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**Some people can't
believe in themselves
until someone else
believes in them first.**

Sean Maguire, Good

EVERYDAY **POWER**



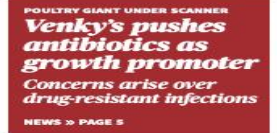
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INSIDE



Terrorists will be pursued across border: Rajath

NEW DELHI
If any terrorist tries to disturb the peace in Bharat, or tries to carry out terror activities in Bharat, we will give them a befitting reply," Defence Minister Rajath Singh said. "If they run away to Pakistan, we will enter Pakistan to kill them," he said. » PAGE 3

NCERT likely to add Rakhigauri findings in books

NEW DELHI
The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has proposed that findings from the DNA analysis of skeletal remains unearthed at the archaeological site of Rakhigauri in Haryana be added to the Class 12 history textbook. » PAGE 5

RBI proposes to enable UPI for cash deposit

MUMBAI
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed to enable the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) for cash deposits considering the app's popularity and convenience. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said, "Given the acceptance of UPI, it is now proposed to facilitate cash deposit facility through the use of UPI." » PAGE 11

Kosovo begins its first national census since 2011

PRIESTINA
Kosovo's government began on Friday its first nationwide census since 2011, which will include surveying the ethnic Serb minority in the north, as time when tensions with Serbia are high. Some 4,400 surveyors will interview residents. » PAGE 13

RBI keeps repo rate on hold as food prices remain high

Lalitendu Mishra
MUMBAI
The spike in food prices has kept the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) worried even though overall inflation has moderated to a certain extent. On Friday, the central bank's Monetary Policy Committee decided to keep the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) unchanged at 6.50%. This is the seventh time that the rates have been kept on hold.

Congress promises to remove 50% quota cap

Congress releases 45-page manifesto, Nyay Patra, with 'five pillars of justice' as the central theme | Rahul Gandhi says the election is being closely fought and the INDIA bloc will emerge victorious | He alleges that the 'capture of institutions' which started in 2019 is now at its peak

Sandeep Dhukhan
NEW DELHI
Framing the Lok Sabha election as a contest between those who want to "destroy" the Constitution and democracy and those who want to protect them, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, at the launch of his party's election manifesto on Friday, said the election would be closely contested and the Opposition would win the battle.



Election strategists: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with former Congress president Rahul Gandhi releasing the party's manifesto in New Delhi on Friday. *STEWART PUGH/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE*

the minimum support price a legal right; filling 30 lakh vacant government posts; constitutional amendments to remove the 50% cap on reservation for SCs, STs, and OBCs; nationwide caste census; implementing 100% reservation in jobs and educational institutions for economically weaker sections (EWS); and scrapping the Agnipath recruitment scheme for armed forces.



Election strategists: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with former Congress president Rahul Gandhi releasing the party's manifesto in New Delhi on Friday. *STEWART PUGH/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE*

starting in 2019 has now reached its peak. Mr. Modi wants to have a monopoly over political financing through the capture of enforcement Directorate, Central Bureau of Investigation, and the Income Tax Department, he claimed.

Asked about the number of seats the Congress and the Opposition are likely to win, he said, "Unlike many political commentators, I cannot predict the future. What I am confident of is that this is a much closer election than what is being propagated by the media. We are going to fight an excellent election and we are going to win the election."

"INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) has decided that we are together fighting an ideological election. After winning the election, the whole coalition will jointly decide who will be the leader, the Prime Minister," the former Congress chief responded when asked about the Opposition's prime ministerial face.

Recalling how the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led BJP government lost in 2004 despite the "India Shining" campaign, Mr. Gandhi said that after accounts of the Congress were frozen, the party was left with its "original path to go to the people". "This [manifesto] reflects the voice of India, we have only written it," he added.

Friday prayers



People offering prayers outside the Jama Masjid on Juma-tul-Vida (last Friday of Ramadan) at Jhri Bazaar in Jaipur. *R. MOORTHY*

Supreme Court stays High Court order striking down law regulating U.P. madrasas

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the operation of an Allahabad High Court judgment which struck down a 20-year-old Uttar Pradesh law regulating madrasas and ordered the transfer of their students to regular schools.

The Allahabad HC had struck down the law and directed the transfer of students to 'regular' schools

that the Act threatened the principles of secularism and was violative of the Basic Structure of the Constitution. Additional Solicitor General K.M. Nataraaj, for Uttar Pradesh, said the course of instruction provided in madrasas did not involve broad-based subjects such as maths, science, and social studies. But the court countered the State's logic, asking how the striking down of a law regulating madrasas would ensure that students were instructed in maths, science, social studies, languages and history.

India abstains from UNHRC vote that called upon Israel for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

Subasini Haldar
NEW DELHI
India on Friday abstained on a resolution at the United Nations Human Rights Council that called upon Israel for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and the member-states to implement an arms embargo, which was adopted by the 47-member Council.

RBI keeps repo rate on hold as food prices remain high

vote in favour of three other resolutions that criticised Israel for human rights violations against Palestinians, Israel's occupation of Syrian Golan, and called for the Palestinian right to self-determination. All four resolutions were introduced at the HRC in Geneva by Pakistan on behalf of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation.

India abstains from UNHRC vote that called upon Israel for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

condemn Hamas, while condemning Israel's killing of more than 33,000 Palestinians, blockade of food into the area, and "forcible transfer" of civilians from one part of Gaza to another in the past six months. The results were 12-4-4, and four other countries voted against the resolution titled "Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the right to accountability and justice" and India joined France and Japan among 13 countries that abstained.

India abstains from UNHRC vote that called upon Israel for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India on Friday abstained on a resolution at the United Nations Human Rights Council that called upon Israel for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and the member-states to implement an arms embargo, which was adopted by the 47-member Council.

While India's abstention is believed to be in line with previous votes on any HRC resolutions that call for "accountability", it did

vote in favour of three other resolutions that criticised Israel for human rights violations against Palestinians, Israel's occupation of Syrian Golan, and called for the Palestinian right to self-determination.

All four resolutions were introduced at the HRC in Geneva by Pakistan on behalf of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation.

While the Ministry of External Affairs did not issue any explanation for the vote, it is understood to follow previous abstentions



The U.S. voted against the resolution.

on similar resolutions, and also in line with its vote at the UNGA in October 2023, since the HRC resolution (A/HRC/55/L.30) failed to

condemn Hamas, while condemning Israel's killing of more than 33,000 Palestinians, blockade of food into the area, and "forcible transfer" of civilians from one part of Gaza to another in the past six months.

