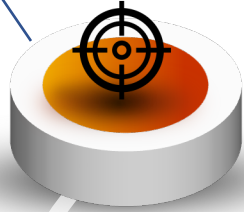


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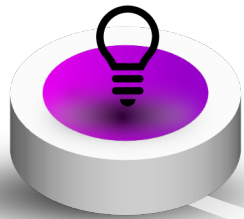
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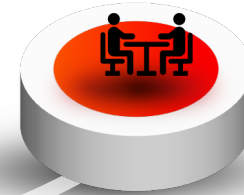
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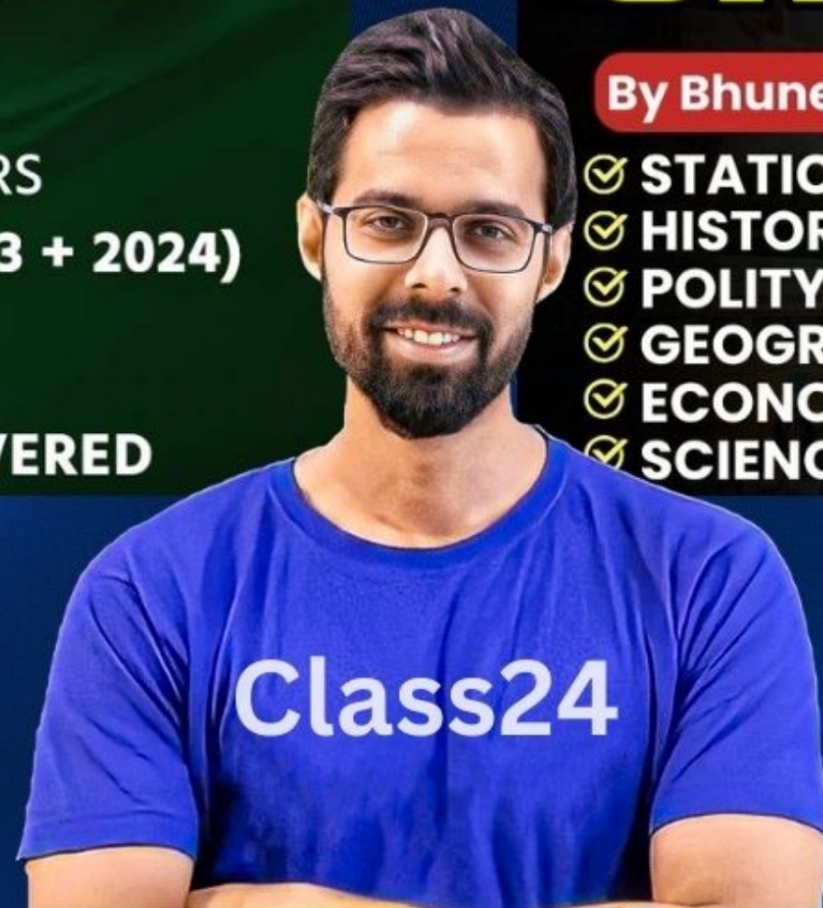
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“**Excellence** is not a gift,
but a **skill** that takes practice.

We do not act ‘**rightly**’
because we are ‘**excellent**’,
in fact we achieve ‘**excellence**’
by acting ‘**rightly.**’”

Plato

Goalcast



Chennai ▸ Coimbatore ▸ Bangalore ▸ Hyderabad ▸ Mumbai ▸ New Delhi ▸ Visakhapatnam ▸ Thiruvananthapuram ▸ Kochi ▸ Kavaratti ▸ Mangaluru ▸ Tiruchirappalli ▸ Kolkata ▸ Guwahati ▸ Shillong ▸ Dispur ▸ Imphal ▸ Aizawl ▸ Agartala ▸ Itanagar ▸ Jammu ▸ Ladakh ▸ Leh ▸ Srinagar ▸ Bhopal ▸ Raipur ▸ Gandhinagar ▸ Lucknow ▸ Patna

ROW OVER SELECTION PROCESS
SC dismisses plea to stay EC appointments
NEWS ▸ PAGE 4

GAZA CONFLICT
At UN, U.S. calls for immediate ceasefire
WORLD ▸ PAGE 14

GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD HABITAT
Panel to study scope of altering power lines
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An instrument to build peace
This year's theme points to the need for security, environmental integrity
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CHANGE OF GUARD
Dhoni hands over the reins to Rutaraj
SPORT ▸ PAGE 16

INSIDE
BJP State chief in first list of T.N. candidates
CHENNAI
The BJP on Thursday fielded some of its prominent leaders, including state president K. Anantha Kumar, Union Minister of State L. Murugan and former Telangana Governor Tamisasa Sundararajan, in the upcoming Lok Sabha election in Tamil Nadu. ▸ PAGE 2

PM is trying to crush Congress financially: Sonia
NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi is making a "systematic effort" to crush the Congress financially and deny a level playing field in the Lok Sabha election, Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi alleged on Thursday. ▸ PAGE 5

Environment Ministry tightens bioplastics rules
NEW DELHI
The Environment Ministry has introduced a "new" rule to make it easier for manufacturers to label their products as biodegradable, introducing a stipulation that they must not leave any microplastic behind. ▸ PAGE 6

Sri Lanka close to IMF moratorium on debt to India
COLOMBO
Sri Lanka is close to finalising a debt treatment plan with India and the Paris Club, sources familiar with negotiations said, pointing to a likely moratorium of up to 10 years and a reduced interest rate during the repayment period. ▸ PAGE 14

MEIL's ₹584 crore to BJP is top donation to any party

Data released by the EC show that the company donated ₹195 crore to the Bharat Rashtira Samithi and ₹85 crore to the DMK. Trinamool received ₹542 crore from lottery magnate Martin's firm

Yignesh Radhakrishnan
Jasmin Nihalani
Rebecca Rose Yarghese
CHENNAI

H yderabad-based Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Services Ltd. (MEIL) donated ₹584 crore to the BJP — the most by a donor for any single party. The company also donated ₹195 crore to the Bharat Rashtira Samithi and ₹85 crore to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Its subsidiary, Western U.P. Power Transmission Company Ltd., donated ₹100 crore to the Congress, followed by ₹80 crore to the BJP, data released by the Election Commission on Thursday revealed. The commission released this data from the State Bank of India. All the top 19 companies

Donors and beneficiaries
The table lists the top three donors through the electoral bond scheme and the parties they donated to the most.

Donor/Company	Party	% of total donations
Future Gaming and Hotel Services	Trinamool	39.6%
DMK	DMK	26.7%
BJP	BJP	20%
Megha Engineering (MEIL)	BJP	20%
BJP	BJP	13.9%
Qwik Supply Chain	Shiv Sena	13.1%

Source: EC

(by total donations through electoral bonds) donated portions of the bonds to the BJP. Lottery magnate Santiago Martin's Future Gaming and Hotel Services PR, the highest electoral bond donor overall, donated ₹542 crore to the Trinamool Congress Party (TMC) through this route. The data pertain to bonds purchased and en-

— the third biggest donor through poll bonds — gave ₹375 crore to the BJP and ₹25 crore to the Shiv Sena. (Three Reliance Group companies own 50% of Qwik.)

Haldia Energy donated bonds worth ₹281 to the Trinamool and ₹81 crore to the BJP. Vedanta Ltd. gave bonds worth ₹229 crore to the BJP, followed by ₹125 crore to the Congress.

In an affidavit, SBI chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara said the information shared with the poll body included the names of the purchasers of the bonds, denominations, and specific numbers of individual bonds, the names of the parties that received the funds through the bonds, the last four digits of the bank account number of the donor, and the nominations and numbers of the bonds. The SBI, however, said the complete bank account numbers and KYC details

cashied between April 12, 2019 and January 24, 2024, for which information has been released to the public. Of the bonds worth ₹10.26 crore purchased by Future Gaming and Hotel Services, 39.6% went to the Trinamool, followed by the DMK (₹503 crore), and the YSR Congress Party (₹154 crore). The BJP received ₹100 crore from the firm.

RELATED REPORTS
▸ PAGE 8

All details about poll bonds handed over to EC, SBI tells SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The State Bank of India (SBI) on Thursday said details regarding the purchase and encashment of electoral bonds in possession to the Election Commission (EC) for publication on its website. In an affidavit, SBI chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara said the information shared with the poll body included the names of the purchasers of the bonds, denominations, and specific numbers of individual bonds, the names of the parties that received the funds through the bonds, the last four digits of the bank account number of the donor, and the nominations and numbers of the bonds. The SBI, however, said the complete bank account numbers and KYC details

were not disclosed, as making them public may compromise the cyber security of the bank accounts. Similarly, the KYC details of purchasers were also not made public for "security reasons", it said.

EC gets details
The SBI assured the court that the KYC details were necessary for identifying the parties who received the funds through the bonds. On March 18, a five-judge bench asked the bank to be "candid and forthcoming" in providing information not yet directed it to make a "complete disclosure" of the data to the poll body.

REPORT, Q&A ON
▸ PAGE 5

BJP gov't. not yet fascist, but is getting there: Kamal

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan, who recently joined the INDIA bloc, said the 2024 Lok Sabha election was a crucial one as it would determine whether the country was going to progress or regress. Speaking to senior presspersons of *The Hindu* on Thursday, Mr. Haasan said the Narendra Modi-led government was not yet fascist, but it was getting there.



REPORT, Q&A ON
▸ PAGE 5

Bogged down



Making way: The Border Roads Organisation clears snow on the Leh-Manali highway, in Malinali on Thursday. ANI

Tamil Nadu Governor 'defying the Supreme Court', says CJJI

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud on Thursday slammed Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi for "defying the Supreme Court" by refusing to re-appoint David Mannepeta Kazhagan (DMK) leader K. Ponmudy as Minister despite an apex court order suspending his conviction in a disproportionate assets case. The court gave the Governor overruling to "set the constitutional position right". Mr. Ravi has refused to administer oath to Mr. Ponmudy as Higher Education Minister, saying it is against "constitutional morality". The Governor has argued that the court's stay of the conviction of Mr. Ponmudy is a "positive manner tomorrow, we will pass an order... We thought of passing an order right now, but we want to give you an opportunity to act in accordance with law. We will give you overnight, Chief Justice Chandrachud, heading a three-judge Bench, made the stand of the court clear to Mr. Venkataraman. The Attorney-General



of the State does not follow the Constitution, what does the State do except come to a constitutional court. We don't know who had advised the Governor, but the advice was not in accordance with the law. D.Y. CHANDRACHUD, Chief Justice of India.

after the Governor wrote back refusing to play ball except come to a constitutional morality. "Does the Governor mean the Supreme Court also acted against constitutional morality by suspending his conviction?" senior advocate A.M. Singhania asked the Governor. "No disrespect" Senior advocate P. Wilson, for Tamil Nadu, said the Governor had no individual discretion in the appointment of a state minister or suitability of a candidate. The Governor has to follow the advice of the Chief Minister-led State Cabinet under Article 164(G) of the Constitution," Mr. Singhania said. "If we have heard both sides and we are inclined at this stage [to grant protection]," the court said.

