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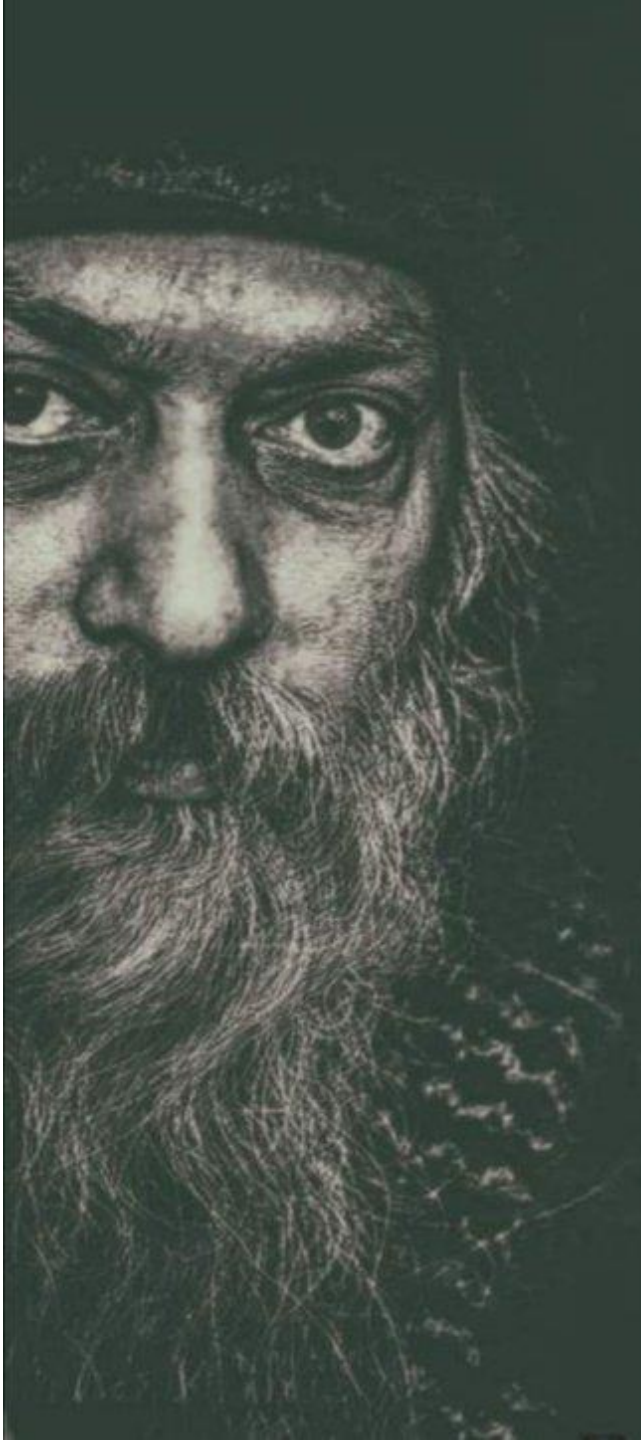
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“Nobody is superior, nobody is inferior, but nobody is equal either. People are simply unique, incomparable. You are you, I am I.”

Osho






Disclosure of Electoral Bonds


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Disclosure of Electoral Bonds

Details of Electoral Bonds submitted by SBI Part- II

 Date: Thursday 14 Mar 2024, 7:55 PM

Details of Electoral Bonds submitted by SBI Part- I

 Date: Thursday 14 Mar 2024, 7:53 PM

Poll bonds: 22 firms donated over ₹100 crore

Election Commission publishes the data on poll bonds received from SBI on March 12

Lottery magnate's firm which was under ED pressure is single largest donor at ₹1,368 cr.

Bharatiya Janata Party encashed bonds worth ₹6,060.5 crore, highest among all parties

The Hindu Data Team
CHENNAI

Future Gaming and Hotel Services PR, whose managing director is lottery magnate Santiago Martin, was the single largest donor to political parties between April 12, 2019 and January 24, 2024, according to the electoral bonds data released by the State Bank of India and published by the Election Commission on Thursday, on the orders of the Supreme Court.

The firm donated a cumulative sum of ₹1,368 crore through electoral bonds during this period. Incidentally, the Enforcement Directorate had attached ₹411 crore in the bank accounts of this firm and other companies in March 2022 and had later filed a prosecution complaint against it under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 before the

PMLA Court, Kolkata on September 9, 2023.

Among parties, the Bharatiya Janata Party encashed electoral bonds worth ₹6,060.5 crore – the highest among all parties – within this period. In fact, the BJP's share of the total bonds encashed by parties was over 47.5%.

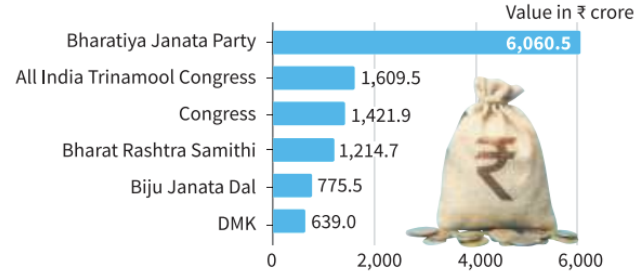
Other political parties

The All India Trinamool Congress received ₹1,609.50 crore (12.6%), followed by the Congress, which received ₹1,421.9 crore (11.1%), the second and third biggest parties in terms of encashment during the period. The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (9.5%), Biju Janata Dal (6.1%), and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (5%) were the other parties which encashed more than ₹500 crore worth of electoral bonds during this period.

Overall, 22 donated more than ₹100 crore dur-

Top recipients

The Bharatiya Janata Party encashed electoral bonds worth ₹6,060 crore, the highest among all parties



ing this period. Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Limited (MEIL), headquartered in Hyderabad, was second on the list, having donated ₹966 crore. Western UP Power Transmission Company, which is also part of MEIL group of companies, donated ₹220 crore.

The other firms in the top 10 donor list for this period were: Qwik Supply Chain (₹410 crore), Haldia Energy (₹377 crore), Vedanta (₹375.65 crore), Essel

Mining and Industries (₹224.45 crore), Bharti Airtel (₹198 crore), and Keven-ter Foodpark Infra (₹195 crore).

Other major buyers include: Grasim Industries, Megha Engineering, Piramal Enterprises, Torrent Power, DLF Commercial Developers, Apollo Tyres, Lakshmi Mittal, Edelweiss, PVR, Sula Wine, Welspun, and Sun Pharma.

In total, electoral bonds worth over ₹12,155 crore were purchased by donors

in this period and more than ₹12,769 crore were encashed by all parties during the same time.

The information was put in the public domain by the ECI on Thursday, after SBI disclosed the data on March 12. The Supreme Court had directed the EC to host this information on its website by March 15, which it did on an "as is where is" basis.

"In compliance of the Hon'ble Supreme Court's directions, contained in its order dated Feb 15 & March 11, 2024 (in the matter of WPC NO.880 of 2017), the State Bank of India (SBI) had provided the data pertaining to the electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India (EC) on March 12, 2024. The Election Commission of India has today uploaded the data on electoral bonds on its website as received from SBI on 'as is where is basis,'" the Election Commis-

sion said in a statement.

The information uploaded on the EC website showed that the SBI shared two sets of data: one with the name of the purchaser of each electoral bond, the date of purchase, and the denomination of the bond; and another with the name of the political party, date and denomination of bonds encashed.

The data supplied by SBI does not include the serial numbers of the bonds.

On February 15, Supreme Court had scrapped the electoral bonds scheme, terming it "unconstitutional". It had asked the SBI to submit to the EC all details of the bonds which had been purchased since the interim order of the court was issued on April 12, 2019, till date. On March 4, the SBI sought additional time till June 30, saying it needed

more time to match the buyers of the bonds with the political parties which encashed them. On March 11, SC dismissed a plea filed by the SBI seeking an extension till June 30 for disclosure of the data on electoral bonds. It asked that the data be submitted to the EC by Tuesday.

In an affidavit filed in the SC on Wednesday, the public sector bank said that 22,217 electoral bonds were issued between April 2019 and February 15, 2024. It said that political parties had redeemed 22,030 bonds, while the remaining 187 were redeemed and the money was deposited in the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, in accordance with the scheme's rules.