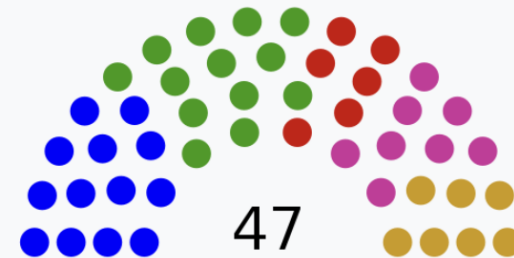
The U.S., Germany and four other countries voted against the resolution titled "Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice" and India joined France

and Japan among 13 countries that abstained. However 28 members, including Bangladesh, China, Maldives, the UAE, Indonesia, voted in favour.

India voted for three resolutions that were adopted with large majorities on "Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination", "Human rights in the occupied Syrian" Golan, and "Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan".

























Formation	15 March 2006; 18 years ago
Type	Subsidiary organ
Legal status	Active
Headquarters	Geneva, Switzerland
President	 Omar Zniber
Parent organization	United Nations General Assembly
Website	www.ohchr.org 



	African States (13)
	Asia-Pacific States (13)
	Eastern European States (6)
	Latin American and Caribbean States (8)
	Western European and Other States (7)

"All victims of human rights abuses should be able to look to the Human Rights Council as a forum and a springboard for action." — [Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, 2007](#)^[1]

Current [\[edit \]](#)

Term	African States (13)	Asia-Pacific States (13)	Eastern European States (6)	Latin American & Caribbean States (8)	Western European & Other States (7)
2024– 2026 [18]	 Burundi  Ivory Coast  Ghana  Malawi	 China  Indonesia  Japan  Kuwait	 Albania  Bulgaria	 Brazil  Cuba  Dominican Republic	 France  Netherlands
2023– 2025 [19]	 Algeria  Morocco  South Africa  Sudan	 Bangladesh  Kyrgyzstan  Maldives  Vietnam	 Georgia  Romania	 Chile  Costa Rica	 Belgium  Germany
2022– 2024 [20]	 Benin  Cameroon  Eritrea  The Gambia  Somalia	 India  Kazakhstan  Malaysia  Qatar  United Arab Emirates	 Lithuania  Montenegro	 Argentina  Honduras  Paraguay	 Finland  Luxembourg  United States

RBI to enable UPI for cash deposit

The RBI Governor said operational instructions on enabling UPI for cash deposit facility will be issued shortly; the RBI also decided to permit foreign investors in IFSC to invest in green bonds and to launch a mobile app for its Retail Direct scheme

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed to enable the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) for cash deposits considering the app's popularity and convenience.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, while making a statement on developmental and regulatory policies, said, "Given the popularity and acceptance of UPI, and also the benefits seen from the availability of UPI for card-less cash withdrawal at ATMs, it is now proposed to facilitate cash de-



More choice: The facility of cash deposit is presently available only through the use of debit cards. PTI

posit facility through the use of UPI."

Cash Deposit Machines (CDMs) deployed by banks enhance customer convenience while reducing

cash-handling load on bank branches. The facility of cash deposit is presently available only through the use of debit cards.

The Governor said oper-

ational instructions on enabling UPI for cash deposit facility will be issued shortly.

In another measure, to facilitate wider non-resident participation in Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs), the RBI decided to permit eligible foreign investors in the International Financial Services Centre also to invest in such bonds.

A scheme for investment and trading in SGrBs by eligible foreign investors in IFSC is being notified separately in consultation with the Government and the IFSC Authority.

At present, foreign port-

folio investors (FPIs) registered with SEBI are permitted to invest in SGrBs under different routes available for investment by FPIs in government securities.

The RBI also decided to introduce a mobile app for its Retail Direct scheme, introduced in November 2021. The scheme gives access to individual investors to maintain gilt accounts with RBI and invest in government securities. The scheme enables investors to buy securities in primary auctions and buy/sell securities through the NDS-OM platform.

UPI GOES GLOBAL

UPI Adoption and Use Case

UK
To enhance cross-border payments using UPI IDs

FRANCE
To allow UPI payments for students, tourists

NEPAL
P2P, P2M, and cross-border payments made operational

UAE
Cross-border UPI payments enabled

OMAN
To allow digital remittances using RuPay cards and UPI

BHUTAN
BHIM UPI QR-based payments enabled

MALAYSIA
To facilitate remittance to beneficiary banks in India via UPI

SINGAPORE
PayNow integrated with UPI for cross-border transactions

OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

UPI QR payments for countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan

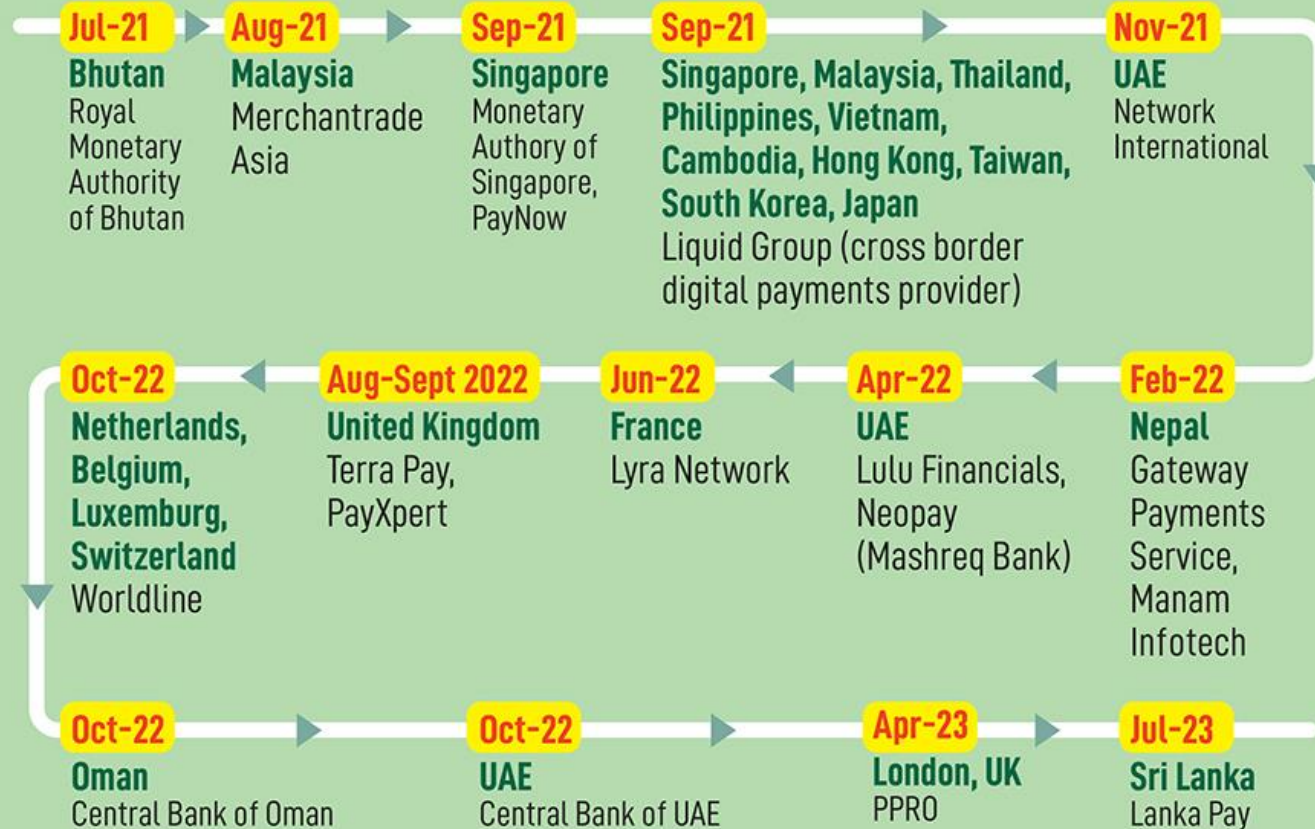
OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Indian payment channels to be enabled in Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland





UPI goes global: Adoption in different countries



As consumption of cannabis surges, Germany clears partial legalisation

On February 23, the lawmakers approved the partial legalisation, with 407 MPs voting for it and 226 voting against it: adults can possess up to 25 gm while outside, 50 gm at home, and a person can grow three marijuana plants at home; Christian Democrats call the law an 'absolute mistake'

Nishith Sawant
BERLIN

At the stroke of midnight on April 1, the area around Berlin's famous Brandenburg Gate was shrouded in a fog of smoke emanating from the thousands of lit joints. The German Cannabis Association organised a smoke-in to celebrate the legalisation of the recreational consumption of cannabis (or marijuana). Around 1,500 people had assembled this spring night to celebrate publicly what was deemed illegal until then.



People gather in front of the Brandenburg Gate during the 'Smoke-In' event in Berlin, Germany. AP

Masha M. was one of the revelers celebrating the decriminalisation of cannabis use. "I am happy because now I can plant my cannabis, which is excellent. Earlier, this was illegal. I have worked for a long time with drug addicts, and it is very important to remove this taboo on cannabis consumption and decriminalise it."

A 33-year-old Markus H. attracted much attention among 12 to 17-year-olds and 18 to 25-year-olds in the last 10 years as a prime motivator to reconsider cannabis regulation.

The Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), who sit in the Opposition, called the cannabis law an "absolute mistake". "The future litigation on cannabis possession is a carte blanche for each small dealer to operate their business more or less openly. It will not be possible for the police and regulatory authorities to control the manifold and partly absurd regulations."

not sell marijuana over the counter, but a German resident has to become a member of the club and can only pre-order marijuana until then. I can't say more on that," he said.

While cannabis has been partially legalised, you still cannot buy it over the counter.

Acquisition rules
The German government joins other European nations, such as Malta and Luxembourg, when it comes to legalising recreational cannabis. However, many rules exist around acquisition and where one can consume it. Adults can possess up to 25 gm of them when outside, 50 gm at home, and three marijuana plants per person can be grown at home.

Non-profit Cannabis Social Clubs or cannabis growing co-operatives, which will start functioning from July 1, are the only legal organisations from where cannabis can be sourced. These clubs can

said Tino Sorge, the health policy spokesperson for the CDU/CSU parliamentary group.

Mr. Lauterbach cited the doubling of cannabis consumption among 12 to 17-year-olds and 18 to 25-year-olds in the last 10 years as a prime motivator to reconsider cannabis regulation.

Thorsten Dietrich, chairman of Berlin's first Cannabis Social Club founded in 2016, expressed pleasure at the passing of the cannabis regulations. He had brought along a life-size sculpture of the hemp leaf, which many revelers used as a backdrop for clicking photographs.

"This is a historical moment. We have been fighting to make growing cannabis legal for our members," said Mr.

Dietrich.

There are many restrictions, such as not smoking around people under 18, not smoking within 100 metres of schools, kindergartens, playgrounds, and sports facilities, and not smoking in pedestrian zones between 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Even within the cannabis social clubs, smoking is forbidden. Advertising of these cannabis clubs and cannabis products is prohibited. Derivatives of cannabis, namely edibles, hash brownies, oils, teas, and so on, are prohibited from sale. The cannabis grown at home cannot be sold to someone else either.

Mr. Dietrich noted that the regulations are still a bit complex. "We have contacted a couple of lawyers to clarify these regulations. Until then, I can't say more on that," he said.

First step
Steffen Geyer, the head of the Hemp Museum in Central Berlin and the chairman of CSCD (an umbrella organisation of German cannabis social clubs), conducted a discussion round with other experts in the hemp scene about the new regulations. The discussion took place in the Hemp Museum's basement, which resembled an enthusiast's cosy living room. A wall surrounded by street art and cardboard cutouts with hemp leaf motifs also pushed back the backdrop.

Mr. Geyer called this regulation a small step in the right direction as one gets the freedom to grow

and consume cannabis.

"Germany has the most liberal cannabis law in Europe, but that may not last for long. Czech Republic and Lichtenstein are working on a different law, and they want to be less bureaucratic than Germany," said Mr. Geyer, referring to the many rules surrounding acquiring cannabis and running social clubs.

When asked if the black market would drastically reduce, Mr. Geyer said he didn't see that happening with the current regulations.

"These social clubs aren't allowed to sell cannabis on the spot. As a member, you will need to tell the club how much cannabis you want, and you will have it three months later. You also participate in growing cannabis as a club member. This is fine for someone who wants to stock up, but for the occasional consumer, it's not practical. Most people will not participate in these legal ways of acquiring cannabis," said Mr. Geyer.

Another strange regulation that Mr. Geyer criticised was not allowing smoking within the cannabis social clubs. "We expect the Federal Constitutional Court to get rid of this ruling, as it doesn't make sense," he said.

Apart from the CDU/CSU, the new regulations have also seen pushback from the medical association.

Nishith Sawant is an independent journalist based in Berlin

Should take action against antimicrobial resistance, says report

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

Political leaders are ignoring the growing danger of antimicrobial resistance, which could lead to an unprecedented health and economic catastrophe, a high-level task force warned on Thursday.

"The world now has a limited and critical window of opportunity to respond at the scale and with the urgency proportionate to the rapidly increasing threats posed by AMR," according to a report published on Thursday by the Global Steering Group on Antimicrobial Resistance.

Resistance to antimicrobials (AMR) — antibiotics, antifungals, and antiparasitics — is already wreaking havoc, and is the result of the massive use of these products to treat humans, animals and food. Evidence is mounting that "changes occurring in the natural environment due to the climate crisis are increasing the spread of infectious disease, potentially including drug resistant infections," the report added.

The report is part of an effort to spur action by global leaders ahead of a meeting in New York on September 26.