ED arrests Delhi CM Kejriwal in excise policy case

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

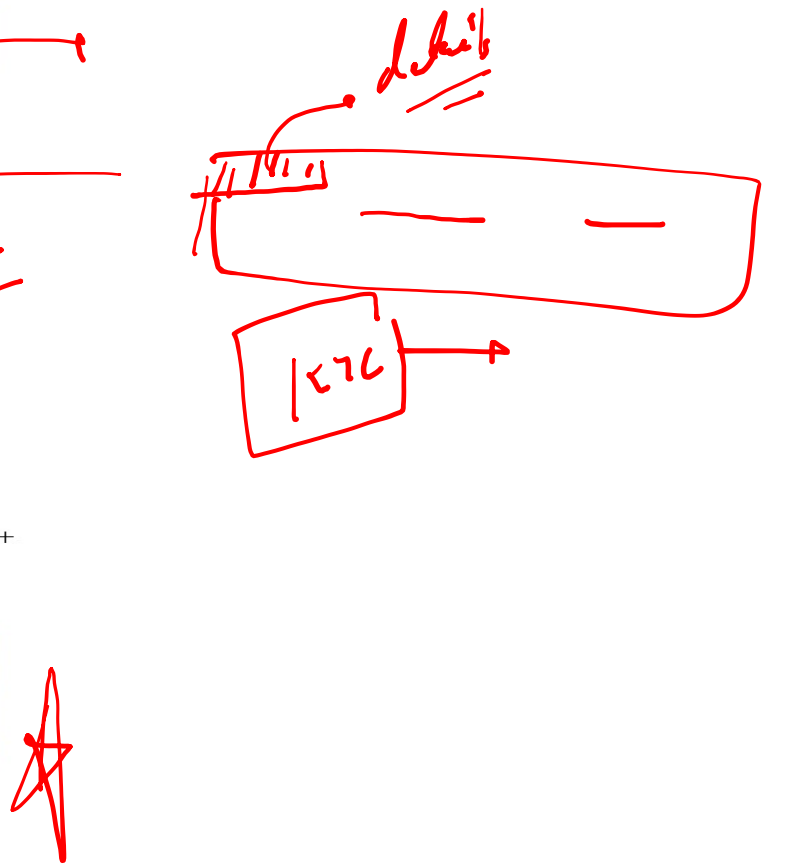
The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a government notification of March 20 establishing a Fact Checking Unit that intends to curb fake news or misinformation regarding the "business" of the Centre. The Bench said the stay will be in force until a third judge of the Bombay High Court took a final call on the validity of provisions of Rule 30(D)(v) of the Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal being taken away from his residence by the ED officials on Thursday. PTI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI
Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener Arvind Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday, on charges of corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the State government's excise policy for 2021-22, which was later scrapped.

Mr. Kejriwal will be produced before a special court on Friday. The AAP said that it has moved the Supreme Court for quashing the arrest, and has asked for an urgent hearing. Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court declined to grant any immediate protection to Mr. Kejriwal for his arrest. The High Court posted the AAP leader's application seeking protection for a further hearing on April 19. Mr. Kejriwal's main petition challenging the summons is scheduled for hearing. "We have heard both sides and we are inclined at this stage [to grant protection]," the court said.

INDIA BLOC PROTESTS
▸ PAGE 4



ED arrests Delhi CM Kejriwal in excise policy case



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal being taken away from his residence by the ED officials on Thursday. PTI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener Arvind Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday, on charges of corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the State government's excise policy for 2021-22, which was later scrapped.

Mr. Kejriwal will be produced before a special court on Friday.

ED officials, accompanied by Delhi policemen, turned up at Mr. Kejriwal's official residence in the evening. As the news of ED action spread, State Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj rushed to the spot, but he was not allowed in.

Heavy surveillance

Rapid Action Force and Central Reserve Police Force units were deployed outside the premises. The police also mounted surveillance in the area using drones, in anticipation of

Mr. Kejriwal will be produced before a special court on Friday.

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Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court declined to grant any immediate protection to Mr. Kejriwal from coercive action in the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

The High Court posted the AAP leader's application seeking protection for a further hearing on April 22, when Mr. Kejriwal's main petition challenging the summons is scheduled for hearing. "We have heard both sides and we are not inclined at this stage [to grant protection]," the court said.

police also mounted surveillance in the area using drones, in anticipation of protests. Following a brief round of questioning, the agency arrested Mr. Kejriwal. Around 9.15 p.m., AAP supporters staged a protest. The Delhi police detained some of the protesters.

Mr. Kejriwal is the fourth AAP leader to have been arrested in the case, after former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Rajya Sabha Member Sanjay Singh and the former party's communications in-charge Vijay Nair.

Delhi's former Health Minister Satyendar Kumar Jain was arrested in another case.

INDIA BLOC PROTESTS

» PAGE 4



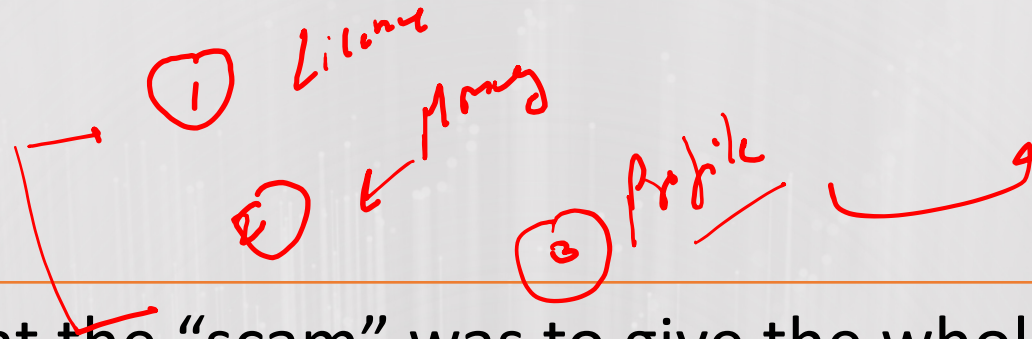
- **Key features of the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22**

- Under the new liquor policy, the city was divided into 32 zones inviting firms to bid on the zones.
 - Instead of individual licences, bidding was done zone-by-zone.
- Also, licenses for 849 retail vends were issued through open bidding by the Excise department in 2021.
 - Under the old liquor policy, Delhi had 864 liquor shops, including 475 run by the four government agencies, and 389 were private.
- For the first time, shops were allowed to offer discounts to retail customers and reduced the number of dry days to three from 21.
- The new policy also had a provision for home delivery of liquor. It even proposed lowering the drinking age from 25 to 21.
- It also suggested the opening of shops till 3 am. However, these were not implemented.

- **What is the Delhi excise policy case?**
- Two cases, one by CBI and one on alleged money laundering being investigated by ED, have been registered in relation to the excise policy.
- The case arose out of a report submitted by [Delhi](#) Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena in July 2022, pointing to alleged procedural lapses in the formulation of the policy.
- The report said “arbitrary and unilateral decisions” taken by then Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia in his capacity as Excise Minister had resulted in “financial losses to the exchequer” estimated at more than Rs 580 crore.

- It alleged that “kickbacks...received by the AAP Delhi government and AAP leaders” from owners and operators of alcohol businesses for preferential treatment such as discounts and extensions in licence fee, waiver on penalties and relief due to disruptions caused by the [Covid-19](#) pandemic, etc. were used to “influence” the Assembly elections held in Punjab and [Goa](#) in early 2022. The AAP went on to form the government in Punjab.

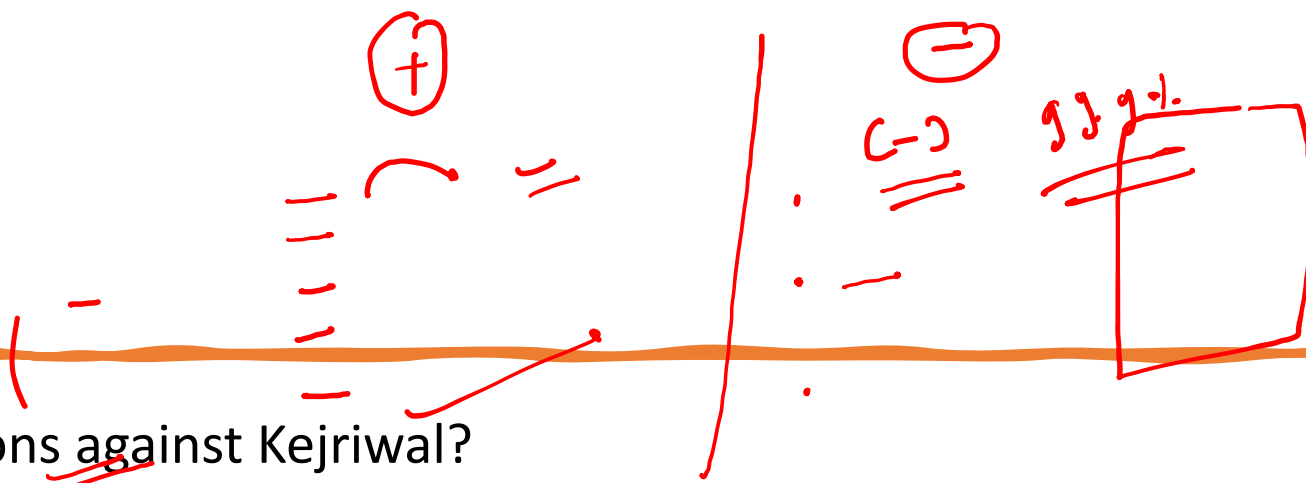
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The ED alleged that the “scam” was to give the wholesale liquor business to private entities and fix a 12% margin, for a 6% kickback. In its first prosecution complaint in November 2021, the ED said the policy was “formulated with deliberate loopholes” that “promoted cartel formations through the back door” to benefit AAP leaders.

The ED also alleged that AAP leaders received kickbacks to the tune of Rs 100 crore from a group of individuals identified as the “South Group”.

-
- Recently, K Kavitha, Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader and daughter of former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, was arrested allegedly for being part of this 'South Group'.
 - Others alleged to be part of the group include [Ongole](#) MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy's son Raghav Magunta, P Sarath Chandra Reddy, son of P V Ramprasad Reddy and co-founder of [Hyderabad](#)-based Aurobindo Pharma.
 - According to the ED, this group “secured uninhibited access, undue favours, attained stakes in established wholesale businesses and multiple retail zones (over and above what was allowed in the policy)”.



- And what are the accusations against Kejriwal?
- It was after Kavitha's arrest that the Enforcement Directorate alleged — for the first time — that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was a conspirator in the case, on March 18
- The summons, Singhvi said, also don't disclose the "details of the reason", whether he is a "witness or a suspect", and are devoid of any information or document required from the CM.

the ED has sent another summons on March 16 and he (Kejriwal) apprehends he will be arrested without any cause or reason.

IN BRIEF



CBI and Europol officials sign working arrangement

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) on Thursday signed a working arrangement, establishing cooperative relations between the law enforcement authorities of India and the Europol. The working arrangement was signed by Europol Executive Director Catherine De Bolle and CBI Director Praveen Sood during a virtual event, in the presence of senior CBI and Europol officials. "This arrangement promotes direct cooperation between both organisations to build on their respective mandates, strategies and to explore the potential for synergies," said the agency.

Influencers shall refrain from endorsing betting platforms

The Union Information & Broadcasting Ministry on Thursday cautioned social media influencers against endorsing offshore online betting and gambling platforms, stating that failure to comply with the advisory might lead to the removal of social media posts and accounts. It said such advertisements had financial and socio-economic implications on consumers, particularly the youth. The online advertisement intermediaries have also been advised not to target such promotional content towards the Indian audience. The Ministry has also asked them to conduct sensitisation efforts among their users.

SC stays govt. notification of establishing fact check unit

The court's stay will operate till the third judge in the Bombay High Court decides the question of validity of provisions of Rule 30(b)(v) of the Information Technology, Rules, 2021

Krishnadas Rajagopal NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a government notification of March 20 establishing the Press Information Bureau's Fact Checking Unit (PIB FCU) to act as a deterrent against the creation and dissemination of fake news or misinformation regarding the "business" of the Centre. The order was passed by a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on petitions filed by the Editors Guild of India (EGI) and stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra.