(With inputs from Sreeparna Chakrabarty in New Delhi)

The top 20 electoral bond purchasers

From lottery to mining, from thermal power to mobile network — the top donors, according to data uploaded by the Election Commission

Future Gaming and Hotel Services Pvt Ltd
₹1,368 cr

What it does:
Lottery business, HQ in Coimbatore, established in 1991

Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd
₹966 cr

Dams and power projects. Based in Telangana, est 1989

Qwik Supply Chain Pvt Ltd
₹410 cr

Logistics and supply chain. Established in 2000

Haldia Energy Ltd
₹377 cr

Thermal power plant located in West Bengal's Haldia, est 2015

Vedanta Ltd
₹376 cr

Mining, largest producer of aluminium in India, est 1965

Essel Mining and Industries Ltd
₹225 cr

Iron ore mining, located in Mumbai, est 1950

Western UP Power Transmission Co
₹220 cr

Production, distribution of power. Est 2009

Bharti Airtel Ltd
₹198 cr

Mobile network operator headquartered in New Delhi, est 1995

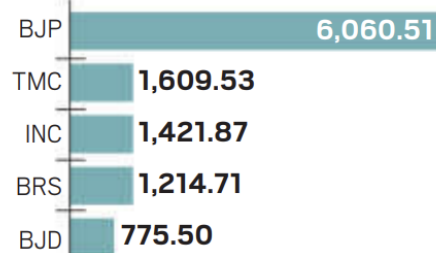
Keventer Food Park Infra Ltd
₹195 cr

Dairy and FMCG, based in Kolkata, West Bengal

MKJ Enterprises Ltd
₹192 cr

Trading in stainless steel business. HQ in Kolkata, est 1982

Party-wise amount received (in ₹ cr)



Madanlal Ltd ₹186 cr; Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital ₹162 cr; Utkal Alumina International Ltd ₹145 cr; DLF Commercial Developers Ltd ₹130 cr; Jindal Steel and Power Ltd ₹123 cr; BG Shirke Construction Technology Pvt Ltd ₹119 cr; Dhariwal Infrastructure Ltd ₹115 cr; Avees Trading Finance Pvt Ltd ₹113 cr; Torrent Power Ltd ₹107 cr; Birla Carbon India Pvt Ltd ₹105 cr

TOP INDIVIDUAL DONORS IN LIST

₹35,00,00,000
Lakshmi Niwas Mittal

₹25,00,00,000
KR Raja JT

₹20,00,00,000
Rahul Bhatia

₹14,00,00,000
Inder Thakurdas Jaisinghani

₹13,00,00,000
Rajesh Mannalal Agrawal

₹10,00,00,000
Raju Kumar Sharma

₹10,00,00,000
Rahul Jagannath Joshi

₹10,00,00,000
Harmesh Rahul Joshi

₹8,20,00,000
Anita Hemant Shah

₹6,00,00,000
Kiran Mazumdar Shaw

Gyanesh Kumar, Sukhbir Sandhu appointed Election Commissioners

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday appointed retired bureaucrats Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu as Election Commissioners. A selection panel, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had earlier recommended their names.

“The President is pleased to appoint Shri Gyanesh Kumar, IAS (retd) and Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, IAS (retd) as Election Commissioners in Election Commission of India with effect from the date of assumption of charge of their office,” a



New roles: Former bureaucrats Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu who were appointed as ECs on Thursday. ANI

Rashtrapati Bhavan communique said.

This is the first time that Election Commissioners have been appointed in accordance with the new Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appoint-

ment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 brought in by the government in December.

According to the Act, a selection committee headed by the Prime Minister and comprising a Union Minister nominated by the

Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha will select members of the Election Commission.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury are members of the current committee.

After the meeting, Mr. Chowdhury told the media that a total of six shortlisted names had been shared with him barely 10 minutes before the meeting.

Mr. Chowdhury said that late on Wednesday night, a list of 212 names had been shared with him. The Congress leader also said that he had submitted a dissent note.

Constitutional Body overview

Formed	25 January 1950; 74 years ago (Later celebrated as National Voters' Day)
Jurisdiction	Ministry of Law and Justice , Government of India
Headquarters	Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi ^[1]  28°37′26″N 77°12′40″E
Employees	Around 300 ^[2]
Constitutional Body executives	Rajiv Kumar , Retd.IAS , Chief Election Commissioner of India Gyanesh Kumar , Retd.IAS , Election Commissioner of India Sukhbir Singh Sandhu , Retd.IAS , Election Commissioner of India

Chief Election Commissioner of India



सत्यमेव जयते

Incumbent
[Rajiv Kumar](#)
since 15 May 2022

[Election Commission of India](#)

Nominator	Union Council of Ministers
Appointer	President of India
Term length	6 years or up to 65 years of age (whichever is prior)
Inaugural holder	Sukumar Sen
Deputy	Election Commissioners of India Deputy Election Commissioners of India
Salary	₹250,000 (US\$3,100) per month ^{[1][2]}
Website	Election Commission of India ↗

Text & Comment

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Land in J&K allotted to build Maharashtra Bhawan

2.5 In acres, the Maharashtra Cabinet has approved a proposal to construct a Maharashtra Bhawan in the Bhawan area, clearing the decks for the first State-run guest house to come up in the Valley. ■

Prize money for the Mumbai team for winning Ranji trophy

10 in ₹ crore. Mumbai won a record-extending 42nd Ranji title after beating Vidarbha. The triumphant Mumbai team will receive an additional ₹5 crore on top of the ₹5 crore prize money already decided. ■

Blue Star AC firm's planned investment in Andhra Pradesh

250 in ₹ crore. Leading home appliances company Blue Star will invest ₹250 crore in a record financial year to raise the manufacturing capacity of air conditioners at its Sri City facility. ■

People arrested in Mizoram for not having ILP

1,187 According to the provisions of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, other States need to possess Inner Line Permit to enter and stay in Mizoram. ■

India's ranking in HDI among 193 nations in 2022

134 After a drop in its Human Development Index value in 2021 and following a flat trend, India's HDI value has increased marginally to 0.644 in 2022. ■

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CAA and status of judicial proceedings

How have the newly notified rules eased the process of granting Indian citizenship to specific communities under the CAA? What arguments have been presented for challenging its constitutionality? What is the significance of the government's assertion that the CAA does not affect legal, democratic, or secular rights?

EXPLAINER

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

Four years after Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified the rules to implement the law on March 11. It fast-tracks citizenship for undocumented immigrants from six non-Muslim communities — Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, Christian and Jain — from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The CAA is also under challenge before the Supreme Court, with several petitioners moving fresh pleas seeking a stay on the implementation of the rules.

What are the implications of CAA? In December 2019, Parliament passed an amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955 (1955 Act) introducing a new proviso to Section 20(b) which defines "illegal migrants." Accordingly, undocumented immigrants who entered India on or before December 31, 2019, and whom the central government notified under the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, or the Foreigners Act, 1946, would be eligible for citizenship under the 1955 Act. However, certain tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura were exempted from the legislation's ambit. To access these protected areas, an Inner Line Permit (ILP) is needed from the concerned State governments.

A key concern is that when viewed in combination with the proposed all-India National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), the CAA has the potential to disproportionately impact Muslims residing in India. In the event of people being excluded from NRIC, non-Muslims may have an opportunity to get included through the CAA, while it may be denied to Muslims. A Supreme Court-monitored National Register of Citizens that took place in Assam in 2021 left out over 19 lakh people from the citizenship register.

On May 28, 2021, the Union government issued an order under Section 10 of the 1955 Act, granting District Collectors in five States with high migrant populations the power to grant citizenship to groups identified in the



Protest march: Petitioners challenge the Citizenship Amendment Act's constitutionality. AP

2019 amendment. In its 2021-22 Annual Report, the MHA stated that in 2021, 1,414 citizenship certificates were granted under CAA provisions. However, after petitions were filed alleging that this order was a "ruse" to implement CAA, the MHA contended before the court that its order had "no relation whatsoever" with the CAA and that it merely delegated "the power (of granting citizenship by registration and naturalisation) to the local authority in particular cases."

With the newly notified rules, the Centre has eased the process of granting Indian citizenship to members of the specified communities by excluding the requirement of a "valid passport" of their origin countries or a valid visa from India. Instead, "any document" that shows one of the parents, grandparents or even great-grandparents of the applicant was from one of these countries is sufficient to prove their nationality. Additionally, a certificate issued by an elected member of a local body can be a replacement for a visa.

After the legislation's enactment in 2019, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUMU) filed a petition challenging its constitutionality, which was joined by close to 200 petitions. These petitions challenge the law for violating Article 14 of the Constitution by making religion a qualifier for citizenship.

The CAA has also been dubbed as a move to subvert the Assam Accord of 1985 that deems any person who cannot prove his ancestry beyond March 24, 1971, as an alien and does not differentiate on grounds of religion. The petitions contend

that the law will further multiply the "uncontrolled influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam."

How has the Supreme Court responded?

Calling the CAA a "benign piece of legislation," the Centre in its affidavit before the Supreme Court said that it seeks to provide amnesty to specific communities from specified countries with a clear cut-off date. It highlighted that the law does not in any manner affect the legal, democratic or secular rights of any Indian citizen.

The affidavit further stated that the "narrowly tailored legislation" was passed to "tackle a specific problem, i.e., the persecution on the ground of religion in the light of the undisturbable theoretic constitutional position in these specified countries, the systematic functioning of these States and the perception of fear that may be prevalent amongst minorities as per the de facto situation in these countries."

On December 18, 2019, a Bench comprising former Chief Justice of India (CJI) S.A. Bobde refused to stay the operation of the law and instead suggested that the government publicise the actual intent of the Act. The court rejected a similar plea for stay on January 22, 2020, by underscoring that it needs to hear the government first.

On October 6, 2022, a Bench comprising former CJI U.U. Lalit passed an order stating that final hearings in the case would begin on December 6, 2022. However, the case has not been listed

since then. As per the Supreme Court's website, the petitions are currently listed before a Bench headed by Justice Pankaj Mishra.

Why are petitioners seeking a stay on the rules?

The IUMU and others have moved the top court seeking a stay on the rules notified on March 11. They have pointed out how the Centre has earlier averted a push for a stay of the CAA in the Supreme Court nearly five years ago by arguing that the rules had not been framed. It has also been highlighted that the rules have done away with the tiered scrutiny of applications for citizenship by District Collectors on the ground of recommendations of State governments as to the wisdom of granting citizenship.

They said that the government ought to have waited for a final decision from the Supreme Court before implementing the rules.

What is the significance of the challenge to Section 6A?

The proceedings against the CAA are also dependent on the outcome of the challenge to Section 6A of the 1955 Act which was introduced in furtherance of a Memorandum of Settlement called the "Assam Accord" signed on August 15, 1985.