Microbes that are not completely eradicated by a given substance can develop resistance to that product, gradually reducing the arsenal of drugs available to treat infections. AMR is already one of the world's leading causes of death, directly responsible for 1.27 million deaths a year, the report said.

If left unchecked, AMR is expected to reduce life expectancy by an average of 1.8 years by 2035, leading to unprecedented healthcare costs and deaths, gradually reducing the arsenal of drugs available to treat infections. AMR is estimated to cost the world \$412 billion a year in additional health costs and \$443 billion a year in lost labour productivity, according to an economic impact study commissioned by the Global Steering Group.

Schools switch to remote learning due to intense heat

Agence France-Presse
MANILA

Thousands of schools in the Philippines suspended in-person classes Friday, the education department said, as parts of the tropical country endure dangerously high temperatures.

The months of March, April, and May are typically the hottest and driest in the archipelago nation but conditions have been exacerbated by the El Niño weather phenomenon.

Many schools have no air conditioning, leaving students to swelter in crowded, poorly-ventilated classrooms.

"Even my smartest student is not in the mood to answer questions because it's very hot," said Myerette Paulino, a teacher. Adding, "students feel tired and seem sleepy".

The Department of Education has issued an advisory giving school heads the power to decide when to switch to remote learning "in cases of extreme heat and other calamities".

Official figures for Friday showed 5,288 schools suspended in-person classes, affecting more than 3.6 million students. That was higher than the 1,768 schools on Thursday.

Some schools have reduced class hours to avoid teaching during the hottest times of the day.

The heat index was expected to reach the "danger" level of 42 or 43 degrees Celsius in several areas of the country on Friday, the state weather forecaster said.

Late bloomers



Illuminated cherry trees in bloom at Chidoriguchi Moat in Tokyo, Japan. The country's Meteorological Agency confirmed that flowers on a sample Someiyoshino tree in the Yasukuni Shrine were in full bloom 13 days later than average. GETTY IMAGES

Big Tech in 'underground' race to license archives that will train AI

Reuters
NEW YORK

At its peak in the early 2000s, Photobucket was the world's top image-hosting site. The media backbone for once-hot services like Myspace and Friendster, it boasted 70 million users and accounted for nearly half of the U.S. online photo market.

Today, with only two million people still use Photobucket, according to analytics tracker Similarweb. But the generative AI revolution may give it a new lease of life.

CEO Ted Leonard, who runs the 40-strong company out of Edwards, Colorado, said he is in talks with multiple tech companies to license Photobucket's 13 billion photos and videos to be used to train generative AI models that can generate content from text prompts.

Mr. Leonard, 57, has discussed rates of between five cents and \$1 dollar per photo and video, with prices varying widely both by the buyer and the types of imagery sought. "We've spoken to companies that have said, 'we need way more,'" Mr. Leonard added, with one



Illustrious era: Ted Leonard, chief executive officer of Photobucket in Colorado, United States. REUTERS

buyer telling him they wanted over a billion videos. Photobucket declined to identify its prospective

buyers, citing commercial confidentiality. The ongoing negotiations, which haven't been previously reported, suggest the

company could be sitting on billions of dollars' worth of content and give a glimpse into a bustling data market that's arising in the rush to dominate generative AI technology.

Tech giants like Google, Meta and Microsoft-backed OpenAI initially used teams of data scraped online to train their generative AI models. But that method is being mimicked by other companies.

They have said that doing so is both legal and ethical, though they face lawsuits over copyright infringement from holders over the practice. At the same time, these

Kosovo gov't. begins its first national census since 2011

Associated Press
PRISTINA

Kosovo's government began Friday its first nationwide census since 2011, which will include surveying the ethnic Serb minority in the north, at a time when tensions with neighbouring Serbia are high.

The Agency of Statistics is conducting the 12 million euro (\$12 million) census, originally to take place in 2021 but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Some 4,400 surveyors will interview residents in person from April 5 until May 17 to cover demographic and socioeconomic indicators that "will take Kosovo a step ahead toward integration into the European Union," according to the agency's website.

Kosovar gov't. EU's statistical office, U.N. organisations, World Bank, Eurostat are funding the census

The Kosovar government and the EU's statistical office, Eurostat, U.N. organisations and the World Bank are funding the census, which will tally the number of people residing in the country, family households, their education and employment, as well as the number of locals living abroad.

Surveyors will also ask interviewees about damage during the 1998-1999 war and if they have relatives who died or were tortured at the time.

Kosovo was a former Serbian province until a 78-

day NATO bombing campaign in 1999 ended a war between Serbian government forces and ethnic Albanian separatists in Kosovo and pushed Serbian forces out. Belgrade does not recognise Kosovo's 2008 independence.

Hazbijë Qerri, the agency spokesperson, said they hoped for "a positive response from everybody".

In 2011 Kosovo had 1.74 million "registered" residents, of which nearly 1.8%, or about 26,000, are ethnic Serbs.

Prime Minister Albin Kurti called on the Serb minority on Wednesday to take part in the census.

"When we made our plans for subsidies, work, education ... the health system, we should have the state of the population reflected in the budget," he said.

tech companies are also quietly paying for content locked behind paywalls and login screens, giving rise to a hidden trade in everything from chat logs to long forgotten personal photos from faded social media apps.

"There is a rush right now to go for copyright material that have private collections of stuff that is often cheaply available to be scraped," said Edward Klaris from law firm Klaris Law, which says its advising content owners on deals available to be

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Capital and largest city	Pristina ^a 🌐 42°40'N 21°10'E
Official languages	Albanian Serbian ^[2]
Regional languages	Bosnian · Turkish ^[3] · Romani
Ethnic groups (2019)^[4]	92% Albanians 4% Serbs 2% Bosniaks 1% Turks 1% Romani
Religion (2020)^[5]	93% Islam 6% Christianity <1% no religion <1% others
Demonym(s)	Kosovar, Kosovan
Government	Unitary parliamentary republic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President • Prime Minister • Chairman of the Assembly 	Vjosa Osmani Albin Kurti Glauk Konjufca
Legislature	Assembly
Establishment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kosovo Vilayet • Treaty of London • Autonomous Province within Yugoslavia • Republic of Kosova • Kumanovo Agreement • UN Administration • Declaration of independence • End of Steering Group supervision • Brussels Agreement 	1877 1913 31 January 1946 2 July 1990 9 June 1999 10 June 1999 17 February 2008 10 September 2012 19 April 2013

SC stays order striking down UP madrasa law, says High Court misread Act

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE SUPREME COURT Friday stayed the Allahabad High Court order which had declared the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004, "unconstitutional" on the ground that it violated "the principle of secularism" and fundamental rights provided under Article 14 of the Constitution.

