nominated as the presiding officer for the meeting to elect the Mayor. The problem here is that the municipal law allows the bureaucracy to appoint any councillor to preside over the election process to avoid any controversy...

Hence, moral and ethical questions aside, the BJP's win in the deputy mayoral polls is not strictly illegal. While States such as Karnataka and Kerala have passed specific laws prohibiting defections in local governments...

A judge's entry into politics

Former Calcutta HC Judge joins BJP, triggering questions about his judgments

STATE OF PLAY Shri Sahay Singh Shivaboy Singh is a lawyer and former judge who has joined the BJP...

Election season in West Bengal usually triggers a series of defections and politicians adept at gauzing the political weather make little hesitation in switching sides. However, something unusual occurred this election season in the State on March 5, when hours after resigning as a Judge of Calcutta High Court, Abhijit Gangopadhyay announced his plans to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The 61-year-old former judge also made little qualms about eagerly awaiting a ticket from the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. "I was in touch with the BJP and the BJP was in touch with me," the former judge said.

The former judge had directed investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on at least 14 occasions in cases relating to the school and municipal recruitment scam in West Bengal.

Multiple FIRs were filed by agencies based on these orders and the investigation came as a major setback to the Trinamool Congress in its third term. Ministers, MLAs, and leaders of ruling parties were arrested, hordes of cash were seized and the commission in charge of agents was made to publish details of how examinations were manipulated and OMR (optical mark reader) sheets were forged to deprive deserving candidates. What has surprised people more than this sudden decision is the scathing political remarks made by someone who stood in judgment of the corruption in the recruitment system of West Bengal for the past several years. Mr. Gangopadhyay said that he could not join the party because he was a "proud Hindu" and chose to stay away from the Congress party as it was a party of a "single family".

in July 2020, had on a number of occasions ruffled feathers with the bar. On January 27, 2024, the Supreme Court of India had to intervene after Mr. Gangopadhyay made allegations against a senior judge at Calcutta High Court in his order accusing him of "misconduct" and harbouring political bias in favour of the majority ruling dispensation. Earlier on April 28, 2023, the court stayed his order to place before him, by midnight, documents based on which the Supreme Court had earlier in the day reassigned a case to itself.

By severing ties with the judiciary five months before his superannuation, Mr. Gangopadhyay has now opened himself to the attacks of his political opponents who will not stop at criticising him but will raise questions on his judgments. This development will set a wrong precedent since judges have been considered immune to public criticism. The critics of Mr. Gangopadhyay are referring to a remark by former Union Minister J. Jayaprakash Narayan, where the BJP leader had said "Pre-retirement judgments are influenced by political interest jobs".

Questions are also being raised as to the timing of his resignation particularly when the BJP Congress party as it was a party of a "single family". Mr. Gangopadhyay said that he could not join the party because he was a "proud Hindu" and chose to stay away from the Congress party as it was a party of a "single family".

Administrating local elections While elections to local governments are conducted by respective State Election Commissions, indirect mayoral elections follow an internal process. As per Section 60 of the Punjab Municipal Corporation Act 1976, which has been extended to Chandigarh, the meeting for the election of the Mayor shall be convened by the Divisional Commissioner, who nominates a councillor, who is not a candidate for the election, to preside the meeting. Accordingly, Anil Masih, the

The party-political nature of local governments is now a reality that cannot be ignored. Hence, there is a need to adopt clear statutory measures that can curb defections at the local level.

However, the Court held that the entire election due to the presiding officer's unlawful action would result in the formation of fundamental democratic principles and used its inherent powers to declare the entire election null and void. Such a timely intervention prevented "horse-trading" in the municipal elections, but could not avert a defection-enabled result in the subsequent deputy Mayors' elections. This reveals the fundamental limitations of judicial interventions that seek to fix deep political conundrums.

In case of defections in local governments, the scope for the court's intervention is limited since the anti-defection law under the 10th Schedule of the Constitution does not apply to panchayats and municipalities.

Crimes against foreigners in India rarely result in convictions

Approximately, one in twenty rape cases in which victims are foreigners results in convictions

On March 1, a woman tourist from Spain coming with her husband was allegedly gang raped in Dumka district, Jharkhand, while travelling to Nepal from West Bengal. The incident occurred as the couple rested in a makeshift tent in a deserted area at Kurnakhat village. According to a police source, eight people passing through the area stopped and assaulted the husband and raped the woman. The culprits all had the same name. The police have arrested eight persons in the case so far. The horrible incident bore chilling similarity to an incident in Madhya Pradesh, a decade ago, when a Swiss tourist was gang raped in Datta district, while on a cycling trip with her partner. She was camping near National Highway 75, close to a local police station. Six convicts were awarded life sentences in the case. In 2018, a Latvian woman disappeared near Pothencode, Thiruvananthapuram. Her body was discovered 40 days later. The prosecution argued that she was drugged, raped and murdered. In 2022, two persons were convicted in the case by a district court. The above cases are examples of the few crimes against foreigners which resulted in arrests by the police and convictions by the courts in India. Data shows that most crimes committed against foreigners in India rarely reach the courts and convictions are even rarer. In the seven years between 2016 and 2022, 148 rape cases in which victims are foreigners, have been recorded in India. In the same period, only 16 rape cases were disposed of by the courts. Disposal of cases includes convictions, acquittals, or the case even disposals without trial if the case gets quashed, withdrawn,

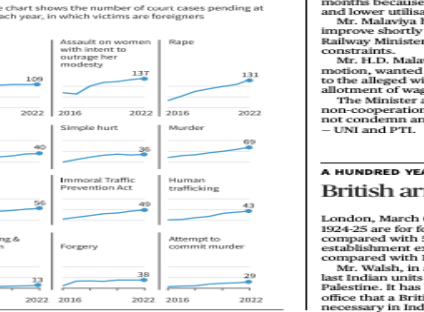
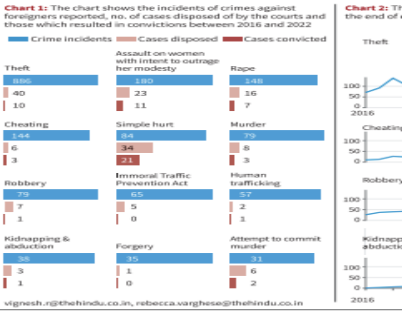
abated or ended in a plea bargain. So disposals are taken by the court in a case. Of those 16 cases, only seven resulted in convictions. So, approximately one in about 20 rape cases in which victims are foreigners result in convictions. This is only an approximation as even these seven convictions could have come in cases filed much before 2016. However, the convictions reported and convictions achieved are compared over a period (in this case, seven years). It gives a sense of the volume of cases reported to the police and how many ultimately result in convictions. Chart 1 shows a comparison of the incidents or crimes against foreigners reported to the police and the number of cases disposed of by the courts and those which resulted in convictions in the 2016 to 2022 period. Only a few types of crimes in which case volumes were high have been considered for analysis. For instance, 65 cases were reported under the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act and no convictions were recorded. In the seven years, 35 forgery cases were reported and no convictions were recorded. Approximately, one in 88 thefts resulted in convictions. In the period considered, 79 foreigners were murdered, and in the same period, only three convictions were achieved. The information in Chart 1 pertains to those cases which resulted in some action by the courts, either conviction or otherwise. But, many cases continue to be stuck in different stages of the trial for years, leading to a massive backlog of court cases in which victims are foreigners. Chart 2 shows the number of court cases pending at the end of each year, in which victims are foreigners. The number of rape cases pending increased from 23 cases in 2016 to 131 in 2022. Cases of assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty were reported and 11 convictions were recorded. In the seven years, 22 cases were reported and 11 convictions were recorded. In the same period, 11 cases were reported and 7 convictions were recorded. In the same period, 10 cases were reported and 7 convictions were recorded. In the same period, 10 cases were reported and 7 convictions were recorded.

Justice delayed and justice denied

The data for the charts were sourced from the National Crime Records Bureau's Crime in India report



Crime scenes: Sleuths from the Crime Investigation Department inspect the spot where a 45-year-old Spanish woman was allegedly gang raped, in Dumka district of Jharkhand, in



FROM THE ARCHIVES The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 7, 1974

Huge accumulation of ingots at steel plants

New Delhi, March 6: Production of steel ingots at Durgapur and other steel plants under Hindustan Steel Limited is now being 'regulated' to reduce the huge accumulation of ingots at the plants caused by the inactivity of the State-owned Steel Corporation of India. This was stated by the Steel and Mines Minister K.D. Malaviya during a discussion on a calling attention motion on the accumulation of steel ingots at the Durgapur steel plant. Mr. Malaviya said these accumulated stocks of ingots were being sent to other steel plants like Bhilai and TISCO for rolling them into steel. In order to prevent further accumulation of ingots at this plant, it has been decided by the Minister to maximise the production of saleable pig iron, matching the production of ingots for rolling with the available rolling capacity and moving ingots to other plants as before. He said Kourkela and Bhilai steel plants also had accumulated steel ingots in the past two months because of constraints on movement of iron ore, coal and coke. Mr. Malaviya hoped the situation would improve shortly as he was in touch with the Railway Minister on removing quickly these constraints. Mr. H.D. Malaviya (Cong.), who sponsored the motion, wanted the government to put an end to the alleged widespread corruption in the steel industry. The Minister admitted that there was some non-co-operation from the INTRA but he could not condemn any one without ascertaining facts — UNI and P.TI.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 7, 1924

British army Budget.

LONDON, March 6: The army estimates for 1924-25 are for forty-five millions sterling, compared with 52 million in the last year. The establishment including India is 152,000 men compared with 154,000 last year. Mr. Walsh, in a memorandum, states that the last Indian units having been withdrawn from Palestine, the establishment has risen from 70 to 137 in the last year that a British cavalry regiment no longer necessary in India, should be stationed there.

Crimes against foreigners in India rarely result in convictions

Approximately, one in twenty rape cases in which victims are foreigners results in convictions

DATA POINT

Rebecca Rose Varghese
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

On March 1, a woman tourist from Spain camping with her husband was allegedly gang raped in Dumka district, Jharkhand, while travelling to Nepal from West Bengal. The incident occurred as the couple rested in a makeshift tent in a deserted area at Kurmahat village. According to a police source, eight people passing through the area stopped and assaulted the husband and raped the woman. The culprits also looted ₹10,000. The police have arrested eight persons in the case, so far.

The horrible incident bore chilling similarity to an incident in Madhya Pradesh, a decade ago, when a Swiss tourist was gang

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Justice delayed and justice denied

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Crime scene: Sleuths from the Crime Investigation Department inspect the spot where a 45-year-old Spanish woman was allegedly gang raped, in Dumka district of Jharkhand. PTI

Chart 1: The chart shows the incidents of crimes against foreigners reported, no. of cases disposed of by the courts and those which resulted in convictions between 2016 and 2022

