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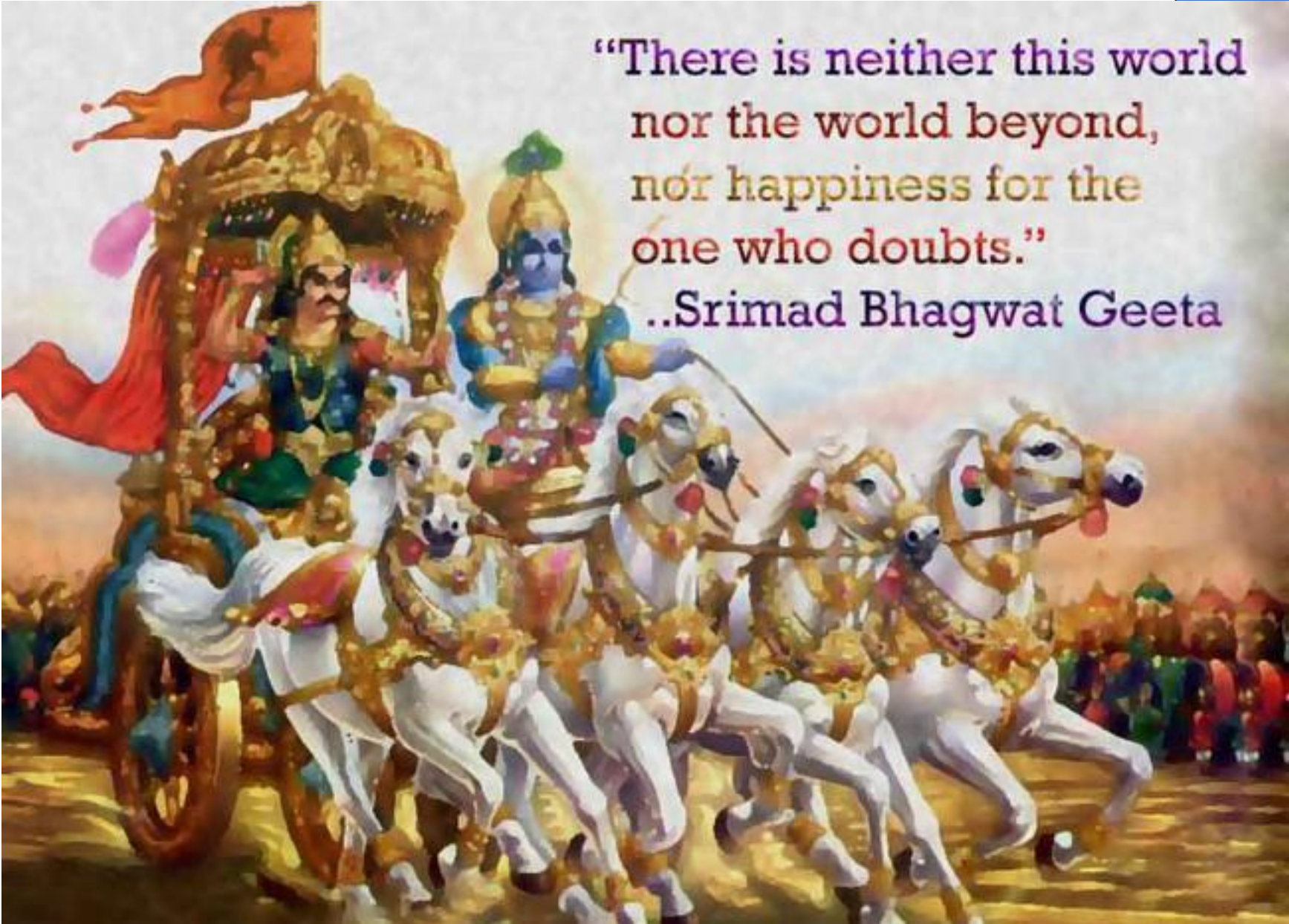
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“There is neither this world
nor the world beyond,
nor happiness for the
one who doubts.”

..Srimad Bhagwat Geeta

SC to hear plea to include CJI on EC selection panel

NGO tells Supreme Court that Centre can take 'unfair advantage' while filling two vacancies

Organisation asks the top court to stay the new law on appointment of Election Commissioners

Says the law was enacted to countermand an order which sought to end 'exclusive control'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to urgently hear on Friday a plea which said the Centre could take "unfair advantage" while filling the two vacancies of Election Commissioners (ECs) in the Election Commission of India (ECI) following the unexpected resignation of Arun Goel ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

A Bench headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna agreed to list for hearing the plea by NGO Association for Democratic Reforms, which said the new law on the appointments of ECs should

be put on hold.

The NGO said the Chief Justice of India (CJI) should be brought back on board the high-profile selection committee headed by the Prime Minister for appointments of ECs to the top poll body as directed by a landmark Supreme Court judgment in the *Anoop Baranwal* case of March 2, 2023.

'Free and fair elections'
"Now, the Executive has the ability to appoint two Election Commissioners which can give an unfair advantage to the Executive. The role of the Election Commission is critical in ensuring free and fair elections and therefore, the appointments must al-

so be seen to be fair and free from any bias or latches to the government of that time," the organisation, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan and Cheryl D'Souza, submitted.

In *Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India* in March last year, a Constitution Bench headed by Justice K.M. Joseph (now retired) ordered the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two ECs to be appointed by the President on the advice tendered by a committee of Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha or the leader of the single largest party in Opposition and the CJI.

The court had reasoned

Matter of concern

The NGO's plea before the Supreme Court has asked for these specific interventions



- Stay the implementation of Section 7 of The Chief Election Commission and other Election Commissions (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023

- Direct the Union of India to appoint the vacant positions of Election Commissioners, till the pendency of the case in the Supreme Court, in accordance with the Selection Committee laid down by the *Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India* judgment of March 2023

- Bring the CJI back on board the high-profile selection committee headed by the Prime Minister for appointment of ECs

that "fierce independence, neutrality and honesty" envisaged in the institution

of the EC required an end to government monopoly and "exclusive control" ov-

er appointments to the highest poll body. However, the government had enacted a new law – The Chief Election Commission and other Election Commissions (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 – to countermand the judgment. The law had replaced the CJI with a Cabinet Minister on the selection committee, giving the Centre a dominant role in the appointment process.

'Political interference'
"... Democracy is a facet of the basic structure of the Constitution and in order to ensure free and fair elections and to maintain

healthy democracy in our country, the Election Commission should be insulated from political and/or executive interference," the NGO argued.

The application filed by the NGO also pointed out that the ECI at present was under the sole charge of CEC Rajiv Kumar.

"In light of the eminent elections, it would not be prudent to leave the post of the Election Commissioners vacant as the role of the Election Commission is critical in assuring free and fair elections, in adjudicating disputes between political parties and in ensuring accurate voter lists and voter turnout," the application said.

IN BRIEF



Proposal to add 3 lakh NCC cadet vacancies approved

A proposal for expansion of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) with the addition of three lakh cadet vacancies has been approved by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. This expansion is expected to cater to the increasing demand for the NCC from educational institutions throughout the country, the Defence Ministry said. It will lead to the proportionate distribution of vacancies, and would reduce the waiting list of institutions aspiring for the NCC, the Ministry said. The expansion plan encompasses the establishment of four new group headquarters and the addition of two new NCC units.

Nagaland church body says LGBTQ+ lifestyle unacceptable

The LGBTQ+ lifestyle is unacceptable according to the biblical principles, an apex church organisation in Christian-majority Nagaland has said. LGBTQ+ expands to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and all other sexual orientations. A statement issued by the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) on Tuesday affirming its opposition to LGBTQ+ lifestyle came a week after an extremist group asked the "propagators of the contrary" to quit Naga-inhabited areas. "We are not against the people who struggle with an LGBTQ+ lifestyle. Love the person but hate the sin should always be our approach," the statement read.

Home Ministry to launch CAA helpline to assist applicants

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs said it would soon launch a helpline to assist applicants for Indian citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019. "Applicants can make free calls from anywhere in India and get information related to CAA-2019. Helpline to be available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.," the Ministry posted on X. Users are required to register on the portal (<https://indiancitizenshiponline.nca.gov.in>). A mobile application, "CAA-2019", has also been readied. All documents, along with photographs are to be uploaded online, and applications will be processed after a background check by security agencies and the payment of ₹50.

Maharashtra's Ahmednagar to be called Ahilyanagar

The Maharashtra Cabinet on Wednesday formally approved the renaming of Ahmednagar district to Ahilyanagar after the 18th Century Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar. The decision to rename the district had already been announced by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in May last year on the 298th birth anniversary of Ahilyabai Holkar. The renaming of Ahmednagar follows the Maharashtra government's decision to rename Aurangabad district as Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Osmanabad as Dharswad. The demand for renaming Ahmednagar was started by BJP leader and MLC Gopichand Padalkar, an influential leader of the Dhargar (shepherd) community.

SC stops Assam govt. move to de-notify rhino habitat

The Forest Department issued the notification in 1998 without consulting the Cabinet or Revenue Department, says State court says it won't stand in the way of protecting rights of forest dwellers

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday froze the Assam government's move to withdraw an almost 26-year-old notification constituting the Pobitora wildlife sanctuary, which hosts one of the largest rhino populations in the country.



Protected lands: An adult Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros walks with a calf inside the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. (PTU/ANUPRAKASH)

"The State government was not right in resolving to withdraw the notification dated March 17, 1998 notifying Pobitora wildlife sanctuary.... We direct that no further steps be taken with respect to the withdrawal of the notification dated March 17, 1998 by the State," a Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and Sandeep Mehta ordered.

The Assam Cabinet had on March 10 withdrawn the notification issued by the State Forest Department in 1998. The Cabinet decision of March 10 said the notification was issued unilaterally by the Forest department without consulting the Revenue Department or even the Chief Minister.

The government reasoned that declaration of

the sanctuary was made without settling the rights of the people living in villages in the area, Doojeng Thengabhang, Murkata and Mayong. These villages belonged to the marginalised communities and had been residing in the area even before independence.

Panel set up The government, having withdrawn the 1998 notification declaring the wildlife sanctuary, had also constituted a committee to look into both the rights and claims of the forest dwellers in the area as well as taking a considered decision, this time, to declare the Pobitora region as a wildlife sanctuary.

"We will not permit any de-notification. Withdrawing a notification declaring a wildlife sanctuary is not your answer. Such withdrawals cannot be done without the permission of the National Board of Wildlife. Besides, the Supreme Court has also passed an order against the de-notification of national parks, sanctuaries and forests," Justice Gavai clarified to the Assam counsel, senior advocate Nalin Kohli.

Amicus curiae, advocate K. Parameswar, said the withdrawal was "ex facie illegal".

"The notification was done unilaterally by the Forest department in 1998.

Panel recommends ban on 'ferocious dogs'

Jacob Koshy NEW DELHI

An expert committee constituted by the Department of Animal Welfare and Husbandry, Ministry of Agriculture, has recommended that certain breeds of "ferocious dogs" be prohibited from being kept as pets.

An official letter has gone out from the department to all States listing out these dog breeds as well as instructions to no longer register licences that permit their sale.

The expert committee was constituted after citizens complained of attacks on people sometimes fatal by these dogs.

There is also a petition being the letter deliberated upon in the Delhi High Court. The court is requesting it to ban certain breeds. The High Court, in De-

ceMBER 2023 had said it would decide on the issue in three months.

The breeds include mixed and cross-breeds like pit bull terrier, tosa inu, American Staffordshire terrier, fila brasileiro, dogo argentino, American bulldog, boerboel, kangal, central Asian shepherd dog, caucasian shepherd dog, south mastiffs, rottweiler, ferrier, thodesian ridgeback, wolf dogs, canario, akbash dog, Moscow guard dog, Cane corso and dogs commonly classified as bandog.

These rules are expected to be implemented by local authorities. Dogs that have already been kept as pets must be sterilised to ensure that further breeding does not happen, the letter signed by the Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, said.

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SUDOKU

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

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

PM launches portal for marginalised sections

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Launching the Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Adharta Janakam (PM-SURAJ) portal for credit support to entrepreneurs from disadvantaged sections of society, virtually on Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said. "This is a testament to our commitment to provide dignity and justice to the underprivileged. PM-SURAJ gives you this guarantee - this campaign of development and respect for the deprived class will intensify in the coming five years."

RSS to pass resolution on Ram Temple

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) will pass a resolution on the Ram Temple during its Pratinidhi Sabha, the meeting of the highest decision-making body of Sangh, scheduled to be held from March 16 to 17 in Nagpur. The annual meeting, which aims at setting the course of action and programmes of the RSS for the

Modi, British PM assess progress on free trade agreement negotiations

The Hindu Bureau LONDON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke over the phone on Tuesday, assessing the progress made on negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), as both countries face general elections.

New Delhi and London have been negotiating a deal since January 2023, but an agreement has thus far not been reached.

On Tuesday, Mr. Modi tweeted that he and Mr. Sunak had reaffirmed their commitment to the "early conclusion" of a "mutually beneficial" agreement. The Prime Minister also reiterated the importance of reaching an ambitious "outcome on goods and services."

FAITH

The power of women

Some may believe International Women's Day is a modern day construct; however, celebration of women power is an ancient one in our culture, dating back eons. Karadaiyan Nombu is one such, said Suchithra Balasubramanian in a discourse.

We are all asked to chant, Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu (May all beings everywhere be happy and free). One should always pray for the well-being of others, since God comes rushing to the aid of those one prays for. The observance of Karadaiyan Nombu is in line with this principle. Also known as Gauri puja, on this day, women pray to Goddess Devi for the longevity and health of their husband.

Falling in the cusp of the end of the Tamil month Maasi and start of Pongal, the nombu celebrates Savitri's surviving love and presence of mind, which helped her wrest her husband literally from the jaws of death. Born the daughter of Ashtapat, Savitri wished to marry Satyavan, despite the prescient knowledge that he would die within a year of their marriage. Parasurama says that although determined to enjoy the happiness from the union, she also steadfastly prayed to Devi to bless her with a long, fruitful life. At the end of a year of the marriage, when the God of Death, arrived to claim Satyavan's life. Known as someone who never fears nor frowns in his duty, he was nevertheless moved by Savitri's love. He offered her a boon. The clever woman said she wanted to birth a few children. Yama quickly granted her wish, before realising that to do so, he would have to allow Satyavan to live.