In December last year, a five-judge Constitution Bench led by CJI D.V. Chandrachud reserved its verdict on the validity of Section 6A after orally observing that the provision was enacted as a humanitarian measure in the wake of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War and was deeply intertwined in the country's history.

Section 6A determines who is a foreigner in Assam by establishing March 24, 1971, as the cut-off date for entry — those who came to the State on or after January 1, 1966, but before March 25, 1971, were to be declared as "foreigners" and would have all the rights and obligations of Indian citizens except that they would not be able to vote for 10 years.

If March 24, 1971, is upheld as a valid cut-off date for entry into the State, then CAA can be held to be violative of the Assam Accord since it establishes a different timeline.

THE GIST

The Ministry of Home Affairs notified the rules to implement the CAA, which fast-tracks citizenship for non-Muslim immigrants from neighbouring countries. Despite delays, the Act faces challenges in the Supreme Court.

Petitioners challenge the CAA's constitutionality, arguing it violates Article 14 by making religion a qualifier for citizenship.

Petitioners seek a stay on the recently notified rules, contending the bypassing of tiered scrutiny for citizenship applications and the government's decision to implement rules before a final court decision.

What are the causes of the flare-up in eastern Congo?

What are the underlying reasons behind the renewed clashes between the Congolese army and the M23 rebels? How has the humanitarian crisis worsened as a result of the recent escalation in violence?

Sumedha

The story so far:

Renewed clashes in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have sparked global concern, worsening the humanitarian crisis. Fighting between the Congolese army and Rwandan-backed M23 group intensified around Sake and Nyanzale, resulting in deaths, displacements, and food security risks. The U.S. urged both countries to avoid war, calling for Rwanda to withdraw its personnel and M23 to cease their offensive. The United Nations and several Western countries have also denounced the attacks and called on the M23 rebels to cease their offensive.

What is the conflict?

An unending cycle of violence has

engulfed the eastern region of the central African country for decades, with the conflict originating in two civil wars. In 1994, an estimated eight lakh minority ethnic Tutsis and Hutus were killed by extremist Hutus in 100 days, in what is now known as the Rwandan genocide.

In the subsequent days, around two million people crossed the Congolese border (then known as Zaire) to settle in refugee camps in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu as a Tutsi government gained control of Rwanda.

Tutsi militia also gathered to fight extremist Hutus as tensions heightened between local Congolese and Rwandan emigrants. The ethnic tensions further set the stage for the First Congo War between the Zairean soldiers on one hand and the Tutsi militia and the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the

Liberation of Congo (AFDL) on the other. After a decade of fighting, the AFDL, which wanted to root out the remaining perpetrators of the genocide. In 1997, the Democratic Republic of Congo was established.

Another deadly war followed in 1998 after the new regime ordered Rwandan refugees and troops to leave the country. It feared that Rwanda would join forces with Uganda. The war that followed was dubbed "Africa's world war." A new Rwanda-backed rebel group, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), began invading parts of Congo. In response, Congolese President Laurent-Désiré Kabila allowed armed Hutu refugees to organise in the east to fight against Rwanda.

Since then, several agreements have been signed to put an end to what has

been called one of the world's deadliest conflicts since the Second World War, but fighting has continued.

Who are the M23 rebels? The March 23 Movement or M23, formed in 2012, claims to defend Tutsi interests against Hutu militias. Originating from a 2009 ceasefire agreement, it broke away from the Congolese army, accusing the government of failing to integrate Tutsis. The group resurged in 2022, citing attacks by Hutu militias. Recent attacks near Goma have escalated the humanitarian crisis, prompting protests urging Rwanda's withdrawal of support.

The worsening violence has led to an escalation in tensions between the DRC and Rwanda, with Congo accusing the latter of backing M23 rebels. Rwanda has repeatedly denied these allegations. Rwanda has claimed the escalation is due to the DRC's weak regional peacekeepers.

The new fighting could lead to an escalation in tensions between the DRC and Rwanda. The International NGO Forum in Congo said the escalation has involved artillery attacks on civilian settlements, causing a heavy toll and forcing many Congolese workers to withdraw. There are concerns a new disaster could go unnoticed because of the attention on the war in Gaza and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

THE GIST

Renewed clashes in eastern DRC between the Congolese army and Rwandan-backed M23 rebels have raised global concern.

The conflict exacerbates the humanitarian crisis in the region, with increased fatalities, displacements, and food security risks.

The United Nations and several Western countries denounce the attacks and urge the M23 rebels to halt their offensive.

Prize money for the Mumbai team for winning Ranji trophy

10 in ₹ crore. Mumbai won a record-extending 42nd Ranji title after beating Vidarbha. The triumphant Mumbai team will receive an additional ₹5 crore on top of the ₹5 crore prize money already decided. PTI

Administrator	BCCI
Headquarters	Mumbai
Format	First-class cricket
First edition	1934–35
Latest edition	2023-24 Ranji Trophy
Next edition	2023–24
Tournament format	Round-robin , then knockout
Number of teams	38
Current champion	Mumbai (42 titles)
Most successful	Mumbai (42 titles)
Qualification	Irani Cup
Most runs	Wasim Jaffer (12,038) 1996–2020
Most wickets	Rajinder Goel (640) 1958–1985
TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports18 • JioCinema <p>[1]</p>
Website	www.bcci.tv ↗
Longest continuous champion	Mumbai

Express Chief of Bureau is joint winner of Chameli Devi award

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

THE INDIAN Express's Chief of National Bureau (govt) Ritika Chopra and independent journalist Greeshma Kuthar have been jointly awarded the Chameli Devi Jain Award 2024 for Outstanding Woman Media Person of the Year.

The Media Foundation, in a statement, said Chopra, who is also the national education editor at *The Indian Express*, "is known for her in-depth investigative stories in the fields of education and government policy".

Commending Kuthar for her "deeply-researched long-form investigative reporting from conflict areas such as Manipur", the Foundation in its release said that her reportage has a strong focus on the social and cultural impact of national political narratives on India's marginalised communities.

An independent jury comprising senior journalist and



Express's Ritika Chopra and (right) Greeshma Kuthar

columnist Radhika Ramaseshan (Chair), award-winning journalist and author Mariyam Alavi, and Down to Earth managing editor Richard Mahapatra selected the winners from more than 65 entries of women journalists.

The award presentation will take place at 6 pm on Friday at the India International Centre, New Delhi (CD Deshmukh Hall). It will be followed by the BG Verghese Memorial Lecture, to be delivered by TN Ninan, editor and author, on 'Work and Wages: Old Challenges in the Age of Automation and AI'.

Set up by the Media

Foundation in 1980, the Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Woman Media Person of the Year is named after Chameli Devi Jain, a freedom fighter and community reformer, who was imprisoned during India's independence movement.

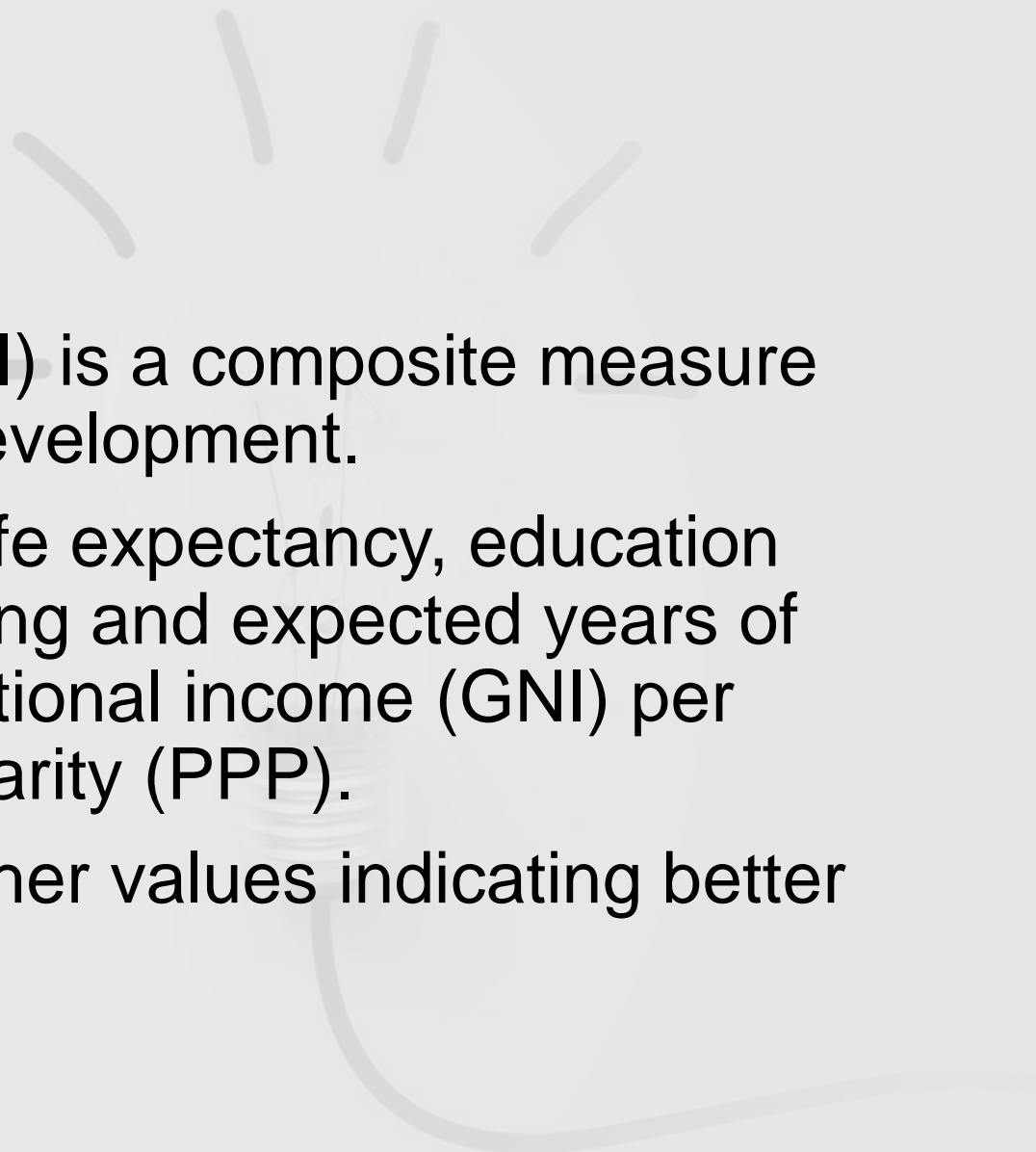
The first award was given in 1982 and since then, it has been presented every year to those practising impactful journalism in fields such as social development, politics, gender justice, human rights, health, conflict and consumer values.