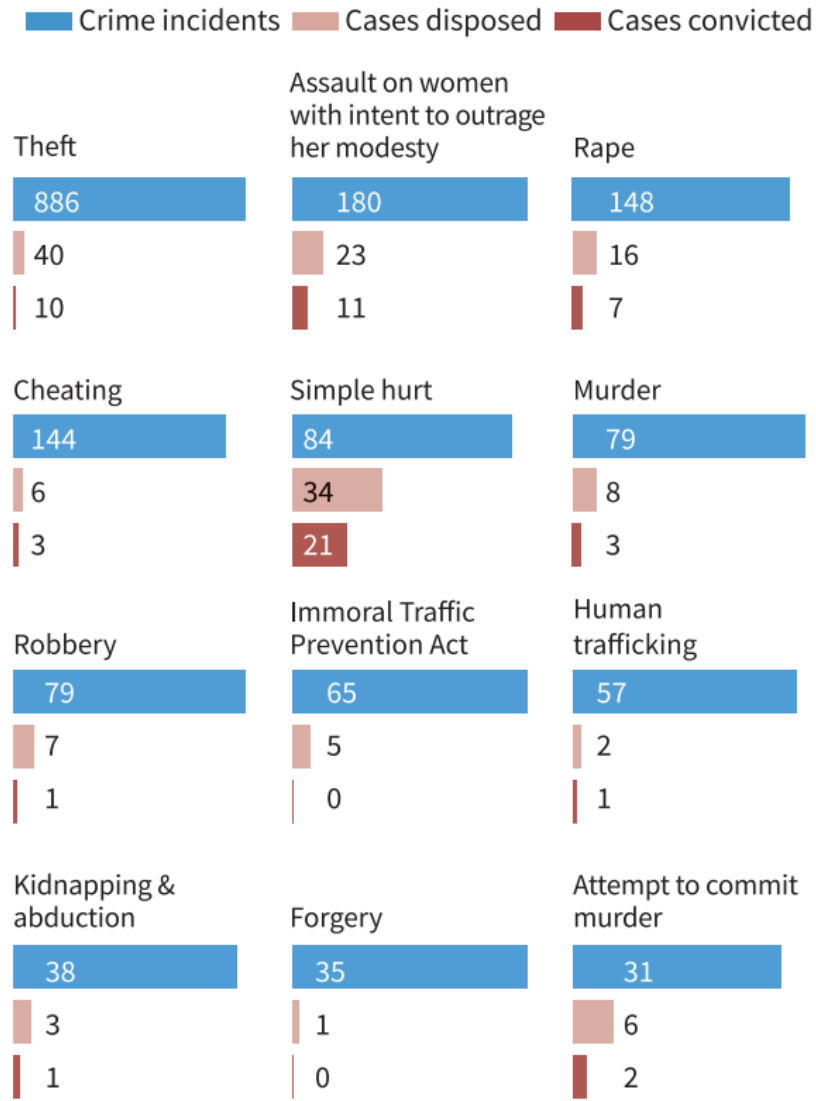
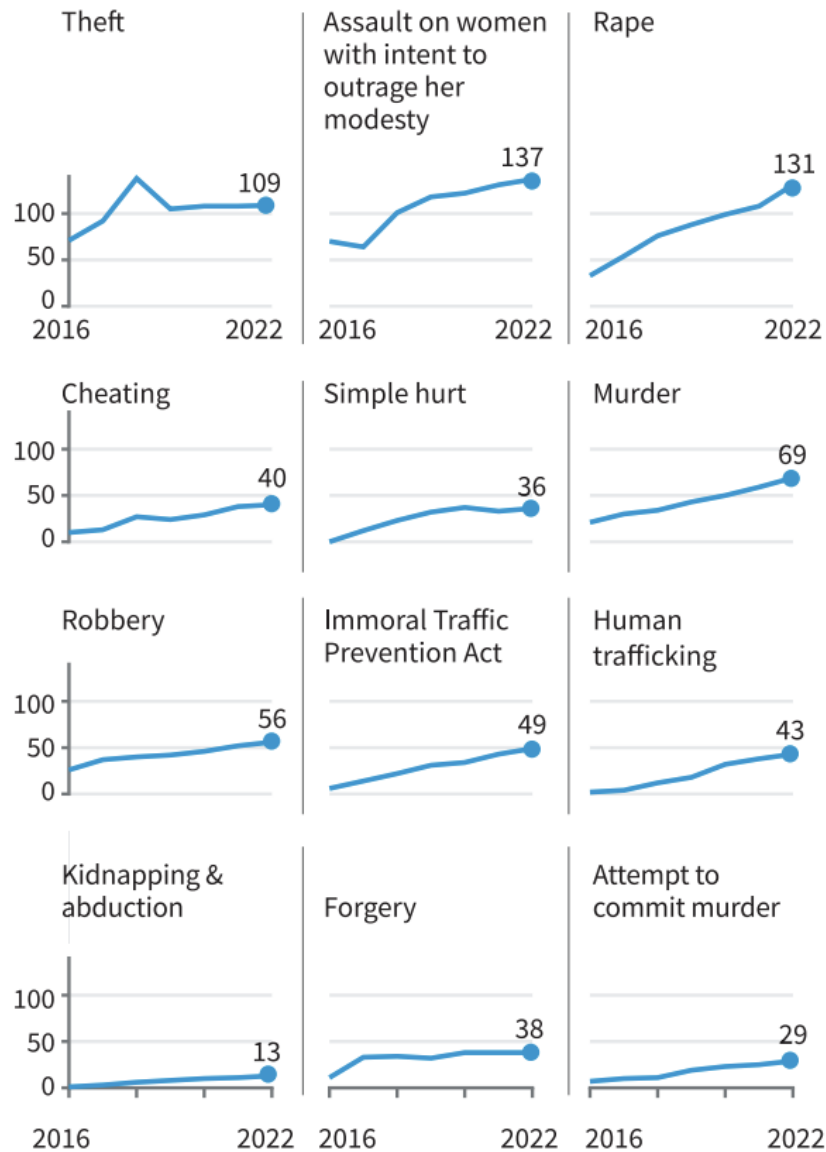


Chart 2: The chart shows the number of court cases pending at the end of each year, in which victims are foreigners



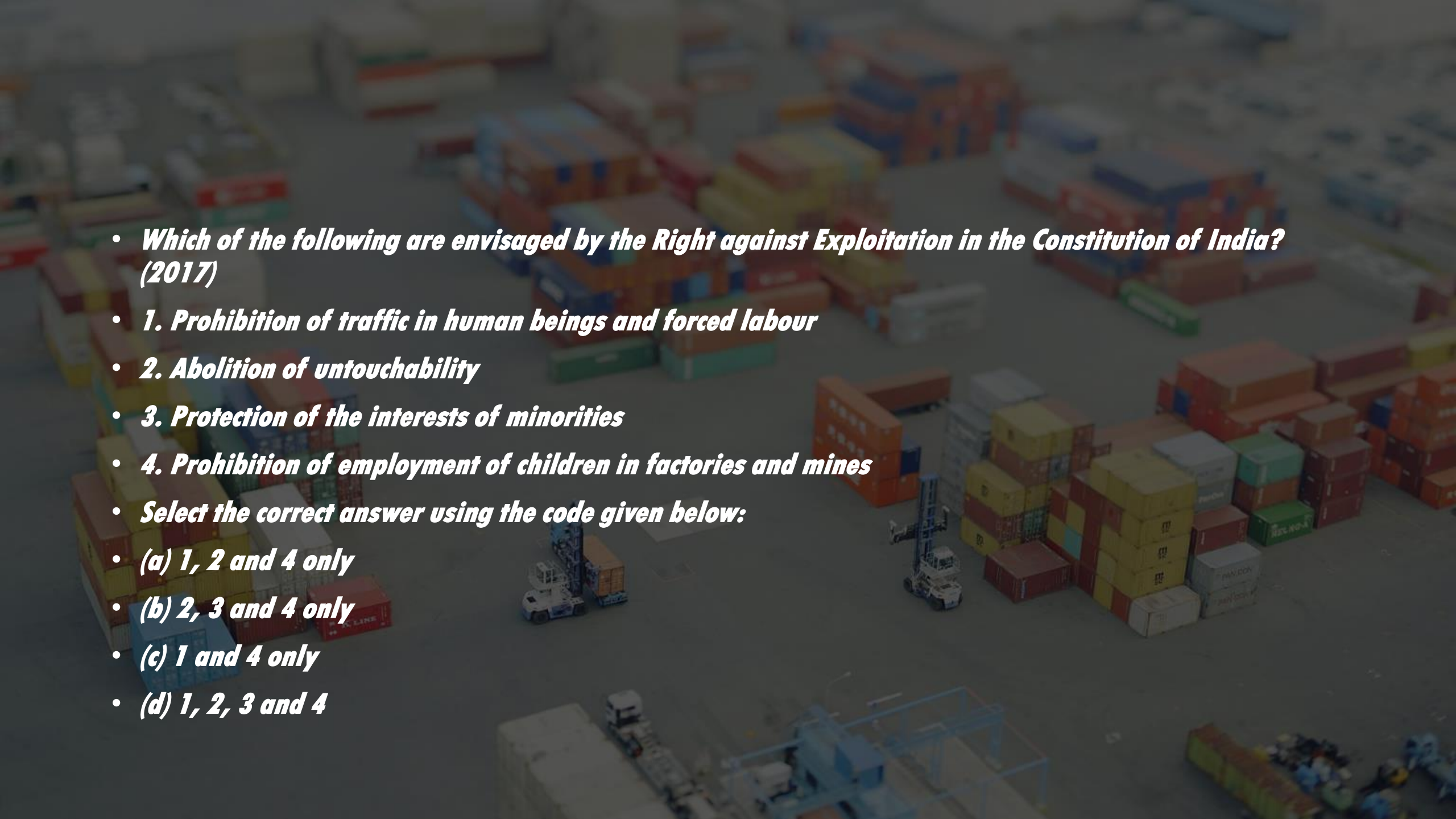
What are the Fundamental Rights Available to Foreigners?

Fundamental rights available only to citizens and not to foreigners	Fundamental rights available to both citizens & foreigners (except enemy aliens)
Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.	Article 14: Equality before law and equal protection of laws.
Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.	Article 20: Protection in respect of conviction for offences.
Article 19: Protection of six rights regarding freedom of (speech and expression, (ii) assembly (iii) association, (iv) movement (v) residence and profession.	Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty.
Article 29: Protection of language, script and culture of minorities.	Article 21A: Right to elementary education.
Article 30: Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.	Article 22: Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.
	Article 23: Prohibition of traffic and human beings and forced labour.
	Article 24: Prohibition of employment of children in factories etc.
	Article 25: Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
	Article 26: Freedom to manage religious affairs.
	Article 27: Freedom from payment of taxes for promotion of any religion.
	Article 28: Freedom from attending religious instruction or worship in certain educational institutions.

- ***Which one of the following categories of Fundamental Rights incorporates protection against untouchability as a form of discrimination? (2020)***
- ***(a) Right against Exploitation***
- ***(b) Right to Freedom***
- ***(c) Right to Constitutional Remedies***
- ***(d) Right to Equality***



- ***Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement? (2018)***
- ***(a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.***
- ***(b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV.***
- ***(c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III.***
- ***(d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution.***

- 
- ***Which of the following are envisaged by the Right against Exploitation in the Constitution of India? (2017)***
 - ***1. Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour***
 - ***2. Abolition of untouchability***
 - ***3. Protection of the interests of minorities***
 - ***4. Prohibition of employment of children in factories and mines***
 - ***Select the correct answer using the code given below:***
 - ***(a) 1, 2 and 4 only***
 - ***(b) 2, 3 and 4 only***
 - ***(c) 1 and 4 only***
 - ***(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4***

ISLAMABAD

'Executed former Pak. PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not receive fair trial'



Former Pakistan Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, executed by the Army regime of Gen Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq in 1979, did not receive a fair trial and due process, the Supreme Court said. The remark came in a special case sent in 2011. By then President Asif Ali Zardari to the Supreme Court to revisit his father-in-law's conviction. AFP

MOSCOW

Russia adds chess legend Kasparov to list of 'terrorists and extremists'



Russia's financial watchdog added chess grandmaster and political activist Garry Kasparov to its list of 'terrorists and extremists' on Wednesday. The 60-year-old former world chess champion has been a long-time opponent of President Vladimir Putin and has repeatedly spoken out against Russia's war on Ukraine. AFP

WARSAW

Yulia Navalnaya calls for election day protest against Vladimir Putin



The widow of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny called on Wednesday for Russians to stage an election day protest against President Vladimir Putin by forming long queues outside voting stations. She has pledged to continue her husband's work following his shock death last month in an Arctic prison colony. AFP

MALE

'Defence deal with China will fetch non-lethal weapons for Maldives'



The Maldives will get free "non-lethal" military equipment and training from China's military under a new agreement with Beijing, President Mohamed Muizzu said, adding that it would strengthen the nation's autonomy. This is the first time Maldives has signed a deal with China for military cooperation of this level. PTI

Haley concedes as Trump, Biden win big in primaries

The former UN Ambassador stops short of endorsing her Republican rival and former boss; of the 15 States that went to the polls on Super Tuesday, she manages to win only in Vermont

Agence France-Presse WASHINGTON

Former U.S. President Donald Trump won majority on "Super Tuesday", the largest day of nominating contests for the Presidency, emerging well ahead of former UN Ambassador and Trump Cabinet member Nikki Haley, who bowed out of the race, but did not endorse her Republican rival.



Not surprised: Nikki Haley announces the suspension of her presidential bid in South Carolina on Wednesday. GETTY IMAGES

On the Democrat side, U.S. President Joe Biden swept all 15 voting States (tying for first place in American Samoa), making it all but certain that the U.S. would see a Biden-Trump showdown in the November general elections. Mr. Biden had 1,487 of 1,968 delegates needed to win the nomination. He has faced mostly nominal opposition in some States from self-help author Marianne Williamson and U.S. Congressman from Minnesota, Dean Phillips. "They call it Super Tuesday for a reason. This is a big one," Mr. Trump said during a victory speech at his Florida resort, Mar-a-Lago. The former President, who is faced with 91 charges across several criminal and civil cases, emerged with 92% of delegates awarded on Tuesday, giving him a total of 995 delegates, more than ten

times his opponent's, who had 89 delegates at the end of Tuesday night. He did not mention Ms. Haley in his speech but said in a statement that Ms. Haley "got trounced". Mr. Trump, who is running on his native MAGA (Make America Great Again) platform, suggested on Tuesday night that the Russia-Ukraine war and the current conflict between Israel and Gaza, would not have happened on his watch. He also criticised the lack of border security at the U.S.-Mexico border.

"We are a third-world country at our borders, and we are a third-world country at our elections," Mr. Trump said as he criticised the political establishment and the press. Quoting former Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Ms.

Born into a Sikh family of immigrants from Amritsar, Ms. Haley did not make use of all the opportunities available to her to engage the Indian diaspora during the primary season. Prakash Koppurapu, a Democrat, who chairs the Indo-American PAC (Political Action Committee) in Iowa, said his bi-partisan group met with her in Iowa in January, before the State's caucuses.

"It's pretty disappointing," Mr. Koppurapu told legates must be won for a candidate to win the Republican nomination a number that Mr. Trump is likely to achieve when more States vote on next Tuesday. "Our world is on fire because of America's retreat. Standing by our allies in Israel and Taiwan is a moral imperative," she said at a concession speech in Charleston, South Carolina, a State she was once Governor of. She also highlighted the level of government spending. Of late, Ms. Haley, an accountant by training, had said Mr. Trump bore a significant amount of responsibility for the national debt level. Ms. Haley won Vermont on Tuesday, losing everywhere else.

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Agence France-Presse BEIJING

China on Wednesday accused the United States of using the Philippines as a "paw" in the South China Sea, as hostilities between the two Asian nations escalate over their territorial dispute in the region.



Chinese Coast Guard vessels fire water cannons at a Philippine resupply vessel in the South China Sea on Tuesday. REUTERS

Manila summoned a Chinese representative on Tuesday after it said China Coast Guard vessels caused two collisions with Philippine boats and water cannons against them during a resupply mission.

China said it "took control measures" against Philippine ships "illegally intruding" into waters it claims, as well as accusing a Philippine ship of "intentionally" ramming a Chinese one.

Chinese spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters when asked about the United States' condemnation of China's actions as "provocative". Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos said Wednesday that he sees Chinese actions in the South China Sea with "great alarm", after recent confrontations described by a Filipino military commander as "the worst" in two years. "Once again, we will make our objections known and hope that we can continue to communicate to find a way so that such actions are no longer seen."