The Rule coerces intermediaries to execute a regime of self-censored censorship of content relating to the business of the Central govt. KUNAL KAMRA Politician

the business of the Central government need protection from misinformation and fake content," Mr. Khambata asked. He said individuals needed more protection from fake content. Mr. Khambata informed the Bench that the Centre had assured the High Court on April 27 last year that it would not implement Rule 30(b)(v) until a final decision was taken by the court. He pointed to the assurance of the March 20 notification barely days before the Lok Sabha polls were due to start. Advocate Shadan Farasat, for the EGI, said implementation of the FCU would ensure that only the Centre would have a monopoly over the truth.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta referred to several instances in the past when fake news had proliferated on social media. He said the statutory mechanism was found inadequate to check the dissemination of false content. He said the social media intermediaries had not challenged the Rule. Mr. Kamra, in his petition, argued that the stay of the Rule operated to "muzzle speech against the Central government".

By threatening intermediaries with the loss of their statutory safe harbours should they fail to take down content that the Central government's FCU identifies as fake, false or misleading, the Rule coerces intermediaries to execute a regime of self-imposed censorship of online content relating to the business of the Central government," the petition argued. It said the intermediaries, who were profit making commercial enterprises, would choose to bend rather than risk civil or criminal liability for third-party content on their online platforms.

Panel to study scope of altering power lines in bustard habitat

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday constituted an expert committee to balance the conservation and protection of the endangered Great Indian Bustard bird population with the country's international commitments to promote renewable sources of energy.



Great Indian Bustard

The large-winged birds are on the brink of extinction, and one of the causes is the frequent collision with high-powered power cables running adjacent to its core habitats in Gujarat and Rajasthan. A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said a blanket direction given by the top court in April 2019 for moving high voltage and low voltage power cables as priority required "re-calibration". The court appointed the Director, Wildlife Institute of India, wildlife and forest laws sustainable development goals and conservation of the birds. It could recommend additional measures to identify additional priority areas. The panel has to file its report in the top court on or before July 31.

The committee would also include Ashok Kumar Rajput, Member, Power Systems, Central Electrical Authority, and P.C. Gaig, Chief Operating Officer, Central Transmission Utility of India Limited as special invitees. The remit of the panel would be to determine the scope, extent and feasibility of underground and overhead electric lines in areas identified as priority spots for the birds in Rajasthan and Gujarat. The committee would explore alternatives to balance sustainable development goals and conservation of the birds. It could recommend additional measures to identify additional priority areas. The panel has to file its report in the top court on or before July 31.

Thankful for ₹13,000 cr. but need more, Kerala tells SC

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The State of Kerala on Thursday thanked the Union government for ₹13,000 crore but said it will continue with its legal battle in the Supreme Court for an additional amount to which it is entitled. "I am very thankful that ₹13,000 crore has come to us. But we are talking about an additional amount to which we are entitled," senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the State, submitted before a Bench of Justices Surya Kant and K.V. Viswanathan.

The State had sought a total of about ₹24,000 crore to tide over a looming financial emergency.

Opening his submissions in a suit filed against the Union government for unduly interfering and placing limits on Kerala's borrowing powers, Mr. Sibal said the State immediately needed a little over ₹13,000 crore more. The State had sought a total of about ₹24,000 crore before March 31 to tide over a looming financial emergency. The focus of the hearing on Thursday was Kerala's push for some interim relief. Mr. Sibal argued that Kerala has a long history of fiscal deficit. A note submitted by the Attorney General in the apex court had said the "fiscal edifice of Kerala has been diagnosed with several cracks". The Centre had said Kerala's poor financial indicators pointed to a "lack of proper management of its public finances". The note highlighted that debts run by States affect the credit rating of the whole country.

At IFFI last year, govt. denied nod to screen four foreign films

Aroon Deep NEW DELHI

The Union government denied permission to screen four films set in the Gaza Strip, Turkey, Hungary, and Bhutan at the 54th International Film Festival of India held in Goa last November, according to records from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. The films are A Gaza Weekend, a satire directed by Basal Khalil set in a post-epidemic Israel where the Gaza strip becomes the safest place in the Levant; Explanation for Everything, a Hungarian drama directed by Gábor Réisz; The Monk And The Girl, a satire directed by Pawo Chökyi Dorji, featuring mock elections in Bhutan; and Damiyori, a drama by Nehir Tuna about a teenager sent to a residential Islamic seminary by his father.

Ministry of Environment tightens rules on bioplastics

Jacob Koshy NEW DELHI

The Environment Ministry has introduced rules that make it harder for makers of disposable plastic waste government waiver as "biodegradable", introducing a stipulation that they must not let any microplastics be released. Biodegradable plastic is defined as the two broad kinds of mechanical and chemical biodegradable plastics. Biodegradable plastic is defined as the two broad kinds of mechanical and chemical biodegradable plastics. Biodegradable plastic is defined as the two broad kinds of mechanical and chemical biodegradable plastics.



Microplastics are reported as a major source of pollution.

The current standards in India only recommend that done to determine the level of microplastics. The committee would explore alternatives to balance sustainable development goals and conservation of the birds. It could recommend additional measures to identify additional priority areas. The panel has to file its report in the top court on or before July 31.

TH CROSSWORD 14129 (set by Dr. X)

Crossword puzzle grid with clues listed on the left and right sides.

To solve this puzzle online, get access to our crossword site. @ https://www.thehindu.com/crossword

SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers 1-9.

Solution to previous puzzle. Solution to yesterday's Sudoku.

FAITH Siva's supreme status

Kumaraguruvar was born in a village called Kalasapuram near Set Vaikuntham in the Tirunelveli region of Tamil Nadu. He was unable to speak, and so when he was five years old, his parents took him to Tiruchendur. The temple priest waved a flower before the child and asked, "What do I hold in my hands?" The child replied, "Poo." That is the Tamil word for flower. The child then composed Kandar Kali Venba, beginning with the word "poo," said T. Rajarathnam, in a discourse. The work is recited in the Tiruchendur temple every day as it contains prayers to Lord Muruga. The work shows that Lord Siva and Muruga are one and the same. The qualities of Siva are also those of Muruga. The first 36 verses establish this and are therefore considered a condensed version of the Kanda Parvanam. The philosophy known as Saiva Siddhanta explains the Jnana Kanda portions of the Vedas. Keeping this in mind, Panamban Swamikal praises Kandar Kali Venba as the ultimate explanation of the Saiva Agamas. Kandar Kali Venba begins with a description of Lord Siva's supreme status. In the svarupa state, God has no name, colour, form, qualities, or actions. He is Omnipresent. These are explained in Saiva Siddhanta, and this is also what Kumaraguruvar explains in Kandar Kali Venba. The qualities of Lord Siva are given in Kandar Kali Venba as exactly the same as those given in Saiva Siddhanta texts. That is why Kandar Kali Venba is important to followers of Saiva Siddhanta.

Ministry of Environment tightens rules on bioplastics

Jacob Koshy

NEW DELHI

The Environment Ministry has introduced rules that make it harder for makers of disposable plastic ware to label such products as 'biodegradable', introducing a stipulation that they must not leave any microplastics behind. Biodegradable plastic and compostable plastic are projected as the two broad kinds of technological fixes to India's burgeoning problem of plastic waste pollution.

Biodegradable plastic involves plastic goods being treated before they are sold. Compostable plastics, on the other hand, do degrade but require industrial or large municipal waste management facilities to do so.

A new set of amendments to India's Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2024, made public last week, defines biodegradable plas-



Microplastics are reported as a major source of pollution.

tics as not only capable of "... degradation by biological processes in specific environment such as soil, landfill..." but also as materials that do not leave "any microplastics...".

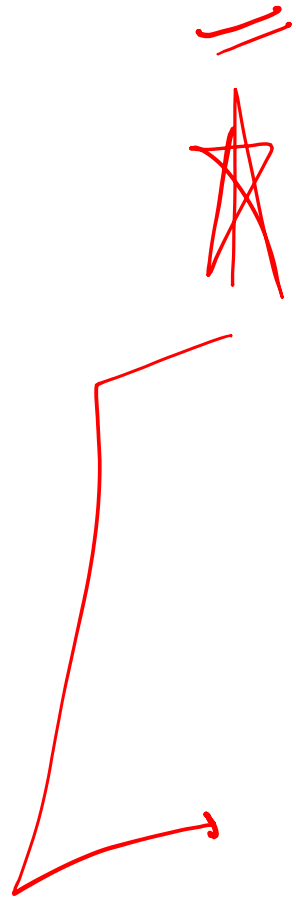
The caveat about microplastics in the updated rules does not specify which chemical tests can be used to establish the absence of microplastics, or to what extent microplastics must be reduced in a sample in order to consider them eliminated, says Sunil Panwar, CEO, Symphony Environmental India. The company offers technologies that, when

added to regular single-use plastics, make them biodegradable.

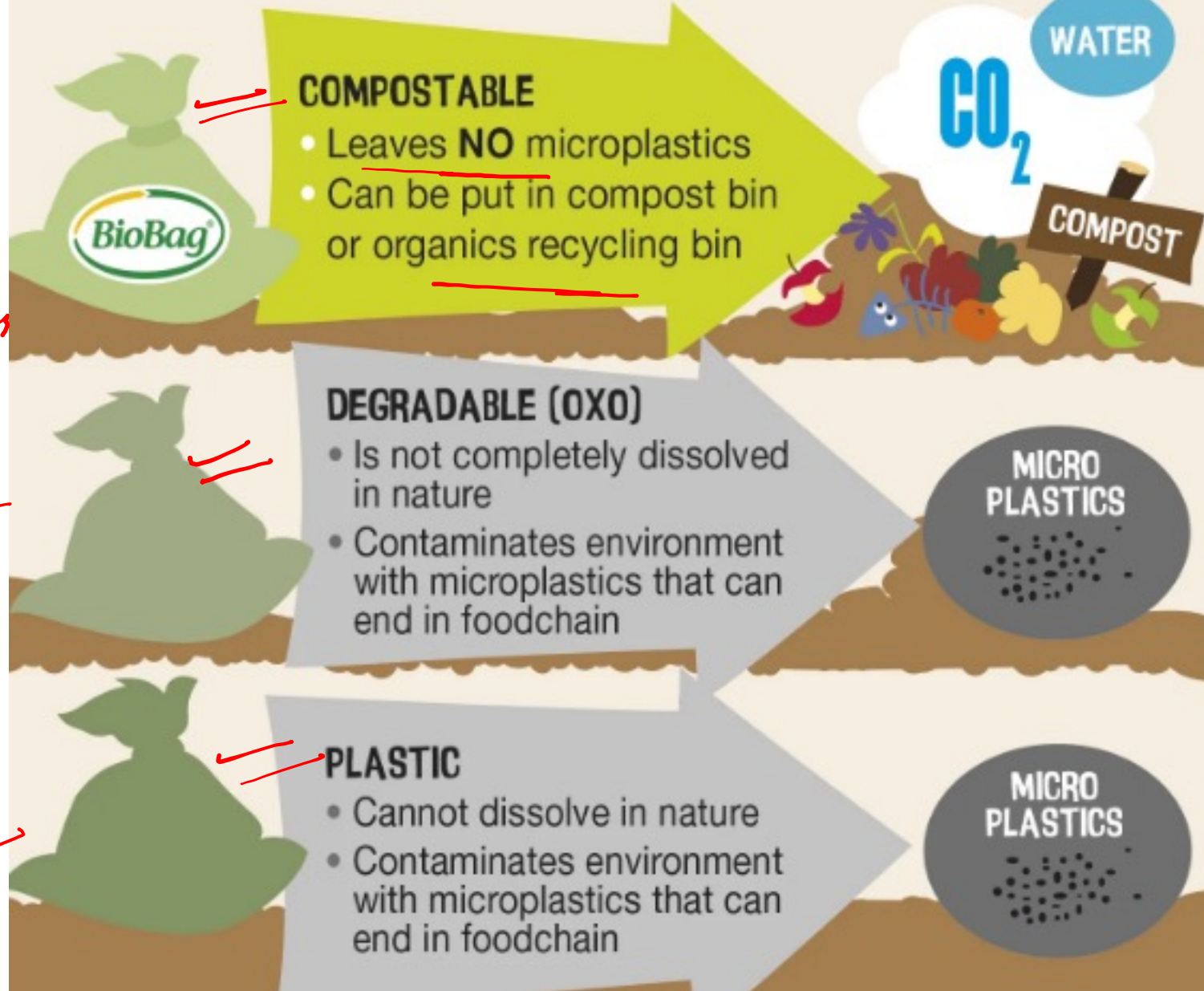
"... The current standards [in India] only recommend tests that can be done to determine the levels of microplastics but don't prescribe a definitive test... Should a standard for microplastics be eventually determined, it should, for fairness sake, include both compostable and biodegradable plastics," he told *The Hindu*.