Crossword puzzle grid with clues: 14 Journalists in opening of movie 'Batman returns' (5), 15 Plane bearing royal crosses border (8), 16 Chronicle of tallness tigers running wild (8), 20 Dressing for dance (5), 23 Champion exhausts, nervous in track (7), 25 Unfriendly animal briefly controlled by force (7), 26 Shakespearean character known for impatience (5), 27 Abruptly put out rage inside - could be harmful (5), 28 "Lived in camp" - entertaining article by journalist (8), 29 Supports chance (6), Down: 1 Temporary leave, followed by discharge? On the contrary (4-4), 2 Weak partner by pair regularly included in team - finally game lost (7), 3 Goddess of performing arts and studies, always in white basically (9), 5 Di event(s) succeeded in arresting criminal for financial wrongdoing (7,7), 6 Encourage those having spirit (5), 7 Cover containing rape became wrinkled (7), 8 Start a journey with extremely suave, well-dressed gentleman (5-2), Across: 1 Churcharman in the older days, ready to control Italy (6), 4 Beginner shot suffers that dull (6), 10 Places to go excitedly? Some nude resorts (9), 11 Weakness of a boy overwhelmed by success (5), 12 Prepare to print form before game of tennis (7), 13 Women's work, mostly performed by men (7)

PM launches portal for marginalised sections

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Launching the Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Adharit Jan-kalyan (PM-SURAJ) portal for credit support to entrepreneurs from disadvantaged sections of society virtually on Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "This is a testament to our commitment to provide dignity and justice to the underprivileged. Modi gives you this guarantee - this campaign of development and respect for

the deprived class will intensify in the coming five years."


Mr. Modi also disbursed around ₹720 crore worth of credit to one lakh beneficiaries from the Scheduled Castes, Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Safai Karamcharis. The portal will be a one-stop point where people from disadvantaged sections of society can apply for and monitor the progress of all loan and credit schemes already available to them.

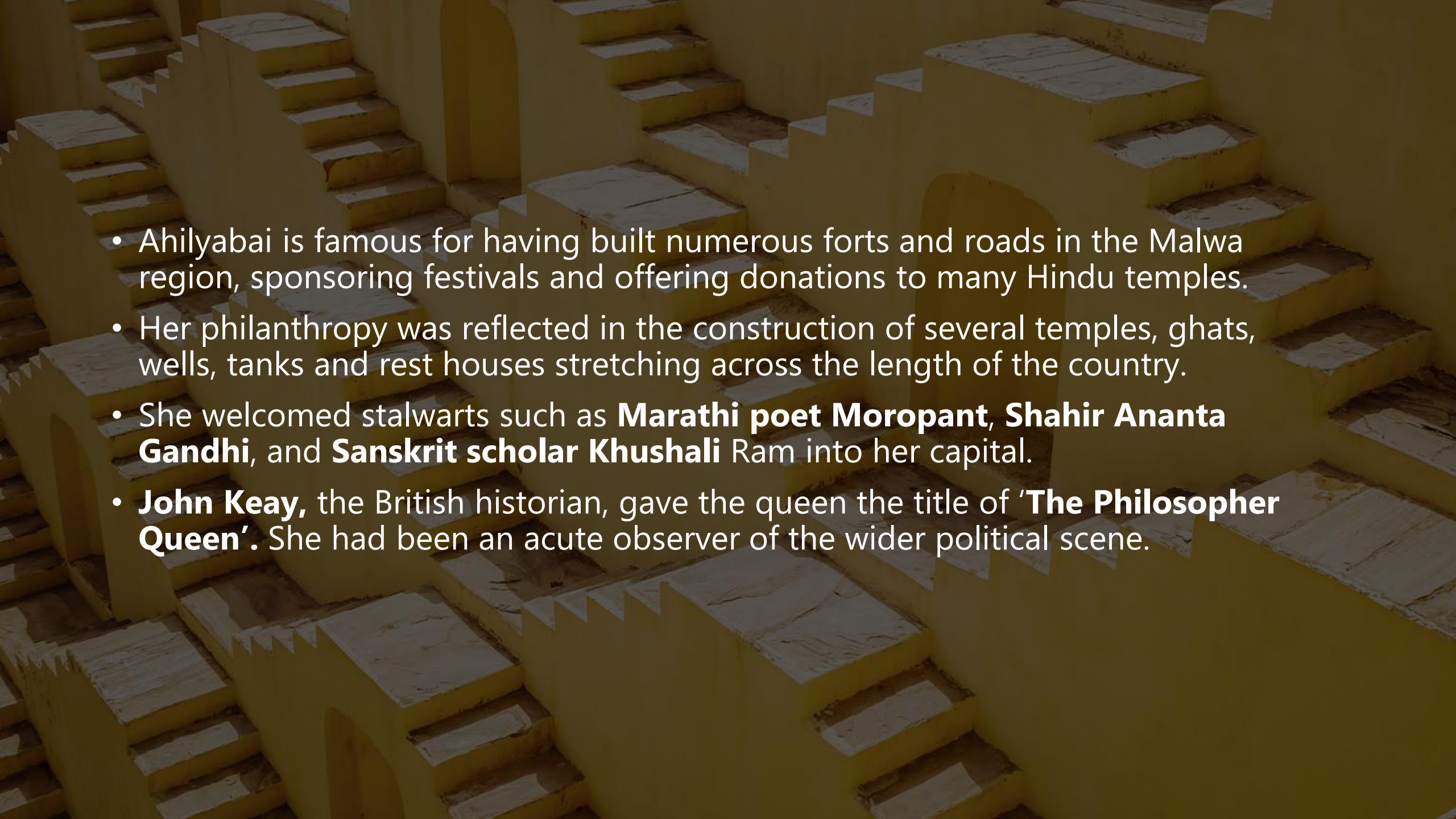
Maharashtra's Ahmednagar to be called Ahilyanagar

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- **Who is Ahilyabai Holkar?**

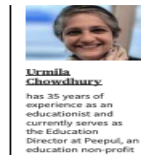
- Ahilyabai (1725 -1795) was one of the women rulers of Medieval India who belongs to the **Holkar dynasty of the Maratha Empire.**
 - She was married Khanderao Holkar in 1733 at the tender age of 8. Her husband was killed in the **battle of Kumbher in 1754.**
- 

- 
- Ahilyabai is famous for having built numerous forts and roads in the Malwa region, sponsoring festivals and offering donations to many Hindu temples.
 - Her philanthropy was reflected in the construction of several temples, ghats, wells, tanks and rest houses stretching across the length of the country.
 - She welcomed stalwarts such as **Marathi poet Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi**, and **Sanskrit scholar Khushali** Ram into her capital.
 - **John Keay**, the British historian, gave the queen the title of '**The Philosopher Queen**'. She had been an acute observer of the wider political scene.

Higher engagement, better learning

The Annual Status of Education Report 2023 states that more than 86.8% individuals in the age group of 14-18 are enrolled in educational institutions, but one-fourth of them cannot read a class 2-level text fluently in their regional languages.

A learning deficit
India has been struggling with a learning deficit for years now. And though there is more awareness about this thanks to Pratham's annual surveys, little seems to have changed on the ground. Attendance in public schools tends to be low, so despite children being enrolled in school, many of them do not learn much. This is largely because schools are unable to engage children. Therefore, children and parents see little value in school. Across classrooms, government school teachers attribute poor student learning outcomes to poor student attendance. When students don't show up, teachers lose their motivation and do little to increase the level of engagement with learners, which could in turn motivate students to show up. It's a chicken and egg situation.



Urnila Chunchibury: has 25 years of experience as an educationist and currently serves as the Education Director at Pratham, an education non-profit

Students learn when there is motivation to do so and that happens when classrooms are meaningful and psychologically safe spaces. However, in classrooms across India, the teacher focuses only on the few students who sit in the front rows. The teacher writes questions and often even the answers on the blackboard. The students spend most of their learning hours copying off the board while the teacher leaves the room to do "more important" work. The teacher asks questions, but only a few students answer. Otherwise, the class answers in a chorus. The children repeat after the teacher in unison. The teacher asks if everyone has understood and receives an enthusiastic "yes" in response. But this does not give a sense of how much the students have really learned. This looks and

sounds like active learning, but is not, because the children are not cognitively or emotionally engaged. India has a long tradition of rote learning. Many have progressed in life learning this way, but this kind of learning does not serve all students. In any case, with the world changing so fast, children need different skills.

A two-way communication
Now imagine a classroom where the teacher calls upon every child randomly. Every child is alert, curious, and attentive. The students are allowed to discuss and solve problems with their peers and learn from one another. Every child gets to touch, feel, and use the learning material whether a math manipulative, a book, or a science kit. The teacher stays in the classroom while the children work and gives them feedback in real time. The children cognitively engage with the topic. There is a happy buzz of students taking ownership for their own learning. This is student engagement and this is what makes the classroom a meaningful space for every learner.

Unless the teacher participates, student engagement cannot happen. Classroom learning opportunities must be made available to everyone, irrespective of gender, caste, religion, special needs, or disability. When teachers actively engage students and focus on the learning, it improves. This seems like a simple teacher writes questions and often even the answers on the blackboard. The students spend most of their learning hours copying off the board while the teacher leaves the room to do "more important" work. The teacher asks questions, but only a few students answer. Otherwise, the class answers in a chorus. The children repeat after the teacher in unison. The teacher asks if everyone has understood and receives an enthusiastic "yes" in response. But this does not give a sense of how much the students have really learned. This looks and

problem is that many of these teachers were themselves not taught in an engaging way. So, very few of them worry about whether they are engaging the learner as they don't see it as their responsibility. Teaching is largely seen as a one-way communication with the teacher getting no feedback from the student during the lesson. The teacher does not know what is going on in the learner's mind and therefore cannot customise their teaching to suit the learner's needs.

Teaching the teacher
Teachers have not seen how practices such as questioning are practiced. This is because teacher education and training in India tends to be theoretical. It is conducted in seminar-style and tends to be a one-way communication. There is little opportunity for practice provided to the participants. We must see teachers as learners too and provide them with an engaging learning environment with 70% practice and 30% theory so that training serves a two-fold purpose: teachers get trained, but also experience learner engagement for themselves.

Additionally, there is no one in school to support teachers. All of us need coaching and hand-holding to support us in adopting new behaviour. Even though teaching is a vital job, teachers do not get help.

Student engagement is the key to driving better learning, but this is missing from many classrooms. The many problems that plague the education system, including inadequate teacher allocation, poor systemic governance, outdated teaching practices, lack of teacher support and coaching, all contribute to making this hard to implement at scale. There are many teachers who teach with passion and dedication, despite the challenges. However, when we have dedicated teachers teaching and good student attendance, children still do not always learn. A part of the

Too many trekkers spoil the mountains

The Karnataka Ecotourism Development Board has forgotten its role

STATE OF PLAY

Janaki Marali

After 4,000 trekkers climbed the Kumara Parvatha peak in the ecologically fragile Pushpagiri Wildlife Sanctuary on the Republic Day weekend, the alarmed Karnataka government temporarily banned trekking in the State. Until a standard operating procedure is put in place, routes without an online booking system would remain closed, it said.

Karnataka

from Bengaluru. Several private tourism agents and trekking clubs offer trekking packages to large groups, which include food packets, tents, and forest entry fees. So much so that forest department officials face challenges in handling the crowds at entry points. This is where baggage is checked for banned items and passes are then issued. Some serious trekkers have likened the weekend crowds to that of the Everest base camp during peak season and prefer to trek during the weekdays.

It is puzzling that the forest department has not fixed restrictions on the number of trekkers who can enter the forest per day, especially since the Karnataka Tourism Policy 2020-26 (revised) states that "ecotourism activities shall focus on increasing awareness towards conservation and sustainability of biodiversity and natural environments." It adds, "The development and promotion of ecotourism shall be done after careful consideration of the destination's carrying capacity..."

The Pushpagiri wildlife sanctuary, proposed as a World Heritage site, is one of 21 sanctuaries in Karnataka. It is situated in the Western Ghats, which has been recognised by UNESCO as one of the eight "biodiversity hotspots" in the world. The UNESCO site includes the forest of the state include some of the best representa-

tives of non-equatorial tropical evergreen forests anywhere and are home to at least 325 globally threatened flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species.

When the Karnataka Ecotourism Development Board (KEDB) was set up in 2013, its aim was to "help the government improve the protection of the wildlife, creating awareness about it, encouraging ecotourism, forest safaris and also prevent damage to the eco-system in the name of tourism." Under its objectives, the KEDB states that "The Forest Department shall encourage and permit wilderness tourism in specified areas of the National Parks/Sanctuaries/Forests, as a conservation tool. It is necessary that tourists desirous of entering wilderness areas should have interest in the flora and fauna. Casual tourists shall be discouraged." It adds that "wilderness areas are sacrosanct, and should continue to sustain themselves in the state... the entry of the number of tourists permissible shall be kept within limits..."

So, what went wrong? How did a body set up expressly to protect the sensitive ecological regions while promoting ecotourism, end up as a hindrance? How did the board remain a silent bystander to the indiscriminate entry of tourists into this eco-sensitive region?

Overcrowding damages the delicate biodiversity of the region and also poses dangers to the tourists themselves. Forests are not just a source of livelihood, food, and shelter, but also act as carbon sinks. They purify our air and water and help in fighting climate change. Both the state and civil society have a role to play in preserving our rich biodiversity.

Janaki Marali is a journalist and author

Russia dominance in India's arms imports declines

Russia's share in India's arms imports shrunk from 76% in 2009-13 to 36% in 2019-23

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

In the last 15 years, India has significantly reduced its dependence on its biggest arms supplier, Russia. According to new data released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a Swedish think tank, about 76% of arms imported by India during the 2009-13 period was from Russia. In contrast, in the 2019-23 period, Russia's share reduced to 36%. While Russia still remains India's largest supplier, arms imports have increased substantially from France and the U.S. in recent years (Chart 1). France's share in India's arms imports was just 0.2% in the 2009-13 period. However, in the 2019-23 period, its share climbed to 33%, making it the second largest supplier. The U.S.'s share increased from 8% in 2009-13 to 13% in 2019-23. The chart shows the volume of arms transfers from the five major arms exporters to India in terms of trend-indicator value. This is calculated based on the known unit production cost of a core set of weapons and is intended to represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfers. India's arms imports increased by 4.7% during 2019-23 compared to the previous five-year period. Between 2019 and 2023, India climbed one spot to become the world's biggest arms importer (Chart 2), displacing Saudi Arabia. India's share in global arms imports rose from 9.1% in 2014-18 to 9.8% in 2019-23. Saudi Arabia, which was the biggest importer in the previous five-year period, reduced from 11% to 8.6%. Understandably, Ukraine, which had a negligible share in global arms imports in 2014-18, increased its share to 4.3% in the next five years, especially after the Russian invasion in February 2022. As far as India's arms imports are

concerned, Pakistan's share in global imports increased from 2.0% in 2014-18 to 4.3% in 2019-23. The share of China, on the other hand, declined from 4.9% to 2.9% in the same period. According to SIPRI, countries in Asia, Oceania, and West Asia continued to import arms in much larger volumes than Europe. In 2019-23, nine of the 10 biggest arms importers were from Asia, Oceania, or West Asia. Chart 2 shows the share of top countries in global arms imports in two five-year periods.