Mexican meleé



Demonstrators use a pickup truck to break down a door of the presidential palace in Mexico City on Wednesday during a protest over the disappearance of 43 students of the Ayotzinapa teaching training school in 2014. AFP

With 8,565 dead, UN says 2023 was the deadliest year in a decade for migrants

Agence France-Presse GENEVA

At least 8,565 people died on migration routes worldwide in 2023, making it the deadliest year since records began a decade ago, the UN's International Organization for Migration said on Wednesday.

"The 2023 death toll represents a tragic increase of 20% compared to 2022, highlighting the urgent need for action to prevent further loss of life," the IOM said in a statement. Last year's total surpassed the previous record reached in 2016, when 8,084 people died during migration.

The IOM said that because safe and regular migration pathways remain limited, hundreds of thousands of people attempt to migrate every year via irregular routes in unsafe conditions. The Mediterranean ocean crossing continues to be the deadliest route for migrants, with at least



Disappearing shores: The casualty numbers of 2023 mark a 20% increase when compared to the previous year. GETTY IMAGES

3,129 deaths and disappearances registered last year. Slightly more than half of the total migrant deaths in 2023 came as a result of drowning, with 9% caused by vehicle accidents, and 7% in violence.

The IOM's Missing Migrants Project was established in 2014 as an open-access database on migrant deaths and disappearances. It has since documented more than 63,000 cases worldwide, though the true figure is estimated to be much higher due to challenges in data collection, particularly in remote locations. "As we mark the Missing Migrants Project's 10 years, we first remember all these lives lost," IOM deputy director general Ugochi Daniels said. "Every single one of them is a terrible human tragedy that reverberates through families and communities for years to come," Ms. Daniels added.

France and Moldova to sign defence agreement

Agence France-Presse PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron and Moldovan leader Maia Sandu will sign a defence co-operation agreement in Paris on Thursday, his office said, a tensions moment between Christians and pro-Russian separatists.

Their meeting in the French capital will take place after pro-Russian officials in Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria last week appealed to Russia for "protection". There is mounting concern that the territory could become a new flashpoint in Moscow's two-year war against Ukraine.

Mr. Macron and Ms. Sandu will discuss the new flashpoint in Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria last week appealed to Russia for "protection". There is mounting concern that the territory could become a new flashpoint in Moscow's two-year war against Ukraine. Mr. Macron and Ms. Sandu will discuss the new flashpoint in Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria last week appealed to Russia for "protection". There is mounting concern that the territory could become a new flashpoint in Moscow's two-year war against Ukraine.

Inquiry panel says Israel PM bears 'responsibility' for 2021 stampede that killed 45

Agence France-Presse JERUSALEM

A probe into Israel's worst disaster in decades will on Tuesday find Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu bears "personal responsibility" for the 2021 stampede which killed 45 Jewish pilgrims.



Benjamin Netanyahu

Tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews had converged on Mount Meron, near Israel's border with Lebanon, on April 30, 2021 for an annual pilgrimage to the tomb of a reputed second-century rabbi. The stampede in the male section of the gender-segregated crowd is believed to have started as people moved through a narrow passageway that became a deadly choke-point. At least 16 children and 45 adults were among the 45 dead. "The Prime Minister is responsible for identifying proactively, by himself or through mechanisms on his behalf, issues that require the attention of his

office and, if necessary, his intervention, in particular those related to a risk of human lives," said the commission. The inquiry found that from 2008 up to the day of the tragedy, the Prime Minister's office was notified on several occasions of the potential hazards caused by high traffic around the tomb of rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, also known by the Hebrew acronym Rashei. Mr. Netanyahu was in power for 12 of those years. "Netanyahu knew that the Rashei's tomb site had been poorly cared for for years, and that this could create a risk for the multi-

Two dead as bulk carrier is hit by missile from Yemen

Agence France-Presse DUBAI

A missile fired by Yemen's Houthis rebels hit a bulk carrier in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday, with the crew reporting at least two dead and six wounded, a U.S. official said.

The Iran-backed Houthis have been targeting merchant vessels transiting the vital Red Sea trade route for months. The militant group have previously hit ships with missiles and drones, but the two deaths on Wednesday appear to be the first fatalities directly resulting from an attack by the rebels. "Significant damage" "Today, the Houthis have killed innocent civilians," the defence official said. "The missile caused significant damage to the Bahamas-flagged, Liberian-owned M/V True Confidence," according to the official, who said it was the fifth anti-ship ballistic missile fired by the Houthis in two days.

MOSCOW

Russia adds chess legend Kasparov to list of 'terrorists and extremists'



REUTERS

Russia's financial watchdog added chess grandmaster and political activist Garry Kasparov to its list of "terrorists and extremists" on Wednesday. The 60-year-old former world chess champion has been a long-time opponent of President Vladimir Putin and has repeatedly spoken out against Russia's war on Ukraine. AFP



Kasparov in 2015

Full name	Garry Kimovich Kasparov
Country	Soviet Union (before 1992) Russia (after 1992)
Born	13 April 1963 (age 60) ^[1] Baku , Azerbaijan SSR, Soviet Union
Title	Grandmaster (1980)
World Champion	1985–1993 (undisputed) 1993–2000 (classical)
Years active	1976–2005 2016–present (speed chess only)
FIDE rating	2812 ↗ (March 2024)
Peak rating	2851 (July 1999)
Peak ranking	No. 1 (January 1984)

With 8,565 dead, UN says 2023 was the deadliest year in a decade for migrants

Agence France-Presse

GENEVA

At least 8,565 people died on migration routes worldwide in 2023, making it the deadliest year since records began a decade ago, the UN's International Organization for Migration said on Wednesday.

"The 2023 death toll represents a tragic increase of 20% compared to 2022, highlighting the urgent need for action to prevent further loss of life," the IOM said in a statement.

Last year's total surpassed the previous record reached in 2016, when 8,084 people died during migration.

The IOM said that because safe and regular migration pathways remain limited, hundreds of thousands of people attempt to migrate every year via irregular routes in unsafe conditions.

The Mediterranean ocean crossing continues to be the deadliest route for migrants, with at least



Disappearing shores: The casualty numbers of 2023 mark a 20% increase when compared to the previous year. GETTY IMAGES

3,129 deaths and disappearances registered last year.

Primary cause

Slightly more than half of the total migrant deaths in 2023 came as a result of drowning, with 9% caused by vehicle accidents, and 7% in violence.

The IOM's Missing Migrants Project was established in 2014 as an open-access database on migrant deaths and disappearances.

It has since documented more than 63,000 cases

worldwide, though the true figure is estimated to be much higher due to challenges in data collection, particularly in remote locations.

"As we mark the Missing Migrants Project's 10 years, we first remember all these lives lost," IOM deputy director general Ugochi Daniels said.

"Every single one of them is a terrible human tragedy that reverberates through families and communities for years to come," Ms. Daniels added.





European Migrant Crisis 2015

Top Countries of Origin



Quellen:
 • Asylum applicants:
 eurostat dataset migr_asypactm
 • Migratory routes:
 FRONTEX Migratory Routes Map
 • Population data:
 eurostat dataset tpr00001
 Data extraction date was 12 Sept. 2015

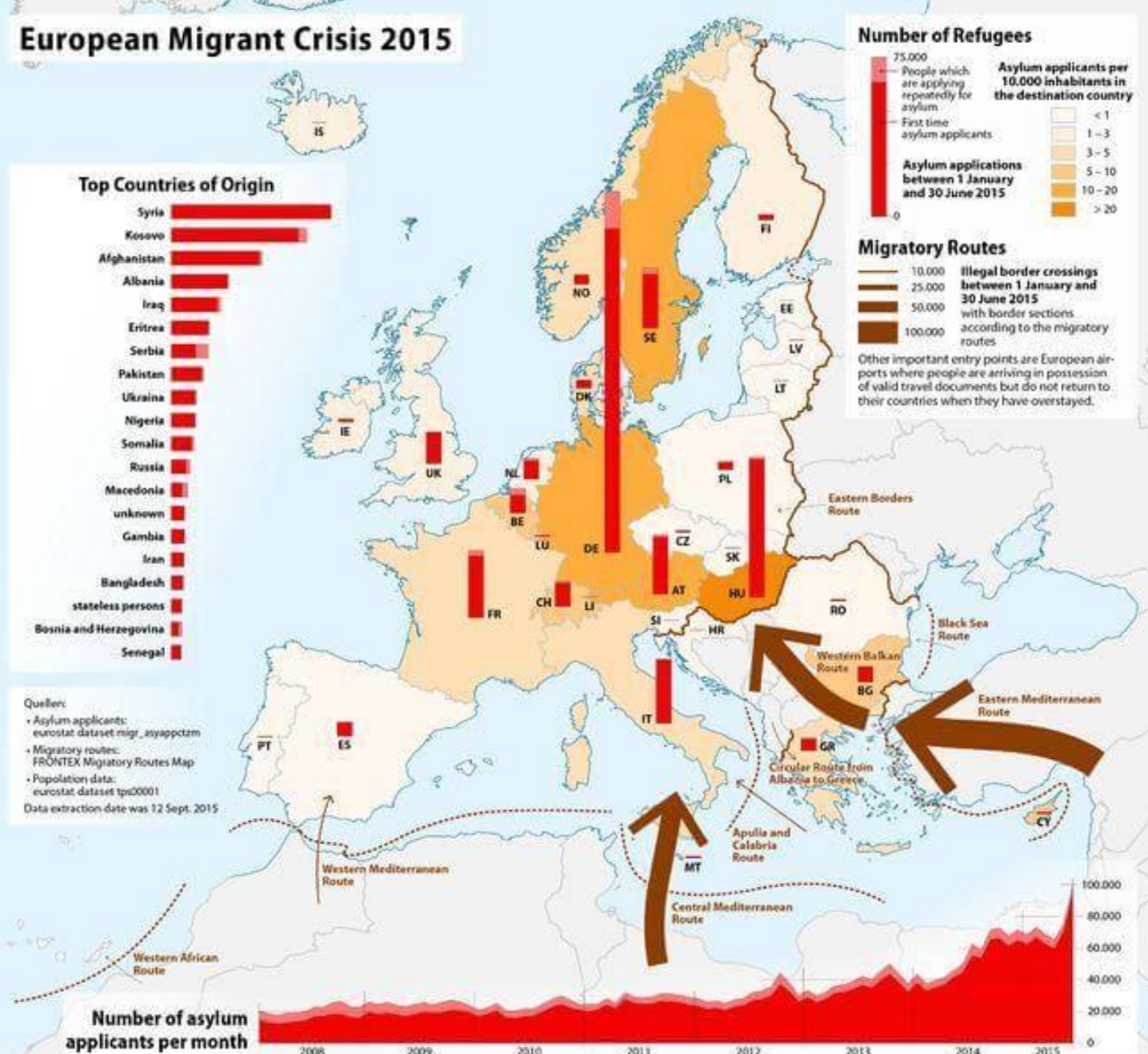
Number of Refugees



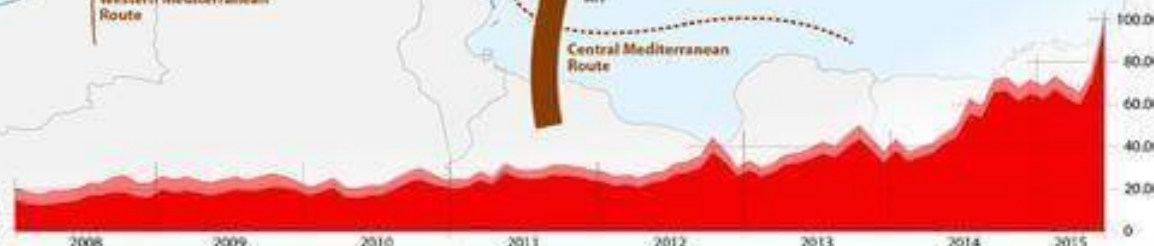
Migratory Routes



Other important entry points are European airports where people are arriving in possession of valid travel documents but do not return to their countries when they have overstayed.