Issuing notice to the Uttar Pradesh government on a clutch of appeals against the March 22 High Court order, a three-judge bench of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said, "We are of the view that the issues raised in the petitions merit

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPRESS NETWORK

SC GRANTS BAIL TO SHOMA SEN IN ELGAR PARISHAD CASE ■■

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

Ten years in opposition and not a word on private reforms?



MAHARASHTRA COMMISSION FINDINGS IN STATE AFFIDAVIT BEFORE BOMBAY HC

Panel sets stage for Maratha quota: Share in Govt jobs falling, girl-child marriage uptick

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, APRIL 5

UNDERLINING THE inadequate representation of the Marathas in all public service sectors and how the community has been "completely out of the mainstream", the Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC), led by retired justice Sunil B Shukre, has found an "alarming" rise in the girl child marriage rate within the community, up from 0.32 per cent to 13.7 per cent in the last six years.



It has also found that 43.76 per cent of Maratha women are involved in manual labour for a livelihood, and that representa-

The contents of the MSBCC report form part of an affidavit filed by the State General Administration Department (GAD), through its Secretary Sunant N Bhangre, in response to a clutch of petitions challenging the 10 per cent reservation granted to Marathas under the Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC) category in jobs and education.

The challenge to the SEBC Act, 2004, which was based on the recommendations of the Shukre Commission, is likely to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

50% women quota in Central jobs, easing bail law: Cong in manifesto

Silences telling: On CAA, OPS, AFSPA



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with senior party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in Delhi. Anil Sharma

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

FACING AN uphill electoral battle, the Congress Friday released its poll manifesto, announcing a

branch of promises to woo marginalised castes, such as raising the 50% cap on reservation for SC, ST and OBCs and reservation in private educational institutions, outlining steps to create

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

It's a do-or-die battle for democracy, defending the core of India: Stalin

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, APRIL 5

AS TAMIL Nadu gears up to vote for the Lok Sabha elections in a fortnight, as part of the first phase on April 19, Chief Minister M K Stalin, who is leading the INDIA bloc in the state, says: "It feels like we are in the midst of a second struggle for independence. It's all about defending the core of India: democracy, secularism and our pluralistic society, not to mention the principle of federalism... from what I would frankly call fascist forces."

In an interview with The Indian Express at his Chennai residence, the DMK chief said that if the BJP's main weapon is projecting Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "a larger-than-life" persona, the Opposition has on its side "a strong team".



M K STALIN
CHIEF MINISTER, TAMIL NADU

"Leaders like Akhilesh Yadav, (Arvind) Kejriwal, Uddhav Thackeray, Mamata Banerjee and Tejashwi Yadav, they are all in it with us. We are united in this fight, recognising the gravity of the moment... In the coming elections, a dynamic young leader like Rahul Gandhi is set to dismantle that cultivated image of Modi and the broader RSS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

7TH TIME REPO RATE UNCHANGED AT 6.5% RBI holds repo rate, says it's waiting for inflation 'elephant' to walk away

Bank retains FY25 projections for real GDP at 7% and inflation at 4.5%; projects inflation dip in Q2 below 4%



RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das with his deputies at the RBI headquarters in Mumbai, Friday. Pradyip Das

HITESH VYAS
MUMBAI, APRIL 5

THE SIX-MEMBER Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Friday kept the repo rate — the rate at which RBI lends money to banks to meet their short-term funding needs — unchanged for the seventh consecutive time at 6.5 per cent.

It also indicated the possibility of retail inflation coming below the crucial level of four per cent in the second quarter (July-September) of FY 2025, raising expectations of a rate cut in fiscal.

The RBI last cut the repo rate by 40 basis points to 4 per cent in September 2023.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Pin code MH-1718: In Antarctica, a post office with Indian address

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
PANAJI, APRIL 5

IN 1984, shortly after India's first foray to Antarctica, its first post office on the icy continent was set up at Dakshin Gangotri — the nation's first scientific base there. Within the first year, as many as 10,000 letters and mail had been posted and "cancelled" at the his-



Cancelled post from Maitri North Goa research base

toric post office. And so began what officials describe as a "unique experience" for India's postal system. Dakshin Gangotri submerged in 1988-89 and was subsequently decommissioned. In January 26, 1990, a post office branch was set up at India's Maitri research station on Antarctica. Since then, for more than

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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The risks of vaping, quantified in new US study

ANONNA DUTT

NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

VAPING AT any point in life can increase the risk of heart failure by up to 19%, according to a new study published by the American College of Cardiology. Heart failure is a condition where the muscles of the heart either stiffen or become weak and are unable to pump blood properly.

“Nicotine in the vaping solution increases heart rate and blood pressure, stressing your heart with long use. It constricts your blood vessels, makes them less flexible and stiffens them up as in fibrosis,” Dr Nishith Chandra of Fortis Escorts Heart Institute in Delhi said.

While India is one of the few countries to have banned the manufacture, import, and sale of e-cigarettes, the products continue to be available in the grey market. Around 23% of people in India reported using e-cigarettes,

with 8% using them daily, according to a survey published last year in the journal *Preventive Medicine Reports*. The Global Adult Tobacco Survey pegs the number of current e-cigarette users at 0.02% of the population.

Vapes, e-cigarettes

Vapes or e-cigarettes electronically heat a solution of glycerine, flavours, and nicotine, the addictive substance in cigarettes. While people use cigarettes for the nicotine hit, it is the tar from smoking that is harmful. This is the reason e-cigarettes, which don't contain tar, were pushed as an aid for smoking cessation.

There is, however, not enough data to show that the use of e-cigarettes actually helps to quit smoking; users often end up smoking both cigarettes and vapes. Also, the different flavours in vapes may tempt even non-smokers. US data show that e-cigarettes

are the most commonly used tobacco product among students.

What the study says

The study scanned 1.7 lakh people and followed them for 45 months. Of them, 3,242 suffered heart failure. The results showed

that those who used e-cigarettes at any point were 19% more likely to suffer heart failure compared to non-users. Researchers also accounted for

a history of smoking and other risk factors.

“The difference we saw was substantial. It's worth considering the consequences to your health, especially with regard to heart health. More and more studies are linking e-cigarettes to harmful effects and finding that it might not be as safe as previously thought,” Yakubu Bene-Alhasan, lead author of the study and the resident physician at MedStar Health in Baltimore, said in a statement.