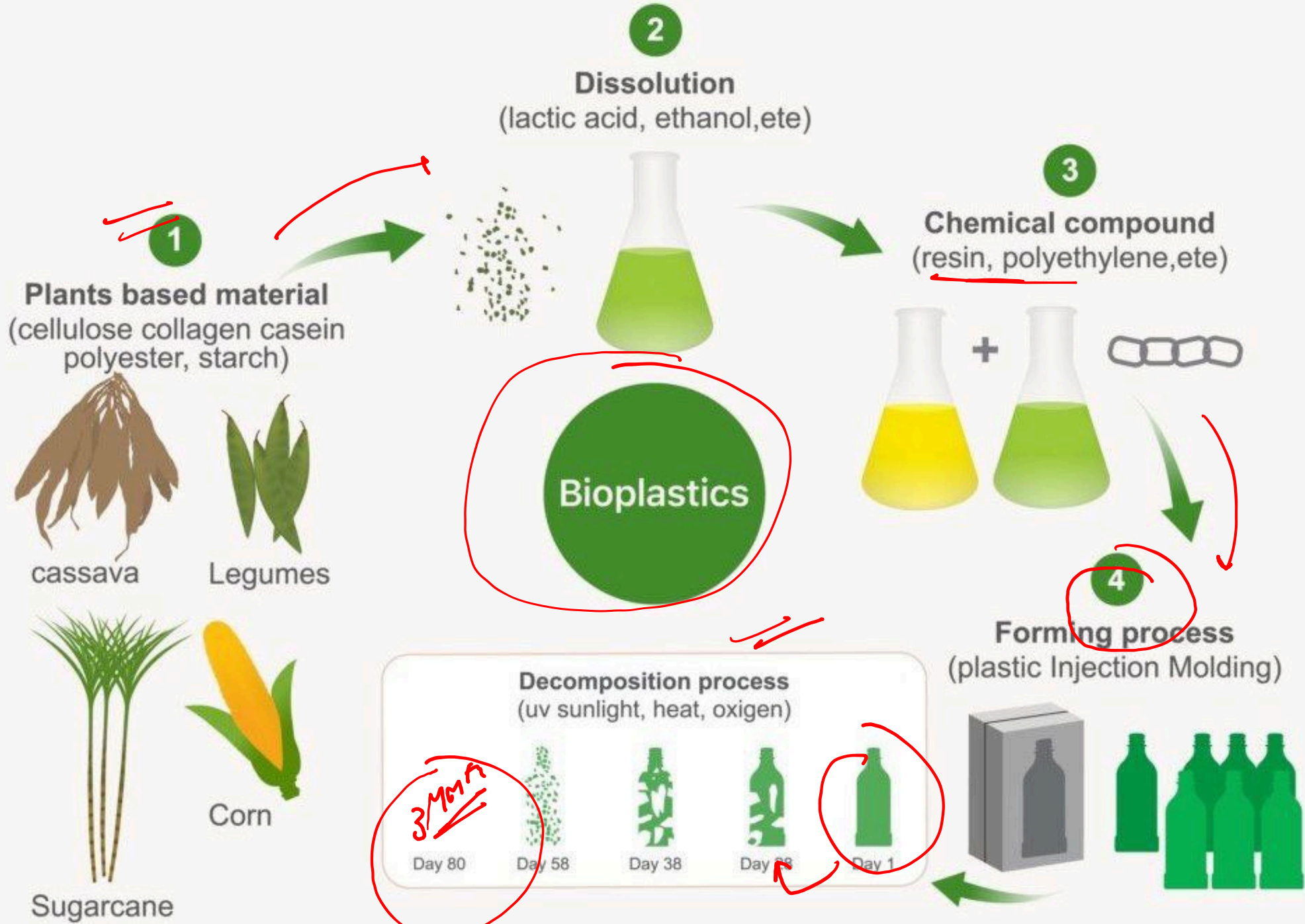
Microplastics have been reported as a major source of pollution affecting rivers and oceans.

Several firms were left in the lurch as the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) refused to provide them with a 'provisional certificate' to license their products as biodegradable. This is because the CPCB only considers biodegradable a plastic sample that has 90% degraded, and such a process takes at least two years.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?





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THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Weekly domestic flights to be operated in summer schedule

24,275 The weekly domestic flights to be operated during the summer starting from March 31, has shown a 6% increase compared to the year-ago period. **PH**

IMF reaches staff-level agreement with Sri Lanka for bailout

337 In \$ million. The International Monetary Fund said it has reached an agreement with Sri Lanka for the next phase that would enable it access to the amount from bailout approved in 2023. **PH**

India's fertility rate in 2021, as per The Lancet report

1.91 India's fertility rate dropped from nearly 6.2 in 1950, and is projected to fall further to 1.29 and 1.04 in 2030 and 2100, respectively, according to research published in *The Lancet*. **PH**

The missiles fired by Russia at Kyiv in the first attack in 44 days

31 The ballistic and cruise missiles fired at Kyiv were shot down by Ukraine's air defences, though 13 people were injured by falling wreckage. Ukraine said that around 80 people were evacuated from their homes. **AP**

India's coal imports during the April to January period

212 in million tonnes. India fired at Kyiv were shot down by Ukraine's air defences, though 13 people were injured by falling wreckage. Ukraine said that around 80 people were evacuated from their homes. **PH**

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Nuclear energy: fixing the finance

Why is there an urgent need to reassess nuclear financing policies in Multilateral Development Banks to accommodate private capital or blended financing models for the generation of nuclear energy? Why is the state of nuclear infrastructure development and finance mobilisation not proportional? Where does India stand?

EXPLAINER

Speed All

The story so far: On March 21, Brussels hosted the first-ever Nuclear Energy Summit, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi. Several world leaders joined the summit to highlight the role of nuclear energy in addressing climate change.

How did this come about? The UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai (UAE) in December 2023 stated the indispensable role of nuclear energy to meet climate goals. The declaration signed by 22 world leaders mentioned the need to triple nuclear energy capacity by 2050. The Nuclear Energy Summit, an initiative in collaboration with the IAEA's 'Atoms4Netzero' programme, is part of the multilateral approach to decarbonisation. Nuclear power emits four times less carbon than solar farms or other renewable sources such as wind, hydropower, and geothermal. Most importantly, nuclear power has the capacity to supply uninterrupted energy irrespective of geographical constraints making it a crucial component of the wider renewable energy mix. Nuclear power plants (NPP) also have low operating costs, smaller land footprint and a longer life cycle compared to all the other renewable energy sources.

How can nuclear energy be financed? Two key motives for the large-scale adoption of nuclear power as the base load energy source are technology and finance. Recent developments in nuclear technology including Small Modular Reactors (SMR), radiation proofing in existing plants, and extended fuel cycles, have the potential to substantially



Energy of the future: The Kudankulam nuclear power project in Tamil Nadu. REUTERS

mitigate nuclear-related risks. Signifying the destigmatisation of nuclear energy is the entry of technology startups in an otherwise government-run industry. The role of technical advancements in reducing carbon emissions is highlighted by an IAEA study, which predicts that while existing technologies will play a significant role, by 2050, half of carbon reductions will come from technologies currently in the prototype stage.

However, in spite of technical advancements, Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and private investors have not made any significant contribution to the industry. The World Bank has not provided financing for a nuclear project since its \$40 million loan to Italy in 1959. There is a pressing need to reassess nuclear financing policies of MDBs to accommodate private capital or blended finance models.

Has the cooperative model worked?

There are successful financial practices that can be replicated, for instance the cooperative funding models of France, South Korea, Russia, and the U.K. where a group of investors raise credit from the market and take full responsibility for project delivery. In Finland, large power plants have been funded by multiple private companies since the 1970s using a cooperative finance model called 'Mankala'. Under this model, companies jointly own energy producers and share the costs of building and operating plants. They don't pay dividends but can buy the energy at a cost based on their ownership share, with investors being wholesalers, retailers, or large industrial firms. Financial creativity and market support with low interest rates can unravel the potential of nuclear energy at scale. There are 440 nuclear reactors in the

world, accounting for a quarter of the world's low-carbon energy. The number of nuclear reactors is increasing, with 60 reactors under construction and 110 in the planning stage, most being in Asia, particularly China, which is soon to overtake the U.S. and the nuclear giant France. China has set a target to produce 50% of its electricity from nuclear energy by 2035 and 18% by 2060. However, the state of nuclear infrastructure development and finance mobilisation is not proportional. NuScale Power, previously expected to be the first U.S. company licensed to build a 462MW SMR in Utah, terminated its planned project due to rising cost. Nuclear powerhouses Westinghouse and Areva also filed bankruptcy due to project overruns.

What about India?

India's first commercial NPP in Pahalgarh, Tarapur offers reliable energy at 2/kWh lower than solar power tariffs. At Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu, a newer power plant offers electricity in the range of 4-6/kWh comparable to coal-fired thermal power plants. Despite its versatile nature, nuclear power contributes only 1.6% of the total renewable energy mix in India. Stigma, weaponisation risk, radiation leak, regulatory high upfront cost, and long project overruns are the reasons for low adoption rate of nuclear energy. Recently, the nuclear industry has been undergoing novel liberalisation, with ambitious plans for growth in India and abroad. Beginning with the invitation of \$26 billion in private investments, a base-load nuclear power capacity from 7,480 MW to 22,480 MW by 2032-2033, and Prime Minister Modi's attendance at the core loading of the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) all mark a positive future for the industry. The PFBR's ability to generate fuel and power at the same time represents a significant advancement in India's mostly self-reliant nuclear industry. The author is a policy professional and a consultant at RIS, New Delhi. Tweets @Alinyst

THE GIST

On March 21, Brussels hosted the first-ever Nuclear Energy Summit, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi.

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India's first commercial NPP in Pahalgarh, Tarapur offers reliable energy at 2/kWh lower than solar power tariffs. At Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu, a newer power plant offers electricity in the range of 4-6/kWh comparable to coal-fired thermal power plants.

Why did Pakistan carry out airstrikes in Afghanistan?

Who was the target? What is the current status of the relationship between the two countries?