Number of asylum applicants per month

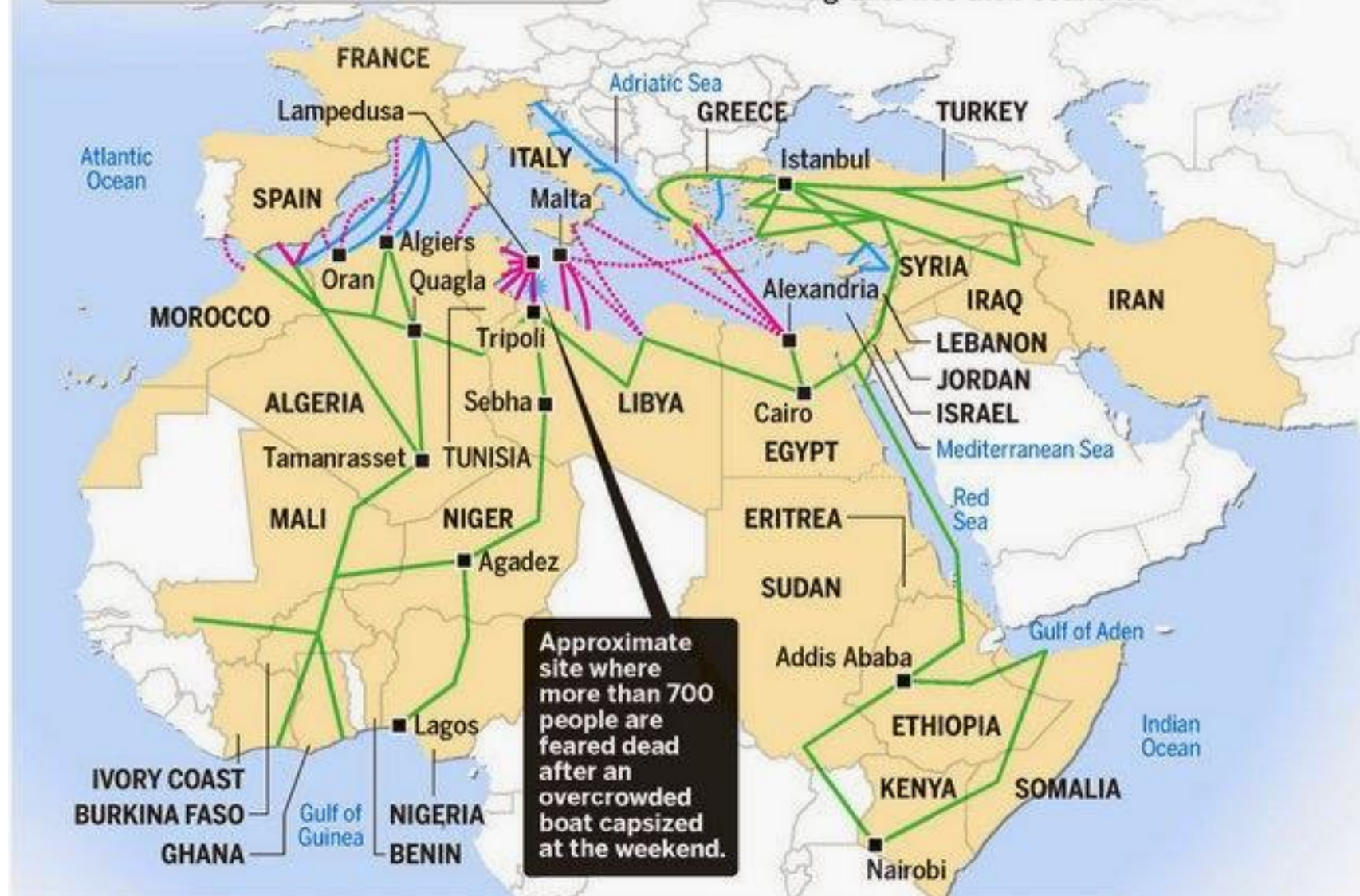


Deadly voyage

Packed into rickety vessels by people smugglers, the path desperate migrants take to reach Europe across the Mediterranean is a dangerous one. Here is a look at the routes they take, the numbers of those who have made it and who have died on the way, and reasons why the migrants flee their countries.

KEY MIGRATION ROUTES

- Major maritime routes
- Minor maritime routes
- Ferry routes
- Major land routes



A NETFLIX FILM



BASED ON
THE INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY

THE SWIMMERS



FIRST IMPRESSION THE BEST Ashwin began Test career with Player-of-the-Match performance



R. Ashwin, who will play his 100th game in the longest format, started his Test career with a player-of-the-match performance, with figures of 27-81-83 and 21.3-5-47-6 in the first game in West Indies' tour of India in 2011 in New Delhi, which the host won by five wickets.

ON A HIGH Ashwin's 50th and India's second biggest away win in terms of runs



R. Ashwin's 50th Test was the first game in India's tour of Sri Lanka in 2017. He scored 47 in the first innings and had figures of 27-5-84-1 and 27-6-65-3 while bowling in the Galle Test. The Indians went on to win by a huge margin of 304 runs, their second-biggest win away from home in terms of runs.

SUPPORT SYSTEM The entire family is built on cricket and to facilitate my career: Ashwin



Ashwin recalled how his parents, Ravichandran and Chitra, worked hard to help realise their collective cricketing dream. "The entire family is built on cricket and to facilitate my career. It has been very hard for us. What he has done for us, no praise is enough. It is rare to have players like him," Rohit said.

PROUD CAPTAIN No praise enough for Ashwin, rare to have players like him: Rohit



No praise is enough for R. Ashwin, said India captain Rohit Sharma as he lauded the senior off-spinner ahead of his 100th Test. "It's a big achievement for any player to play 100 Tests. He has been a very hard worker for us. What he has done for us, no praise is enough. It is rare to have players like him," Rohit said.

Team India looks to finish on a high in Ashwin's 100th

Rohit's men likely to play three seamers; Bumrah's return bolsters the pace department; Stokes' side opts for two pacers and two spinners

Man of many hats A maverick spinner and a competent batter, Ashwin's versatile genius has served Indian cricket well

Table with columns: Overall, BY OPPONENT, HOME AND AWAY. Rows include statistics for various teams like Australia, Bangladesh, New Zealand, South Africa, Sri Lanka, West Indies, India, Australia, Bangladesh, England, New Zealand, South Africa, Sri Lanka, West Indies.

India's 100-Test clubs Ashwin will become the 14th Indian to play 100 Tests when he takes the field against England in the fifth and final Test in Dharamshala on Thursday

Table with columns: Name, Runs. Lists players like Sunil Gavaskar, Dilip Vengsarkar, Kapil Dev, Sachin Tendulkar, Anil Kumble, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly, V.V.S. Lakshman, Vinod Kambli, Ishant Sharma, Cheteshwar Pujara.



Lodestar: Ashwin, over the years, has been one of India's greatest match-winners. R. V. MOORTHY SOURCE: ESPRESSO/GETTY

For now, it is time for Ashwin to aim for the stars in the Himalayan skies

When India and England step onto the turf at the HPCL Stadium in Dharamshala on Thursday, R. Ashwin will scale another peak. It is a rare high that may well give a complex to the Dhauladhar range, part of the Himalayas, that serves as a backdrop to a picturesque cricketing venue.



Magical marks Ashwin would hope to put in a performance worthy of his landmark game. SIX ESCORTER

A 100 Tests is never an easy landmark especially in a format that gets the rough end of sporting itineraries beset with the transient pleasures and commercial heft of ODIs and T20s. A 100 Tests also demand excellence spilling well past a decade of top-flight cricket so that the selectors remain interested. Ashwin has done remarkably well to flourish this long, spinning an eternal web and to also cope with the playing overseas, he may not necessarily be the first-choice spinner. If the musical chairs abroad are between him and Ravindra Jadeja, earlier Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh took deal with the same issues.

I don't know what Bazball means: Rohit

Rakesh Rao DHARMSHALA

A relaxed Rohit Sharma, with the series in the bag, was at his candid best as he reflected on the four Tests so far. He termed it "a series of comebacks" for his triumphant team. Rohit went on to admit that he did not know what Bazball meant. The India skipper was at his witty best on Wednesday.



Huge positive: Skipper Rohit is proud of the way the youngsters have stood up in the tough series against England. SIX ESCORTER

ENGLAND IN INDIA

Rakesh Rao DHARMSHALA

England may be licking its wounds but nurses hope of hurting India in pretty much English weather conditions here. This optimism rose in the week leading to the fifth and final Test starting on Thursday after a fresh spell of snowfall in the higher reaches triggered another round of cold waves.

The spinners smile, England's skipper Ben Stokes will go in with pacers James Anderson and Mark Wood, left-arm spinner Tom Hartley and off-spinner Shoaib Bashir if he covers from a sickness bug.

Whether that be India with the bat or India with the ball." Considering the return of Jasprit Bumrah and the conditions here, Rohit Sharma did not rule out a three-man pace attack.

The India skipper also backed the struggling Rajat Patidar. "He hasn't scored as many runs. He would have liked to bat but he obviously has a lot of ability. Very much a new to Test cricket and we should give him some more time before making a judgement on him."

The teams: India (from): Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shuban Gill, Rajat Patidar, Ravindra Jadeja, Sarfaraz Khan, R. Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraz, Jasprit Bumrah, K.S. Bharat (wk), Akhilles Dhanoo, Rohit Sharma, Mukesh Kumar

England (to): Ben Stokes (Capt.), Ben Foakes (wk), Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jerry Brunt, Tom Hartley, Mark Wood, Shoaib Bashir, and James Anderson, Umpires: Joel Wilson and Rod Tucker, TV umpires: Kumar Dharmasena and J. Madanagopal, Match referee: Jeff Crowe, Match starts at 9.30 a.m.

Mooney, Wolvaardt shine as Giants finally win



Power play: Mooney and Wolvaardt joint on the attack and powered Giants to a run short of 200. SHY KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

with some massive hits peppered over long and deep square leg but fell soon after. Ellyse Perry went a little over a run a ball but neither her nor Riya Ghosh could capitalise on their starts. Georgia Wareham (48, 22b, 6x4, 2x6) looked the most promising of the lot, but lost partners regularly. When the highest of the season and 'Giants' first fifty-plus stand up top this year, exposed RCB's wasteful bowling.

SCOREBOARD

GUJARAT GIANTS Laura Wolvaardt run out 76 (45b, 23b), Beth Mooney not out 85 (22b, 12w, 1x5), Sheba Girdhar Litchfield run out 18 (7b, 1x4), Molnauze run out 3 (2b), Sameer B. Warham 0 (2b), D. Hemalatha st. Richa b. Molnauze 5 (2b), Veda Krishnamurthy run out 1 (2b), Kahira Bryce not out 1 (2b), Extras (lb-3, w-14): 17. Total (for five wks, in 20 overs): 199

FALL OF WICKETS

1-40 (Wolvaardt, 12.6 overs), 1-51 (Litchfield, 18.3), 3-182 (Warham, 18.6), 4-195 (Hemalatha, 19.1)

RCB BOWLING

Dewine 3-8-27-0, Remond 4-3-34-0, Molnauze 4-0-32-1, Warham 4-0-36-1, Ekka 5-0-31-0, Aha 3-0-11-0, Perry 1-0-15-0

GIANTS BOWLING

Devi 4-3-21-2, Remond 4-6-26-1, Tanuja 4-0-43-1, Meghna 4-0-42-0, Manasi 1-0-10-0, Shabnam 3-0-27-0

ROYAL CHALLENGERS

Mooney 2-0-24-0, Smriti Mandhana lbw b Gardner 24 (20b, 2x5b), Ellyse Perry b Mooney 6

Veda Krishnamurthy were sent in one after another ahead of big-hitting Kathryn Bryce but could collect little in key moments only compounded Smriti and Co.'s off night on the field.

India's 100-Test club: Ashwin will become the 14th Indian to play 100 Tests when he takes the field against England in the fifth and final Test in Dharamshala on Thursday

Name	Matches
Sunil Gavaskar	125
Dilip Vengsarkar	116
Kapil Dev	131
Sachin Tendulkar	200
Anil Kumble	132
Rahul Dravid	163
Sourav Ganguly	113
V.V.S. Laxman	134
Virender Sehwag	103
Harbhajan Singh	103
Ishant Sharma	105
Virat Kohli	113
Cheteshwar Pujara	103



Lodestar: Ashwin, over the years, has been one of India's greatest match-winners. R. V. MOORTHY



Williamson reminisces 'surreal' 2010 debut

Set to play his 100th Test match, star New Zealand batter Kane Williamson on Wednesday recollected the surreal feeling he had when he was surrounded by the legendary Indian cricketers, including Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid, during his debut Test in Ahmedabad in 2010. "I remember walking out and looking around the field and seeing all my heroes."

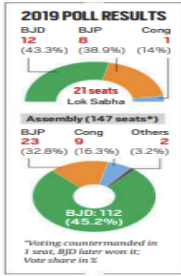
Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee Means Guarantee of food at every household Free ration to 80 crore beneficiaries



MORE TIE-UPS FOR RULING ALLIANCE AFTER JD(U)'S RETURN 5 Days after snapping ties, BJP set to return to NDA fold ahead of elections

Party's seat-sharing talks with BJP final, announcement likely soon

SUJIT BISOIYI & LIZ MATHEW BHUBANESWAR, NEW DELHI, MARCH 6



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at Chandikho, Odisha, on Tuesday. ANI

When in alliance, BJP-BID saw nearly 50% vote share

THE RETURN of the BJP to the BJP's side has been some time in the making, with the state party careful to sustain cordial ties with the ruling party at the Centre, despite the two being prime opponents in Odisha for some time now. What has helped are the warm ties BJP supreme Naveen Patnaik enjoys with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who gave another sample of it during his visit to Odisha on Tuesday. While Modi hailed Patnaik as a "Lokparya popular" CM and indicated that Odisha will play a significant role in the BJP-led NDA's target of 400-plus seats in the Lok Sabha polls, the CM said

Days after Tripura pact, Tipra set to join BJP Govt

DEBRAJ DEB AGARTALA, MARCH 6

FOUR DAYS after the BJP-led Centre signed a tripartite agreement with the erstwhile Tripura government and the state's principal Opposition Tipra Motha to address the latter's demands regarding a "constitutional solution" to the tribal problems, the stage is set for the Tipra to join the state government headed by Chief Minister Manik Saha. Speaking to The Indian Express, Tipra Motha founder and royal scion-turned-politician Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma said, "We have decided to join the state government and send two of our legislators to the Cabinet. They will join tomorrow."