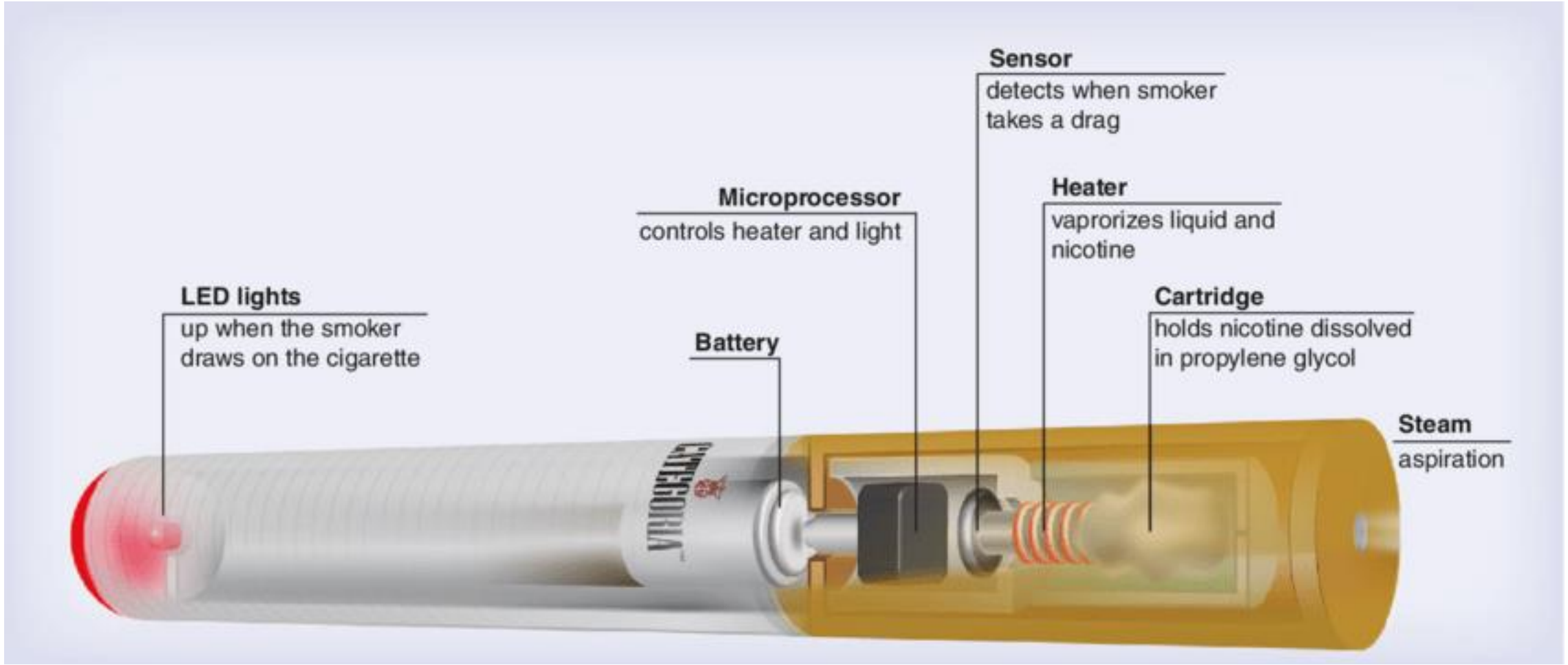
The researchers found that vaping increased the odds of a particular type of heart failure called heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF) — a condition in which the heart muscles become stiff and the heart does not properly fill between contractions. “The heart doesn't relax between beats. Daily use damages the lining of blood vessels, restricts the development of new blood vessels and stokes inflammation. This increases the risk of both heart attacks and strokes,” Dr Chandra said.

Other dangers from vapes

The nicotine in e-cigarettes may become a source of addiction instead of an aid in quitting regular cigarettes. Accidental exposure to the liquid could cause acute nicotine poisoning.


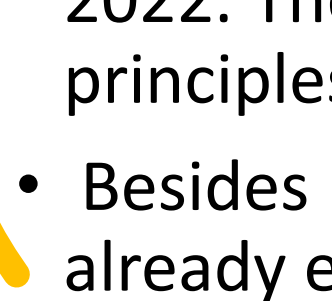
With no standardisation of the liquid used, many vapes release chemicals that cause lung disease, and contain cancer-causing compounds and heavy metals.



**EXPLAINED
HEALTH**



Nepal Moves to Ratify BIMSTEC Charter

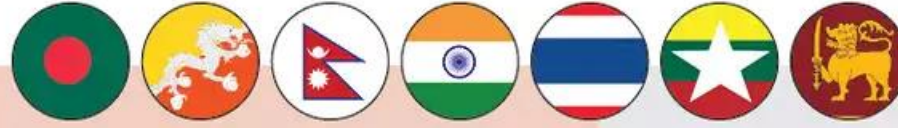
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- The presentation of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Charter in the Federal Parliament of Nepal marks a significant step towards regional cooperation and economic prosperity.
 - The BIMSTEC Charter was adopted during the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit, 2022. The Charter serves as the foundational document, setting out principles and structures for cooperation among member states.
 - Besides Nepal, the other six member countries of BIMSTEC have already endorsed the BIMSTEC Charter.
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- **BIMSTEC, formed in 1997, focuses on economic prosperity, social progress, scientific achievement, peace, and stability among countries in the Bay of Bengal region.**
 - **It is initially known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), and the organisation now comprises seven Member States (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.)**
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BIMSTEC

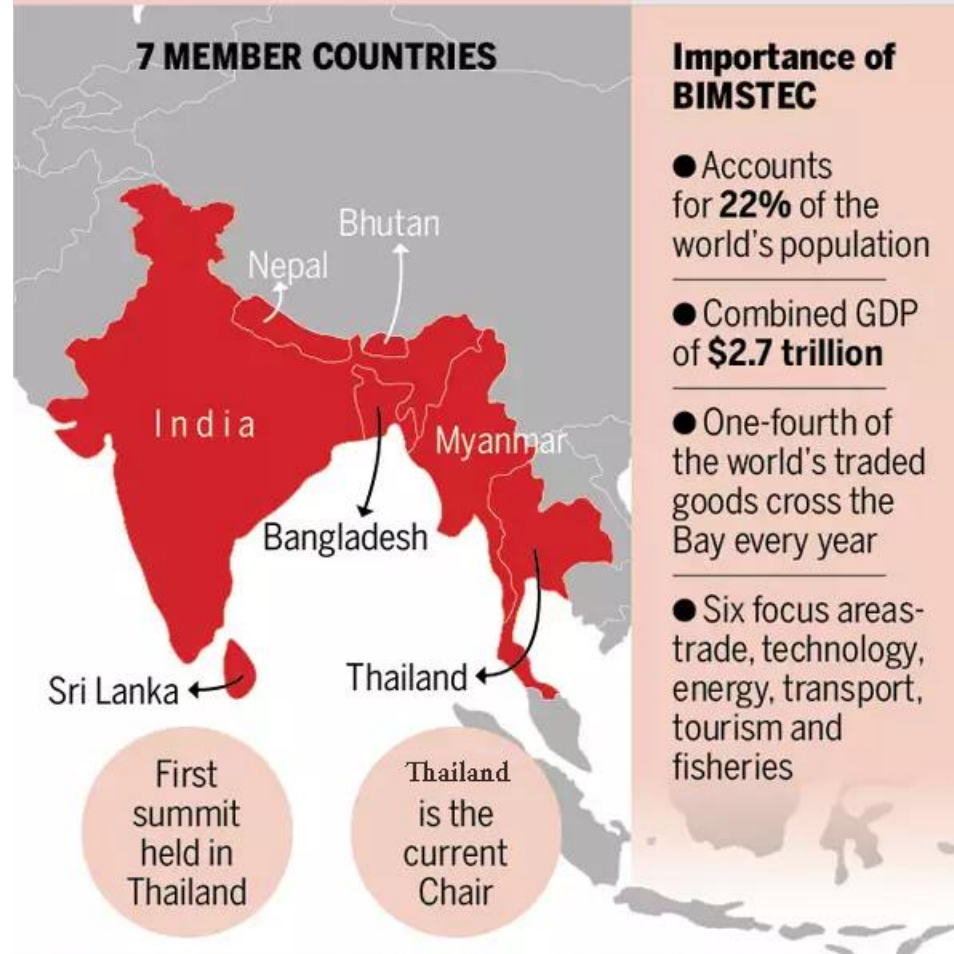
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