Past winners include Barkha Dutt, Neerja Chowdhury, Usha Rai, Pamela Philipose, Sunita Narain, Nirupama Subramanian, and Patricia Mukhim. The award has also recognised women journalists from rural areas whose stellar work often goes unnoticed.

The Media Foundation was instituted in 1979 with the aim of upholding freedom of speech, expression and information and enhancing the quality of life through media and communication.

India's ranking in HDI among 193 nations in 2022

134 After a drop in its Human Development Index value in 2021 and following a flat trend, India's HDI value has increased marginally to 0.644 in 2022. PTI

- 
- The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure used to assess a country's overall development.
 - It considers three key dimensions: life expectancy, education (measured by mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling for children), and gross national income (GNI) per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP).
 - The HDI ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better human development outcomes.

The 2023-24 Human Development Report shows Switzerland, Norway and Iceland leading the human development index, while Central African Republic, South Sudan and Somalia lagged the furthest behind.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (commonly known as North Korea) and Monaco were not ranked in the list of countries and economies by UNDP.

India's loss in HDI due to inequality is 31.1%. South Asia's loss in the HDI due to inequality is among the highest in the world (after sub-Saharan Africa), followed by the Pacific.

As per the latest report, In 2022, India saw improvements across all HDI indicators which includes life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.

Life expectancy rose from 67.2 to 67.7 years

expected years of schooling reached 12.6

mean years of schooling increased to 6.57

GNI per capita saw an increase from \$6,542 to \$6,951.

Between 1990 and 2022, India saw its HDI value increase by 48.4%, from 0.434 in 1990 to 0.644 in 2022.

India moves a notch up in UN's human development index

PRIYANSH VERMA
New Delhi, March 14

INDIA'S RANK IN the United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI) improved from 135 in 2021 to 134 in 2022, even though the latest standing was still lower than 132 in 2020.

The index value increased to 0.644 in 2022 from 0.633 in 2021, which retains the country in the "medium human development" category.

According to the 2023-24 UNDP Human Development Report, India saw improvements across all HDI indicators in 2022 — life expectancy, education and gross national income (GNI) per capita. Life expectancy rose from 67.2 to 67.7 years, expected years of schooling reached 12.6, mean years of schooling increased to 6.57, and GNI per capita saw an increase from \$6,542 to \$6,951, the report said.

As many as 193 countries are assessed for HDI. India also demonstrated progress in reducing gender inequality. India's Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.437 is better than the global and South Asian averages.

"This highlights the country's com-

mitment over time to accelerate economic growth and improve the quality of life for its citizens. But there is room for improvement. With a renewed focus on women-led development, India can further unlock socio-economic progress, paving the way for a brighter and more equitable future for all," said Caitlin Wiesen, resident representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India.

However, the report notes even though the global overall HDI value is greater than it was in 2019, but that doesn't mean the world has recovered fully from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, compounded by other global crises.

"The 2023 figure remains below the level that was predicted before the pandemic. Essentially, we have not reached the level of human development that could have been expected had the pandemic not happened," the report said.

Between 1990 and 2022, the country saw its HDI value increase by 48.4%, from 0.434 in 1990 to 0.644 in 2022. India has also shown progress in reducing gender inequality and ranks 108 out of 166 countries in the GII 2022, the report noted.

India saw improvements across all indicators — life expectancy, education and gross national income per capita, according to the UN report

0.967

Switzerland

01

0.966

Norway

02

0.959

Iceland

03

0.956

Hong Kong, China (SAR)

04

0.952

Denmark

05

0.380

Somalia

01

0.381

South Sudan

02

0.387

Central African Republic

03

0.394

Niger

04

0.394

Chad

05

IN BRIEF



Tamil Nadu tops illegal trade in shark body parts

Tamil Nadu accounted for almost 65% of the illegal trade in shark body parts, a new analysis of seizures by TRAFFIC and WWF-India between January 2010 and December 2022 has revealed. TRAFFIC is the Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce. The analysis, released on Thursday, found that about 16,000 kg of shark fins was seized from 2010 to 2022, constituting almost 80% of the shark-derived products. Significant volumes of shark cartilage and teeth were also seized. The fact-sheet titled "Netted in illegal wildlife trade: Sharks of India" said Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, and Maharashtra follow Tamil Nadu in illegal shark trade.

Panel formed to reform prices of drugs and medical devices

The Department of Pharmaceuticals (Pricing Division) has formed a committee to reform the pricing framework for drugs and medical devices. The panel is likely to submit its report in the next three months. It is mandated to give its inputs regarding institutional reforms within the NPPA and balancing price and availability of essential medicines, while providing incentives to sustain growth and exports. On March 12, the department had specified that the committee would have three members — Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals; Chairman, NPPA; and Senior Economic Adviser, Department of Pharmaceuticals.

Govt. blocks 18 OTT platforms for streaming obscene content

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Information & Broadcasting Ministry has blocked 18 OTT platforms for streaming obscene and vulgar content. Nineteen websites, 10 apps, and 57 social media handles associated with these platforms have also been blocked. The action has been taken in coordination with various intermediaries for violations of the Information Technology Act, the Indian Penal Code, and the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act. While seven of the blocked apps were hosted on Google Play Store, three were on Apple App Store, the Ministry said.

Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur has repeatedly emphasised the responsibility of the platforms not to propagate obscenity, vulgarity, and

19 websites, 10 apps, and 57 social media handles linked to these platforms have also been blocked

abuse under the guise of "creative expression". On March 12, 2024, Mr. Thakur announced that 18 OTT platforms publishing obscene and vulgar content have been taken down," it said.

The blocked platforms are Dreams Films, Vooiv, Yesma, Uncut Adda, Tri Flicks, X Prime, Neon X VIP, Besharams, Hunters, Rabbit, Xtramood, Nusfiks, MoodX, Mojlix, Hot Shots VII, Fagi, ChikooRix, and Prime Play. The Ministry said a significant portion of the content was found to be obscene and portrayed women in a demeaning manner.

It depicted nudity and sexual acts in various inap-

'India likely to start free trade deal talks with EAEU'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India is "seriously considering" starting talks for free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Foreign Minister of Belarus Sergei Alesnik declared during his two-day visit to India. The remarks from the Belarusian Minister acquire significance as Belarus has been closely aligned with Russia even as President Vladimir Putin continues to push ahead with the military operation against Ukraine since February 2022.

"My counterpart confirmed that India is seriously considering starting negotiations on a free trade agreement. Of course, we agreed to maintain contacts on this issue," Mr. Alesnik was quoted as saying by Belta, the state-owned news organisation.

"We reaffirmed our mutual support for our efforts at the UN. We hold similar views with India on international relations, on the need to build a truly fair system of international relations, a just, multipolar world order. On March 12, the department had specified that the committee would have three members — Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals; Chairman, NPPA; and Senior Economic Adviser, Department of Pharmaceuticals.

Modi will travel to Bhutan next week

PM says he had productive discussions with Tobgay on various aspects: Bhutan PM is expected to travel to Mumbai and meet business leaders

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Cardinal relations: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Bhutan counterpart, Tshering Tobgay, in New Delhi on Thursday. (PI)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bhutan next week, announced the visiting Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay after the two leaders met in New Delhi on Thursday night. Mr. Tobgay is on a five-day visit to India and is expected to return to Thimphu on Monday.

Mr. Modi will travel there, officials said. No press statement was made after the meeting, but Mr. Modi posted on X that he had "productive discussions encompassing various aspects of (India-Bhutan's) unique and special partnership" and thanked the King of Bhutan Mr. Tobgay for the invitation.

"We reaffirmed our mutual support for our efforts at the UN. We hold similar views with India on international relations, on the need to build a truly fair system of international relations, a just, multipolar world order. On March 12, the department had specified that the committee would have three members — Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals; Chairman, NPPA; and Senior Economic Adviser, Department of Pharmaceuticals.

between Bhutan and India, which their Prime Ministers are exchanging back-to-back visits but could cast a shadow on when dates for general elections would be announced. According to the model code of conduct, no major policy decisions can be made after the election dates are declared, and by convention, the Prime Minister doesn't travel abroad once they are declared. Reports had indicated that the announcement of dates by the Election Commission could come as early as Friday. If they are announced prior to Mr. Modi's travel, however, officials said that might mean no major agreements would be signed during the visit to Bhutan.