Sumeda

The story so far: In a major escalation of tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan this week, Pakistani fighters carried out airstrikes inside the Afghan provinces of Paktika and Khost. At least eight civilians were killed in the pre-dawn attacks, Afghan officials said. The Taliban strongly condemned the strikes, and as retaliation, attacked Pakistani military posts along the border using "heavy weapons." Although the signs across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has stopped for now, the incident highlights the increasing tension between the two countries as Islamabad has accused the Taliban of providing refuge to terrorists launching frequent attacks on its territory.

Why has Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban soured? The 2,670-kilometre Durand Line which marks the international land border between Pakistan and Afghanistan has

long been a point of contention between the two nations. Successive Afghan governments have disputed the demarcation, claiming Pashtun territories in Pakistan, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and parts of the North West Frontier Province. Tensions became apparent after the Taliban firmly rejected the Durand Line as a permanent border, dividing ethnic Pashtuns, following its return to power in 2021. A series of skirmishes between the two forces along the border were brokered by the Afghan Taliban broke down. The Afghan Taliban and the TTP are separate groups with common ideological links. A regrouped TTP ordered nationwide attacks after the ceasefire ended, which resulted in an unprecedented surge in terror incidents across Pakistan. The country saw a 69%

increase in attacks in 2023, an 81% rise in resultant deaths, and a 60% surge in the number of injuries, according to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS). The total violence-related fatalities reached a record six-year high last year, with over 1,500 deaths from 789 terror attacks and counter terror operations. Amid a multifaceted crisis, Pakistan urged the Afghan Taliban to control the TTP. While the Taliban assured that they wouldn't permit anyone to use Afghan soil for attacks against any country, the surge in attacks since 2021 created distrust between Pakistan and the Taliban.

What triggered the airstrikes? On March 15, seven Pakistani soldiers were killed after a suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden truck into a post in North Waziristan. The next day, while offering the funeral prayers, President Asif Ali Zardari vowed to "respond strongly." Hours later, the Taliban released a statement, alleging that

Pakistani planes had bombed the Barmal district of Paktika province and Sepera district in Khost at 3 a.m. on March 15, resulting in the deaths of civilians.

Pakistan confirmed the airstrikes hit rebels belonging to the TTP's Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group after the outfit claimed responsibility for the March 16 attack. The Pakistan Foreign Office said the country conveyed its serious concerns to the Afghan government over the presence of terror outfits including the TTP inside Afghanistan over the past two years. "These terrorists pose a grave threat to Pakistan's security and have consistently used Afghan territory to launch terror attacks inside Pakistani territory," it declared. Notably, this was not the first time Pakistan launched airstrikes against Afghanistan. In April 2022, the Pakistani military carried out a similar operation in Khost and Kunar provinces.

What has the Taliban said? The Taliban has warned Pakistan of attacks against any country, which will be out of Pakistan's control "in case of continued attacks inside its territory. The Taliban spokesperson claimed that attacks took place on houses of civilians, killing five women and three children. The Taliban denied Pakistan's Special Representative to Afghanistan Ambassador Asif Durrani's recent charge that Afghanistan was providing shelter to 5,000 to 6,000 TTP militants, but also acknowledged the possibility of their presence due to Afghanistan's rugged terrain.

THE GIST

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On March 16, seven Pakistani soldiers were killed after a suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden truck into a post in North Waziristan. The next day, while offering the funeral prayers, President Asif Ali Zardari vowed to "respond strongly."

The Taliban has warned Pakistan of "very bad consequences which will be out of Pakistan's control" in case of continued attacks inside its territory.

767 → 40%

India's fertility rate in 2021, as per *The Lancet* report

2.1 FR

1.91

1.91 India's fertility rate dropped from nearly 6.2 in 1950, and is projected to fall further to 1.29 and 1.04 in 2050 and 2100, respectively, according to research published in *The Lancet*. PTI

2100

100cr

2050-1.29

2100=1.04

2017 List by the World Bank

Rank ▾	Country	Fertility rate in 2017 (births/woman) ⚡
192	 Singapore	1.2
191	 Moldova	1.3
190	 Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.3
189	 Italy	1.3
188	 Spain	1.3
187	 Portugal	1.4
186	 Malta	1.4
185	 Ukraine	1.4
184	 Greece	1.4
183	 Poland	1.4
182	 Luxembourg	1.4
181	 Croatia	1.4
180	 Japan	1.4

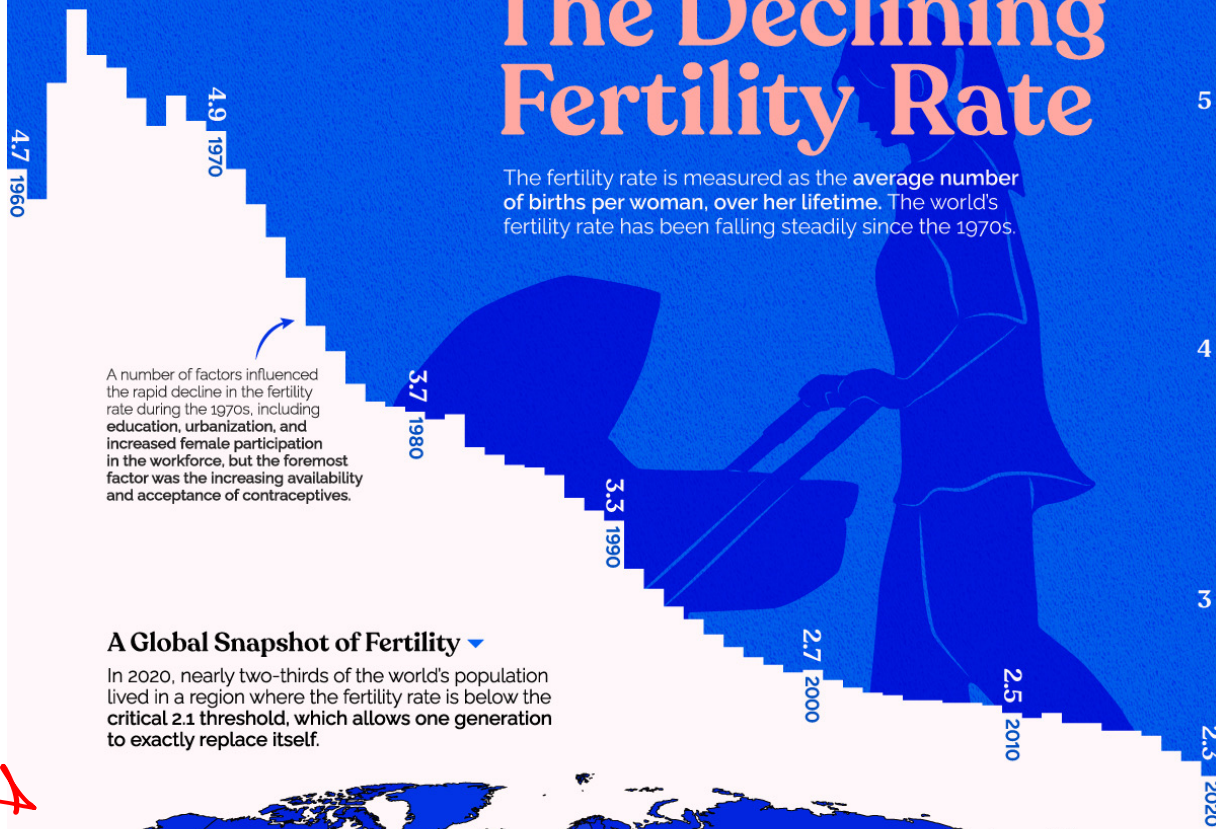
Handwritten red annotations:

- A box containing the number "45" with an arrow pointing to the Singapore row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Moldova row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Italy row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Spain row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Portugal row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Malta row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Ukraine row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Greece row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Poland row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Luxembourg row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Croatia row.
- A box containing "2017" with an arrow pointing to the Japan row.

Handwritten red annotation: "4" with an arrow pointing to the Japan row.

The Declining Fertility Rate

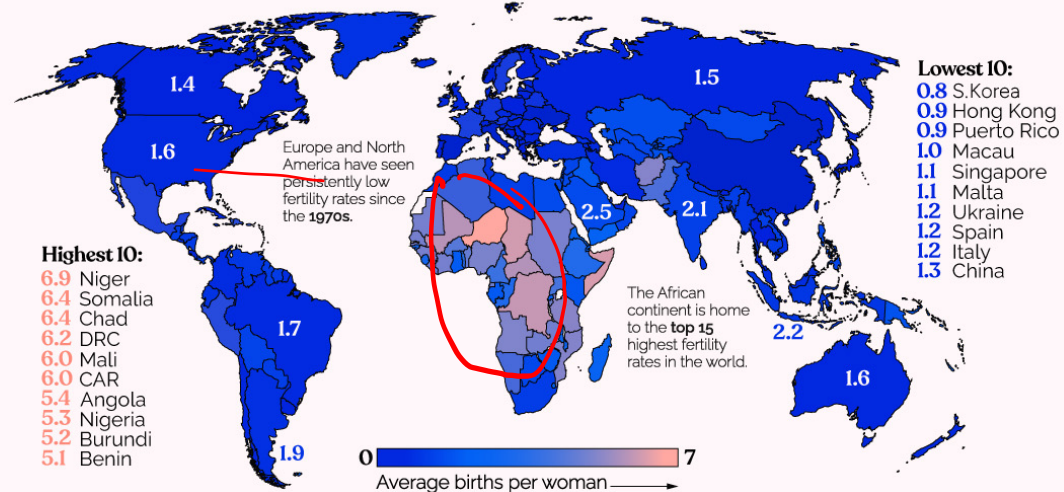
The fertility rate is measured as the average number of births per woman, over her lifetime. The world's fertility rate has been falling steadily since the 1970s.



A number of factors influenced the rapid decline in the fertility rate during the 1970s, including education, urbanization, and increased female participation in the workforce, but the foremost factor was the increasing availability and acceptance of contraceptives.