Russia's role as an arms supplier diminished not just in the case of India but across the world. Russia accounted for 29% of all arms exports in 2014-18. In 2019-23, this share came down to 15% (Chart 3). In volume terms, Russia's exports fell by 52% during the two periods. According to the think tank, until the year 2019, the volume of Russian arms exports remained more or less constant with minimal changes. However, export volumes started to rapidly decline in 2020, 2021, and 2022. In 2023, the volume exported was 74% lower than the levels recorded in 2019. Russia was the major arms supplier to 31 nations in 2019. This figure decreased to 14 in 2022 and by 2023. On the other hand, the U.S., the biggest exporter of arms, further cemented its position by increasing its share in global exports from 34% to 42%.

Table 4 lists the units of various types of weapons ordered by India in the last 15 years. Missiles formed the largest component in India's arms order and a majority of them were from Russia followed by the U.S., Iran, and France. Most ordered commodities also included engines, armoured vehicles, and aircraft. While engines and aircraft were mostly ordered from Russia, France and the U.S., armoured vehicles came from South Africa and Russia.

From Moscow to Paris

The data for the charts were sourced from the Arms Transfers Database maintained by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

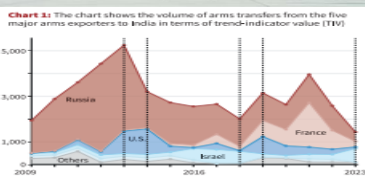
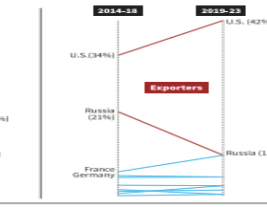


Table 4: Units of various types of weapons ordered by India

Year	Missiles	Engines	Armoured vehicles	Aircraft
2014-18	59,823	593	1,000	356
2019-23	4,622	329	1,000	136

Table 4: Units of various types of weapons ordered by India in the last 15 years

Seller	Missiles	Engines	Armoured vehicles	Aircraft
Russia	59,823	593	1,000	356
U.S.	4,622	329	1,000	136
Iran	1,821	342	24	44
France	1,343	342	24	172
S. Africa	360	240	640	0
Ukraine	360	240	0	0
U.K.	200	240	0	57
Germany	240	0	0	46
Canada	240	0	0	0
S. Korea	0	0	0	2



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 14, 1974

Why is the national motto missing on notes?

New Delhi, March 13: A question about the national emblem motto Satyameva Jayate was the subject of a 20-minute exchange, which included digs at the Government and philosophical observations, in the Lok Sabha today.

Mr. Madhav Dandavate, the alert and quick-witted Socialist member of the Government to explain the absence of the motto on currency notes and postal stamps. Mr. P.H. Mohsin, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs, replied that although the motto was an integral part of the national emblem, there were instructions that for technical reasons there could be a modification of the emblem for use on coins, currency notes and stamps.

To a supplementary question from Mr. Dandavate, the Home Minister, Mr. Uma Shankar Dikshit, said the Government certainly did not regard the motto to be of marginal or secondary importance. Mr. Dandavate asked whether one reason for dropping the motto from currency notes was because the rupee value had eroded. The Government realised that the inscription in the notes "I promise to pay the bearer a sum..." was a breach of truth. Mr. Dikshit: It is a very poor joke. I refused to take note of it.

Mr. Mohsin said the question of printing the motto on coins and currency was referred by the Ministry to the then Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister (Mr. Morarji Desai). It was later "conveyed in detail by the Finance Minister. It was found that printing the motto was not possible as it would increase the lettering.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 14, 1924

Help from America

New York, Mar. 12: American bankers headed by the Morgan group have established a credit of hundred million dollars in favour of the Banque of France.

London, Mar. 13: The French loan is fully secured by gold in the vaults of the Banque de France, which is acting for the French Government and will be used to stabilise French exchange and for other purposes. It was understood that the duration of the loan is for one year.

Russian dominance in India's arms imports declines

Russia's share in India's arms imports shrunk from 76% in 2009-13 to 36% in 2019-23

From Moscow to Paris

The data for the charts were sourced from the Arms Transfers Database maintained by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)



Chart 1: The chart shows the volume of arms transfers from the five major arms exporters to India in terms of trend-indicator value (TIV)

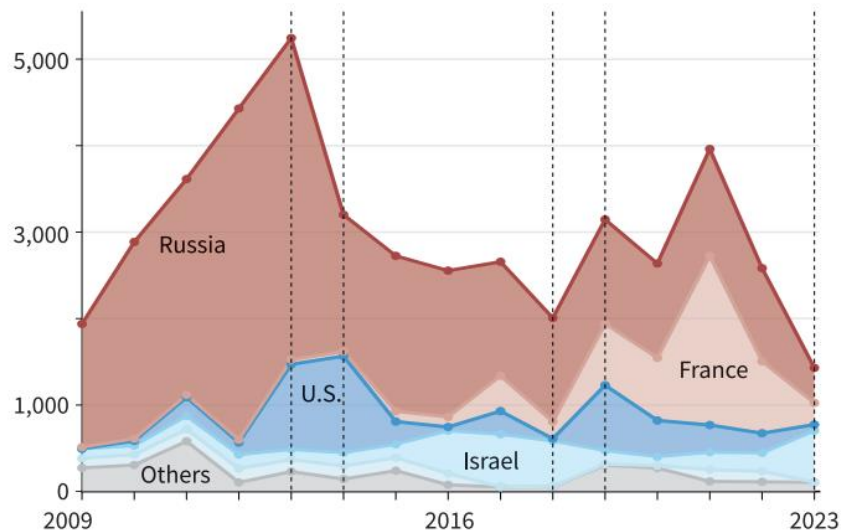


Table 4: The table lists the units of various types of weapons ordered by India in the last 15 years

Seller	Missiles	Engines	Armoured vehicles	Aircraft
Russia	59,821	593	1,005	356
U.S.	4,622	329		136
Israel	1,821			44
France	1,343	342	14	172
S. Africa			640	
Ukraine	360	240		
U.K.	200			57
Germany		240		46
Canada		215		2
S. Korea				

Chart 2:

The chart shows the share of top countries in global arms imports in two five-year periods. India climbed one spot to become the world's biggest arms importer, displacing Saudi Arabia

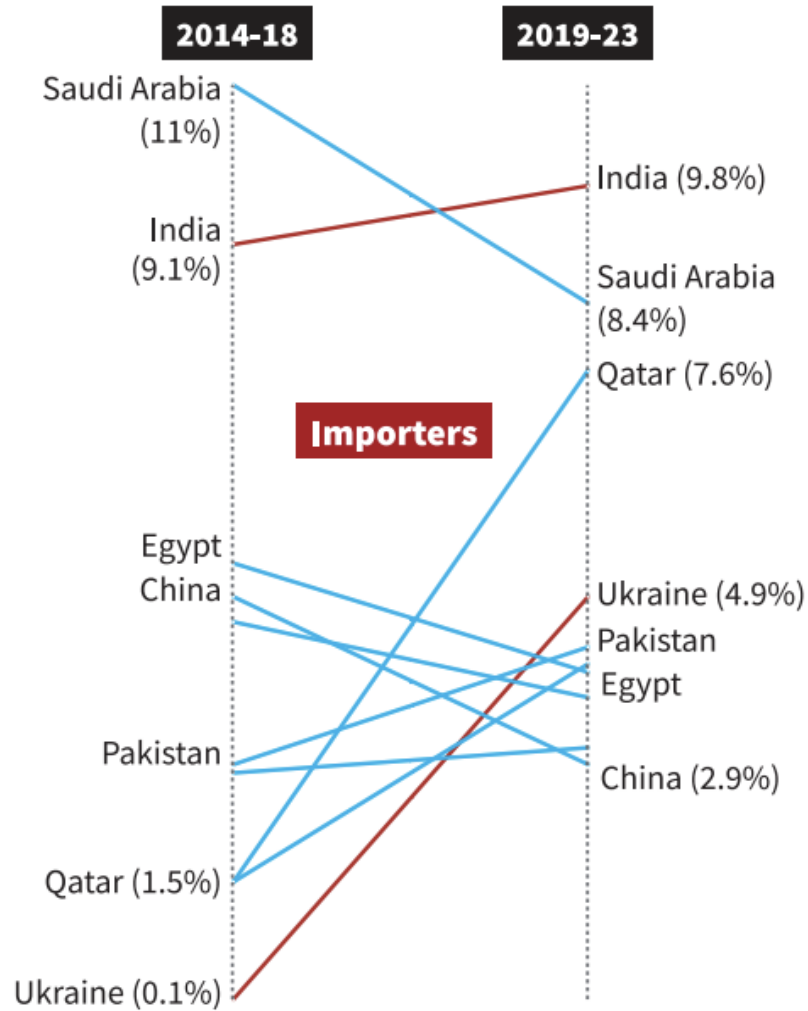
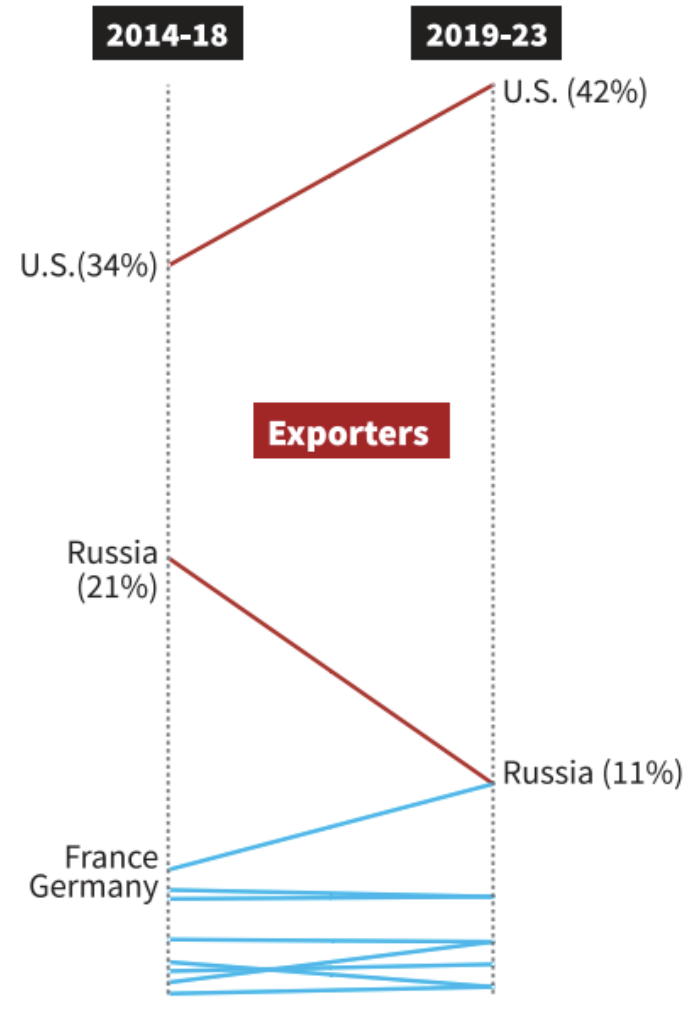


Chart 3:

The chart shows the share of top countries in global arms exports in two five-year periods. Russia's share in global arms exports reduced from 21% to 11%



RAMALLAH

Israeli forces kill two Palestinians at West Bank hospital in the north



Israeli forces shot dead two Palestinian men at a hospital in the West Bank on Wednesday, the latest in a spate of killings in the occupied territory since the war in Gaza began. The killings before dawn took place on the compound of the government hospital in Jenin, in the north of the West Bank, the hospital's director said. AP

LONDON

U.K. mulls plan to pay migrants to Rwanda voluntarily



The U.K. government said on Wednesday it was considering a scheme to divert from asylum seekers to Rwanda voluntarily and will reportedly pay them up to £3,000 to make the move. The plan is an extension of existing voluntary returns arrangements and part of the U.K.'s plan to deport migrants to the East African nation. AP

WASHINGTON

U.S. House overwhelmingly passes Bill to ban Chinese-owned TikTok



The U.S. House of Representatives approved a Bill that would force TikTok to divest from its Chinese owner or get banned from the U.S. The lawmakers voted 352 in favour and 65 against. The fate of the Bill is uncertain in the Senate, as some consider such a move drastic against an app that has 170 million U.S. users. AP

VILNIUS

Navalny ally, Volkov, attacked outside home in Lithuania



Leonid Volkov, a close ally of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, was assaulted outside his home in Vilnius on Tuesday, an incident that sparked an uproar from the Lithuanian government. Volkov, 43, is a prominent opposition figure and was Navalny's ex-chief of staff and chair of his Anti-Corruption Foundation. AP

Nepal PM Prachanda wins vote of confidence, third time in 15 months

Floor test was called after he broke an alliance with the Nepali Congress and joined hands with the Unified Marxist-Leninist last week; the Maoist-Centre leader's coalition secured 157 votes, while 110 members, including Congress MPs, voted against

Sanjeev Satgaliya
BATHAMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" won a vote of confidence in Parliament on Wednesday with the support of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and other smaller parties.

It was Prachanda's third confidence vote on Wednesday since he was elected Prime Minister in December 2022.

Speaker Devraj Ghimire announced after the vote that Prachanda secured 157 votes, while 110 members voted against.

In the 275-member parliament, he required a mi-



majority of 138 votes to pass the floor test in the 275-member parliament. REUTERS

Prachanda, a former rebel leader who led an armed struggle from 1996 to 2006, broke his one-year-old alliance with the Nepali Congress on March 4 to

join hands with the UML.

The Nepali Congress, the largest party in parliament with 88 seats, voted against the confidence motion.

Prachanda's Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) had fought the 2022 general elections under an alliance with the Congress. But following a row over which party should lead the government, Prachanda reached out to the UML, the second largest party with 78 seats, which supported him to become Prime Minister.