Mr. Tobgay is in India on his first international visit after winning elections in January this year. During his visit, he met with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and is due to meet Ministers of Finance, Trade and Energy on Friday, and subsequently to Mumbai where he will meet business leaders. He is expected to discuss strengthening bilateral trade and investment levels in infrastructure projects, and Bhutan's plans for a mega "Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC)" on Bhutan's southern border with Assam. India is watching Bhutan-China talks on boundary demarcation closely as well, and talks on the new Bhutanese government's strategies on the issue are understood to have been part of the agenda.

Centre unveils project for cashless treatment of road crash victims

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Road Transport and Highways Ministry on Wednesday announced a pilot project to provide cashless treatment of up to ₹1.5 lakh to all victims of road accidents. The pilot project will be undertaken in Chandigarh to establish an "ecosystem for providing timely medical care to the victims of road accidents, including during the golden hour," the Ministry said in a statement.

Victims will be entitled to cashless treatment of up to ₹1.5 lakh per person for a maximum period of seven days from the date of the accident. The scheme will be applicable to all victims of road accidents involving a motor vehicle which occurred on any category of

road. The packages for trauma and polytrauma offered under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana will also be co-opted under the scheme. Cashless treatment will be reimbursed from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund. The golden hour is the period following an injury during which there is highest likelihood of preventing death by providing prompt medical care, according to the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund Act, 2019.

The amendment also provided for "a scheme for cashless treatment of road accident victims" as well as a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund. The National Health Authority will be the implementing agency for the program, in coordination with the police, hospitals and the State Health Agency.

Will oust BJP this election, says Kisan Mahapanchayat

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

"Thousands of farmers, who gathered here on Thursday for a Kisan Mahapanchayat under the leadership of Kisan Morcha banner, resolved to defeat the BJP in the Lok Sabha election."

Alleging that the police mistreated farmers, pro-corporate and anti-farmer, the SKM gave a call for mass protests against the BJP, and to observe "save democracy day" on March 23 against the BJP's decision to field Minister of State of Home Ajay Mishra Terri from the Kheri Lok Sabha seat again. The SKM alleges that Mr. Terri is the "mastermind" behind the killing of four farmers and a journalist at Lakhimpur Kheri during the 2020-21 farmers' protest.

A resolution adopted at the mahapanchayat also decided to expose and

Survey flags mixed implementation of Forest Rights Act

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A fact-finding committee formed by Call for Justice, a Delhi-based organisation, has found "mixed" implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 in Assam across the States.

The States studied by an eight-member committee, led by Justice S.N. Dhingra (retd), over eight months are Assam, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Karnataka.

The team assessed two districts in Assam — Dima Hasao and Haikalandi — and found that the FRA in its current form does not address the unique situation existing in the northeastern States concerning shifting or *Jhum* cultivation. This form of cultivation involving slashing and burning plants on hill slopes needs to be recognised as a practice adapted to the ecological and cultural needs of the forest-dwelling communities. The team's status report made public on Thursday said. In Chhattisgarh, the decision-making process was significantly delayed in Bilhar and Korba, the two districts where the team conducted the study. The FRA implementa-

Delhi-based group Call for Justice says that *Jhum* cultivation should be recognised in the northeast

tion in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli was found to be satisfactory while the process was not completed in Nashik. The team found "substantial advancement" in the implementation of FRA in Kandhamal and Sundargarh districts of Odisha.

However, it was observed that a significant gap existed in the districts between individual forest rights (IFR) and community forest rights (CFR) claims submitted and recognised.

In Karnataka, the team visited Ramnagara and Mysuru districts. According to Ministry of Tribal Affairs data, only 5.17% of the claims filed for IFR were recognised, which needed Karnataka had the highest rate of IFR claims rejection made public on Thursday said. In Chhattisgarh, the decision-making process was significantly delayed in Bilhar and Korba, the two districts where the team conducted the study. The FRA implementa-

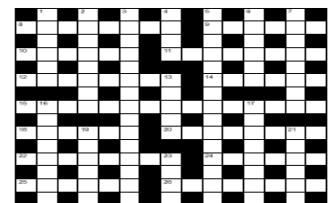


Dissest model: Farmers attending the Kisan Mahapanchayat at the Ramliha Maidan in New Delhi on Thursday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

punish" the BJP for not implementing the Swaminathan Commission formula on minimum support price. "The real homage to M.S. Swaminathan is not conferring the Bharat Ratna on him, but implementing the farmer-friendly recommendations in his report," senior SKM leader Ashok Dhawale said. He said more than one lakh farmers commu-

nication in the first eight years of the Modi regime. "Trade unions' backing Promising their support, 10 Central trade unions, in a message to the mahapanchayat, said the workers were with the farmers after understanding that the "corporate-consumal nexus" was posing great danger to the core values outlined in the Constitution.

CROSSWORD 14123
To solve this puzzle online, get access to our crossword site. @ <https://qrqo.page.link/qrqo>



- Across
- 8 Stately old ladies flutter in parties (8)
- 9 New nurse at first usually in doubt (6)
- 10 'Til for tat is fashionable, bird's back on tattoos (2,4)
- 11 Strict control of press works (4)
- 12 Catholic clergyman must be faithful (8)

- 14 Smart and keen guards at the rear (6)
- 15 Crazy scene and theme in comic (6,3,6)
- 18 Rip off belly from tropical seafood (6)
- 20 One bound by rule constantly trains in this (8)
- 22 Article received in legacy, fantastic medieval weapon (9)
- 24 Lay, short one ending in fourteen lines? (6)
- 25 More shocking depressing tales about corrupt legislature (6)
- 26 Take advances (8)
- Down
- 1 Company beginning to grow and stir up spirit (6)
- 2 Kinky withdrawn, one chance withdrawn (8)
- 3 Coral reef adding new mass at sea (4,4,7)
- 4 In motion spilling a drop of red wine (4)
- 5 Not working, as how a broker without earnings may be? (3,2,10)
- 6 Hats off to mum's condition complicating aspiration (6)
- 7 Crazy football club covers entire ground (8)
- 13 Cycling at that place in compound (5)
- 16 Trade dialogue (8)
- 17 Present, not past, primarily to consider - it's not surprising (2,6)
- 19 Help out family considerably less hard up (4,2)
- 21 Returns slide, bad year ahead (6)
- 23 Jabbers, for example, about power cuts (4)

SUDOKU

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

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Example of sibling bonding

Whenever one is feeling down or sorrowful, wise men say reading of the Ramayana will uplift such a person. Every character in the epic will show all of us the way forward in spiritual and material life and provide relief from sorrow, said Damal S. Ramakrishnan in a discourse.

The Ramayana is a practical guide on various premises, including on how a son should conduct himself, upbringing of children by parents, the equation between a guru and sisya, the connection between a ruler and his subjects and the understanding between a husband and wife. Above all, it showcases sibling bonding.

Rama is a stellar example of the ideal brother, right from birth, to Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrugna. Lakshmana, who would not stop crying in his cradle until he was placed in the same crib as his older brother, was inseparable from Rama. When sage Viswanitra summoned the baby Rama to his yagna, Rama took Lakshmana along with him, but implemented the brotherly bond between the two. When he was summoned to Ayodhya after Rama's banishment Bharata went to the palace of Rama in order to ascertain what had unfolded in his absence. Upon learning of his banishment, and his own impending elevation as ruler, Bharata refused the realm forthwith. He immediately donned the attire of an ascetic and set out to bring Rama, the lawless, back to Ayodhya. Kausalya also joined the growing ranks of people determined to go to the forest. Gaha, the boatman who Rama embraced as his own sibling, was initially suspicious of Bharata's motive; however, upon coming face to face with him, he too became aware of Bharata's nobility.

Centre unveils project for cashless treatment of road crash victims

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Road Transport and Highways Ministry on Wednesday announced a pilot project to provide cashless treatment of up to ₹1.5 lakh to all victims of road accidents.

The pilot project will be undertaken in Chandigarh to establish an “ecosystem for providing timely medical care to the victims of road accidents, including during the golden hour,” the Ministry said in a statement.

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The scheme will be applicable to all victims of road accidents involving a motor vehicle which occurred on any category of

road. The packages for trauma and polytrauma offered under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana will also be co-opted under the scheme. Claims raised by hospitals for providing treatment will be reimbursed from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund.

The golden hour is the period following an injury during which there is highest likelihood of preventing death by providing prompt medical care, according to the Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019.

The amendment also provided for “a scheme for cashless treatment of road accident victims” as well as a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund. The National Health Authority will be the implementing agency for the programme, and will coordinate with the police, hospitals and the State Health Agency.

Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

Solar energy for every home

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

Free electricity through solar rooftops to 1 crore households with project cost of ₹75 thousand crore



Scan for more information

ELECTION COMMISSION PUTS OUT bond buyers, party redemptions

Not paid to the parties

INFRASTRUCTURE, CONSTRUCTION, MINING, PHARMA COMPANIES DOMINATE DONOR LIST

First veil of secrecy is lifted; top 20 donors account for just under half of the total Rs 12,156 crore purchased through electoral bonds 2019-24

NJISHNU DAS DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The first one-veil of secrecy over electoral funding in India lifted days before the notification of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Pushed and prodded by the supreme Court, which struck down the electoral bonds scheme—introduced by the Narendra Modi government in 2019—the Election Commission of India released Thursday the list of those who purchased bonds. Among the biggest contributors that donated money to political parties through the electoral bond scheme are Anil Gargal-promoted Vedanta Ltd, and Mittal-led promoted Bharti Infratech Group-promoted Western UP Power Transmission Co Ltd.