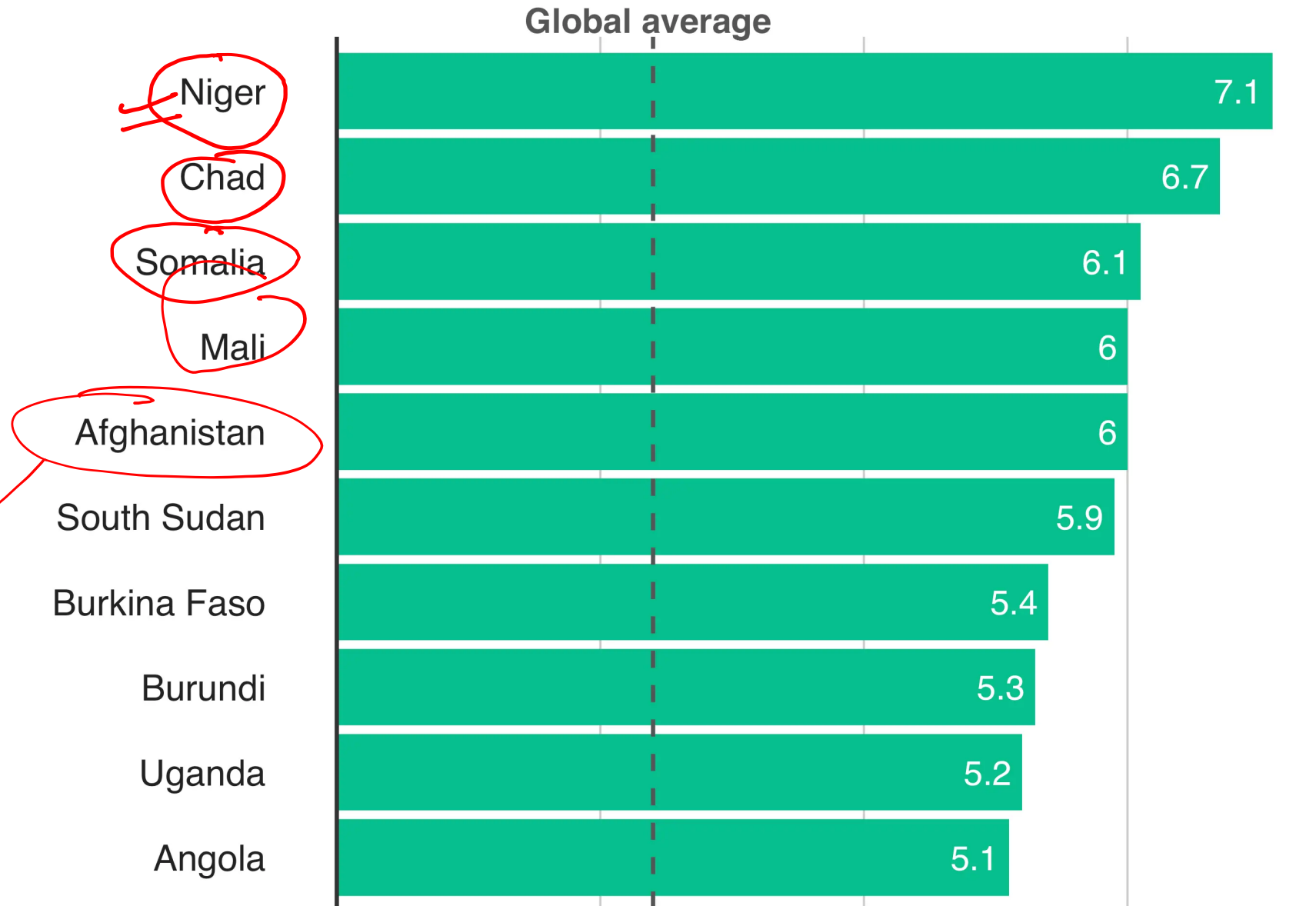
A Global Snapshot of Fertility

In 2020, nearly two-thirds of the world's population lived in a region where the fertility rate is below the critical 2.1 threshold, which allows one generation to exactly replace itself.



Where women are having most children

Average fertility rate, top 10 countries in 2017



Source: Global Burden of Disease

IN BRIEF



Smriti and Richa only Indians picked in The Hundred Draft

Women's Premier League-winning captain Smriti Mandhana and wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh were the only Indian players who found takers during The Hundred Draft in London. Smriti was drafted in by Southern Brave Women's while teammate Richa found a new home at Birmingham Phoenix Women's.

Powerlifters Ashok, Parmjeet qualify for Paris Paralympics

Asian Games bronze medalist Ashok and Parmjeet Kumar qualified for the Paris Paralympics by winning a silver medal each at the Para Powerlifting World Cup in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt on Thursday. Competing in the 41kg category, Manpreet Kaur earned a bronze medal after lifting 86kg. Ashok lifted 192kg and 196kg respectively, which gave him the silver medal. In the 49kg category, Parmjeet lifted 160kg and 166kg in his first two attempts.

Arjun and Jeevan in Challenger semifinals

Arjun Kadhe and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan beat the second seeds Bart Stevens and Petros Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-2 in the doubles quarterfinals of the €74,825 Challenger tennis tournament in Murcia, Spain, on Thursday.

Mumbai City FC signs Slovakian attacker Vojtus

Mumbai City FC has signed Slovakian attacker Jakub Vojtus for the remainder of the season, the Indian Super League (ISL) club said on Thursday. The striker will don the No. 9 jersey for the Islanders and replaces Spaniard Iker Guarrotxena, who has been ruled out of the season due to a knee injury.

Newcastle defender Botman out for up to nine months

Newcastle defender Sven Botman was ruled out for up to nine months on Thursday after sustaining a serious knee injury. The Netherlands center back injured his ACL in the 2-0 loss to Manchester City in the FA Cup quarterfinals on Saturday. "He is expected to return to action within six to nine months," Newcastle said.

Max Verstappen to see out Red Bull contract

FORMULA ONE

Reuters
MELBOURNE

Formula One World champion Max Verstappen has backed Red Bull's handling of a complaint against boss Christian Horner and said the saga has had no impact on how he feels racing for the team.

Verstappen started the season by winning both races so far, but those victories at Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have been overshadowed by unspecified allegations of misconduct against Horner by a female employee at Red Bull.

Horner, who has denied the accusations and been cleared of misconduct but the unidentified woman lodged an appeal after her complaint was dismissed, British media reported last week, ensuring the controversy has continued to run on in the leadup to Sunday's Australian Grand Prix.

Verstappen said he did not want to be too involved in off-track issues because his role was to worry about performing in the car. "But from what I know everything is handled in



Staying put: Verstappen did not rule out a move to Mercedes in the long term but said he was comfortable at Red Bull. REUTERS

"the right way," the Dutchman told reporters in the Albert Park paddock on Thursday. "I'm not going into any further details from that side because I don't know more than that. And I also don't want to know because that's not my job or my task within the team."

Verstappen, who has won the last three World Championship titles with Red Bull, said the internal strife had no impact on his performance.

"For me, all the things that have been going on, it's very easy to jump back in the car and perform," he added. "There are so many great people also in the garage, for example."

"But from what I know everything is handled in

Rishabh Pant wants to get a bit of trust back in his body again, says Ricky Ponting

'He has been putting himself through a few different paces and playing all the shots that he plays. More importantly, he has got a smile on his face'

IPL-17
Sports Bureau

Delhi Capitals' head coach Ricky Ponting and director of cricket Sourav Ganguly shared some insights on team skipper Rishabh Pant's readiness ahead of the Indian Premier League beginning on Friday.

"He has probably batted more in the last week than he has ever batted leading into most of the IPLs. I think from his point of view, he wants to get a bit of trust back in his body again," said the Australian great about Pant's early approach at the pre-season camp.

"He has been putting

himself through a few different paces and playing all the shots that he plays. He has been great, and more importantly, he has got a smile on his face, which is what we all love to see."

Improvements
"I'm surprised with the improvements he has made. Hopefully, it's a good season for him because he has gone through a lot emotionally. It's never easy when you go through that sort of injury. It will be great to see him back not just for the Delhi Capitals, but for the Delhi Ranji team and for India as well because he is a special talent, a special player," said Ganguly.

Speaking about Pant's qualities as captain, Pont-

ing said "we all love his infectious attitude and smile around the group. Although he is still young in age, he has actually played a lot of cricket. He sets an example, he has a lot of energy and that's why other people tend to follow."

Former India Captain Ganguly said he would follow Pant's captaincy closely. "He is not the conservative type of batter, so you expect that character in his captaincy. Nobody comes as a ready-made captain. You learn as you go and I think captaincy is by instinct. I'm looking forward to watching him during the tournament."

Capitals take on Punjab Kings in their first match of IPL 2024 in Chandigarh on March 23.



Happy times: Ponting was all praise for Pant's infectious attitude. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

I would be more than happy to help Shubman, says Williamson

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

With the IPL season set to roll on Friday, one captain who has 100 Tests under his belt is willing and ready to mentor a newbie captain who will be taking over a leadership role for the first time.

"He (Gill) is a great player and like I said a great cricketing brain, and I would certainly encourage him to walk that path and take his decisions. No doubt that he will look to do the same," Williamson said in an interview.

"I will be more than happy to help Shubman in any way I can and Shubman knows that," said Williamson.

Williamson said that the youngster has the calibre to navigate his way through choppy waters. "As for the team and myself, I would generally like to share some ideas. It is a long season ahead. It will be quite a journey and we will all be learning through



Memberships: Williamson believes Gill has what it takes to be a successful captain and is willing to ease him in his new role. ANI

it," he said. With no Mohammed Shami available due to neck surgery, it won't exactly be a walk in the park for Gill but Williamson said such challenges are a routine for any captain.

"Obviously, there has

been a few changes in the camp, that's a challenge for every team as every year you have some adjustments to make, really exciting opportunity for Shubman and we need to focus what's there in front of us," he said.

As far as his own batting position is concerned, Williamson hinted that he would be his usual No. 3 slot.

"I think it will be a top order option. There are so many quality players, whether that's local Indian players, who have been exceptional over the overseas ones. So, it will come down to balance and I think a top order option," he said.

Williamson quite liked the idea of bowlers being allowed two bouncers per over from this IPL as he feels it will ensure a more balanced contest.

"I think it is a good addition and it will bring slightly different dynamic to the game. It is a nice extra option for the fast bowlers," said Williamson.

"There could be smaller grounds around country and some very good surfaces which offer some high scores. Also addition of Impact Players, which move towards the runs side of the things. So, it is a nice addition and will play a role for sure."

Sainz feeling 'positive' about Ferrari return after surgery

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Carlos Sainz expressed confidence on Thursday he was fit enough to drive his Ferrari in Melbourne but will decide whether to race after seeing how his body holds up in practice.

The Spaniard underwent surgery for appendicitis two weeks ago, forcing him to miss the last grand prix in Saudi Arabia, where teenage reserve driver Oliver Bearman came seventh.

"I'm very happy with the progress I've made and how, as I said, it's time to jump in the car and see how I feel."

Sainz is leaving Ferrari at the end of the season to make way for Mercedes seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton.



Sainz. REUTERS

Perez downplays Verstappen's Mercedes switch

Associated Press
MELBOURNE

Sergio Perez has downplayed speculation that his three-time Formula 1 world champion teammate Max Verstappen could be considering a switch to Red Bull to Mercedes.

Verstappen's future has been the talk of the Australian Grand Prix paddock at Albert Park this week, with Red Bull allegedly divided over its recent controversy involving team principal Christian Horner.

"The team is in a very strong position, because with the results we're currently having, the harmony that there is in the team, I think to achieve that it takes a couple years, probably," Perez said on the eve of the first practice sessions in Melbourne.

Verstappen has won the first two races of the F1 season in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Perez finished second in the first race.

"Right now, the dynamic is very good. We're working really well together, the whole engineering

Mary Kom named chef de mission



Huge honour: Sharath and Mary would hope to excel in their new roles. FILE PHOTOS: M. VEDHAN & AFP

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association on Thursday named Olympic medalist and multiple-times World champion boxer M.C. Mary Kom as the chef de mission for the Paris Olympics. Veteran table tennis star A. Sharath Kamal will be the country's flag-bearer at the opening ceremony of the Games.

Mary, who is also the chairperson of the IOA Athletes Commission, will be accompanied by six-time Olympian and member of the Athletes Commission Shiva Keshavan as

Ex Pakistan captain Saeed Ahmed passes away

Press Trust of India
LAHORE

Saeed Ahmed, the former Pakistan Test captain and a dashing batter of his time, passed away in Lahore after leading a largely reclusive life away from cricket since his retirement. He was 86. Saeed played 41 Tests, scoring 2,991 runs with five centuries and 16 half-centuries. He also took 22 wickets with his off-spin. He made his Test debut against West Indies in the famous drawn Bridgetown Test in 1958 when he was 20 and played his last match for Pakistan in Melbourne against Australia during the 1972-73 tour.

group, it's really united," Perez said. "And you can see that on-track, and how efficient we've been in the last year. So I don't see any reason to change it."

"I don't have that clause," Perez said. "I don't know what clause Max has in his contract, it's better if you ask him. I think Max, as far as I know, has a contract with the team and is fully committed with the team."

Verstappen has won the first two races of the F1 season in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Perez finished second in the first race.