Subsequently, he went for the floor test on January 10 last year, which he passed with flying colours as even the Congress voted in fa-

vour. He had secured 268 votes.

However, riled at Prachanda's decision to support the Nepali Congress presidential candidate, the UML withdrew support to the government in February, paving the way for the Congress to join the government. A year later, Prachanda, last week, ditched the Nepali Congress and forged a new Left alliance with the UML.

On Wednesday, besides the Maoist Centre and the UML, Rastriya Swatantra Party, Janata Samajbadi Party, CPN (Unified Socialist), Nagarik Unmukti Party and Aam Janata Party (Prabhu Shah) voted in favour of Prachanda.

Biden, Trump set the stage for general election rematch

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump clinched their parties' presidential nominations on Tuesday with decisive victories in a slate of low-profile primaries, setting up a general election rematch that many voters do not want.

The outcome of contests across Georgia, Mississippi and Washington State was never in doubt. Neither Mr. Biden, a Democrat, nor Mr. Trump, a Republican, faced major opposition. But the magnitude of their wins gave each man the delegate majority he needed to claim his party's nomination at the summertime national conventions.

There is no longer any doubt that the fall election will feature a rematch bet-



They were seen at a major victory in the States of Georgia, Mississippi and Washington. AP

ween two flawed and unpopular Presidents.

Different drawbacks

At 81, Mr. Biden is already the oldest President in U.S. history, while the 77-year-old Mr. Trump is facing decades in prison as a defendant in four criminal cases.

Those remarks—the first featuring two U.S. Presidents since 1912—will al-

most certainly deepen the nation's searing political and cultural divides over the eight-month grind that lies ahead.

Both candidates dominated Tuesday's primaries in swing-State Georgia, deep-red Mississippi and Democratic-leaning Washington. Mr. Trump also won Hawaii's Republican caucus.

Chinese military team visits Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Nepal

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

A Chinese military delegation recently visited the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Nepal to discuss further cooperation in defence issues, Beijing said on Wednesday.

Beijing is seeking to build closer ties in South Asia in a push to counter its strategic rival India's influence.

Last week, the Maldives said it had signed a "military assistance" deal with China after ordering Indian troops deployed in the small but strategically-placed archipelago to leave.

Meeting with Muizzu And Beijing confirmed on Wednesday that a delegation had visited the coun-

try and met with pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu during a trip that also took them to Sri Lanka and Nepal from March 4 to 13.

In all three countries, "they exchanged views on military relations and regional security issues of common concern", the Chinese military said in a statement on its official WeChat account. The delegation of officials from the military's international cooperation department focused on "in-depth consultations on promoting bilateral defence cooperation".

"A series of consensus was reached to further enrich defence cooperation between the PLA and the relevant countries," it added, referring to the Chinese military by its official acronym.

Dreaming up volcano



Smoke billows from the Popocatepetl volcano in Mexico on Tuesday. A ceremony was led by the 69-year-old Don Antonio Anacleto Sevilla, who is believed to have the ability to talk with the volcano in his dream. Worshippers bring food to offer to the volcano for the ceremony. AP

Russia ready to use nuclear weapons if sovereignty is threatened, says Putin

Associated Press

President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russia is ready to use nuclear weapons if its sovereignty or independence is threatened, issuing another blunt warning to the West just days ahead of an election in which he's all but certain to secure another six-year term.

The Russian leader has repeatedly talked about his readiness to use nuclear weapons since invading Ukraine in February 2022. The most recent such threat came in his state-of-the-nation address last



month, when he warned repeatedly that the West against getting too involved in the Ukraine war.

Asked in an interview on Wednesday if he is ever considered using nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Putin said he would not rule out

reference to NATO allies that there has been no need for that. He also said he does not think the world is heading for a nuclear war, describing U.S. President Joe Biden as a veteran politician who fully understands possible dangers of escalation.

Mr. Putin said that in line with the country's security doctrine, Moscow is ready to use nuclear weapons in case of a threat to "the existence of the Russian state, our sovereignty and independence." "All that is written in our strategy, we haven't changed it,"

in an apparent reference to NATO allies that there has been no need for that. He also said he does not think the world is heading for a nuclear war, describing U.S. President Joe Biden as a veteran politician who fully understands possible dangers of escalation.

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Pro-Kyiv militias urge civilians to flee cities bordering Russia

Agence France-Presse
KYIV

Russian volunteer forces fighting alongside Kyiv on Wednesday urged civilians to flee Belgorod and Kursk, threatening large-scale attacks on military targets in the Russian border cities.

Groups of volunteer fighters, made up of Russians who oppose the Kremlin, said this week they had crossed into Russia from Ukraine and captured a village in the Russian border region of Kursk.

"We are forced to inflict shelling on military positions that are stationed in the cities of Belgorod and Kursk," said three groups the Freedom of Russia Legion, the Russian Volunteer Corps and Sibir.

"We call on the local authorities to preserve human lives and begin evacuating the cities of Kursk and Belgorod," they added in a joint statement.

As parties rush aid to Gaza, EU says hunger being used as weapon

Agence France-Presse
GAZA STRIP

Donor nations, aid agencies and charities pushed efforts on Wednesday to rush food to war-torn Gaza by land, air and sea after the EU top diplomat Josep Borrell said starvation had become "a weapon of war".

The Israel-Hamas conflict raging since October 7 has caused mass civilian deaths, reduced vast areas to a rubble-strewn wasteland and sparked warnings of looming famine in the Palestinian territory of 2.4 million people.

Vessel on the way
A Spanish charity vessel, the *Open Arms*, was on its way to Gaza from Cyprus, where it had set sail early on Tuesday towing a barge with 200 tonnes of aid. In a first voyage meant to open a maritime corridor.

"The flow of aid trucks from Egypt into Gaza has slowed recently — a trend variously blamed on Israel and its security checks of aid, and on civil unrest in Gaza where desperate crowds have looted aid shipments."

Uncertain future: A child looks on as Palestinians wait to receive food during Ramadan in Rafah on Wednesday. REUTERS



Uncertain future: A child looks on as Palestinians wait to receive food during Ramadan in Rafah on Wednesday. REUTERS

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Speaker Devraj Ghimire announced after the vote that Prachanda secured 157 votes, while 110 members voted against.

In the 275-member parliament, he required a mi-



Number game: Prachanda required a minimum of 138 votes to pass the floor test in the 275-member parliament. REUTERS

nimum of 138 votes to pass the floor test. During Wednesday's vote 268 members were present in parliament, the Speaker said.

In a dramatic move, Pra-

chanda, a former rebel leader who led an armed struggle from 1996 to 2006, broke his one-year-old alliance with the Nepali Congress on March 4 to

join hands with the UML.

The Nepali Congress, the largest party in parliament with 88 seats, voted against the confidence motion.

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The Right Honourable
Pushpa Kamal Dahal

पुष्पकमल दाहाल



Dahal in 2016

33rd Prime Minister of Nepal

Incumbent

Assumed office

26 December 2022

President [Bidya Devi Bhandari](#)
[Ram Chandra Paudel](#)

Deputy [Purna Bahadur Khadka](#)
[Bishnu Prasad Paudel](#)
[Narayan Kaji Shrestha](#)
[Rabi Lamichhane](#)
[Rajendra Prasad Lingden](#)

Preceded by [Sher Bahadur Deuba](#)

In office

In office

4 August 2016 – 7 June 2017

President [Bidya Devi Bhandari](#)

Deputy [Bimalendra Nidhi](#)
[Bijay Kumar Gachhadar](#)

Preceded by [Khadga Prasad Oli](#)

Succeeded by [Sher Bahadur Deuba](#)

In office

15 August 2008 – 25 May 2009

President [Ram Baran Yadav](#)

Deputy [Bamdev Gautam](#)

Preceded by [Girija Prasad Koirala](#)

Succeeded by [Madhav Kumar Nepal](#)

Senior party positions [\[show\]](#)

Parliamentary offices [\[show\]](#)

Personal details

Born [Ghanashyam Dahal](#)
11 December 1954 (age 69)
[Lewade](#), [Dhikur Pokhari VDC](#),
[Pokhara](#), [Nepal](#)

Political party [CPN \(Maoist Centre\)](#) (1994–
2018; 2021–present)

Other political affiliations [Nepal Communist Party](#)
(2018–2021)
[CPN \(Unity Centre\)](#) (1991–
1994)
[CPN \(Mashal\)](#) (1984–1991)
[CPN \(Masal\)](#) (1983–1984)
[CPN \(Fourth Convention\)](#)
(before 1983)

Spouse [Sita Poudel](#) (died 2023)

Children 4, including [Renu](#)

Alma mater [Institute of Agriculture and
Animal Science](#)

Website [cmprachanda.com](#) [↗](#) [✎](#)

IN BRIEF

Ashwin reclaims top spot among Test bowlers

A nine-wicket haul in his 100th Test match helped Indian off-spinner R. Ashwin reclaim the top spot in the bowlers' list, while his captain Rohit Sharma was back in the top-10 at sixth in the batting charts of the latest ICC rankings on Wednesday.

India takes lead over Lanka in blind cricket series

India defeated Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the third T20 to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match Samarth championship for blind cricket in New Delhi on Wednesday. Chandana Deshapriya (76) helped Sri Lanka post 162 for three after being asked to bat. Dinesh Ratna, Naresh Tummala, Lokesh and Pankaj Bhuse, who was adjudged player-of-the-match, contributed with the bat as India made 164 for three in 15.3 overs.



Kuldeep had inkling he will be my 700th scalp: Anderson

James Anderson revealed that Kuldeep Yadav had a hunch about being his 700th Test against India in Dharwad. Anderson became the first pacer and third bowler to take 700 Test wickets on March 9 with Kuldeep being his landmark scalp. "Kuldeep edged me down to third man for a single. As he got to the non-striker's end, he said: 'I'm going to be your 700th wicket,'" Anderson said BCCI's T20ers' pedestal.

Prathuysha Rachapudi loses in first round

Laura Dilekova of Slovakia beat Prathuysha Rachapudi 6-2, 6-2 in the first round of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on Wednesday.

Shrivalli outplays top seed Irina Maria Bara

Shrivalli Bhamidipaty outclassed top seed Irina Maria Bara of Romania 6-3, 6-0 in the first round of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis at the Indore Tennis Club, Indore, on Wednesday. Viktoriya Morozova of Slovakia beat Vedika Chaudhari in three sets. Sahaja Yamalappali eased past Zeel Desai for the loss of four games and will play fourth seed Mananchaya Sawangkawee of Thailand in the pre-quarterfinals. Qualifier Vaisakhi Adiga fought well for two hours and 44 minutes, but lost to Thasaporn Nakko of Thailand. In doubles, top seeds Anagita Raina and Rutuja Bhosale were beaten 6-3, 10-7 by the Japanese, Akiko Omae and Mei Yamaguchi.

The results: First round: Shrivalli Bhamidipaty bt Irina Maria Bara 6-3, 6-0; Viktoriya Morozova bt Vedika Chaudhari 3-6, 6-2, 6-4; Ekaterina Yastina bt Michela Czaki 6-1, 6-3; Veronice Kozlovic bt Annya Choudhary 6-1, 6-0; Irina Raducanu bt Alankhaha Nitthure 6-0, 6-3; Diana Marcinkovic bt Rinon Okuwaki 6-2, 3-6, 6-2; Jacqueline Cabaj Rebecq bt Daria Kudashova 6-3, 6-3; Sahaja Yamalappali bt Zeel Desai 6-3, 6-1; Mananchaya Sawangkawee bt Rutuja Bhosale 6-2, 6-0; Thasaporn Nakko bt Vaisakhi Adiga 3-6, 7-6(10), 7-5; Mei Yamaguchi bt Akiko Omae 6-2, 6-1; Dalia Jakupovic bt Ayumi Koibuchi 6-3, 6-1.

Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Omae & Yamaguchi bt Rutuja & Anita 5-2, 7-1; Ryo Bhatta & Michika Ozeki bt Sharmada Balu & Rinon Okuwaki 6-1, 2-1 (retired); Ya-Hsuan Lee & Sofyan Park bt Alankhaha Nitthure & Saha 6-1, 6-3; Jacqueline & Diana Marcinkovic bt Doyeok & Gyeong Seo Lee 7-5, 4-6, 10-5.

Lazio names Martusciello as new coach after Sarri resigns

Lazio officially announced coach Maurizio Sarri's resignation on Wednesday and said his longtime assistant Giovanni Martusciello will take over. Italian media had reported on Tuesday that the 65-year-old Sarri had decided to step down after five losses in Lazio's last six matches. Sarri was in his third season in charge of Lazio and had a contract until the end of next season. Martusciello was Sarri's assistant at Empoli, Juventus and Lazio. He will make his debut at Frosinone on Saturday.



Winning streak: Karnataka's victory helped it complete the red-ball double in age-group cricket, also for the first time. K. HIRUKESHA

Karnataka clinches its maiden title

It's the first trophy we have got at U-23 level; we just need to carry this momentum and win as many as we can, says skipper Smaran

C.K. NAYIDU TROPHY

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka won its maiden Col. C.K. Nayudu (U-23) Trophy after overcoming Uttar Pradesh by virtue of having secured the first-innings lead, at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Wednesday.

The victory comes less than two months after Karnataka clinched the Cooch Behar (U-19) Trophy, helping complete the red-ball double in age-group cricket, also for the first time.

So special was the victory that it probably deserved a toast. But in the absence of champagne, the boys and the coaching staff made do with packaged drinking water, poking holes in the bottle cap with the help of shoe spikes. Little did they realise that the water is more precious than spirit.

Skipper R. Smaran, though, was elated with the win. "We have been waiting for a long time and it's a very proud moment for Karnataka," he said. "It's the first trophy we have got at U-23 level. Earlier, we used to come, play knock-outs and go. Now that we have won this, it is a stepping stone. We just need to carry this momentum and win as many as we can."

The cricket that transpired before all the celebrations wasn't sparkling. Karnataka, starting from an overnight 444 for five, was bowled out for 585, but before K.V. Anesh helped himself to a fine double-century (214, 273b, 18x4,

6x6). Chasing a mammoth 805, UP threatened to fold and give the host the added satisfaction of an outright win. Pacer Marvanth Kumar (5/36) had UP opener Rituraj Sharma off the second ball of the innings before going on to reduce the visitors to 34 for three.