The total amount donated under the scheme from April 1, 2019 to February 15, 2024, was ₹12,156 crore, of which almost half came from the top 20 donors alone, the data provided by the State Bank of India to the EC showed.

What is missing, however, is the unique bond number against which purchase and redemption, which would have revealed who

107 CR TWO MONTHS AFTER VICTORY FMC at No. 2 with Rs 1,609 crore, its bond redemption surged after Assembly win

ALMANI VERMA ANJISHNU DAS
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

REDEMPTION OF electoral bonds by the Mamata Banerjee-led All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), the second largest recipient of such donations to political parties between April 2019 and early 2024, increased after the party swept the West Bengal assembly elections in 2022.

According to data uploaded by the Election Commission, the

PETITIONER LAWYER BHUSHAN says will ask SC to match lists

Not paid to the parties

FUTURE GAMING, MEGHA ENGINEERING, VEDANTA 3 of top 5 donors bought bonds with ED and I-T knocking on their door

5 days after ED attached Rs 409-cr assets, Future Gaming bought bonds worth Rs 100 cr

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY MAHENDERSINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

THREE OF the top five poll bond donors to political parties between 2019 and 2024 are companies which have bought bonds even as they face Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax probes.

These include lottery company Future Gaming, infrastructure firm Megha Engineering and mining giant Vedanta.

The top 20 electoral bond purchasers

From lottery to mining, from thermal power to mobile network—the top donors, according to data uploaded by the Election Commission

Company	Amount (₹ cr)	Year
Future Gaming and Hotel Services Pvt Ltd	₹1,368 cr	2023
Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd	₹966 cr	2023
Qwik Supply Chain Pvt Ltd	₹740 cr	2020
Halkia Energy Ltd	₹577 cr	2021
Vedanta Ltd	₹376 cr	2019
Essel Mining and Industries Ltd	₹225 cr	2020
Western UP Power Transmission Co	₹220 cr	2020
Bharti Infratech Ltd	₹198 cr	2019
MKJ Enterprises Ltd	₹192 cr	2022
Keweenaw Food Park Infra Ltd	₹195 cr	2023

Madanial Ltd ₹886 cr; Yoshoda Super Speciality Hospital ₹302 cr; Utkal Alumina International Ltd ₹345 cr; DLF Commercial Developers Ltd ₹330 cr; Jindal Steel and Power Ltd ₹223 cr; BG Shriek Construction Technology Pvt Ltd ₹195 cr; Diwan Infrastructures Pvt Ltd ₹185 cr; Torrent Power Ltd ₹107 cr; Birla Carbon India Pvt Ltd ₹105 cr.

Reporting by Anjishnu Das, Aditya Goyal, Sukhmani Malik, Shajith P Kunhathy

MOST FIRMS IN AREAS THAT NEED Centre, State licences, approvals

Not paid to the parties

FACING GST HEAT A telling pattern: In pharma, different firms buy bonds on same days

5 days after ED attached Rs 409-cr assets, Future Gaming bought bonds worth Rs 100 cr

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK ANANDHIL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

FROM PHARMACEUTICAL companies buying electoral bonds en masse in 2022 to construction companies lining up to purchase them in 2019 and 2023, the electoral bonds data released by the Election Commission of India reveals a telling pattern: companies in specific sectors bought

the company. On April 2, 2022, the ED attached movable assets worth Rs 409.92 crore in the case.

JINDAL, RUNGTA Mining, steel majors spent ₹825 crore, among them firms awaiting green nod

NIKHIL GHANEKAR & JAY MAZOOMDAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

THE GIANTS of India's mining and steel conglomerates, Vedanta Limited, Rungta Sons Private Limited, Jindal Steel and Power (JSP), Essel Mining and Industries Limited (EMIL) and Dempo—put together their Rs 825 crore worth of electoral bonds, according to data made public by the Election Commission of India.

Of these companies, Rungta Sons Private Limited spent Rs 100 crore, Vedanta Ltd ₹376 crore, EMIL Rs 224.5 crore, JSP, Rs 123 crore and Dempo, Rs 15 crore.

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Party-wise amount received (in ₹ cr)

Party	Amount (₹ cr)
BJP	6,050.51
TMC	1,609.53
INC	1,421.87
BRS	1,214.71
BJD	775.50

INSIDE MEGHA ENGG SPENT ₹140 CR MONTH BEFORE WINNING TENDER FOR TUNNEL IN TRANSPORT SECTOR, INDIGO, ASSOCIATES TOLD DONORS PHARMA, HEALTHCARE COMPANIES ALSO IN LIST

South India, few names have sparked as much controversy and intrigue as Martin, now 50. On his return from Myanmar, he started a lottery business in 1988 when he founded Martin Lottery Agencies Ltd in Coimbatore. What made his name, 'Lottery Martin', and his business a household name was the two-digit lottery craze that swept the region during the period.

Based in Coimbatore, he expanded his operations to Karnataka and Kerala, eventually

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION REPORT Curtail terms of Assemblies, sync with Lok Sabha polls: Kovind panel

Not paid to the parties

Simultaneous polls can be held as early as 2029 if next govt accepts report

Former President Ram Nath Kovind presents the report to President Droupadi Murmu. Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal (2nd from left) is also seen. The panel included (from left) ex-CVC Sanjay Kothari, former Leader of Opposition in RS Ghulam Nabi Azad, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Commission ex-chairperson N K Singh, Lok Sabha ex-Secretary-General Subhash C Kashyap. PTI

DAMINI NATH PRITIKA GOPRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

TO SET in motion the process of simultaneous elections, the high-level committee on one nation, one election chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind has recommended that the term of State Assemblies elected after the first sitting of a newly-elected Lok Sabha be curtailed till the elections to the next Lok Sabha.

In case the government falls in the Centre or any State, the committee has recommended that elections should be held only for the remainder of the

WHAT NEXT? GOVT WILL bring in constitutional amendments. THE PRESIDENT, on the date of the first sitting of new LS, will issue notification. TENURE OF state assemblies will last only till the end of the ongoing LS term. AFTER THAT, Lok Sabha and state assembly elections will be held simultaneously. Local polls will be held within 100 days of these elections.

OF the 47 political parties which gave their opinion to the Ram Nath Kovind-led panel on simultaneous elections, 32 supported the idea, whereas 15 opposed it. Of the 32 in support, all the parties, including those are their BJP allies, or friendly to the party.

Opp opposed, raised concerns on federalism, Constitutional changes

LALMANI VERMA & ANJISHNU DAS
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

OUT OF the 47 political parties which gave their opinion to the Ram Nath Kovind-led panel on simultaneous elections, 32 supported the idea, whereas 15 opposed it. Of the 32 in support, all the parties, including those are their BJP allies, or friendly to the party.

Of the 15 against, five are parties outside the NDA umbrella which are in power in states, including the Congress.

Ex-bureaucrats Sukhbir Sandhu, Gyanesh Kumar new ECs; Adhir dissents

RETIRED IAS officers Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu were appointed new Election Commissioners Thursday, hours after their communication by a three-member committee headed by the Prime Minister. Sandhu, former Chief Secretary of Uttarakhnad, and Kumar retired in January as Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation. He was in the Ministry of Home Affairs at