WANTED FOR ATTACK ON ED SEARCH TEAM Bengal demands Shahjahan to CBI after fresh HC decision

CID transfers custody after HC sets a deadline

ATRI MITRA KOLKATA, MARCH 6

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi, at the centre of a row between the ruling party and the BJP in West Bengal, was turned over to the CBI by the state CID Wednesday evening after high drama over who should get his custody. Accused of sexual abuse, extortion, land-grabbing in Sandeshkhali and wanted for the January 5 attack on Enforcement Directorate officers who had gone to search his house as part of the probe into the cattle distribution case, Sheikh was transferred to CBI custody at 6.45 pm after the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday ordered the state administration in the morning and set a 4.15 pm deadline. He was arrested on February 29 after being on the run for 55 days following the attack on the ED team at his house. Before handing over Sheikh, the CID set him to the SSKM Hospital for a medical check-up as he was brought back to Bhabani Bihawan, the police station, after an hour. Thereafter, the CBI, which had been waiting for the state since

Bengal women will end TMC mafia raj, says PM

SANTANU CHOWDHURY BARASAT (WB), MARCH 6

STEPPING UP his attack on the ruling TMC for unleashing "a reign of terror" on women in West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Wednesday that the ripples of what happened in Sandeshkhali will be felt across the state and the women of Bengal will put an end to TMC's mafia raj". Addressing the "Nari Shakti Vandan" concluding Kalyanmali rally at Barasat in North 24 Parganas district where he later met a group of women from Sandeshkhali who narrated their ordeal to him, Modi said, "In Bengal, women have faced atrocious treatment. TMC's

Money, muscle, murky deals — how Shahjahan Sheikh built an empire

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & ATRI MITRA KOLKATA, MARCH 6

FROM A market named after him to brick kilns and guesthouses — suspended Trinamool Congress strongman Shahjahan Sheikh's empire touched almost every corner of West Bengal's

World recognising India as robust, economically sound, no doubt, says SC

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G NEW DELHI, MARCH 6

HEARING A suit filed by the Kerala government which has accused the Centre of not letting it borrow more money to meet its needs, the Supreme Court Wednesday said the world is recognising India as a robust economically sound country, adding that this is not based on just perception.

Aadhaar seeding with voter ID: EC wants law amended to clarify it's voluntary

Law Ministry says law needs no change, clarification by EC will do

DAMINI NATH & RITIKA CHOPRA NEW DELHI, MARCH 6

LET voter decide

THE ELECTION Commission of India has approved the Union government proposing amendments to the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and voter enrolment forms, to delete the provision that compels a voter to provide reasons for his decision not to seed her Aadhaar number with the voter ID card. The proposal, however, is earned to have been turned down by the Union Law Ministry on the ground that the Supreme Court gave no specific directions on the RP Act, 1950. It has, instead, suggested that the poll panel issue clarificatory guidelines reiterating its position that providing Aadhaar details is voluntary and that no name of any voter be deleted from or denied inclusion in the voters' list for want of Aadhaar number.

Bengaluru cafe blast: CCTV trail gives leads on suspect's identity, stopovers

JOHNSON TA BENGALURU, MARCH 6

THE CCTV trail of a suspect in the March 3 bomb blast at The Rameshwaram Cafe in the Whitefield area of Bengaluru has revealed some aspects of the identity of the suspect. Nine persons were injured in the incident and the NIA has started talking over the case from the Bengaluru police. On Wednesday, the NIA announced a reward of ₹10 lakh for information about the suspect and also posted his CCTV grab. The suspect's arrival in a public bus at a bus stop located about 100 metres from the cafe at around 10.45 am, his entry into the cafe at 11.34 am, exit at 11.43 am, and subsequent walk to a bus stop over a kilometre away for his escape using public buses has been captured on CCTV cameras. Sources said the CCTV trail of the suspect — from his arrival to his escape, an hour before the 12.56 pm blast at the cafe — has



A CCTV grab of the suspect posted by NIA

Telangana man, who was 'duped' into joining Russia war, is killed

SREENIVAS JANYALA HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

A 30-YEAR-OLD from Telangana who had been duped into joining Russia's war with Ukraine has been killed on the frontlines. Earlier this week, the family of Hyderabad resident Mohammed Afsan (30) had spoken to The Indian Express about how he was tricked into believing he was applying for a job as a helper in the Russian government offices, but was forced to



Mohammed Imran with Afsan photo of his brother Afsan

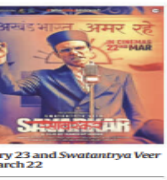
Valley to Bastar, films meet elections in the great countdown

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

VIDHATRI RAO NEW DELHI, MARCH 6

DURING A visit to Jammu on February 20 and ahead of heading to Kashmir, which would mark his first to the Valley since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi remarked, "I do not know what the film is about, but yesterday I heard on TV that a film is coming on Article 370. Good, it will be useful for people to get the correct information." The PM was referring to Article 370, the Jami Gauram star, which was released just days after

Modi returned from Jammu. In 2019, also an election year, Modi had made a reference to another Bollywood film, about another incident involving Kashmir, which would address the inauguration event of the National Film Festival of India in Mumbai. "How's the job?" he asked the crowd, including many Bollywood personalities, borrowing a dialogue from the blockbuster Ori, which was based on the "surgical strikes" by the Indian Army on Pakistan soil following an attack on an Army base in Uri. Gauram stars in both the films while Aditya Dhar, who directed Ori in 2019, has produced Article 370. Besides Ori, 2019 had seen Mission Mangal, which was based on the life of ISRO scientist Bhanu Prakesh, who led the mission; and The Accidental Prime Minister, centred on the tenure of Manmohan Singh. Five years apart, Bollywood again appears to be in sync with the government on its political messaging ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. The film The Naxal Story will hit the theatres on March 15. The film's trailer talks of the Naxal movement, and the killing of 74 security personnel by the Naxals.



Article 370 was released on February 23 and Swatantra Vee Serverin is slated for release on March 22

It adds that the killings had been "celebrated" by students at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. Actress Adah Sharma, who plays an IPS officer in the trailer, "In Bastar (Chhatisgarh), Naxalists do not want the state government to get back his body," he told PTI. The Indian Embassy in Russia

Story: Swatantra Vee Serverin, a biopic on RSS ideologue Vee Serverin, is scheduled for release in the works. Mid-year will see Emergency on the events from 1975 under Indira Gandhi, stars Kangana Ranaut as the former PM. The Naxal Story has been made by the same team that was behind 2023's Kerala Story which, as per its makers, was based on the story of 32,000 young women who sold the story of the Modi government's efforts to come out with an indigenous vaccine at the height of the Covid pandemic, 2024 kicked off with Main

India to become upper middle-income country by 2031: Crisil

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

MUMBAI, MARCH 6

AFTER EXPANDING by 7.6 per cent in the current fiscal, India's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth is likely to decelerate to 6.8 per cent in the fiscal 2025 (FY25) as higher interest rates and lower fiscal impulse will temper domestic demand, Crisil Ratings said in a report on Wednesday. Despite this, com-

menting on country's growth, Crisil added that between FY25 and FY31, the size of the economy will inch closer to the \$7 trillion mark and the rise in per capita income would place India in the upper middle-income category.

"At that point, India will become the third-largest economy in the world," it said.

The economic growth in FY25 will moderate due to normalisation of the net tax impact

on GDP seen in FY24 and as uneven growth in key trade partners will restrict healthy export recovery. But, India will retain its position as the fastest-growing large economy, the rating agency said.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected the real GDP growth for 2024-25 at 7 per cent. The recent data from the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the country's economy is expected to grow at 7.6

per cent in 2023-24.

Crisil said the transmission of the rate hikes effected by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI between May 2022 and February 2023 still continues and is likely to weigh on demand next fiscal. The RBI raised the repo rate – the key policy rate – by 250 basis points (bps)pv between May 2022 and February 2023. One basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point.

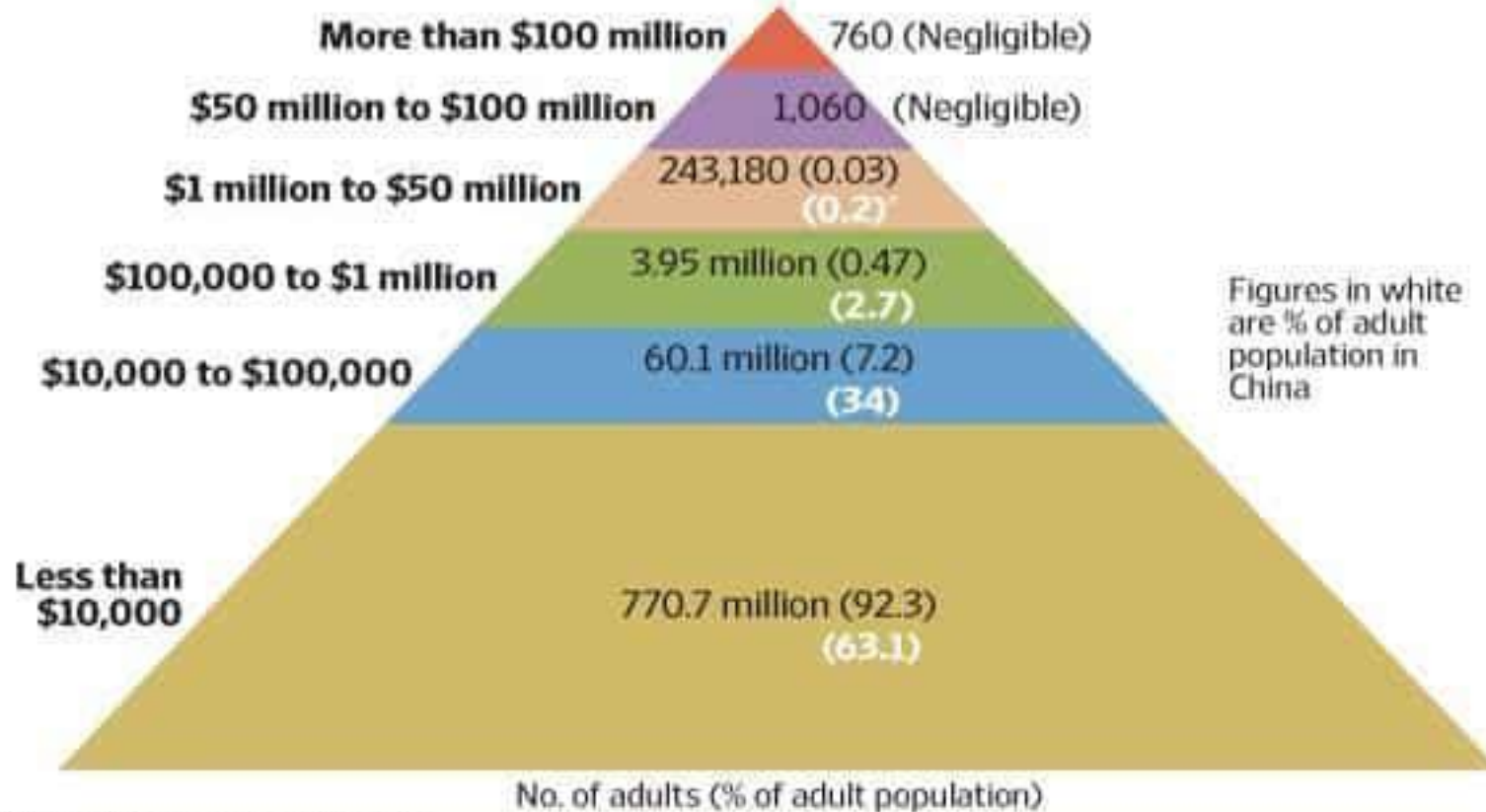
On the other hand, regulatory actions to tame unsecured lending will have a bearing on credit growth.

In November last year, the RBI increased the risk weights on the exposure of banks towards consumer credit, credit card receivables and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) by 25 per cent up to 150 per cent.

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India's wealth pyramid

92% of Indian adults have wealth of less than \$10,000.



*All adults with wealth above \$1 million

Graphic by Subrata Jana/Mint

Source: Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report, 2017

	Low Income	Lower-middle Income	Upper-middle Income	High Income
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July 1, 2023 - for FY24
(new)

<= 1,135 1,136 - 4,465 4,466 - 13,845 > 13,845

July 1, 2022 - for FY23
(previous)

<= 1,085 1,086 - 4,255 4,256 - 13,205 > 13,205

COUNTRY GNI PER CAPITA*



MP university 'forgets' to conduct exam, students protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, MARCH 6

EXAM OFFICIALS at the Jabalpur Rani Durgavati University in Madhya Pradesh are facing allegations that they forgot to conduct the first-semester examination for the MSc computer science batch, prompting students to protest with blindfolds and accuse university officials of negligence.

The university had released time tables of 3 exams last month, meant to be held from February 21 to March 13.

According to the time table, the exam for Computer Organisation and Assembly Language subject of MSc first semester was scheduled to be held on March 5, and students had already received admit cards.

Candidates reached the university at 8 am Tuesday but were informed there was no exam and the university had not prepared the question paper, members of NSUI alleged.

Candidates reached the university at 8 am Tuesday but were informed there was no exam and the university had not prepared the question paper, members of NSUI alleged.

University registrar Deepesh Mishra told *The Indian Express*, "It is wrong to suggest there was major negligence on our part. There were 12 exams that day, including the MBA exam attended by 1,600 students. In the MSc computer science paper, there were only 9 students from first semester. There was some negligence."

NSUI (Jabalpur) leader Sachin Rajak said, "This is a serious case of negligence by university administration. How can they forget the datesheet and other necessary arrangements for the exam?"

V-C Dr Rajesh Verma and Mishra immediately released a new exam schedule and officials concerned have been given 3 days to explain what went wrong. "We issued notice and formed a team to investigate the matter. So far, it appears that the examination was not conducted because the question paper never reached the examination centre because of a miscommunication with the strong room. Officials have been tasked to ensure the examination is conducted, and their leaves have been cancelled till this is done," Mishra said.