But a 103-run partnership for the fifth wicket between Swastik (67, 78b, 7x4, 3x6) and Vipraj Nigam (73, 54b, 9x4, 2x6) arrested the slide. UP eventually finished on 174 for six with the game called off roughly an hour before close.

The scores: Karnataka 358 & 585 in 151.5 overs (MacNeil 8, Noronha 79, Prabak Chaturvedi 86, K.V. Anesh 214, R. Smaran 40, Kevthik Krishna 16, Sunil Tyagi 47x5) drew with Uttar Pradesh 139 & 174 for six in 31 overs (Swastik 67, Vipraj Nigam 73, Marvanth Kumar 5/36).

Bairstow available for Punjab Kings for full IPL season

Press Trust of India

England batter Jonny Bairstow will be available for the entire duration of the Indian Premier League, beginning March 22.

The BCCI officials were in talks with their England

and Wales Cricket Board (CCB) counterparts over the availability of their players for the IPL.

Sanjay Bangar, who was appointed as cricket director at Punjab Kings ahead of the 2024 edition, will double up as the batting coach of the side.

Ramkumar has a smooth start



Easy outings: Ramkumar did not have to sweat much against Chanta. KAMESH SRIVANAN

TENNIS

Kamesh Srivastava
NEW DELHI

Third seed Ramkumar Ramathanan did not have to sweat much as he beat Thanapet Chanta of Thailand 6-4, 6-4 in the first round of the \$25,000 ITF men's tennis tournament at the DLFIA Complex on Wednesday.

In the pre-quarterfinals, Ramkumar will play Jang Yunseok of Korea, who eased past Siddhant Bhatia for the loss of three games.

Siddhant Vishwakarma, Kabir Hans and Chirag Duban were the other Indians to progress into the second round, and they all beat compatriots, Nitin Kumar Sinha, Yash Chaurasia

Shooters need fine-tuning ahead of the Paris Olympics, says Suma Shirur



Suma Shirur. FILE PHOTO: EMMAHUA, YODINI

India's rifle shooting coach Suma Shirur believes the shooters are in a very good zone ahead of the Paris Olympics, and all that need is a bit of fine-tuning leading up to the mega event. The NCAI will hold four trials in April and May to select the Indian shooting team for the Games, and thereafter, the Indian contingent will be heading to Munich for the ISSF World Cup.

"Most of the work has been done since last year. In every discipline, we were working on little things, making positive changes in their system, and Raghav Jain Singhani.

The results: First round: Kabir Hans bt Yash Chaurasia 6-3, 7-6(10); Gansey Shekhar bt Rishi Reddy 6-1, 3-6, 6-3; Hareet Bax bt Manas Gharme 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; Chirag Duban bt Raghav Jain Singhani 3-6, 6-4, 6-0; Yashraj Inul bt Jagmeet Singh 6-3, 6-1; Wishaya Trongcharoenchaikul bt Sidharth Rawat 6-0, 6-2; Siddhant Vishwakarma bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-1, 6-4; Woolton Shin bt Aditya Babotekar 6-4, 6-4; Jang Yunseok bt Siddhant Bhatia 6-1, 6-2; Suresh Kumar Ramathanan bt Thanapet Chanta 6-4, 6-4; Nam Hoang bt Anish Geng 6-4, 6-2; Bing Shuo Yin bt Karsana Kanchhi 6-4, 6-3; Mitsuki Lee bt Dev Javia 6-3, 6-4.

Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Parkhi Sri Somani & Manish Surendran bt Adil Rajanpur & Leong 6-3, 3-1; Barisha & Vidya Vardhan bt Shivani Bhatnagar & Rohan Mehta 6-3, 6-3; Ramkumar & Sharmayya Sultana bt Bax & Karan Singh 7-6(10), 6-2.

Smriti credits RCB management for revival in fortunes

WPL SEASON 2
LAVANYA L.
NEW DELHI



An improved show with bat and ball helped Royal Challengers Bangalore not only register its first-ever win against Mumbai Indians in the Women's Premier League but also make it to the play-offs of the tournament for the first time. Captain Smriti Mandhana credits the RCB management for its support to players and staff alike.

"Last season didn't go our way. It wasn't a bad team. We didn't step up and play the cricket we wanted to play. A lot of hard work and thought has gone into this over the past 12 months, not only from my side but all the support staff and the RCB management. For them to show their faith in all of us was just amazing," Smriti told reporters after her side's MI on Tuesday.

"I wouldn't say that (this has been a) really satisfying



Keeping faith: Smriti believes backing players have done wonders for the side. K.V. MOORTHY

campaign still, but we had a lot of ups and downs, but that's how WPL and T20 cricket is. You'll have good days and bad days."

"One important talk we had was to not look at the other games as its not in our hands. It takes away the cricketing talk. We treated it as quarterfinal, semifinal, final and spoke about playing our best cricket," she said.

Smriti bailed crowd support for the franchise in both legs.

"I was surprised to see the whole crowd chanting

Fifty-two entries for 47th MMSC South India Rally

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

The 47th MMSC South India Rally to be held from March 15 to 17 at the Madras International Sports Club (MMSC) here has attracted 52 entries.

The three-day event, organised by MMSC, and promoted by Bluebird Sports, doubles up as the first round of the AIT Gold Cup FIA AFRC South India Rally - Asia Cup which has received 10 entries, all from India, and the Bluebird Insci Indian National Rally Championship (52 entries, including 10 AFRC contenders) to be contested over 137km of 13 special stages and covering an overall distance of about 446 km.

The Madras International Circuit is the hub of most activity, including the super special and track stages. The Asia Cup entry list is headlined by Aroor Arjun Rao (co-driver Sarith Rajagopal), the 2023 overall National champion, driving a Maruti Suzuki Baleno and representing Mandovi Racing.



Aroor Arjun Rao.

It. Around 54 shooters will compete in the tournament. Suma Shirur, the high performance director Pierre Bouchamp will attend the event.

Talking about Olympics preparation, Shirur said, "As national coaches, we are not teaching them how to shoot, but now the focus is on how to perform at a bigger stage. That's the main thing for us. Self-regulation is the most important aspect that we are going to work on because no matter how you train, you still need to go out there and perform."

Shirur said the high expectations, India's shooters had a disappointing run in Tokyo Olympics as none of its

campaigners, barring Saurabh Chaudhary, could reach the final.

"Tokyo was a completely different ball game and back then, quite a few decisions had to be taken because of the circumstances. We did not have any control over those circumstances due to COVID. At this time, after the Munich World Cup, we will have our camp and the shooters will come back and emotionally recover, rejuvenate before the Paris Games," Shirur said.

"It's about getting the best out of them. The athletes are in a very good zone. It's just that we need to sharpen them a bit more."

AFC asks Bhattacharjee to submit evidence of corruption charges against Chaubey

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has asked Bhattacharjee for accusing him of corruption. Bhattacharjee, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has alleged that Chaubey was part of a conspiracy to rig tender processes and made attempts to "siphon off mo-

ney from the federation" for personal expenses.

In a copy of the letter of the matter, the AFC has requested Bhattacharjee to submit a "full written report" by March 18.

We refer to the attached media articles in which Bhattacharjee has levelled allegations relating to corruption against the AIFP president Kalyan Chaubey. In light of the seriousness of the matter, we kindly request that you submit Bhattacharjee to a full written report setting out your position on the matter by 18.03.2024 at the latest," deputy secretary to the AFC Disiplinary and Ethics Committee, Barry Lysaght, wrote.



Winning streak: Karnataka's victory helped it complete the red-ball double in age-group cricket, also for the first time. K. MURALI KUMAR

Karnataka clinches its maiden title

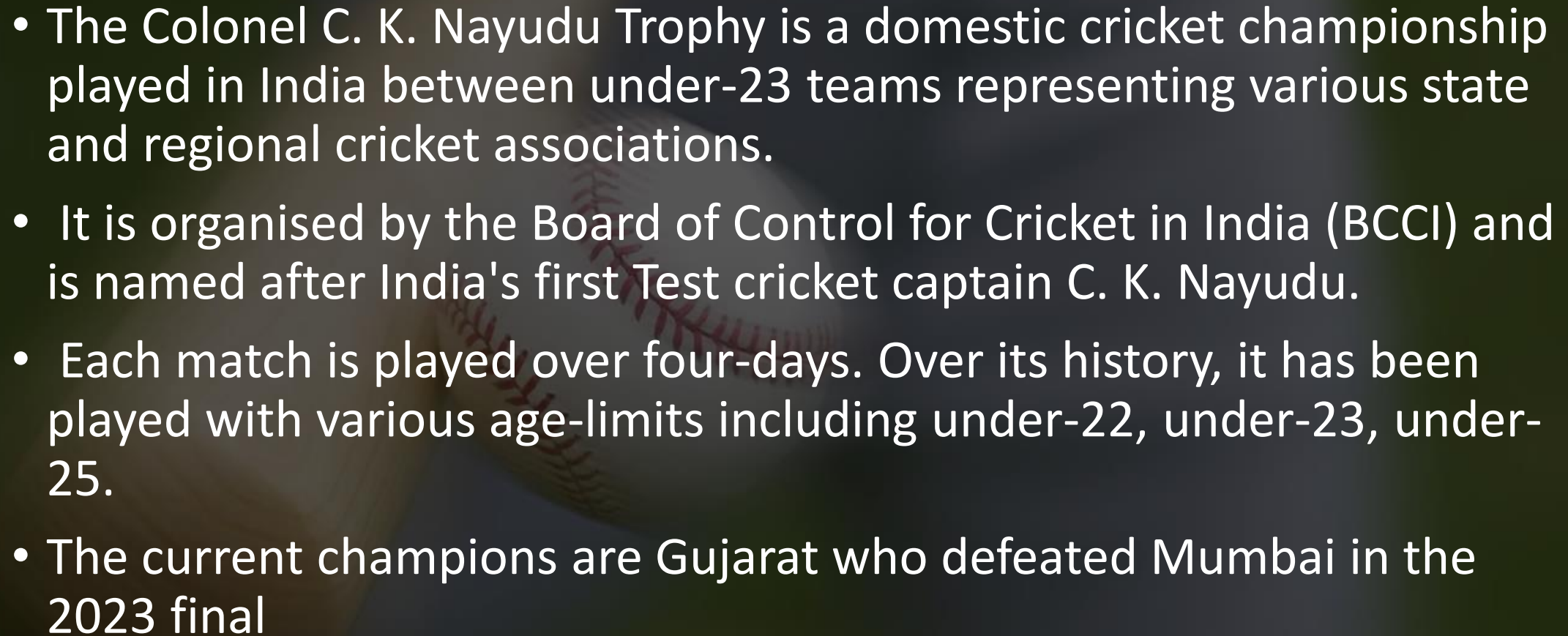
It's the first trophy we have got at U-23 level; we just need to carry this momentum and win as many as we can, says skipper Smaran

C.K. NAYUDU TROPHY

Sports Bureau

holes in the bottle cap with the help of shoe spikes. Little did they realise that in the Bengaluru of today, wa-

6x6). Chasing a mammoth 805, UP threatened to fold and give the host the added satisfaction of an outright

- 
- The Colonel C. K. Nayudu Trophy is a domestic cricket championship played in India between under-23 teams representing various state and regional cricket associations.
 - It is organised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and is named after India's first Test cricket captain C. K. Nayudu.
 - Each match is played over four-days. Over its history, it has been played with various age-limits including under-22, under-23, under-25.
 - The current champions are Gujarat who defeated Mumbai in the 2023 final

Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Scan for more information



Vanchiton ko Variyata

Assistance of ₹ 11,700 crore to over 25 lakh beneficiaries to promote entrepreneurship among Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Sanitation workers

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat



VIND PANEL
ation, 1 poll port likely day: In eight lumes, no rman model

MINI NATH
DELHI, MARCH 13
HIGH-LEVEL committee set y the government to draw a map for holding simultaneous elections is expected to submit an eight-volume report, running into 18,000 pages, to identify Droupadi Murmu on Friday, sources said. The committee, chaired by her President Ram Nath, is likely to recommend a model for one-nation election — as opposed to getting options — for synchronising the different poll cycles. The committee is reported to have deliberated on a number of ways for ensuring continuity of the election process, according to sources, it also cited the German model of a constructive vote of no-confidence — where a no-confidence motion against the incumbent is brought if there is a positive vote of confidence in a successor — but decided against

PARTY RELEASES NAMES FOR ANOTHER 72 SEATS Gadkari, Khattar, Goyal in second BJP list for LS, 28 MPs dropped

3 former CMs, 9 ministers, 15 women among nominees

LIZ MATHEW & VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

THE BJP Wednesday released its second list of candidates for the Lok Sabha elections, dropping at least 28 sitting MPs while including three former Chief Ministers, nine Union Ministers, two Rajya Sabha MPs and 15 women.



Gadkari (Nagpur); Goyal (Mumbai North); Khattar (Karnal)

was more about continuity with a large number of candidates being retained, the second list of 72

E The winnability factor THE BJP second list points to the emphasis on the winnability factor of candidates given that it has set itself a target of 370 seats this time. Reason why 28 MPs no longer find place in a list of 72.

candidates signalled change and an emphasis on selection based

INSIDE

NIA DETAINS MAN WHO BENGALURU BLAST SUSPECT MET

POLL BONDS DATA TO EC NAMES BUYERS, PARTIES: SBI TO SC

SENSE DOWN 906 POINTS: SLIDE AMID BUBBLE WARNINGS

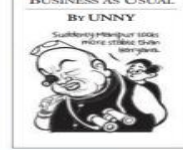
DATA DELETED AS REGIME CHANGED: FIR Hyderabad probes tapping of BRS rivals, officer held

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, MARCH 13

THE HYDERABAD Police on Wednesday arrested a suspended Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) who is suspected of having tapped the phones of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi's (BRS) political opponents while the

BJP COMPLETES ITS DELHI LIST, PAGE 3

BUSINESS AS USUAL



HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

FROM THE women's reservation Bill passed by the BJP-led government at the Centre to AAP's promise of Rs. 1,000 a month and Congress's proposed allowance of Rs. 1 lakh per annum — ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, political parties have been pushing key legislative and development measures targeting women voters. Data drawn from three

Cong revisits NYAY promise: Rs 1 lakh/yr for poor women

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

AHEAD OF an uphill Lok Sabha election battle, the Congress on Wednesday dusted off and revived NYAY, the centrepiece of its 2019 manifesto promise, and announced that the party, if voted to power, would give Rs 1 lakh annually to a woman of every poor family. The party also said it would provide 50 per cent reservation for women in new appointments in the central government.