● **SNAPSHOT**

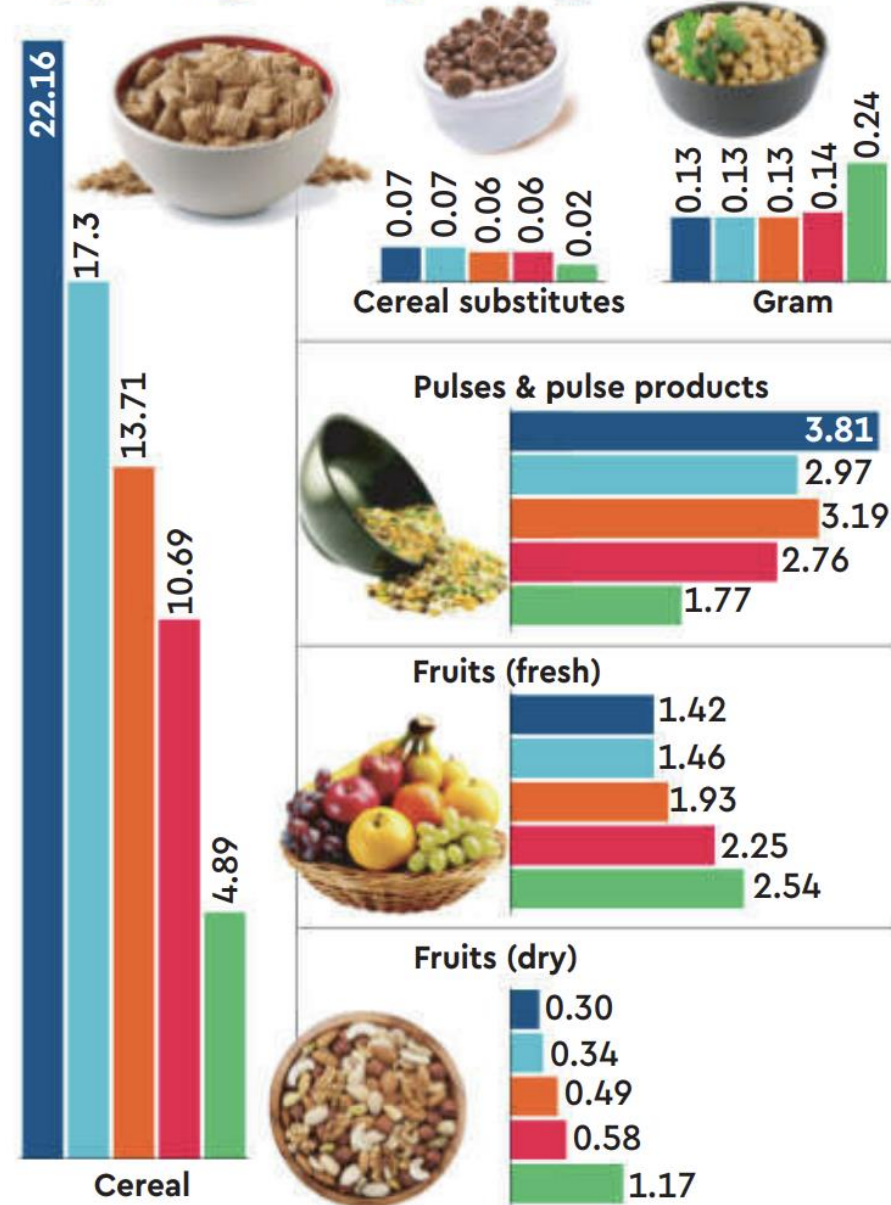
How Bharat spends

McKinsey coined the term 'revenge spending' in 2021 to explain the surge in luxury goods spending immediately after Covid era restrictions were lifted. So what is India spending on now? The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23 by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation gives us a clear picture of the expenditure patterns across India and all the mini Indias within it. Rediffusion's Bharat Lab has culled out key learnings for marketers and product innovators. Glimpses:



CONSUMPTION SHIFTS

(%) 1999-00 2004-05 2009-10 2011-12 2022-23



Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Report by Rediffusion

The High Level Committee on One Nation, One Election submitted its report on holding simultaneous polls to President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday. We look at the recommendations and the Constitutional amendments that will be needed to make them work



5-6

elections are now held in a year according to the high-level committee

1957

saw simultaneous polls held in Bihar, Bombay, Madras, Mysore, Punjab, UP & West Bengal

1967

was the last year when elections to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies were held simultaneously

● Recommendations of the committee

THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE (HLC) headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind has recommended that the Constitution be amended to enable simultaneous elections in two steps. In the first step, simultaneous elections would be held to the Lok Sabha and the state Assemblies. For this, no ratification by the states will be required for the constitutional amendment. This would synchronise the electoral cycles

of the central and state governments and bring back simultaneous elections.

In the second step, local body polls will be synchronised with elections to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies in such a way that polls to the municipalities and the panchayats are held within 100 days of the elections to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies. This will require ratification by not less than one-half of the states.

● How will the proposal be implemented?

THE HLC HAS suggested that an implementation group be constituted to look into the execution of its recommendations. For meeting logistical requirements, the Election Commission of India will plan and estimate in advance, in consultation with the State Election Commissions, and take steps for the deployment of manpower, polling personnel, security forces, electronic voting

machines etc. For preparation of single electoral roll and electoral photo identity cards for use in elections to all the three tiers of government, the Constitution will have to be amended, so that the Election Commission of India can prepare a single electoral roll and election ID in consultation with the State Election Commissions. These amendments will require ratification by not less than one-half of the states.

● Need for simultaneous polls

ACCORDING TO THE HLC report, the country now sees five to six elections in a year — if municipalities and panchayat elections are also included, the number of elections will increase manifold. Frequent elections burden the government exchequer with additional expenditure. If the expenditure incurred by political parties is also added, these figures will be even higher.

Asynchronous elections cause uncertainty and instability, thwarting supply chains, business investments and economic growth. Frequent imposition of the Model Code of Conduct once poll dates are announced causes policy paralysis and slows down the pace of the developmental programmes. Staggered polls induce 'voters' fatigue' and present a significant challenge in ensuring their participation.

● What happens in case of a hung House?

IN THE EVENT of a hung House, no-confidence motion, or any such event, fresh elections may be held to constitute the new House. Where fresh polls are held for the Lok Sabha, the committee has recommended that the tenure will be only for the unexpired term of the immediately preceding full term of the Lok Sabha and the expiration of this period shall lead to the dissolution of the House. Where fresh elections are held for the state Assemblies, then such a new Assembly unless sooner dissolved, shall continue up to the end of the full term of the Lok Sabha.

● Simultaneous polls not new in India

SIMULTANEOUS POLLS WERE held in the seven states of Bihar, Bombay, Madras, Mysore, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal in 1957 following efforts made by the central government, state governments, and political parties along with the ECI. Simultaneous polls were in vogue until the fourth general elections of 1967. But as successive central governments used constitutional provisions to dismiss state governments before the end of their term, and as coalition governments kept collapsing, polls at different times through the year became the norm.

● How early can such polls be held?

A photograph showing a lush green cornfield in the foreground. In the background, there is a bioenergy processing facility with several large green cylindrical silos and a central building with a blue roof. To the right, a white wind turbine is visible against a clear blue sky.

BioCNG Production from Dung

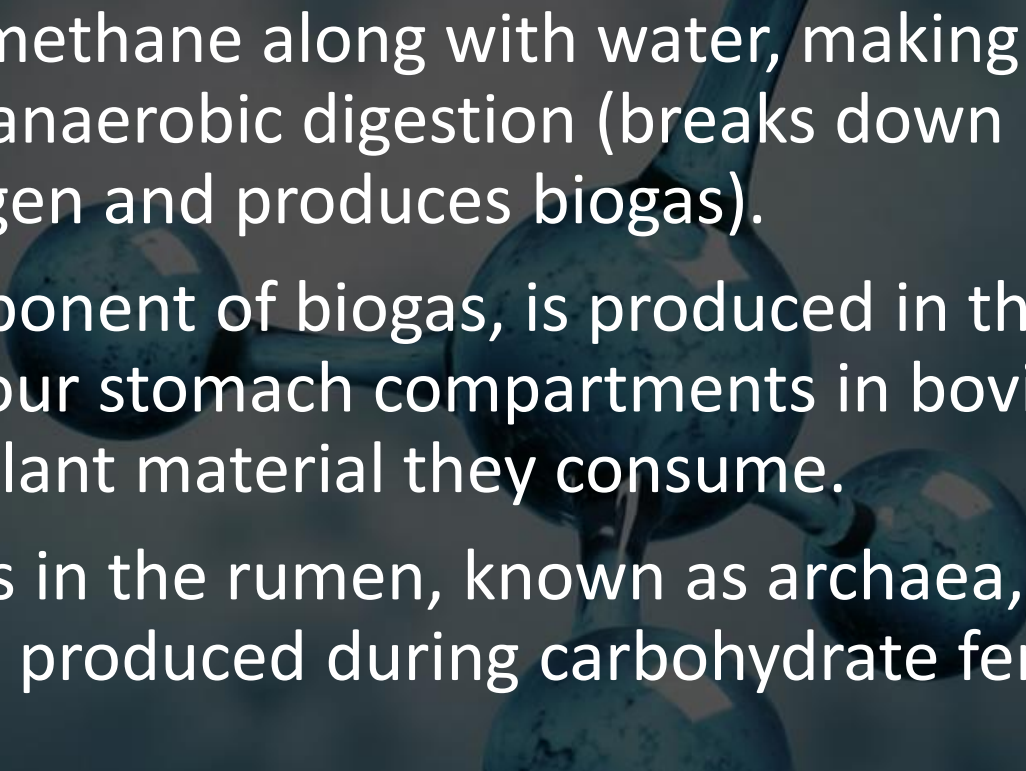
- **Banaskantha District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union, Gujarat are converting dung into Bio CNG (compressed natural gas) and fertiliser, supplementing farmers' income. This initiative addresses waste management while creating new revenue streams for dairy farmers.**
- **The BioCNG outlet on the Deesa-Tharad highway in Gujarat's Banaskantha district is a pioneering initiative, being India's first and only gas-filling station operating on dung sourced from cattle and buffaloes.**

-

How are Farmers Harnessing the Value of Dung?

Dung Facts:

- An average adult bovine animal discharges 15-20 kg of fresh dung daily, while calves give out 5-10 kg.
- A bovine refers to a **domestic animal of the species *Bos taurus* (cattle) or *Bubalus bubalis* (water buffalo)**.
- Fresh dung contains 80-85% water; one kg weighs hardly 200 grams on drying.

- 
- Fresh dung contains methane along with water, making it essential for biogas production in anaerobic digestion (breaks down biodegradable material without oxygen and produces biogas).
 - Methane, a key component of biogas, is produced in the rumen of bovines (the first of four stomach compartments in bovines) during the fermentation of plant material they consume.
 - Bacteria-like microbes in the rumen, known as archaea, utilise carbon dioxide and hydrogen produced during carbohydrate fermentation to generate methane.