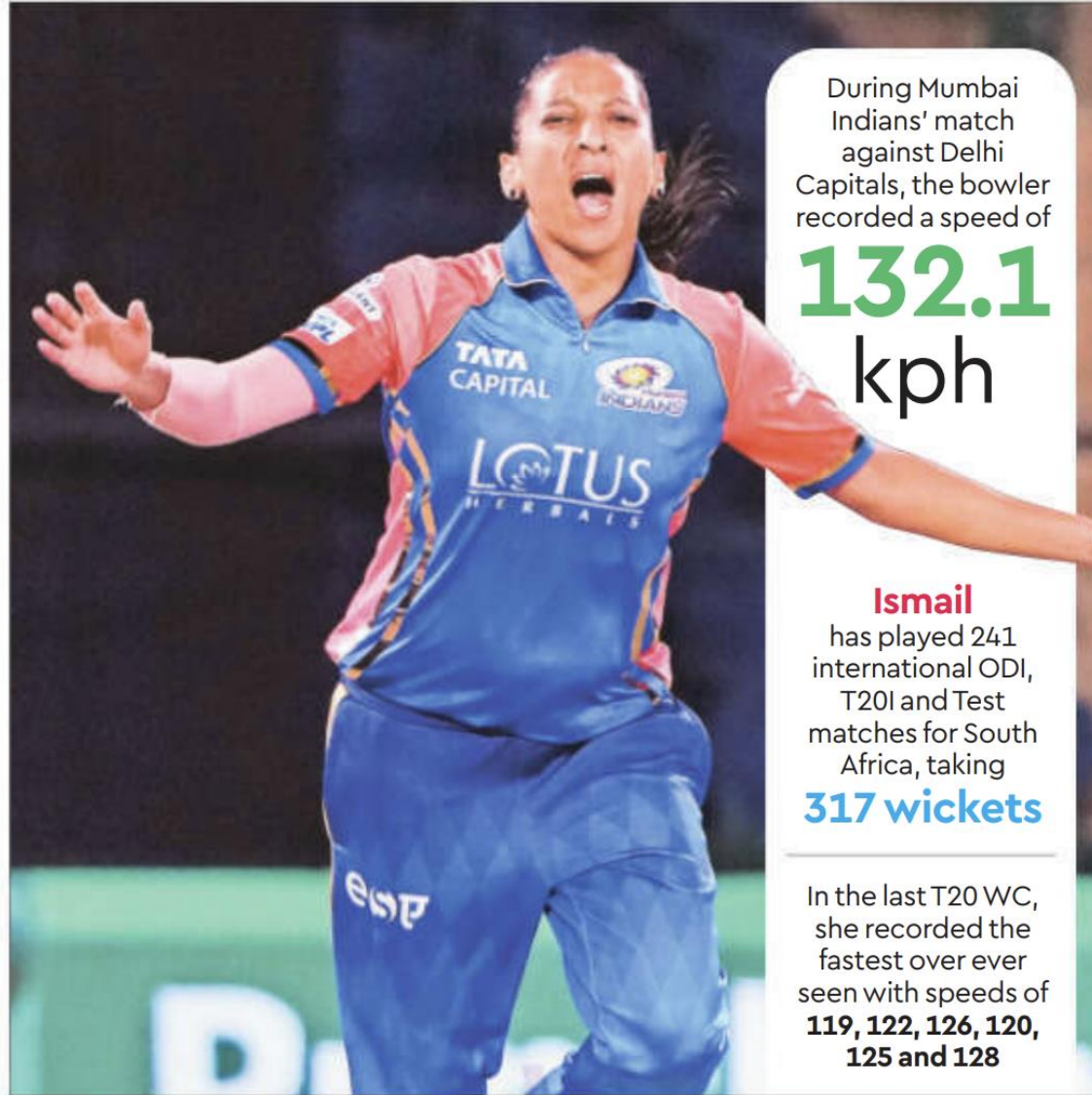
MI's Shabnim Ismail becomes first woman to break barrier of 130 kph

The speedster has long been considered the fastest in women's cricket

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN
New Delhi, March 6

SHABNIM ISMAIL IS rapid, she has been for a long time. The South African speedster, now retired from international cricket, has long been considered the fastest in the women's game. On Tuesday, she was credited by the Women's Premier League broadcasters as breaching the 130kph barrier, which would be the fastest recorded delivery in women's cricket since the time data is available.

The sequence of events around the particular delivery, though, was a little eyebrow-raising. On her return from a brief injury break, it did feel like Ismail was pumping the pace up in her opening spell for Mumbai Indians against Delhi Capitals. After she ran in to bowl the first ball of the third over, with Meg Lanning on strike, the broadcast feed had a pop-up poll question. "Will Shabnim Ismail break the



During Mumbai Indians' match against Delhi Capitals, the bowler recorded a speed of

132.1
kph

Ismail has played 241 international ODI, T20I and Test matches for South Africa, taking **317 wickets**


In the last T20 WC, she recorded the fastest over ever seen with speeds of **119, 122, 126, 120, 125 and 128**

are not frequently displayed and even when they are, appear on the screen briefly. During Ismail's against DC, when the speeds were shown, hovered most the early 110s, with just deliveries crossing 120.

Having said all that, if one was going to get past 130kph mark, it had to be Ismail. And 132.1 is much within her range than 138.

Born and raised in Cape Town in the Western Cape, Ismail played 241 international ODI, and Test matches for South Africa, taking 317 wickets. Originally a footballer, Ismail got into cricket with encouragement from her mother and grandfather. She went on to establish herself as one of the best fast bowlers in women's cricket, finishing behind Jhulan Goswami – her bowling coach at Mumbai Indians – in the list of wicket-takers.

Ismail was always fascinated by speed – she traveled almost as quickly as she bowled – and even at 35, she is keeping the numbers high.



GI Tag to Majuli
masks, Manuscript
and Narasapur
Crochet Lace Craft



-
- **Majuli masks and manuscript painting in Assam gain GI recognition, enhancing their cultural significance and safeguarding against decline.**
 - **These GI tags aim to rejuvenate and promote traditional crafts, ensuring their continued legacy and heritage preservation.**

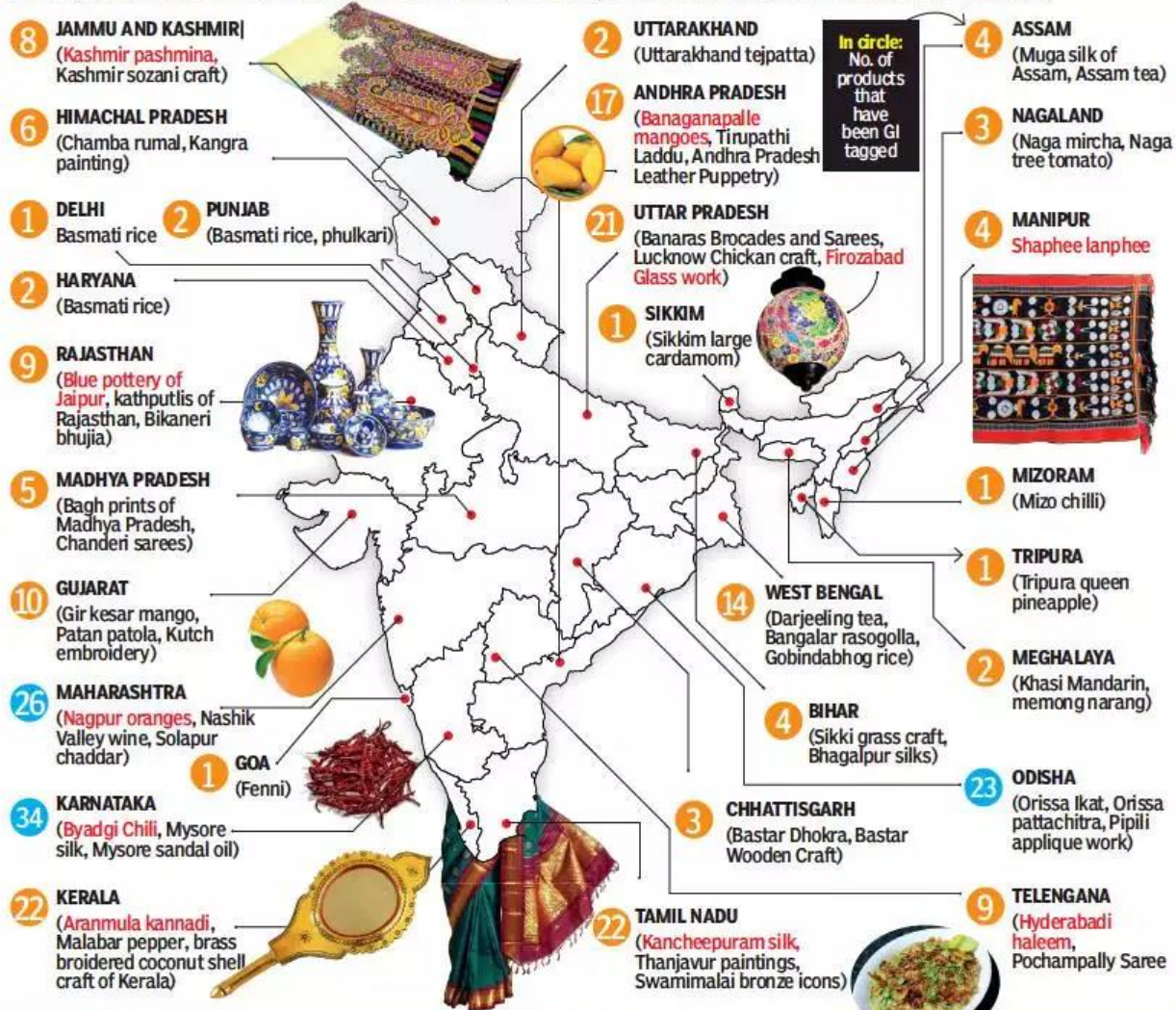




वृद्धोऽनन्तनिर्वृ
श्रवस्रुयविष्णु
श्रयस्रुयविष्णु
ववरांश्चयेवयव
त्रिंशद्विबस्रुधा
श्रवस्रुयविष्णु
मेवस्रुयविष्णु

JOINED BY BORDERS, DIVIDED BY CULTURES

Having got GI tags for 34 products, Karnataka has the most number of registrations, followed by Maharashtra (26) and Odisha (23)



WHAT IS A GI TAG?

- > A GI tag is a geographical indication of an item which is specific to a particular place
- > GI status can be sought for agricultural products, handicrafts, handloom and food products
- > The RGI (registration of geographical indications) logo given to a particular product can

- only be used by registered and authorised users
- > When marketed, a GI tagged product must carry a logo showing its place of origin
- > Civil and criminal proceedings can be initiated against those using the logo in unauthorised manner

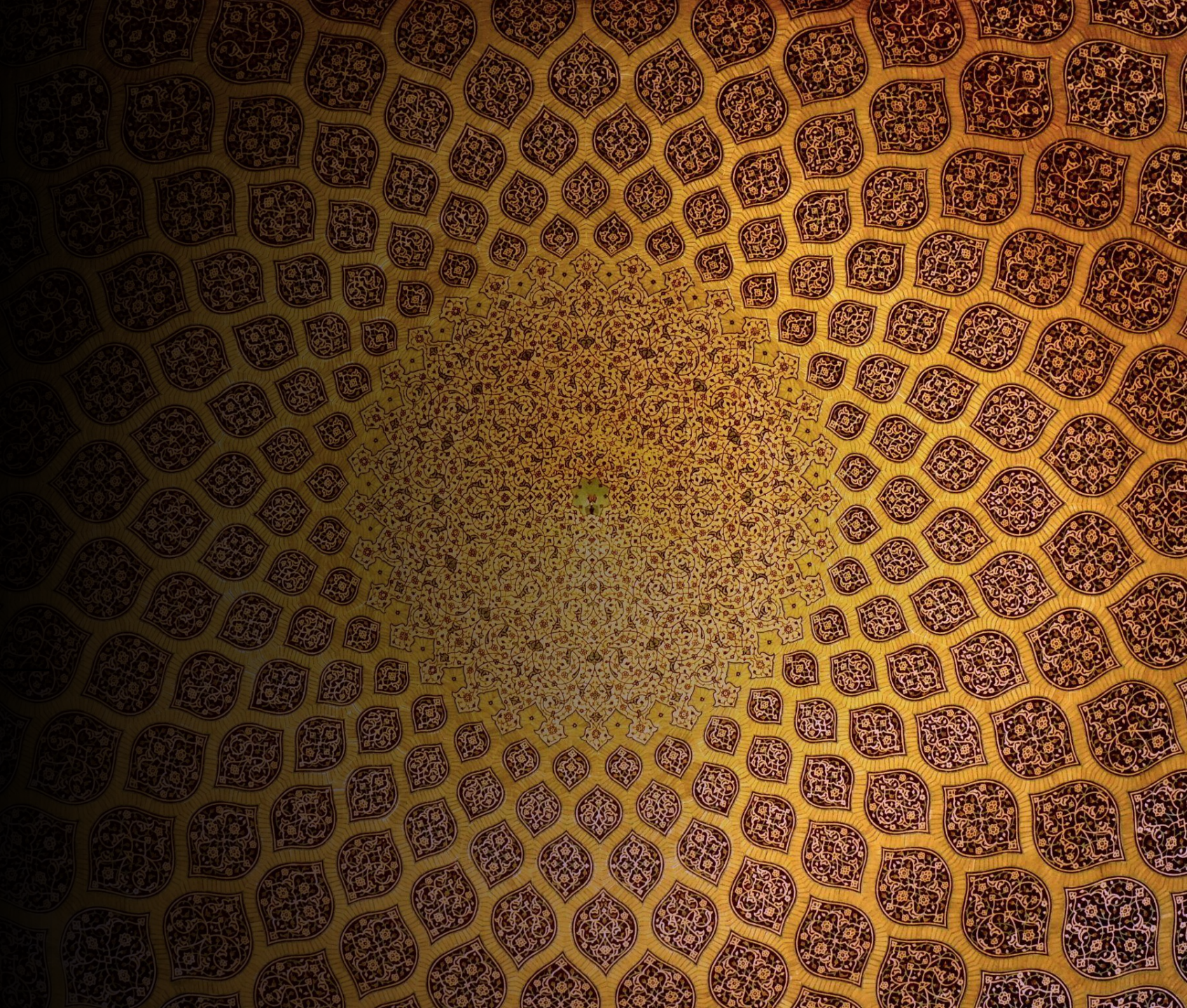


HOW TO APPLY?