Rahul Gandhi in Dondaicha, Maharashtra, Wednesday. PTI

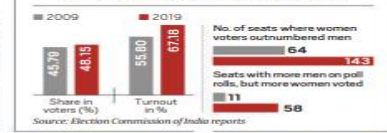
Yojana, was the highlight of the Congress's 2019 election manifesto, under which it had promised

used "five crore families who constitute the poorest 20 per cent of all families," a guaranteed cash transfer of Rs. 72,000 a year. "As far as possible, the money will be transferred to the account of a woman of the family who has a bank account or who will be urged to open a bank account," the manifesto had said. On Wednesday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, in

RELATED REPORT
PAGE 12

Growing tally, rising turnout: More and more women stepping out to vote

LOK SABHA POLLS: THE WOMAN VOTE



No. of seats where women voters outnumbered men: **64**
Seats with more men on poll rolls, but more women voted: **11**
58



AFTER ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE TO THE FESTIVAL SPECIAL HOUSING SCHEME, 2023, DDA NOW OFFERS SEVERAL CATEGORIES OF FLATS ACROSS DELHI

Phase III of Festival Special Housing Scheme, 2024

- 7931 EWS and LIG flats in Pocket 11, Sector G-7, Narela
- LIG price: Rs. 25.2 Lakhs; Plinth Area 50 sq.m.
- EWS price: Rs. 14 Lakhs; Plinth area 35 sq.m.
- All newly constructed flats

SCHEME STARTS 14.03.2024

ALL FLATS READY TO MOVE IN

FREEHOLD PROPERTY

SCHEME COMPLETELY ONLINE

FIRST COME FIRST SERVE (FCFS)

Flats at Jasola, Rohini, Siraspur and Loknayakpuram on First Come First Serve basis at old price

- 8 HIG flats at Jasola, price in the range of Rs. 2.08-2.18 Cr. each
- 836 LIG flats at Rohini, price in the range of Rs. 14.1-14.24 Lakhs each
- 107 LIG flats at Siraspur, price in the range of Rs. 17.4-17.7 Lakhs each
- 89 LIG flats at Loknayakpuram, price in the range of Rs. 27-28.5 Lakhs each

Special discount of 15% for LIG flats at Ramgarh Colony and MIG (2BHK) Flats at Narela, Sector A1-4, Pkt. 1A, 1B, 1C

- 211 flats on offer at Ramgarh Colony
- Near Jahangirpuri Metro Station
- Plinth area in the range of 31.9-35.3 sq.m.
- Discounted price in the range of Rs. 13.1-14.5 Lakhs each
- MIG (2 BHK) Flat Cost Rs. 85 Lakhs after discount at Narela



Special Scheme for Government Employees for MIG (2 BHK) flats at Narela, Sector A1-4, Pkt. 1A, 1B, 1C

- 25% discount for all employees of Government of India, State Government, Autonomous Bodies, Local Bodies, PSUs, Central and State Govt. Universities
- 445 flats on offer
- Each flat cost Rs. 75 Lakhs after discount; Plinth area in the range of 112.7-114.7 sq.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SCAN QR CODE



GLOBAL SIGNPOST FOR OTHER GOVTS GRAPPLING WITH HOW TO REGULATE FAST-DEVELOPING TECH.

European lawmakers give final approval to world's first AI law

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON, MARCH 13

EUROPEAN UNION lawmakers gave final approval to the bloc's artificial intelligence law Wednesday, putting the world-leading rules on track to take effect later this year.

The European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Artificial Intelligence Act, five years after they were first proposed. The AI Act is expected to act as a global signpost for other governments grappling with how to regulate the fast-developing tech.

"The AI Act has nudged the future of AI in a human-centric direction, in a direction where humans are in control of the

technology and where it helps us leverage new discoveries, economic growth, societal progress and unlock human potential," said Dragos Tudorache, a Romanian lawmaker who was a co-leader of the Parliament negotiations.

Big tech companies generally have supported the need to regulate AI while lobbying to ensure any rules work in their favour. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman caused a minor stir last year when he suggested the ChatGPT maker could pull out of Europe if it can't comply with the AI Act — before backtracking to say there were no plans to leave.

Like many EU regulations, the AI Act was initially intended to act as consumer safety legislation, taking a "risk-based approach" to

THE RISKIER THE MORE SCRUTINISED

BANNED USES:

- Social scoring systems that govern how people behave.
- Predictive policing, emotion recognition systems in schools, workplaces.
- Police scanning faces in public using remote 'biometric identification' but with exceptions.

ON GENERATIVE PLATFORMS

- General purpose AI models will provide

detailed summary of the media and data on the internet used.

- AI-generated deepfake pictures, video or audio of existing people, places or events must be labeled.

EXTRA SCRUTINY FOR MOST POWERFUL

- There's extra scrutiny for the biggest and most powerful AI models that pose 'systemic risks,' which include OpenAI's GPT4 — its most advanced system — and Google's Gemini.

products or services that use AI.

The vast majority of AI systems are expected to be low risk, such as content recommendation systems or spam filters. Companies can choose to follow voluntary requirements and codes of conduct.

High-risk uses of AI, such as in medical devices or critical infrastructure like water or electrical networks, face requirements like using high-quality data and providing clear information to users.

Some AI uses are banned because they're deemed to pose an unacceptable risk, like social scoring systems that govern how people behave, some types of predictive policing and emotion recognition systems in school and workplaces. Other banned uses include police scanning faces in

public using AI-powered remote "biometric identification" systems, except for serious crimes like kidnapping or terrorism.

The law's early drafts focused on AI systems carrying out narrowly limited tasks, like scanning resumes and job applications. The astonishing rise of general purpose AI models, exemplified by OpenAI's ChatGPT, sent EU policymakers scrambling to keep up. They added provisions for so-called generative AI models, the technology underpinning AI chatbot systems that can produce unique and seemingly life-like responses, images and more.

Developers of general purpose AI models — from European start-ups to OpenAI and Google — will have to provide a detailed sum-

mary of the text, pictures, video and other data on the internet that is used to train the systems as well as follow EU copyright law.

AI-generated deepfake pictures, video or audio of existing people, places or events must be labeled as artificially manipulated. There's extra scrutiny for the biggest and most powerful AI models that pose "systemic risks," which include OpenAI's GPT4 — its most advanced system — and Google's Gemini.

Brussels first suggested AI regulations in 2019, taking a familiar global role in ratcheting up scrutiny of emerging industries, while other governments scramble to keep up. The Act is expected to officially become law by May or June, after a few final formalities.

THE 'FIRST AUTONOMOUS' AI SOFTWARE ENGINEER: MEET DEVIN

BIJIN JOSE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

US-BASED applied AI lab, Cognition, has introduced what it claims is the world's first AI software engineer. The makers say that the AI agent, named Devin, has successfully passed practical engineering interviews held by leading AI companies. It has also completed real jobs posted on Upwork, an US-based freelancing platform, according to Cognition.

"Devin is a tireless, skilled teammate, equally ready to build alongside you or independently complete tasks for you to review. With Devin, engineers can focus on more interesting problems, and engineering teams can strive for more ambitious goals," read the company's official blog post on Devin.

What can Devin do?

The AI agent comes with advanced capabilities in software development, including coding, debugging, problem-solving, etc. Devin uses machine learning algorithms to constantly learn and improve its performance and adapt according to new challenges. It can build and deploy apps end-to-end and can also train and fine-tune its own AI models.

Devin can plan and execute complex engineering tasks that would require thousands of decisions. This is possible owing to Cognition's advances in long-term reasoning and planning. According to the company, Devin can recall relevant context at each step, self-learn over time, and even fix mistakes.

assisted of the previous state-of-the-art model.

In terms of performance, Devin AI is capable of augmenting efficiency and speed within software development processes by automating repetitive tasks, instantly generating code, expediting project timelines, and cutting down development expenses substantially.

One of the most notable facets of Devin AI is that it is immune to human errors or inconsistencies. The AI agent is capable of guaranteeing precision and uniformity in coding practices which can lead to the development of superior-quality software products.

It needs to be noted that the company has not disclosed anything about the AI model that is powering Devin AI, nor has it revealed detailed technical specifications. Some of the other popular AI-powered tools that help with coding are OpenAI Codex, GitHub Copilot, Polycoder, CodeT5, Tabnine, etc.

What challenges, opportunities does it bring?

While the company has elaborated on the capabilities of Devin, some experts feel that the AI software engineer may struggle with complex requirements or instances that rely on human intuition and creativity. Besides, AI tools such as Devin seem to fan concerns about job losses.

However, others believe that Devin can be an ally for thousands of software engineers, offering new avenues of collaboration between human ingenuity and AI.

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Besides, the makers have also endowed the AI software engineer with the ability to proactively collaborate with the user. It reports progress in real-time, is capable of accepting feedback, and works along with the user through design choices as needed.

What about its performance?

On the SWE-Bench benchmark (a benchmark for evaluating large language models on real-world software issues found on GitHub), Devin correctly resolved 13.86 per cent of the issues without any assistance compared with the 1.96 per cent unassisted and 4.80 per cent

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What is Cognition?

Cognition, the firm behind Devin, is headed by Scott Wu. Cognition calls itself an applied AI lab that is focussed on reasoning. The company claims that it is building AI teammates with capabilities that surpass existing AI tools. "Building Devin is just the first step—our hardest challenges still lie ahead," reads the website.

The agent will soon be available to be hired for engineering works, but for now, companies need to join a waitlist.

LONGER VERSION ON
indianexpress.com/explained



IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran and Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel at the groundbreaking ceremony of three semiconductor plants — two in Gujarat and one in Assam — at Dholera in Gujarat, on Wednesday. Vaishnaw said the first chip from Dholera will roll out in 2026. ■ PAGE 4 PT

Indian Semiconductor Market

Drivers

- * Rising demand for consumer electronics
- * Implementation of advanced technology in automotive
- * Increase in IOT in industrialization

Restraints

- * Malfunctioning of equipment

Opportunities

- * Tremendous growth in electric vehicle
- * Rising automation in manufacturing industry

Key Player



Material

- Silicon
- Germanium
- Carbon
- Tin
- Others

Component

- IC Design
- IC Manufacturing
- IC Packaging and Testing
- O-S-D

Organisation Type

- Large Enterprises
- SMEs

Fabrication Technologies

- Metalorganic vapour phase epitaxy (MOVPE)
- Molecular beam epitaxy (MBE)
- Hydride vapour phase epitaxy (HVPE)
- Liquid phase epitaxy (LPE)
- Metal-organic molecular beam epitaxy (MOMBE)
- Atomic layer deposition (ALD)

End User Industry

- Electronics
- Telecommunication
- Information & Technology
- Data Processing
- Automotive
- Industrial Machinery
- Consumer
- Others

CAGR
XX%
2018-2026





CABINET DECISIONS
15 DECEMBER, 2021

Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem in India

1/2

- Incentives of ₹2.3 lakh crores to position India as global hub
- ₹76000 crores approved for development of semiconductors and display manufacturing ecosystem
- Setting up of India Semiconductor Mission to drive this sector



CABINET DECISIONS
15 DECEMBER, 2021

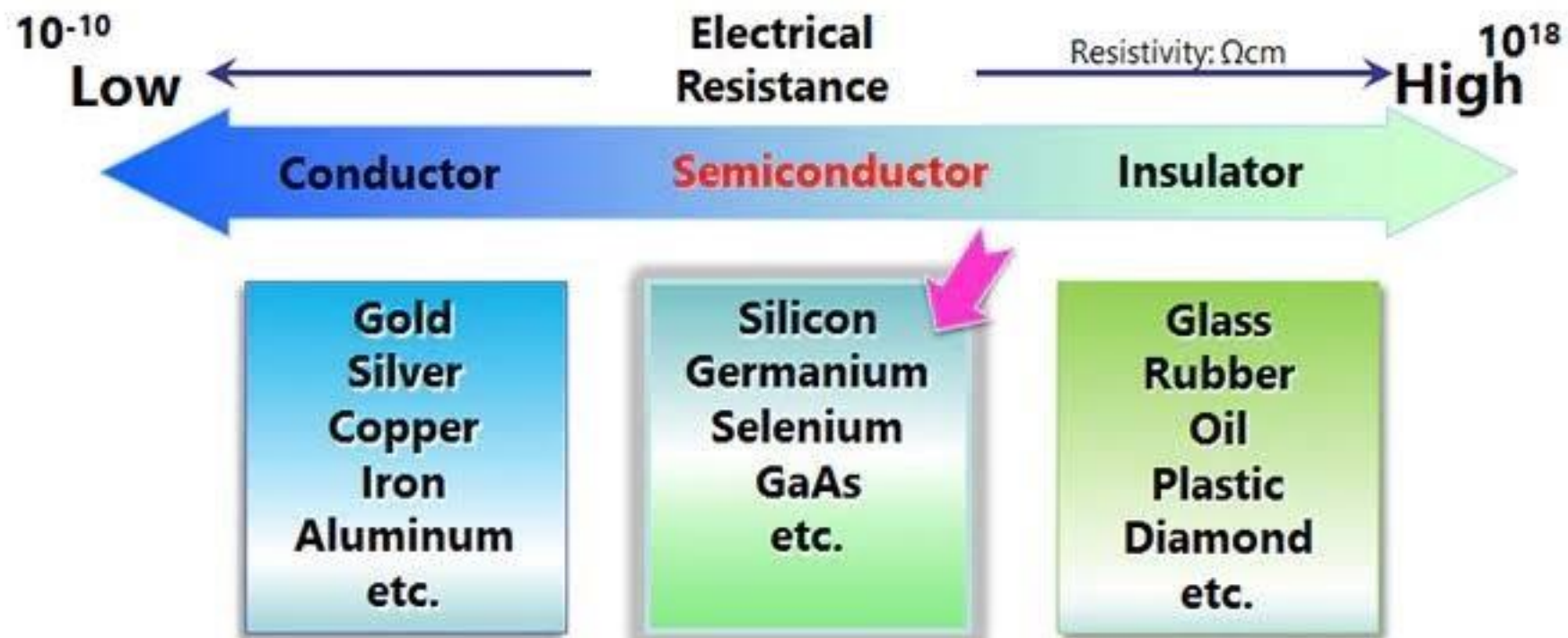
Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem in India

2/2

Benefits:

- Multiplier effect across different sectors
- Deeper integration to the global value chain
- Higher domestic value addition in electronics manufacturing
- Contribute significantly to achieving a USD 1 Trillion digital economy and a USD 5 Trillion GDP by 2025





Why taps are running dry in Bengaluru

For the last two weeks Bengaluru has been reeling under a severe water crisis. While the drought in the Cauvery basin is the immediate reason, groundwater depletion and unplanned construction in the country's IT capital are the other causes.