Stands for **The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation**

Founded in 1997 through **Bangkok Declaration**

7 MEMBER COUNTRIES



Importance of BIMSTEC

- Accounts for **22%** of the world's population
- Combined GDP of **\$2.7 trillion**
- One-fourth of the world's traded goods cross the Bay every year
- Six focus areas—trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries

First summit held in Thailand

Thailand is the current Chair

First Home-Grown Gene Therapy For Cancer



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- The President of India, launched India's first home-grown gene therapy which is CAR-T cell therapy (NexCAR19) for cancer at IIT Bombay.

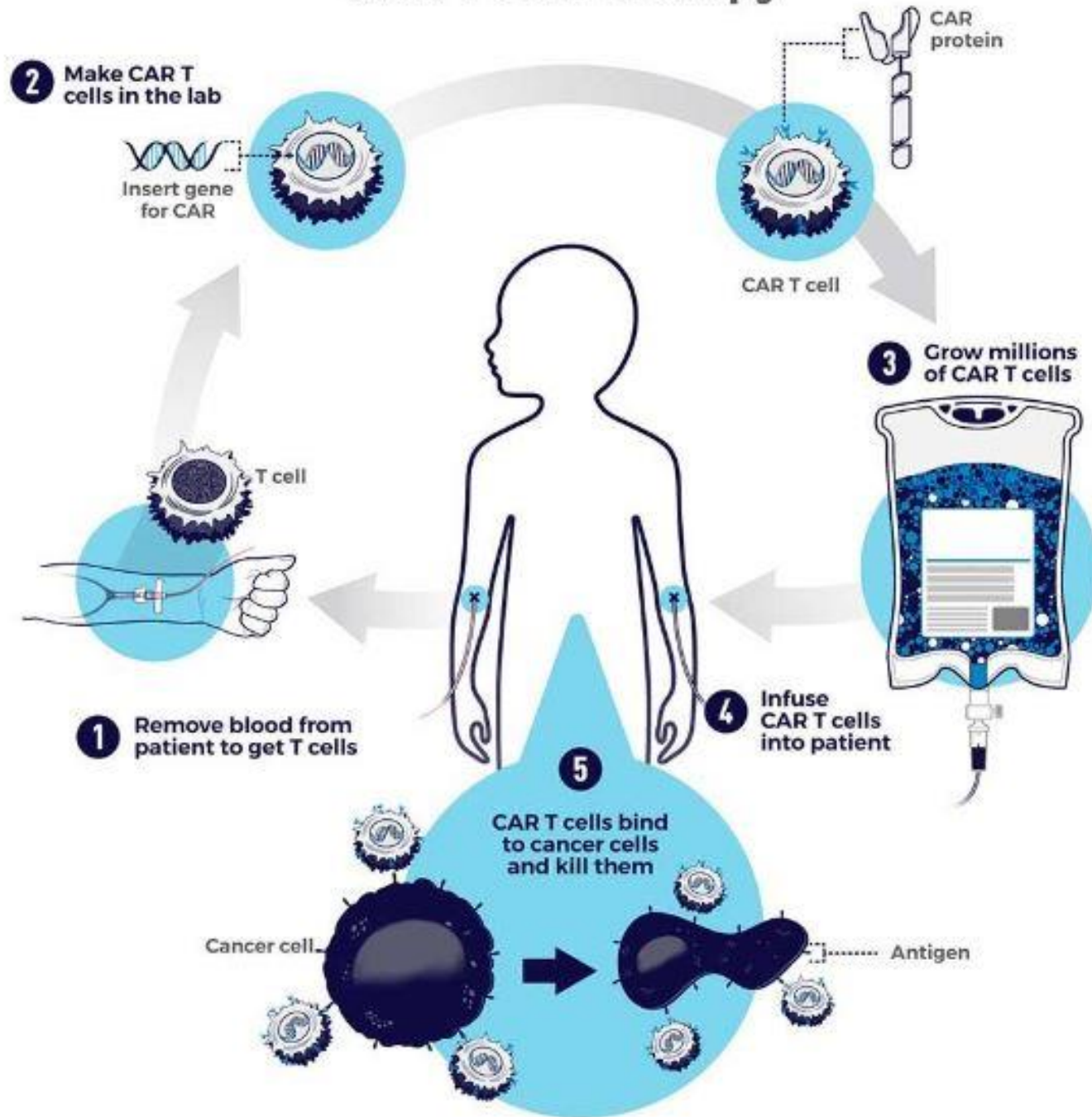
- **About**

- NexCAR19 is the indigenously developed **therapy for B-cell cancers** (types of cancers that form in the immune system's cells) such as leukemia and lymphoma.
- It has been developed collaboratively by **ImmunoACT**, a company incubated at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB), and **Tata Memorial Hospital**.
-

- **CAR-T Cell Therapy**

- T cells are the cells of the immune system that fights infections and can kill cancer.
- But, sometimes cancers can evade the T cells and there comes the use of “CAR-T cell therapy” or **Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy**.
- In this, patients own T cells are taken and modified in the lab so that they can recognise and react against the cancer.
- These modified T cells, also called CAR-T cells are then reinfused back into the patients. Now, these cells can better recognise cancer and are able to attack it.
-

CAR T-Cell Therapy



- **Different types of cell therapies**

- **Stem cell therapy:** This type of therapy involves the transplantation of stem cells to replace damaged or diseased cells. Stem cells have the ability to differentiate into various types of cells, including blood cells, nerve cells, and muscle cells, and can help repair damaged tissue.

- **Dendritic cell therapy:** This type of therapy involves the use of dendritic cells, which are immune cells that help to coordinate the immune response against cancer.