- > An association or collective body can apply to GI Registry
- > Application should be backed by proof of uniqueness, historical records to show proof of origin, quality and special character
- > After rounds of verification, presentation and meetings, if registry is satisfied, application goes to GI Registry journal
- > If application receives no opposition within four months, it gets the GI tag



e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi



Recently, the Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution launched the 'e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi' (Digital Gateway) of Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) to leverage technology for easing farmers' warehousing logistics and ensuring fair prices for their produce.



The 'e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi' platform simplifies the digital process, allowing farmers to store their produce at any registered WDRA warehouse for up to six months at 7% interest per annum.

This initiative, featuring a no collateral, extra security deposit policy, aims to prevent distress sales by farmers, enabling better post-harvest storage opportunities.

The Minister highlighted that the integration of e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi and e-NAM enables farmers to leverage interconnected markets, extending benefits beyond government Minimum Support Price (MSP).



Women, Business and the Law 2024 Report



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- **Women, Business and the Law 2024 report** was released by the **World Bank**.
 - **About**
 - It is the 10th in a series of annual studies measuring the **laws that affect women's economic opportunity in 190 economies**.
 - It measures women's economic participation in – **mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets, and pensions**.
 - The data offer **objective and measurable benchmarks for global progress** toward gender equality.
 -

Major Findings

Legal Rights to Women: Women enjoy less than two-thirds or 64 percent of the of the legal rights available to men.

- The lower number reflects the major deficiencies in **Safety and Childcare**.
- Deficiencies in these areas **discourage women from entering the global workforce**.

Pay: Women earn just **77 cents for every dollar** paid to men.


- In all, 92 economies lack provisions mandating equal pay for work of equal value; 20 prohibit a woman from working at night; and 45 prohibit a woman from working in jobs deemed dangerous.

Entrepreneurship: Globally, only **44 percent** of the legal provisions that support the entrepreneurship of women are in place.

- Across the world, women hold just **one out of every five corporate board positions**.

Nationality Rights: In 28 economies, a woman cannot pass her nationality to children in the same way as a man.

- In 50 economies, a woman does not enjoy an equal right to confer citizenship on her foreign spouse.

- 
- **Retirement:** In 62 economies, the age at which men and women can retire is not the same, with **women retiring earlier than men.**
 - In 81 economies, a woman's pension benefits do not account for periods of work absences related to childcare.

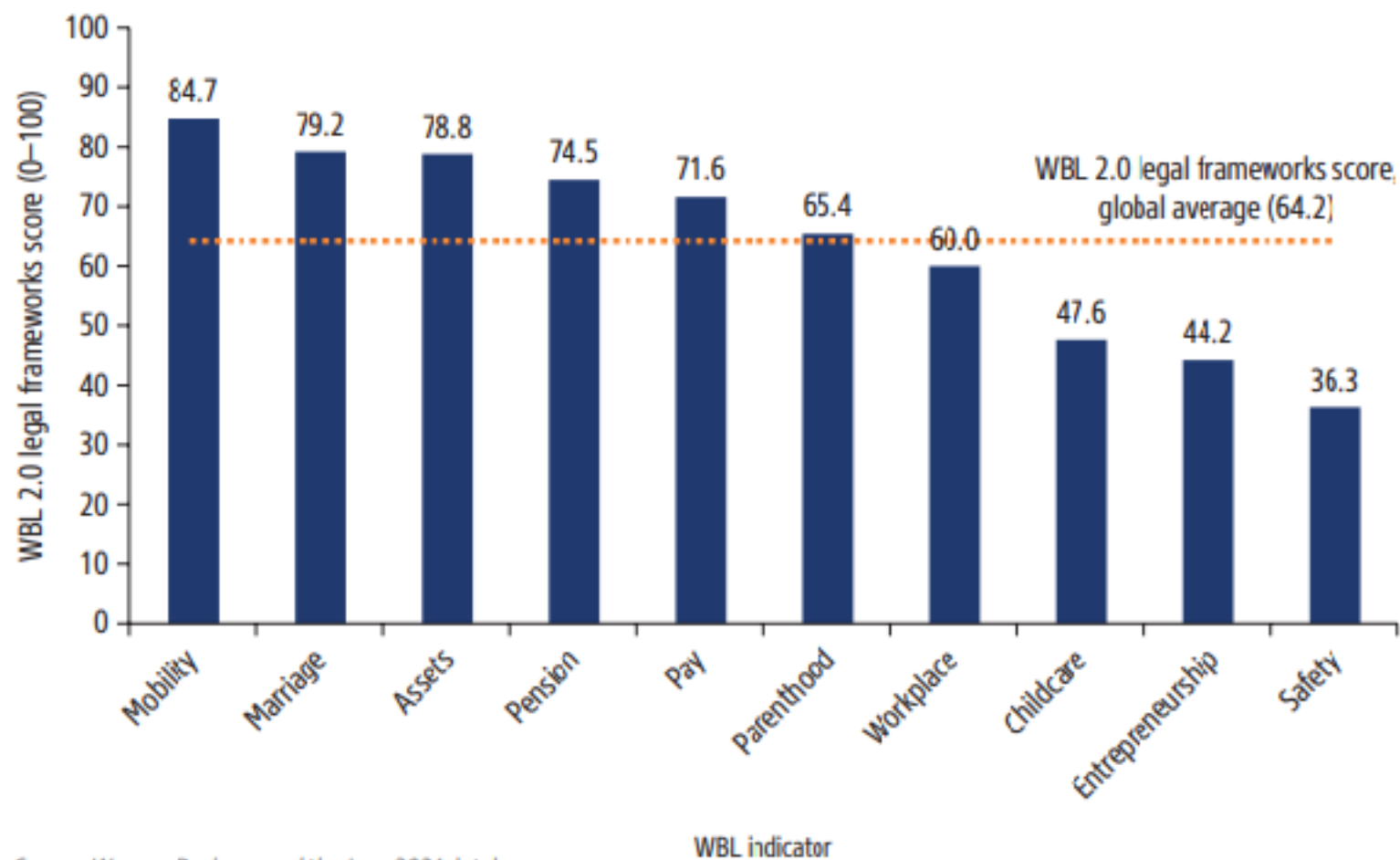
Ranking: India's rank has marginally improved to 113, with a score of **74.4 percent**.

- The score has remained constant since 2021, but the ranking witnessed a **decline from 122 in 2021 to 125 in 2022** and further **to 126** in the **2023 index**.

Legal Rights: Indian women have just **60 percent of the legal rights** compared to men, slightly **below the global average of 64.2 percent**.

- **India outperformed its South Asian counterparts**, where women have only 45.9 percent of the legal protections enjoyed by men.

SAFETY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND CHILDCARE INDICATORS HAVE THE LARGEST LEGAL GAPS

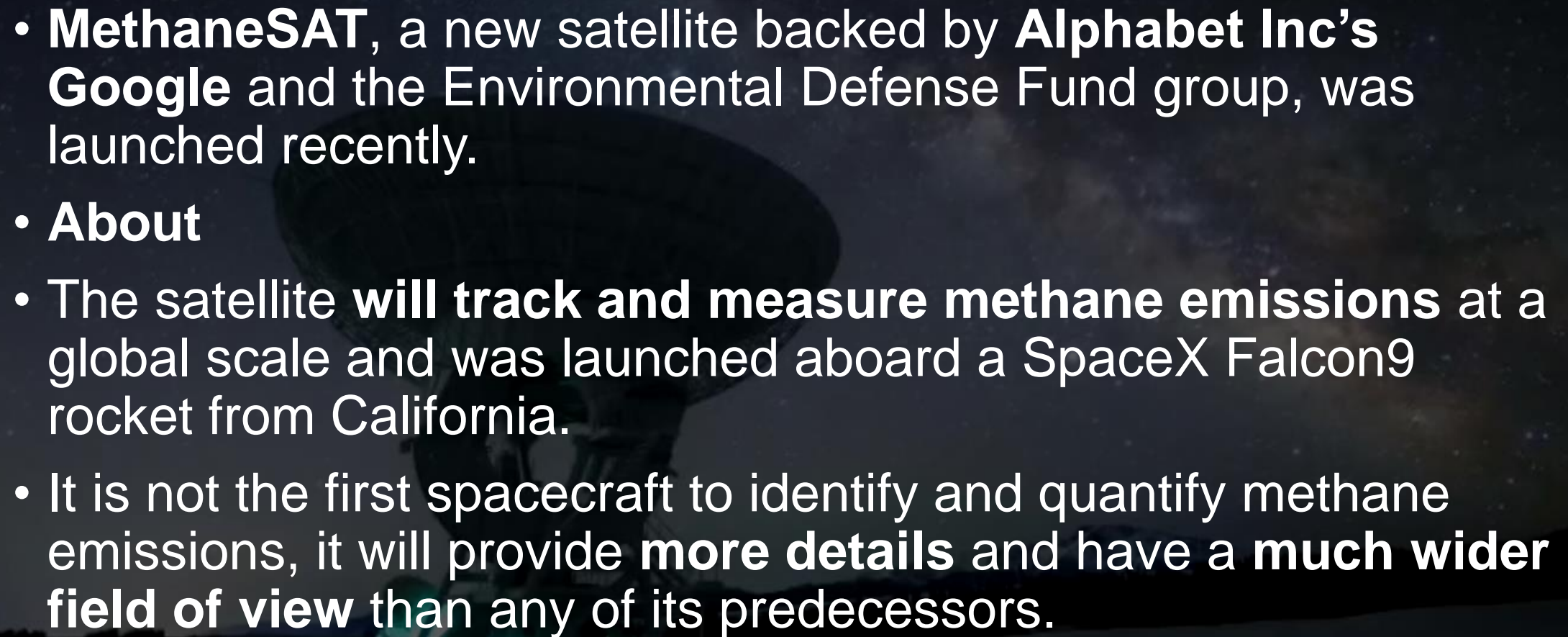


Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024 database.

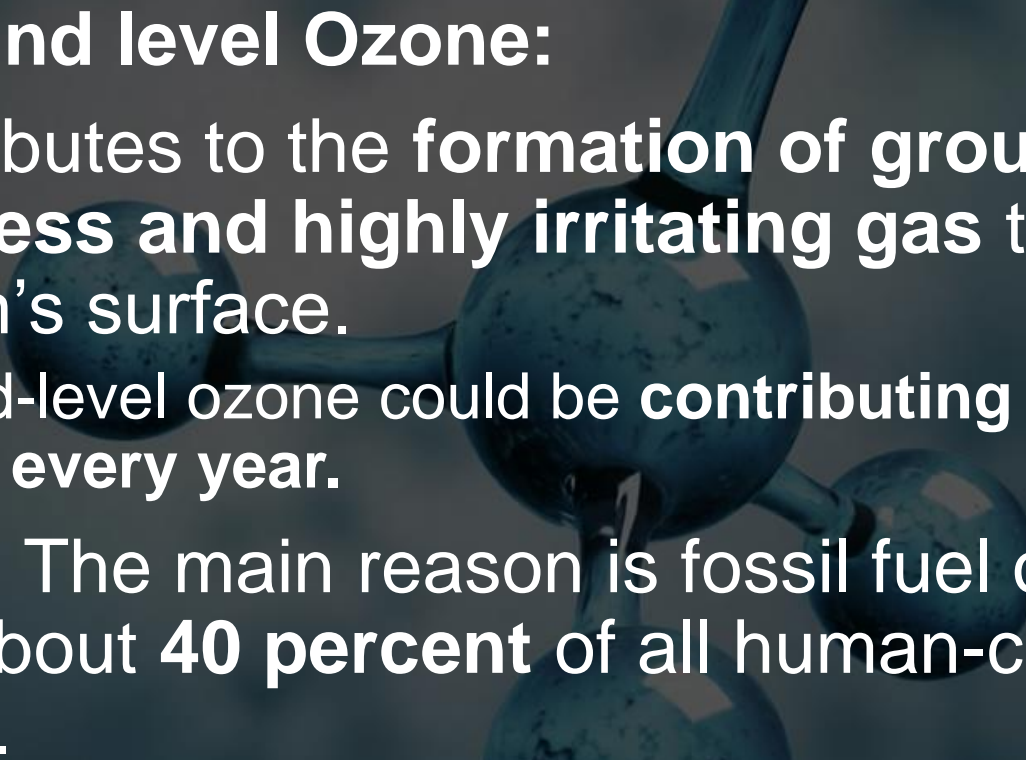
Note: WBL = Women, Business and the Law.