Mary Kom named chef de mission



Huge honour: Sharath and Mary would hope to excel in their new roles. FILE PHOTOS: M. VEDHAN & AFP

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

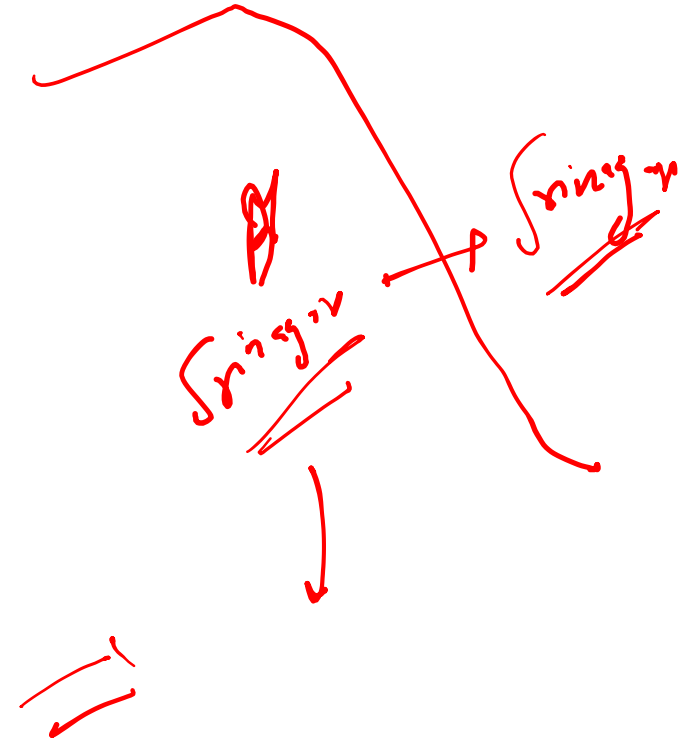
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Mary, who is also the chairperson of the IOA Athletes Commission, will be accompanied by six-time Olympian and member of the Athletes Commission Shiva Keshavan as

her deputy. "Her unparalleled dedication to sports and inspiring journey make her a natural choice to guide and mentor our athletes at the Olympics. Keshavan, a former Olympian in luge, brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to support the team's management and coordination efforts," the IOA said in a statement.

IOA vice-president and shooter Gagan Narang will be in charge of overseeing the village operations for the Indian shooting contingent while Dr. Dinshaw Pardiwala has been named the Chief Medical Officer.

Handwritten red notes: "Chef de mission" written in cursive, with two double red lines above and below it.



FIRST SERVING CM TO BE ARRESTED | SC HEARS PLEA TODAY, HC DENIED RELIEF | NATIONWIDE PROTESTS: AAP

CENTRAL AGENCY ARRESTS KEJRIWAL

ED arrests Delhi CM days after it linked him to ₹100 cr kickbacks in excise case

GAYATHRI MANI, ARVINDJI SUR & MAHENDER SINGH MANRALI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

ARVIND KEJRIWAL, whose campaign against corruption in 2011 birthed the Aam Aadmi Party and paved the way for his ascension as Delhi's Chief Minister, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate Thursday night in connection with the Delhi excise policy case.

He became the first serving Chief Minister to be arrested, after months of skipping summons by the investigation agency — nine in total — and calling the Delhi High Court "illegal".

His arrest came hours after the Delhi High Court declined to grant Kejriwal interim protection from coercive action by the ED. The case pertains to alleged



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal being taken away from his residence after his arrest in New Delhi on Thursday. *Abhinav Sobti*

kickbacks received by the AAP and its leaders in implementation of the now-scrapped 2021 Delhi excise policy. While Kejriwal is the most high-profile arrest in the case, investigation agencies have also arrested his former deputy

Frightened dictator, says Rahul; Opposition loses 'national campaign voice'

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

AS ARVIND Kejriwal became the second opposition chief minister to be arrested, the first sitting CM — to be arrested — in less than two months, the Opposition INDIA bloc rallied behind him and launched a blistering attack on the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

From senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK leader MK Stalin, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh

WHAT NEXT, WHO NEXT
AAP claims he will run Govt from jail, why that's easier said than done
L-G can push for President's rule if he doesn't quit; political vacuum in party

Yadav, BJP's Tejashwi Yadav, a range of Opposition leaders severely criticised the Government.

Hitting out at Modi, Rahul said a "scared dictator" is sound-biting the death knell of democracy. Leaders of the Delhi Congress, led by its chief Arvinder Singh Lohewala and AAP leader Sandeep Dikshit, reached Kejriwal's residence in a show of support.

"While capturing all the institutions including the media, breaking up parties, extorting money from companies, freezing the account of the main

MALLICA JOSHI, JATIN ANAND & APRUVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

WHO NEXT and what next? Never have these questions been as relevant for a political party and a government as they are now for the Aam Aadmi Party. As Arvind Kejriwal was arrested on Thursday evening, the party maintained that he will run the government from Tihar jail.

"There is no plan to change the Delhi Chief Minister or the party chief. We have said before that if he is arrested, he will govern from jail and that stance has not changed," said Delhi Health and Urban Development minister Saurabh Bhardwaj.

That's easier said than done given the new battle lines — political and Constitutional — that are being drawn.

For Kejriwal to remain CM, he would need some respite from

BJP's TOTAL DONORS: 487, ITS TOTAL BONDS REDEEMED SINCE APRIL 2019: ₹6,060 CR

BJP recipient No. 1, its top 10 donors form 35% of its ₹6,000-cr bond kitty

SBI files compliance affidavit in SC; EC releases donor, recipient details

JAY MAZOOMDAR, SHILPITH KUNHITTY, ANUSHKUN DAS & RITHIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

PUSHING AND prodded by the Supreme Court, the State Bank of India (SBI), which had sought time until June 30, revealed telling data on electoral bonds Thursday — firm donor details to parties that redeemed the bonds, including the unique alphanumeric codes that link donors to beneficiaries.

A scrutiny of the data published by the Election Commission of India shows that the top 10 of the total 487 donors to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party account for Rs 2,149 crore, which is 35 per cent of the party's electoral bond kitty of Rs 6,060 crore encashed since April 2019, the largest amongst all parties.

This data, published by ECI after SBI filed a compliance affidavit as directed by the court, represents the largest disclosure regarding the controversial scheme that guaranteed absolute anonymity to donors.

TOP 10 DONORS FOR TOP 3 PARTIES

Party	Donor	Amount
BJP	Megha Group	6,060 cr*
	Oilfield Supply Chain	584 cr**
	Vedanta	226.65 cr
	Bharti Airtel	197.4 cr
	Mediantal	175.5 cr
	Kevenster Food Park	144.5 cr
	DLF	130
	Birla Carbon	105
	Future Gaming	100
	Haldia Energy	81
TMC	Haldia Energy	542 cr
	Dhawal Infrastructure	281 cr
	Dhawal Infrastructure	90 cr
CONG	Western UP Power	1,422 cr
	MKJ Enterprises	110 cr
	Yashode Super Trading	91.6 cr
	Future Gaming	64 cr
	Sasmita Infrastructure	50
	PCBL Ltd	39
	Rishwick Projects	30
	SEPC Power	30
	Siddhi Trading	22
	Future Gaming	22

* Total bonds redeemed since April 2019; ** High-value bonds (₹5 crore); Data compiled by Shagun Khushnir, Anjishnu Das

Infra, metals and energy dominate donor sectors

SHYAMLA YADAV & JAY MAZOOMDAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

THE TOP three donors of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, the biggest beneficiary of electoral bonds, include Hyderabad-headquartered Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd, Oilfield Supply Chain Private Ltd, which is associated with Reliance Industries Ltd, and Anil

Common to Cong, BJP: Group that gave the most

LAL MANI VERMA & JAY MAZOOMDAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

THE NO. 1 donor to the Congress was the Megha Group's Western UP Power Transmission Company Limited which contributed Rs 110 crore via electoral bonds. The group's Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited was also the highest donor to the BJP with Rs 529 crore — it was the second largest purchaser of electoral bonds, spending Rs 1,192 crore.

The Congress redeemed poll bonds worth a total of Rs 1,422 crore since April 2019.

The Vedanta Ltd was the party's second largest poll bond donor with Rs 104 crore.

MKJ Enterprises Limited, which trades in stainless steel,

FULL COVERAGE
PAGE 7

Bond Buyer No. 1 is TMC's Donor No. 1

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

THE BIGGEST purchaser of electoral bonds, lottery company Future Gaming and Hotel Services Pvt Ltd, which bought bonds worth over Rs 1,200 crore between 2019 and 2024, donated the highest amount of

Rs 542 crore to the Trinamool Congress (TMC).

According to data released by the Election Commission on Thursday, the TMC, led by West Bengal Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, received Rs 1,610 crore through electoral bonds from 211 donors between April 12, 2019 and January 24, 2024.

Apart from Future Gaming,

the TMC also received Rs 281 crore from Haldia Energy and Rs 90 crore from Dhawal Infrastructure. Two companies — MKJ Enterprises and AVEES Trading Finance — donated over Rs 45 crore each. Among the other donors were IFB Agro Industries, Chennai; Green Woods, PCBL, Prarambh

How police tracked a baseball cap from CCTV to key accused in Bengaluru cafe blast case

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, MARCH 21

THE TRAIL of a baseball cap that a man wore while planting an improvised explosive device at the Hennessey Cafe in Bengaluru on March 1 has yielded vital clues about the sus-



pect involved in the lunch-hour blast that left nine people injured.

The cap the suspect is seen wearing in CCTV footage from the cafe in Whitefield was found abandoned near a religious place located around three kilometres from the cafe, where he allegedly also changed from a shirt to a round-neck t-shirt.

The branded cap, with numbers on it, was found by investigators to a central Chennai mall where it was sold at a branded

retail store in late January. It also led to new CCTV footage of two men purchasing the cap and other items, including the suspect seen in the cafe CCTV footage, multiple sources familiar with the probe confirmed.

The cap is a limited edition series of merchandise from a round-neck and around 400 has been sold in India by the company, which only has a presence across south India through

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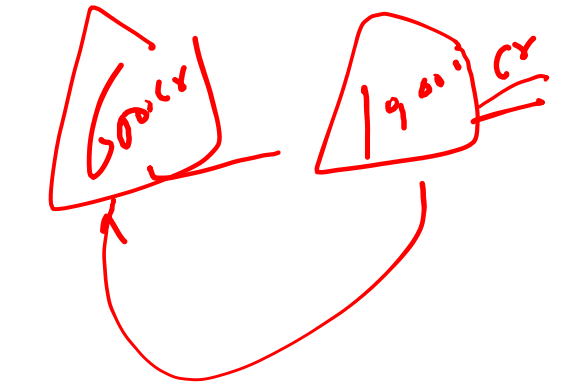
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Har Pal Anshu Saath



THE IMPLANT SEEKS TO ENABLE PEOPLE TO CONTROL COMPUTER CURSOR OR KEYBOARD USING ONLY THEIR THOUGHTS

Musk's Neuralink shows first brain-chip patient playing online chess

REUTERS

NEW YORK, MARCH 21

ELON MUSK'S brain-chip startup Neuralink livestreamed on Wednesday its first patient implanted with a chip using his mind to play online chess.

Noland Arbaugh, the 29-year-old patient who was paralysed below the shoulder after a diving accident, played chess on his laptop and moved the cursor using the Neuralink device. The implant seeks to enable people

to control a computer cursor or keyboard using only their thoughts.

Arbaugh had received an implant from the company in January and could control a computer mouse using his thoughts, Musk said last month.

"The surgery was super easy," Arbaugh said in the video streamed on Musk's social media platform X, referring to the implant procedure. "I literally was released from the hospital a day later. I have no cognitive impairments."