Banasree Purkayastha looks at whether the city can find a lasting solution to its water woes



1,450 mn litres

of water from the
Cauvery river
needed by Bengaluru
every day

700 mn litres

of groundwater
extracted every day
additionally to meet the
city's water demand

1,940 mn litres

of wastewater generated
daily in Bengaluru
but around 25% is
left untreated

● Other cities in India too are running dry

CITIES ACROSS INDIA have been facing water shortages due to massive population growth and unplanned urbanisation. In 2019, Chennai's reservoirs ran dry, forcing the government to bring 10 million litres of water a day by tankers to its citizens. Neither Bengaluru or Chennai is rain-deficient, and have faced floods in recent years.

A World Wide Fund for Nature report in 2020 warned that 30 Indian cities would face a 'grave water risk' by 2050 due to a sharp spike in population. By 2030, 40% of India's population will live in urban areas, up from 34% in 2011, making the situation worse.

Current water crisis in Bengaluru

BENGALURU IS STARING at a Cape Town-like water crisis this year with the depletion of groundwater and a drought in the Cauvery basin. Even before peak summer has set in, 1,214 of the 10,955 borewells drilled by the city's municipal corporation have dried up. In 3,700 others, water levels have dropped. The city needs 1,450 million litres per day (MLD) of water from the Cauvery and an additional 700 MLD from groundwater

resources. Its water supply body — Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) — has been urging people to use treated water for non-drinking purposes.

The real challenge is the next two to three months. With the summer expected to be more severe this year, 7,082 villages and 1,193 wards, including in Bengaluru Urban district, need to gear up for a prolonged drought-like situation.

Reasons behind the water shortage

THE CURRENT SITUATION is a result of multiple factors including depletion of groundwater resources, reliance on distant water sources, lack of access to BWSSB water supply connection in peripheral parts of the city, and an inefficient water management system. The city's population has gone up from 8.7 million in 2011 to 12.6 million in 2021, putting additional pressure on existing

water supply facilities.

The poor rainfall in 2023 due to the El Nino effect precipitated the situation as adequate groundwater recharge could not happen. Its effect was evident as summer set in the third week of February, which usually starts only in March in Bengaluru. The Krishnaraja Sagar Dam in Mandya district from where Cauvery water is supplied to Bengaluru also does not have adequate water.

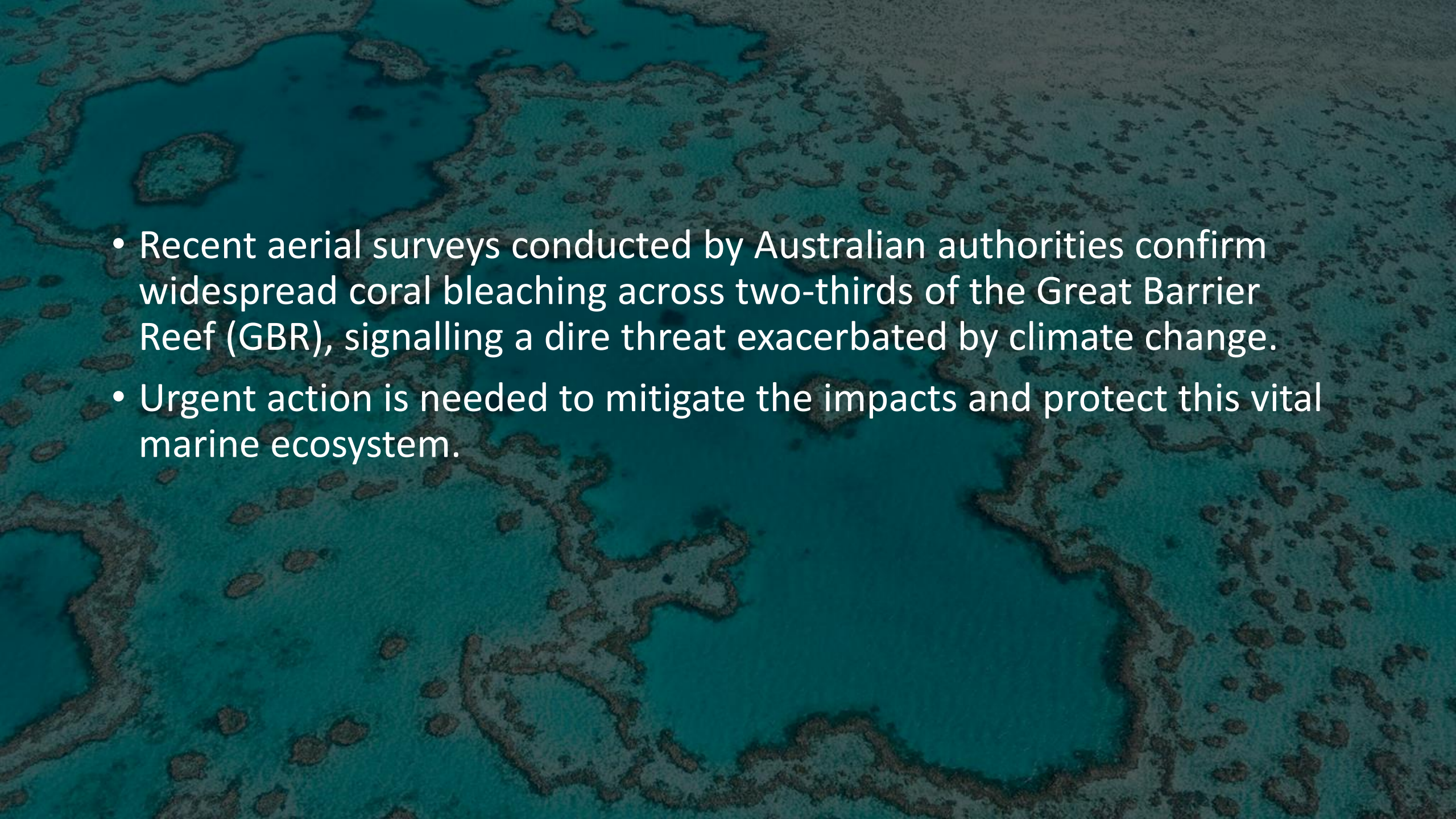
Impact on industrial production

THE PROLONGED WATER scarcity is a cause for concern for industries too, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The major industrial districts in the state require 290 MLD of water. Industrial areas in Bengaluru urban and rural, Tumakuru, Chikkaballapura and Kolar districts are already facing drinking water problems, and without uninterrupted supply, the state's industrial growth may suffer in the short term.

Sectors such as textile processing, chemical industries, paper manufacturing and packaging which are especially water-dependent, apprehend potential disruptions to production in March. The number of effluent treatment plants in industrial areas are too few to meet the demand for treated water. IT companies in the city are better placed as they have been implementing water conservation measures.

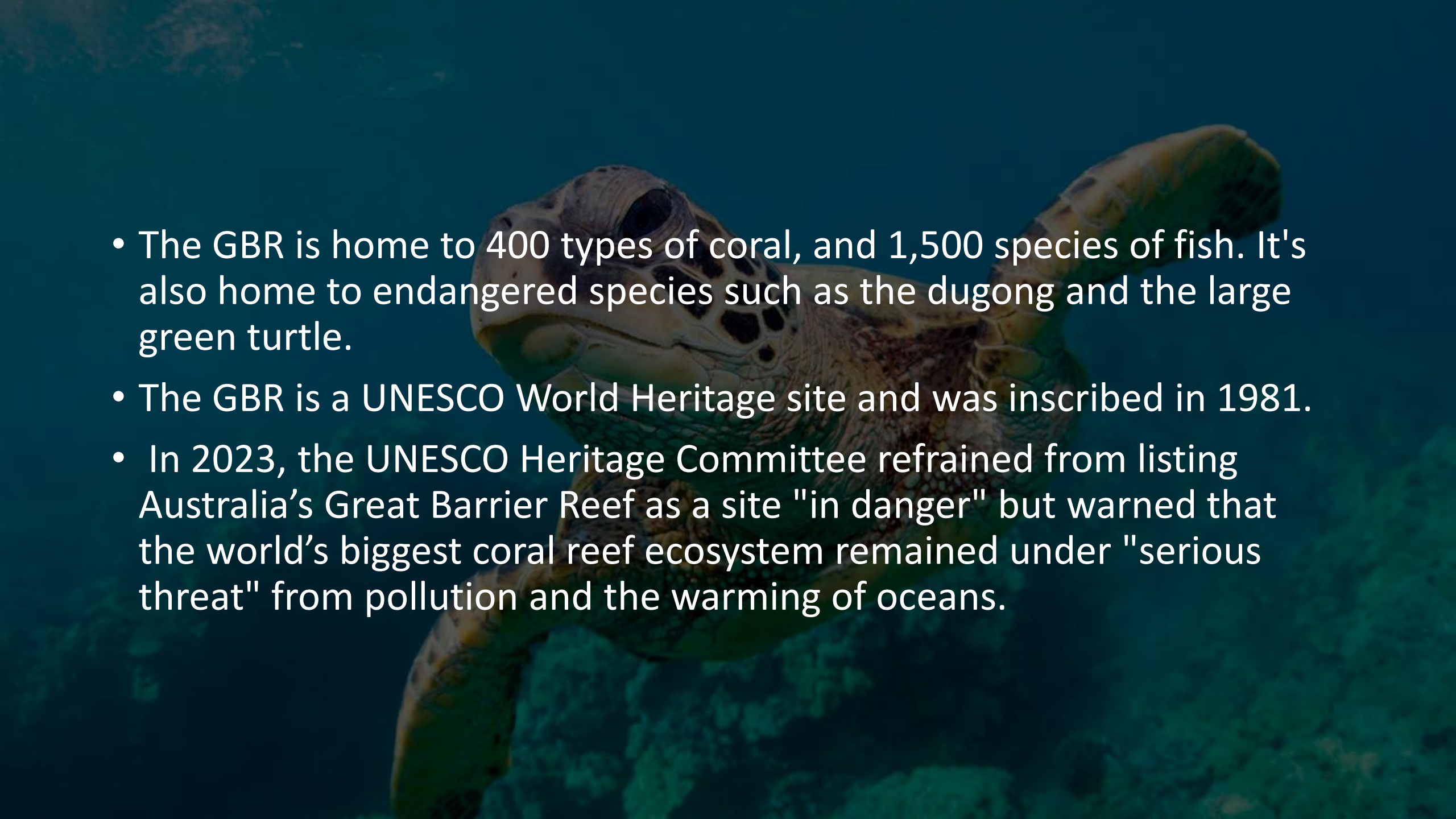
An underwater photograph showing clear blue water with sunlight filtering through the surface, creating a shimmering effect. The text "Coral Bleaching in Great Barrier Reef" is overlaid in white.

Coral Bleaching in Great Barrier Reef

- 
- An aerial photograph of a coral reef system showing significant coral bleaching. The water is a deep, dark teal color, and the coral structures are visible as lighter, brownish-grey patches. The bleached areas are widespread and irregularly shaped, indicating a large-scale environmental impact. The overall scene is a stark contrast between the healthy-looking water and the damaged coral structures.
- Recent aerial surveys conducted by Australian authorities confirm widespread coral bleaching across two-thirds of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), signalling a dire threat exacerbated by climate change.
 - Urgent action is needed to mitigate the impacts and protect this vital marine ecosystem.

- 
- Great Barrier Reef (GBR)
 - **The GBR is the world's largest coral reef system. It's located in the Coral Sea off the coast of Queensland, Australia.**
 - **The GBR stretches across 2,300 km and is made up of around 3,000 individual reefs and 900 islands.**

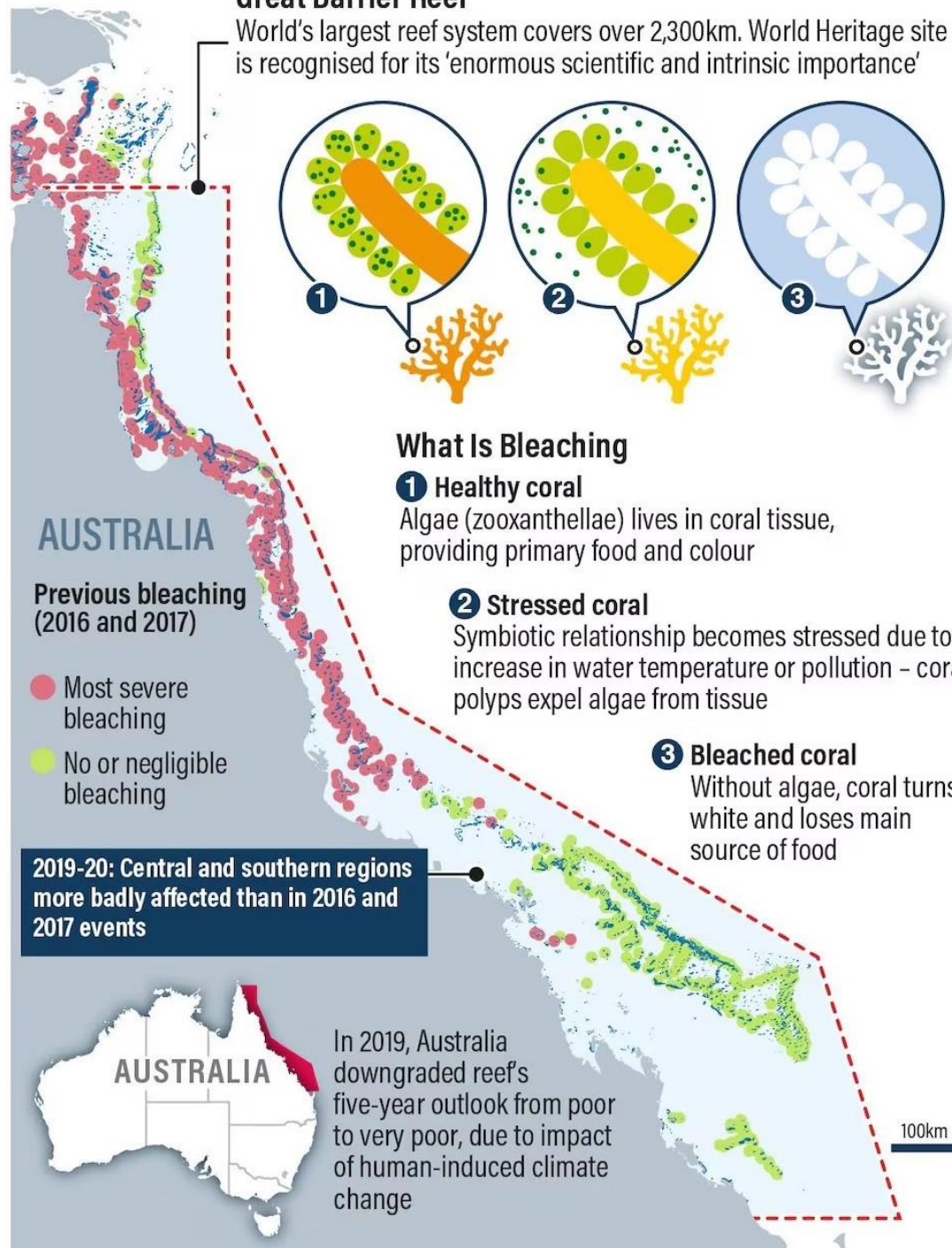
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- 
- A large green turtle is swimming in clear blue water, surrounded by a vibrant coral reef. The turtle's head and front flippers are visible, and it appears to be moving towards the left. The background is filled with various types of coral and other marine life, creating a rich, textured environment.
- The GBR is home to 400 types of coral, and 1,500 species of fish. It's also home to endangered species such as the dugong and the large green turtle.
 - The GBR is a UNESCO World Heritage site and was inscribed in 1981.
 - In 2023, the UNESCO Heritage Committee refrained from listing Australia's Great Barrier Reef as a site "in danger" but warned that the world's biggest coral reef ecosystem remained under "serious threat" from pollution and the warming of oceans.