Hike in Prices of Essential Medicines

-
- The **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)** has hiked the **price of essential medicines** including painkillers, antibiotics and anti-infectives.
 - NPPA was set up under the Department of Pharmaceuticals is an independent regulatory agency that **controls the prices of pharmaceutical drugs** in India.
 -

- **Essential medicines** are those that **satisfy the priority healthcare needs** of the **majority** of the population.
- The essential medicines list needs to be **country specific** addressing the disease burden of the nation and the commonly used medicines at **primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare levels.**
- **The first country** in the world to compose its EML was **Tanzania in 1970.**
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- **In India, The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** prepared the first National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) **in 1996**. Subsequently, the list has been revised.
 - **Drug Price Control Order, 2013** was issued by the Department of Pharmaceuticals under Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers for **fixing the ceiling price of medicines included in NLEM**.



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Project Akashdeep

- Recently, the Indian Army has started the induction of **Akashteer Command and Control Systems** under ‘**Project Akashdeep**’ to bolster its air defence capabilities.
- **About the Akashteer Command and Control Systems**
- It is developed by **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** as part of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat initiative.
- It is a cutting-edge initiative designed to **automate air defence control and reporting processes** by digitising the entire process.

The system's Control Centres, designed to be vehicle-based and mobile, can maintain operational capabilities even in challenging communication environments.

It aims to enable monitoring of low-level airspace over the battle areas of the Indian Army and effectively control the **Ground Based Air Defence Weapon Systems**.

By integrating radar and communication systems at all levels into a unified network, Akashteer aims to deliver an unprecedented level of situational awareness and control.



- **Project Akashdeep**

- It is an **automated air defence control and reporting system, similar to the Indian Air Force's system.**

- It focuses on building a comprehensive air defence picture for ***monitoring, tracking, and engaging*** air defence assets by **digitising the entire process.**



Romania

Research centre in Romania has developed the world's most powerful laser.

About Romania

It is located in the geographic centre of Europe.

It neighbours to the North of Ukraine, to the East on the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and the Black Sea, to the South on Bulgaria, to the South-West on Serbia, and to the West on Hungary.





Saudi Arabia

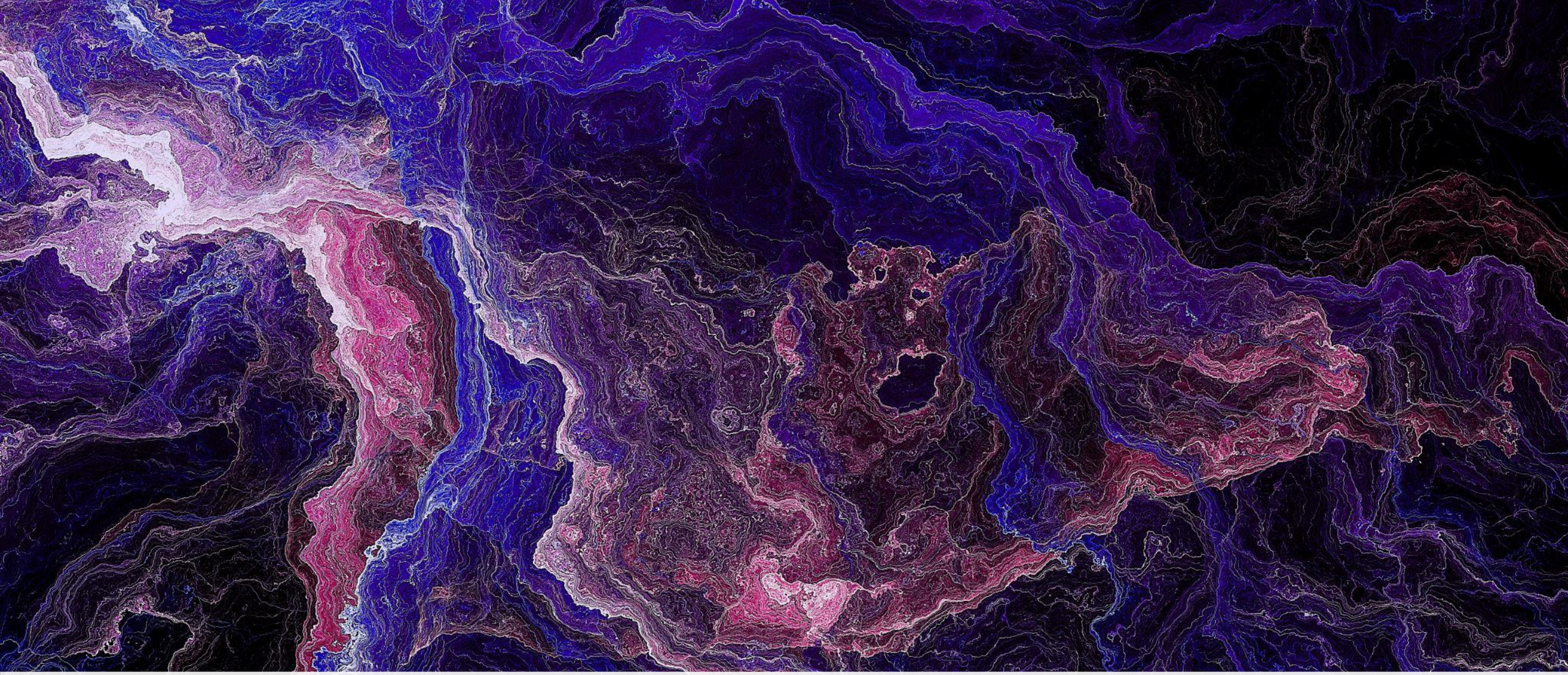
- World's First 3D-Printed Mosque was built in Saudi Arabia
- **About Saudi Arabia**
- It is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula
- It is located in the southwest corner of Asia
-



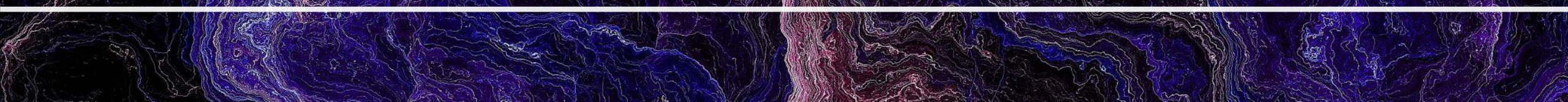


Saudi Arabia

Jordan Iraq Iran
Kuwait
Qatar
Egypt Riyadh UAE Oman
Jiddah Mecca
Sudan Red Sea
Eritrea Yemen
Arabian Sea



Fun fact



You need to drink at least eight glasses of water every day.



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A group of people are clapping in a dimly lit room. The focus is on the hands and forearms of several individuals, some wearing suits. The background is blurred, showing more people and a window. The overall mood is celebratory and professional.

Thank you
guys.