Noland Arbaugh (second left), who was paralysed below the shoulder after an accident, played chess on his laptop and moved the cursor using the Neuralink device. X

"I had basically given up playing that game," Arbaugh said, referring to the game Civilization VI, "you all (Neuralink) gave me the ability to do that again and played for 8 hours straight."

Elaborating on his experience with the new technology, Arbaugh said that it is "not perfect" and they "have run into some issues."

"I don't want people to think that this is the end of the journey, there's still a lot of work to be done, but it has already changed my life," he added.

Kip Ludwig, former program director for neural engineering at the US National Institutes of Health, said what Neuralink showed was not a "breakthrough."

"It is still in the very early days post-implantation, and there is a lot of learning on both the Neuralink side and the subject's side to maximise the amount of information for control that can be achieved," he added. Even so, Ludwig said it was a positive development for the patient that they have been

able to interface with a computer in a way they were not able to before the implant. "It's certainly a good starting point," he said.

Last month, Reuters reported that the US Food and Drug Administration inspectors found problems with record keeping and quality controls for animal experiments at Elon Musk's Neuralink, less than a month after the startup said it was cleared to test its brain implants in humans. Neuralink did not respond then to questions about the FDA's inspection.



Criminal Case Management System and Sankalan App

- In a significant move to enhance India's capability in combating terrorism and organized crime, the Ministry of Home Affairs inaugurated a digital Criminal Case Management System (CCMS) developed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in New Delhi.
- Alongside the CCMS, a mobile app 'Sankalan', a compendium of New Criminal Laws by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) was also launched.



What is the Criminal Case Management System (CCMS)?

The CCMS is an innovative digital platform that streamlines and enhances the **management of criminal cases**, particularly those related to terrorism and organised crime.

- The CCMS software aims to standardise investigations and compile terror-related data across India.

old → (New)

- Sankalan App
- The Sankalan app has been designed to **navigate through new criminal laws as a bridge between old and new criminal laws.**
- This app will work as a comprehensive guide for all stakeholders. The app will work in offline mode as well and its availability has been ensured in far-flung areas so that all stakeholders can have access to desired information around the clock.

Sabroom

-
- Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launched several developmental projects in Tripura including the inauguration of the **state's second integrated check post (ICP)** (also known as Land Port) in Sabroom, which is Tripura's southernmost tip bordering Bangladesh.

-



About:

Whom to vote (circled) → *Bhunuah* (circled) → *2019* (circled)



Sabroom is located in South Tripura district in Tripura. It is located on the banks of the Feni River, which separates India and Bangladesh.



It is connected to the Chittagong port of Bangladesh through Maitree Bridge on River Feni.



It will enhance the transportation of passengers and goods between India and Bangladesh.



An aerial photograph of a large, irregularly shaped ice floe floating in the middle of a vast field of smaller ice chunks. The water is a deep, dark blue, and the ice is a bright, clean white. The lighting is bright, creating soft shadows and highlights on the ice surfaces. The overall scene is serene and cold.

IceCube: Exploring Neutrinos from Earth's South Pole



- The IceCube neutrino observatory at the **Earth's South Pole** detected subatomic particles called neutrinos.
- Neutrinos are **electrically neutral, undisturbed by even the strongest magnetic field**, and rarely interact with matter, earning the nickname "**ghost particle**."
- As neutrinos travel through space, they pass unimpeded through matter - stars, planets and, for that matter, people.
- A neutrino is a fermion (an elementary particle with spin of $\frac{1}{2}$) that **interacts only via weak interaction and gravity**.

Severe Malnutrition Among Children

A recent study found the prevalence of **'zero-food children'** in India at **19.3%**, drawing attention to extreme food deprivation among children.

Zero-food children refers to infants aged **six months to 23 months** who have not consumed **any substantial food** for a period of **24 hours**.

The study also ranks **India** as having the **third highest percentage of zero-food children**, above only **Guinea (21.8%)** and **Mali (20.5%)**.

- Uttar Pradesh stands out as a significant hotspot for this crisis, with a high percentage of **'zero-food children.'**

According to the Global Hunger Index 2023, India topped the list of countries with the highest child-wasting rate in the world, at 18.7%.

Also, According to the National Family Health Survey 5, 35.5% of children under age five years are stunted in India.

Six Heritage Sites in Tentative UNESCO List

-
- Madhya Pradesh's six heritage sites have been included in the tentative UNESCO list.

- **About**

- The sites are Gwalior Fort, the historical Group of Dhamnar, the Rock Art Sites of ~~Chambal~~ Valley, Bhojeshwar Mahadev Temple, Burhanpur's Khooni Bhandara and the Gond monuments of Ramnagar, Mandla.
- MP is home to three UNESCO heritage sites – Sanchi Stupa, Khajuraho Group of Monuments and Bhimbetka Rock Shelters.

- **Gwalior Fort**

- It is located on the **basalt rock hills**.
- It was initiated by Raja Sourya Sena who finished the fortification system around the plateau in 773CE.
- The modern-day fort, embodying a defensive structure and two palaces was built by the **Tomar Rajput ruler Man Singh Tomar in 1398**.
- Ancient Temples in the Gwalior fort includes:
 - **Teli ka Mandir**, dedicated to lord Shiva, Vishnu, and Matrikas.
 - **The Chaturbhuj temple** which has mathematical connection where the second oldest reference to **zero in mathematics** is seen in a carving.



Historical Group of Dhamnar

The Dhamnar caves are located on a hill near the village of Dhamnar.

The rock-cut temple site has 51 caves, stupas, chaityas, passages and dense dwellings and was built in the 7th century AD.

The site contains a colossal statue of **Gautam Buddha** in the nirvana pose.



Bhojeshwar Mahadev Temple

The temple is thousand-year-old and dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is set on a 3-tier sandstone platform in 6 meters square.

It has architectural grandeur, colossal lingam, and historical significance.

It was built during the 11th century under the patronage of **Raja Bhoj in Bhojpur** and represents the zenith of temple architecture during the Paramara period in India.

Rock Art Sites of Chambal Valley

At Daraki-Chattan in the Chambal basin, a cave in the quartzite buttresses of Indragarh hill.

The vertical walls of the cave boast more than 500 cupules. On the southern wall of the cave at Daraki-Chattan, small circular cupules show conical depth and are about two million years old.

Khooni Bhandara

It is an underground water management system comprising eight waterworks built in Burhanpur.

It is the Mughal period water work following the persian qanat approach.

It was built by erstwhile ruler **Abdurrahim Khankhana** in 1615.

Gond Memorial of Ramnagar

The architectural complexes were built by Gond kings of Garha Mandla, **Hirde Shah** and located on the bank of the **Narmada river** in Ramnagar.

The cluster of monuments include the following:

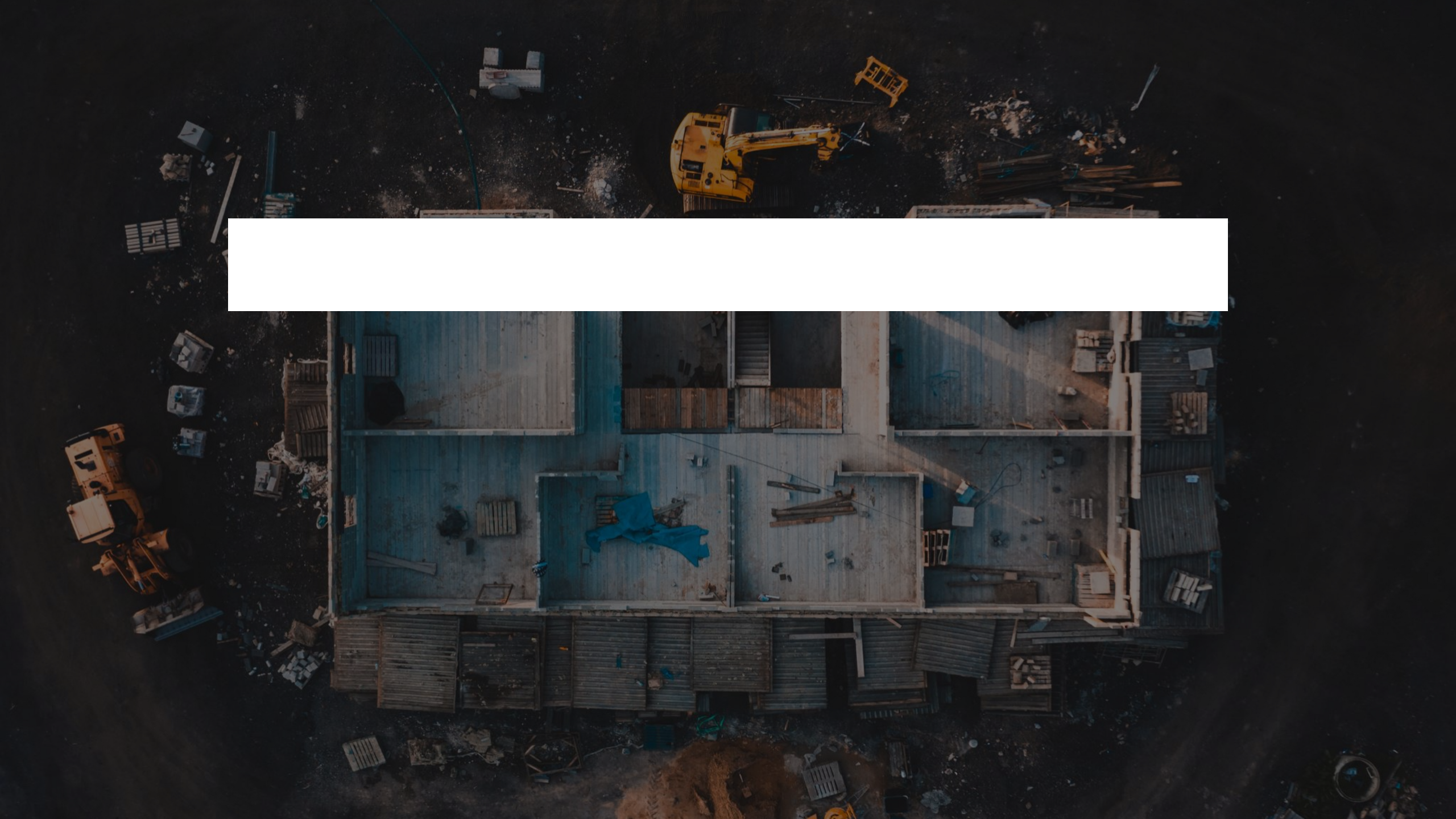
Moti Mahal (Rajmahal), Ramnagar, Mandla

Raibhagat ki Kothi, Ramnagar, Mandla

Vishnu Mandir (Suraj mandir), Ramnagar, Mandla

Begum Mahal, Chaugan Rayotwari

Dalbadal Mahal, Chaugan Ryotwari



India's share in Space Industry

India constitutes 2-3% of the global space economy and is expected to enhance its share to more than 10% by 2030.

With over 400 private space companies, India ranks **fifth globally** in no. of space companies.

% of global market share

US	40%
UK	7%
India	2%

Global space economy (in 2021)	USD 386B
India (in 2021)	USD 7.6B
India to grow (by 2025)	USD 50B

- **Private players in space industry**

- Indian start-ups are taking active interest in the space market, from just 1 start-up in the space sector in 2012 to **189 start-ups in 2023**.

- The funding received by these start-ups reached a total of **\$124.7 Mn in 2023** from \$67.2 Mn in 2021.

- The Skyroot, have launched India's first privately built rocket, **Vikram-S**, into space, with plans to revolutionize satellite launches.

Fun fact



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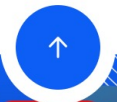
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