- 
- **Widespread mass bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef was first seen in 1998 and happened again in 2002, 2016, 2017, 2020, 2022 and now in 2024.**

Great Barrier Reef

World's largest reef system covers over 2,300km. World Heritage site is recognised for its 'enormous scientific and intrinsic importance'



AUSTRALIA

Previous bleaching
(2016 and 2017)

● Most severe
bleaching

● No or negligible
bleaching

2019-20: Central and southern regions
more badly affected than in 2016 and
2017 events



In 2019, Australia
downgraded reef's
five-year outlook from poor
to very poor, due to impact
of human-induced climate
change

What Is Bleaching

1 Healthy coral

Algae (zooxanthellae) lives in coral tissue,
providing primary food and colour

2 Stressed coral

Symbiotic relationship becomes stressed due to
increase in water temperature or pollution - coral
polyps expel algae from tissue

3 Bleached coral

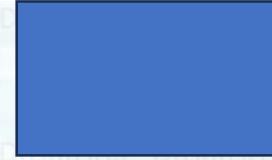
Without algae, coral turns
white and loses main
source of food

100km

- 
- **What Factors are Contributing to the Coral Bleaching in GBR?**
 - **Temperature Stress**
 - **Climate Change Impact**
 - **Algae Relationship**

Coral Reefs

(Rainforests of the seas)



About

- ✦ **Large underwater structures** – made of skeletons of **colonial marine invertebrates**
- ✦ **'coral'** – individually called **polyp**
- ✦ **Symbiotic Relationship with algae** **'zooxanthellae'** (responsible for beautiful colours of corals)
- ✦ Support over 25% of marine biodiversity

Hard Corals vs Soft Corals

- ✦ **Hard Corals** - Rigid skeleton **made of CaCO_3** - **reef-building** corals
- ✦ **Soft Corals** - Non reef-building

Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

- ✦ Largest Coral Reef in the World
- ✦ World Heritage Site (1981)
- ✦ Endures Mass Coral Bleaching



Corals in India

- ✦ Present in the areas of Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep Islands and Malvan



Significance

- ✦ Coral reefs **protect coastlines from storms/erosion**, provide jobs, offer opportunities for recreation
- ✦ Source of **food/medicines**

Threats

- ✦ **Natural:** Temperature, Sediment Deposition, Salinity, pH, etc.
- ✦ **Anthropogenic:** Mining, Bottom Fishing, Tourism, pollution, etc.

Coral Bleaching

- ✦ Corals under stress - expel algae – thus turning white (bleached)
- ✦ Bleached corals - not dead – but, more risk of starvation/disease



Initiatives to Protect Corals

Technology

- ✦ Cyromesh: Storage of the coral larvae at (-196°C) - Can be later reintroduced to the wild
- ✦ Biorock: Creating artificial reefs on which coral can grow rapidly



Global

- ✦ International Coral Reef Initiative
- ✦ The Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform

Indian

National Coastal Mission Programme

- 
- **"Biorock technology" is talked about in which one of the following situations?**
 - **(a) Restoration of damaged coral reefs**
 - **(b) Development of building materials using plant residue**
 - **(c) Identification of areas for exploration/extraction of shale gas**
 - **(d) Providing salt licks for wild animals in forests/protected areas**

An underwater photograph of a coral reef. The water is dark blue, and the coral is a mix of brown, tan, and green. There are many small fish swimming around. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

• **Consider the following statements: (2018)**

1. Most of the world's coral reefs are in tropical waters.

2. More than one-third of the world's coral reefs are located in the territories of Australia, Indonesia and Philippines.

3. Coral reefs host far more number of animal phyla than those hosted by tropical rainforests.

• **Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

• **(a) 1 and 2 only**

(b) 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Karnataka Ban Harmful Food Colouring Agents



HARMFUL COLOURS FOUND IN FOOD

Rhodamine B: It is used as an industrial dye. Because of its low cost, Rhodamine B is often used for food colouring – an illegal practice by all means. It has been classified as a potential carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Its prolonged use in food can lead to liver dysfunction or cancer


Sunset Yellow: It is a synthetic dye used in food, drugs, and cosmetics. If consumed alone or in combination with other dyes, Sunset Yellow can cause allergic or pseudo-allergic reactions and severe reactions among asthma and urticaria patients



Carmoisine: A synthetic food dye, it is also called Food Red. IARC classifies it as a category 3 carcinogen. Its prolonged consumption can affect liver, kidneys and trigger behavioural changes among children, besides triggering skin rashes, and respiratory allergies

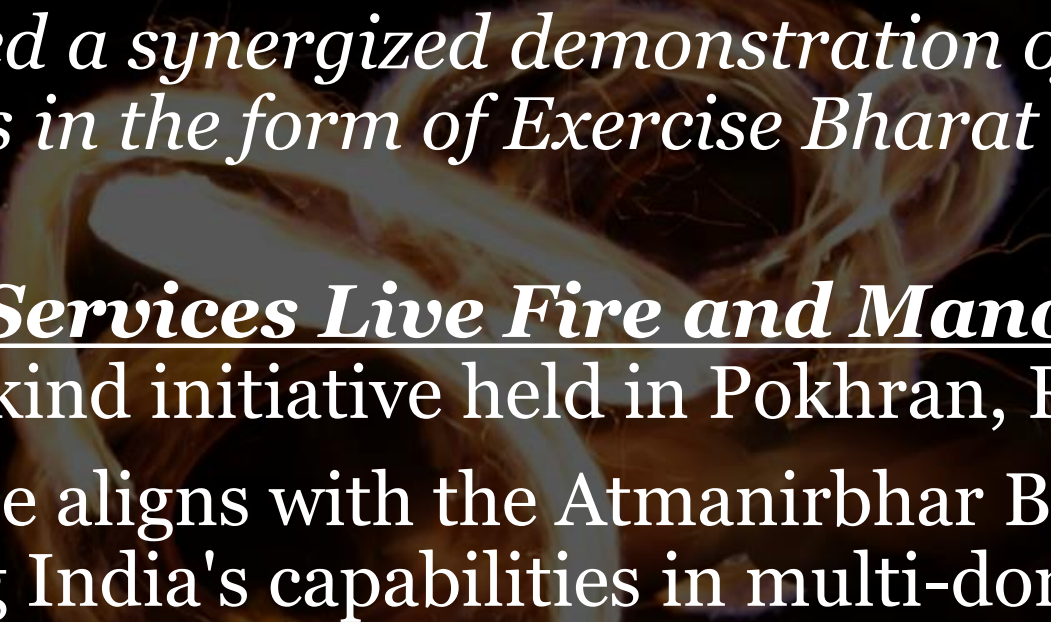
Tartrazine: A yellow, nitrous derivative compound, it is used as a synthetic food colouring chemical. Prolonged intake can cause angioedema, eczema, bronchitis, and headaches. It affects the thyroid gland and hormones

- **Recently, the Karnataka Government has announced a ban on the use of harmful colouring agents in popular food items like cotton candy and Gobi Manchurian.**
- **The ban targets Rodamine B in cotton candy and imposes restrictions on Tartrazine usage in Gobi Manchurian.**
 - **Rhodamine B is a chemical compound commonly employed in synthetic dyes for colouring silk, jute, leather, cotton, and wool, as well as in the cosmetics and plastics industries**

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- Tartrazine is a bright yellow azo dye that is more stable and a cheaper alternative to natural food dyes.
 - According to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), no colouring matter should be added to food unless permitted in the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulation, 2011

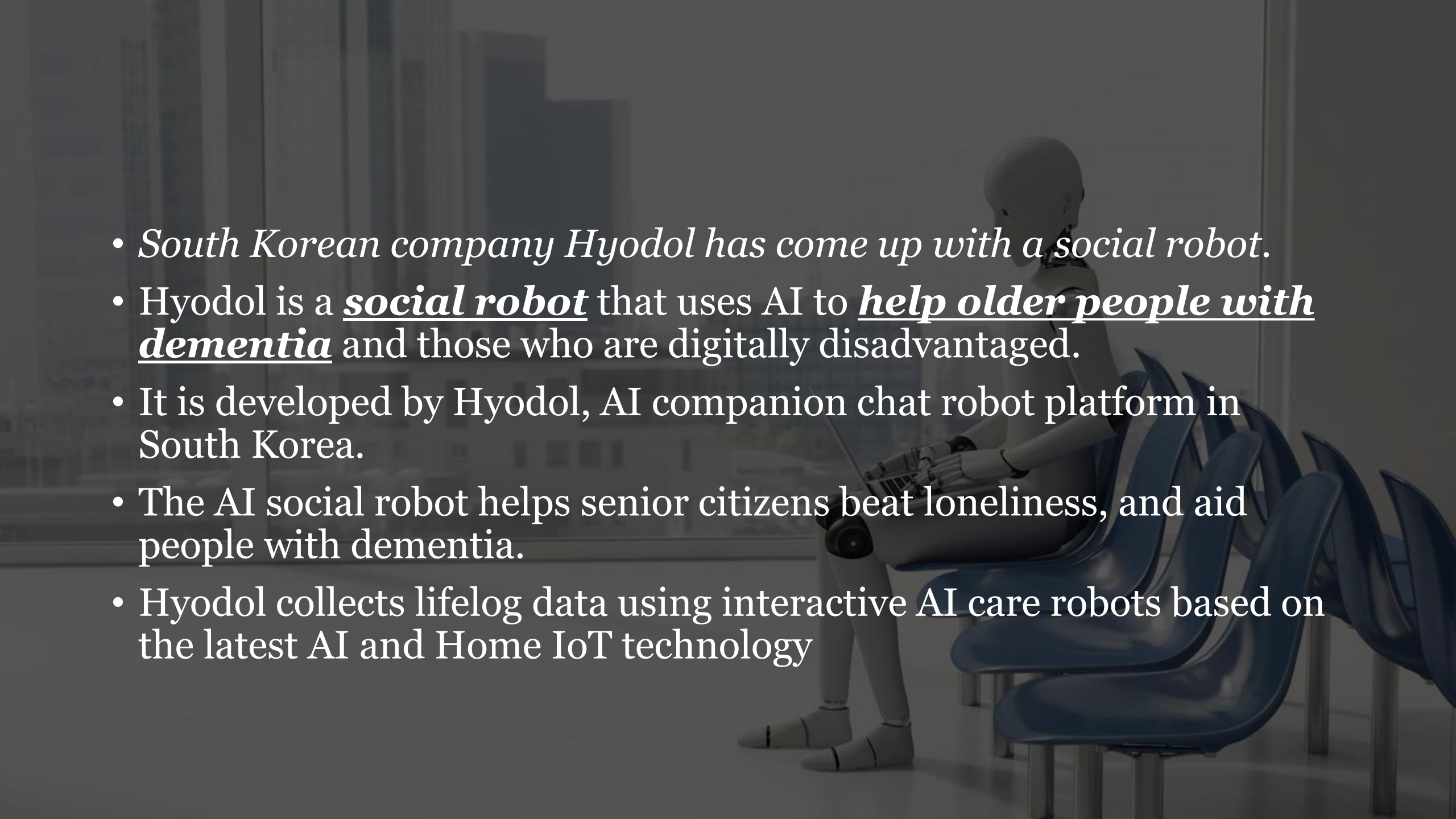


Exercise Bharat Shakti

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- *M witnessed a synergized demonstration of indigenous defence capabilities in the form of Exercise Bharat Shakti in Pokhran, Rajasthan.*
 - It is a **Tri-Services Live Fire and Manoeuvre Exercise**, first-of-its kind initiative held in Pokhran, Rajasthan.
 - The exercise aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, showcasing India's capabilities in multi-domain operations.

The background features a dark blue gradient with several overlapping, organic, light green and teal shapes that resemble watercolor or ink blots. The shapes are centered and spread across the upper and middle portions of the frame.

Hyodol

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- A humanoid robot is seated on a blue plastic chair in a room with large windows. The robot is facing right, looking out at a city skyline. The robot has a white, featureless face and is wearing a dark, form-fitting suit. The background is a blurred cityscape with tall buildings under a grey sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.
- *South Korean company Hyodol has come up with a social robot.*
 - Hyodol is a **social robot** that uses AI to **help older people with dementia** and those who are digitally disadvantaged.
 - It is developed by Hyodol, AI companion chat robot platform in South Korea.
 - The AI social robot helps senior citizens beat loneliness, and aid people with dementia.
 - Hyodol collects lifelog data using interactive AI care robots based on the latest AI and Home IoT technology

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A group of people are clapping in a dimly lit room. The focus is on the hands and forearms of several individuals, with some in the foreground and others blurred in the background. The lighting is soft and moody, creating a sense of appreciation and collective effort. An orange horizontal bar is located in the top left corner of the image.

Thank you
guys.