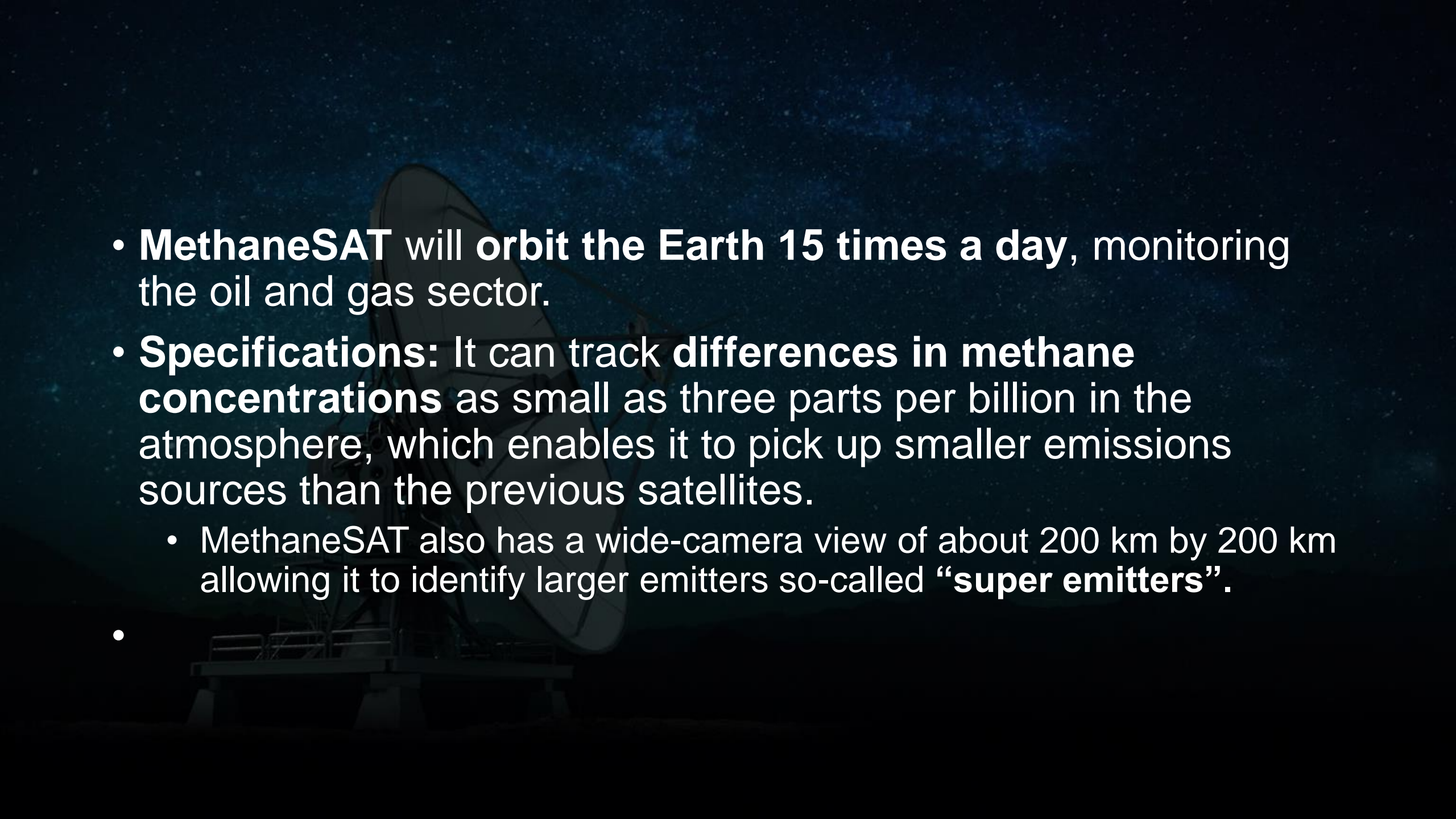


MethaneSAT

- 
- A large satellite dish antenna is mounted on a rooftop, set against a dark night sky filled with stars. The dish is dark and its structure is partially visible. The background is a deep black with numerous small, bright white stars scattered across it. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the stars.
- **MethaneSAT**, a new satellite backed by **Alphabet Inc's Google** and the Environmental Defense Fund group, was launched recently.
 - **About**
 - The satellite **will track and measure methane emissions** at a global scale and was launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon9 rocket from California.
 - It is not the first spacecraft to identify and quantify methane emissions, it will provide **more details** and have a **much wider field of view** than any of its predecessors.

- 
- **Methane Emissions and Need to Track it**
 - **Contribution of Methane Gas:** Methane is an **invisible but strong greenhouse gas**, and the **second largest contributor** to global warming after carbon dioxide, responsible for **30 percent of global heating** since the Industrial Revolution.
 - According to the United Nations Environment Programme, **over a period of 20 years**, methane is **80 times more potent** at warming than carbon dioxide.

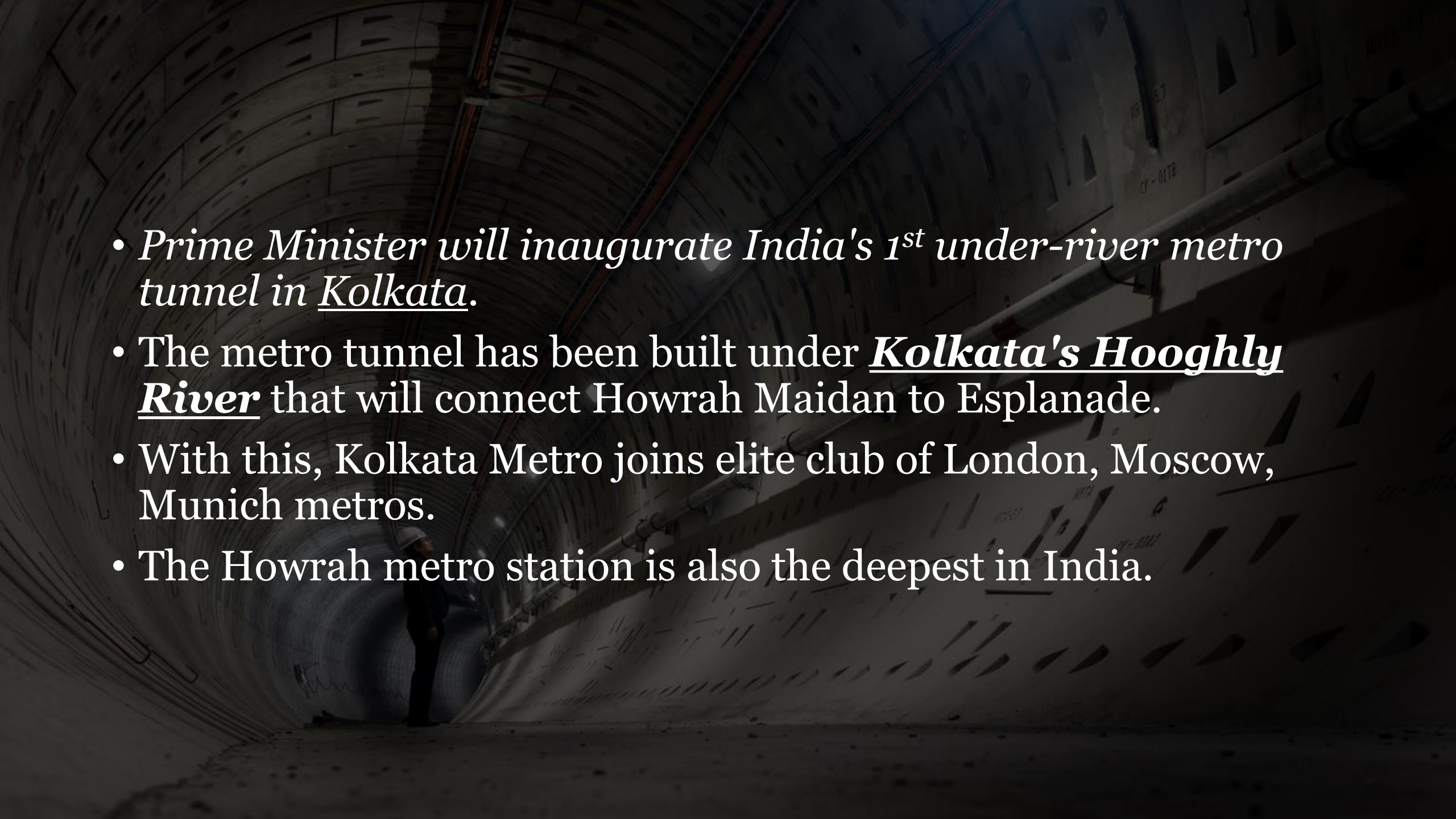
- 
- **Formation of Ground level Ozone:**
 - The gas also contributes to the **formation of ground-level ozone** — a **colourless and highly irritating gas** that forms just above the Earth's surface.
 - Exposure to ground-level ozone could be **contributing to one million premature deaths every year.**
 - **Major Contributor:** The main reason is fossil fuel operations, which account for about **40 percent** of all human-caused methane emissions.

- 
- **MethaneSAT will orbit the Earth 15 times a day**, monitoring the oil and gas sector.
 - **Specifications:** It can track **differences in methane concentrations** as small as three parts per billion in the atmosphere, which enables it to pick up smaller emissions sources than the previous satellites.
 - MethaneSAT also has a wide-camera view of about 200 km by 200 km allowing it to identify larger emitters so-called “**super emitters**”.



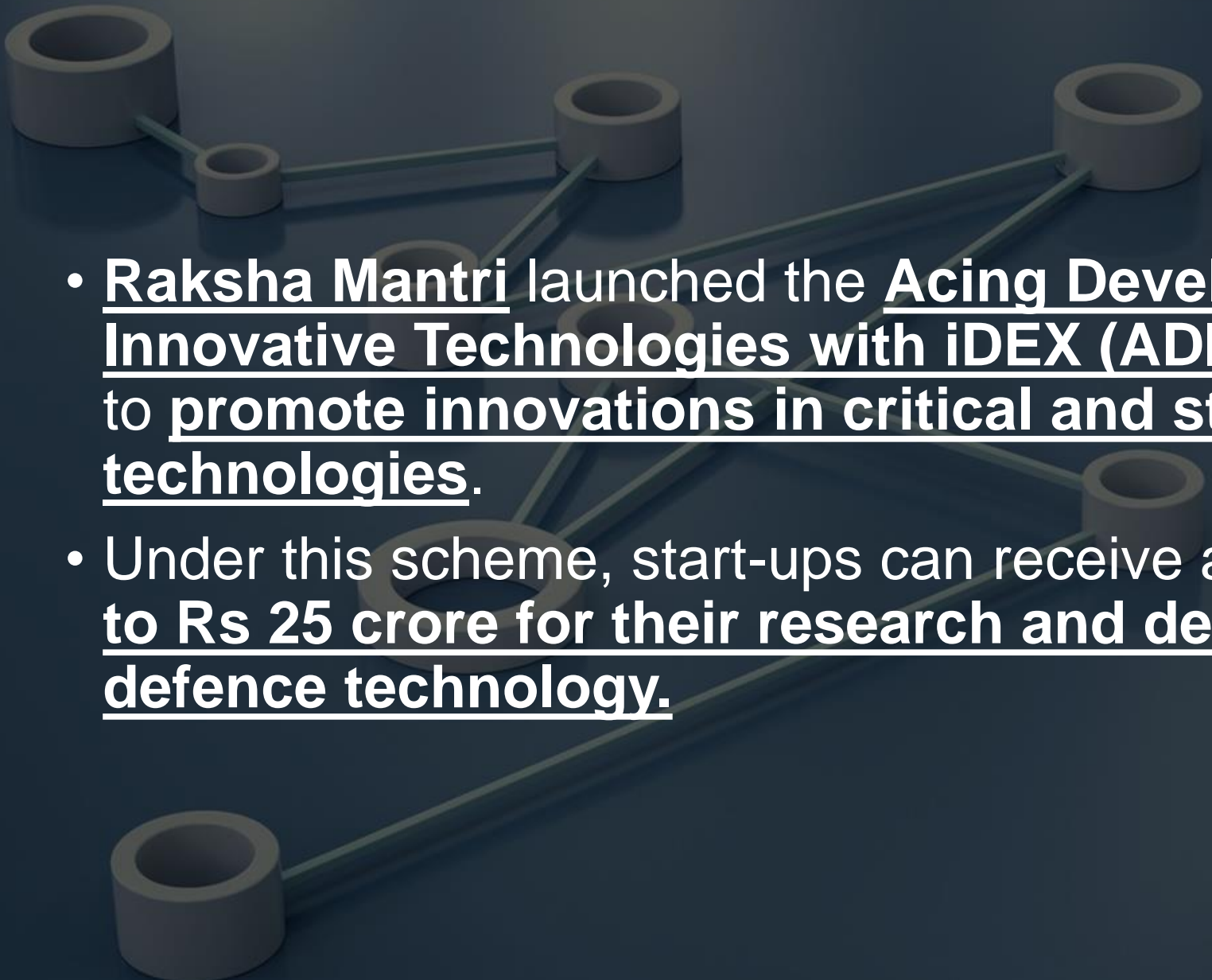
India's 1st underwater metro



- 
- *Prime Minister will inaugurate India's 1st under-river metro tunnel in Kolkata.*
 - The metro tunnel has been built under **Kolkata's Hooghly River** that will connect Howrah Maidan to Esplanade.
 - With this, Kolkata Metro joins elite club of London, Moscow, Munich metros.
 - The Howrah metro station is also the deepest in India.

The image features a central white circle with a thick green border. Inside the circle, the text "ADITI scheme" is written in a white, sans-serif font. Surrounding the circle are several decorative elements: a small orange circle on the left, a double orange circle in the top right, a grid of white dots in the bottom right, and two white wavy lines on the left side.

ADITI scheme

- 
- Raksha Mantri launched the Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme, aiming to promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies.
 - Under this scheme, start-ups can receive a grant-in-aid of up to Rs 25 crore for their research and development efforts in defence technology.

- The scheme is part of the **iDEX framework** and aims to develop about 30 deep-tech critical and strategic technologies while bridging the gap between defence requirements and innovation capabilities.
- Additionally, the event unveiled the 11th edition of the Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC) with 22 problem statements, inviting innovators to propose solutions to enhance defence capabilities.
- The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework is a program that aims to promote innovation and technology development in India's defence and aerospace sectors.

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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.