• **Consider the following: (2019)**

1. Carbon monoxide

2. Methane

3. Ozone

4. Sulphur dioxide

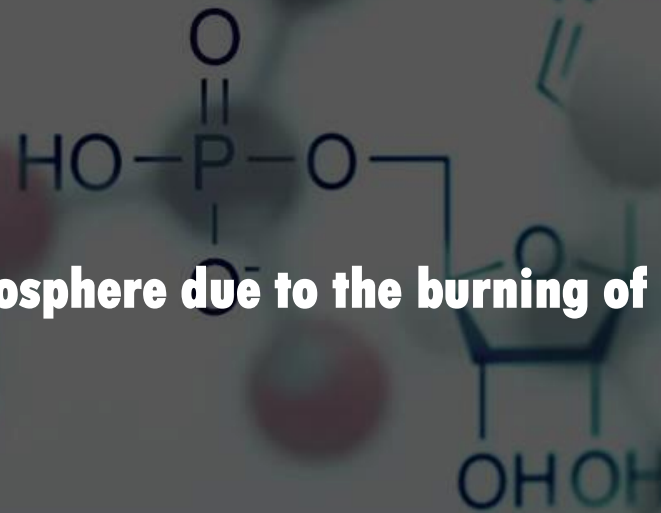
• **Which of the above are released into the atmosphere due to the burning of crop/biomass residue?**

• **(a) 1 and 2 only**

(b) 2, 3 and 4 only

(c) 1 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4





PB-SHABD

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting launched the Prasar Bharti - Shared Audio Visuals for Broadcast and Dissemination (PB-SHABD), a news-sharing service from Prasar Bharati, aimed at transforming news dissemination in India.

PB-SHABD will serve as a single-point source of news content for smaller news organisations lacking extensive networks.

SHABD service is offered free for the first year, providing news stories in major Indian languages across fifty categories.



The minister highlighted the revamped platforms for **Doordarshan News** and **Akashvani News**, and updated News on the Air mobile app, emphasising their role in **democratising access to news and fostering collaboration within the media industry.**

The background of the image is a light gray color, overlaid with a dense pattern of diagonal streaks. These streaks are in various shades of green, blue, and purple, creating a sense of motion and energy. The streaks vary in thickness and length, some appearing as thin lines and others as thicker, more prominent bands. The overall effect is a vibrant, abstract design that frames the central text.

Samudrayaan Mission

- The minister of Earth Sciences confirmed that the **Samudrayaan mission** is scheduled to explore the bed of the ocean by **2025 end**.





Ministry of Earth Sciences
Government of India

DEEP OCEAN MISSION

EXPLORING THE DEEP OCEAN - THE FINAL FRONTIER ON PLANET EARTH

Oceans are the key to sustenance of life on our planet. They are the driving force for monsoons, flywheel of climate, vital source of natural resources and act as a trigger for ocean hazards. Oceans contribute immensely to "Blue Economy" through sectors such as Fisheries, Renewable Energy, Oil & Gas, Minerals, Shipping, Tourism, etc. The lives and livelihoods of about 350 million population living along the 7500 km long coastline of India are intricately linked to the Oceans. Climate change and anthropogenic impacts are threatening ocean health and biodiversity. Yet, 95% of the deep ocean remains unexplored.

India's Deep Ocean Mission will contribute to our understanding of the oceans, realising our "Blue Economy" vision and managing our Oceans sustainably. Being undertaken at a cost of ₹4077 Crore over the next 5 years, the Mission will be spearheaded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences in synergy with other Central Ministries, National Institutions, Universities and Industry.

Technologies for Autonomous Underwater Vehicles and Deep Sea Mining

Manned submersible capable of diving up to 6000 m to the bottom of the ocean.

Mining tools to explore 300 MMT of valuable metal deposits in a 75,000 square kilometre area in the Indian Ocean sea bed.



Deep Ocean Survey and Exploration

Construction of a state-of-the-art research vessel to explore hydrothermal deposits in mid-ocean ridges for precious metals like Copper, Zinc, Aluminum, Silver, and Platinum, etc.



Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services

Accurate future projection of sea level change and extreme events like cyclones, storm surges and waves to safeguard our coastal population, economy and infrastructure.

A suite of state-of-the-art ocean models and an improved network of ocean observations based on deep sea gliders, deep Argos, etc.



Carnivorous Sponges

Exploration and Conservation of Deep Sea Biodiversity

Inventorization of deep sea fauna and flora including microbes.

Products of Industrial importance from the deep-sea microbes.

Advanced marine station for Ocean Biology

Translate research in ocean biology and engineering into industrial application and product development through establishment of on-site business incubator facilities.



Energy and freshwater from the Ocean

Engineering capabilities to scale up offshore Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) powered energy generation and desalination plant for clean energy and fresh water.




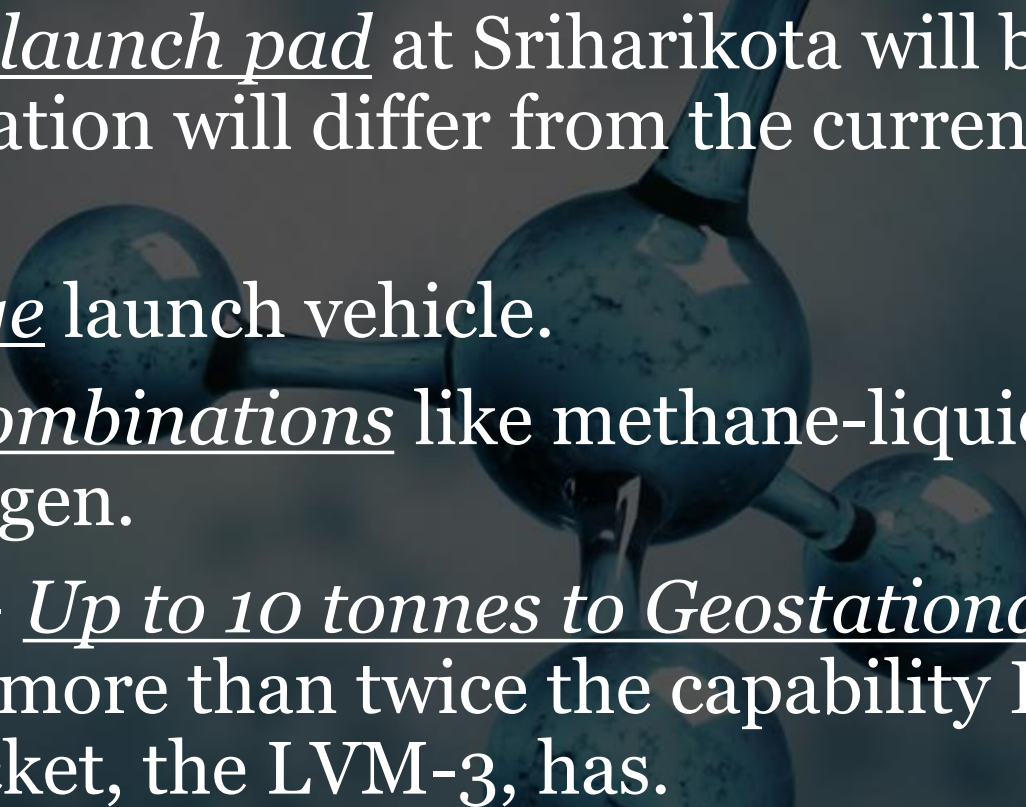
SAMUDRAYAN

India's first manned ocean mission launched

- India joins elite club of selected nations including **USA, Russia, Japan, France & China**
- Part of ₹6,000 crore Deep Ocean Mission, will send submarines with 3 persons to **a depth of about 6000 m**
- Will enable exploration of ocean resources for **drinking water, clean energy & blue economy**

Project SOORYA

- 
- *ISRO has formalised a project team, internally named 'SOORYA', to start building the New Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV).*
 - **Aim** – To develop NGLV and thereby to build the country's own space station and send Indians to the Moon.
 - *NGLV will be India's biggest rocket and is to be ready by 2034-35.*

- 
- **Requirement** – 3rd launch pad at Sriharikota will be necessary as NGLV's configuration will differ from the current class of rockets.
 - **Features** – A 3-stage launch vehicle.
 - **Fuel** – Green fuel combinations like methane-liquid oxygen or kerosene-liquid oxygen.
 - **Payload capacity** – Up to 10 tonnes to Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO) that is more than twice the capability India's current heaviest rocket, the LVM-3, has.

Cost-competitive rocket –
Reusability reduces the launch costs, of around \$1,900 per kg to Low Earth Orbit (LEO), compared to \$3,000/kg for an expendable configuration.



In line with India's Space Vision 2047 – It helps in achieving the goals of building a space station by 2035 and eventually sending Indians to Moon.




Operation 'Rising Sun'

It is a pan-India operation of Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) against the smuggling of foreign-origin gold.



The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) is the apex anti-smuggling agency of India, working under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC), Ministry of Finance.

Functions -Detecting and curbing smuggling of contraband, including drug trafficking and illicit international trade in wildlife and environmentally sensitive items



Combating commercial frauds related to international trade and evasion of Customs duty

The background is a dark blue field filled with a complex pattern of teal and yellow-green dots and lines. The dots are of various sizes and are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct clusters. The lines are thin and irregular, weaving through the dots and creating a sense of movement and connectivity. The overall effect is that of a digital or network map.

Sabroom Land Port

Prime Minister has recently inaugurate the 3rd land port in Sabroom, Tripura

Land Port Sabroom is strategically located in Tripura along the international border between *India and Bangladesh*.

It will be constructed by the *Land ports authority of India*.

Sabroom is directly connected to *Chittagong port of Bangladesh* through *Maitree bridge on River Feni* .

Land ports is an area on an international border that includes parts of highways, railways, and other roads.

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By Bhunesh Sir

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- ✓ COMPLETE NOTES (PDF)
- ✓ 360° DEGREE EXAMS COVERED

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A group of people are clapping in a dimly lit room. The focus is on the hands and forearms of several individuals, with some wearing watches. The background is blurred, showing more people and a window. An orange horizontal bar is located in the top left corner.

Thank you
guys.
