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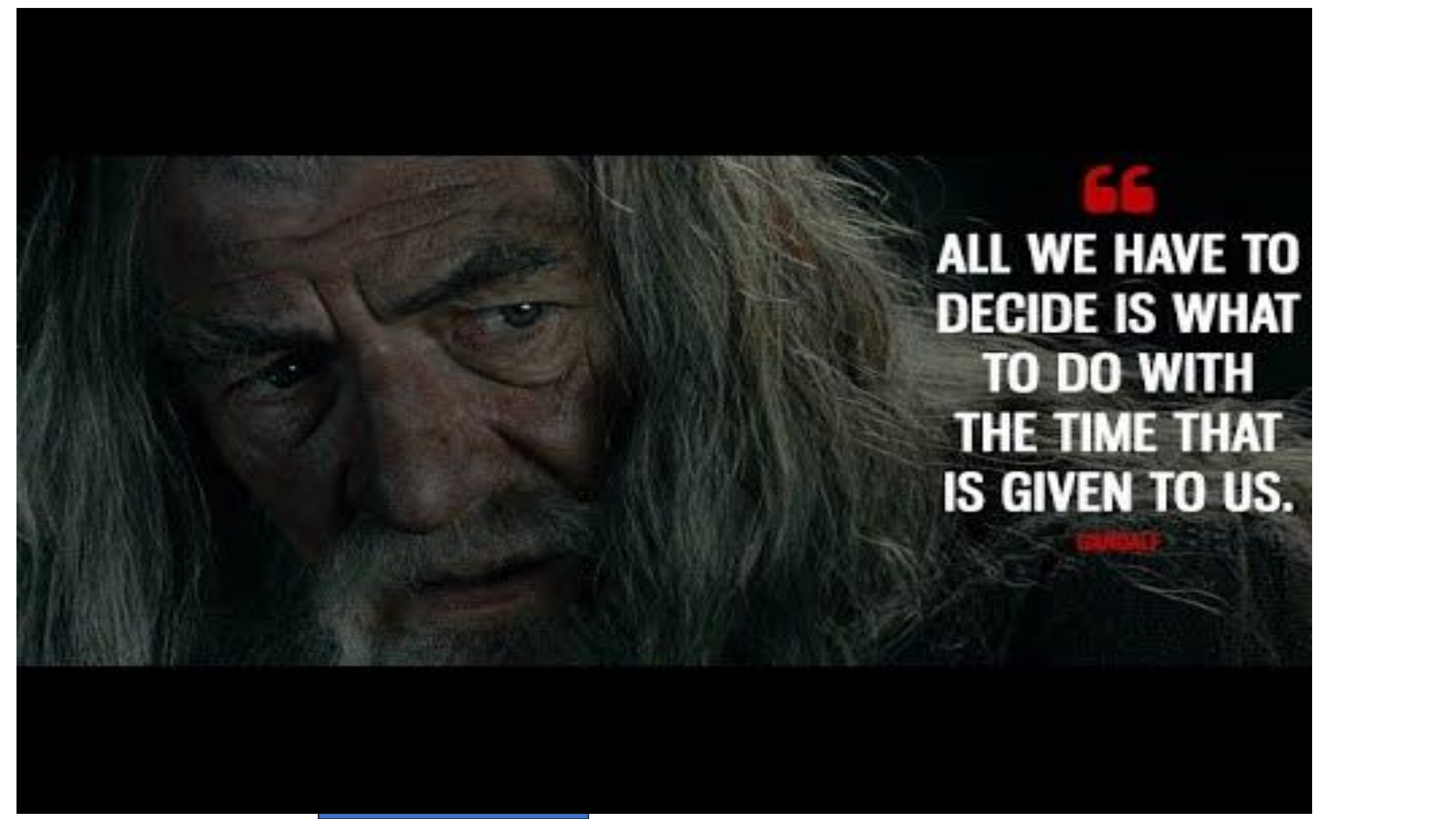
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THE HILLS ARE (BARELY) ALIVE

Kodaikanal, a microcosm of a national problem

Our mountains need better scrutiny to ensure their ecosystems do not buckle under rampant development and tourism

MAGAZINE » PAGE 1

Crisis ends, PVR to resume screening Malayalam movies

NEWS » PAGE 3

Why has the WHO issued an alert on viral hepatitis?

FAQ » PAGE 8

It's KKR vs LSG and MI vs CSK in today's double-header

SPORT » PAGE 13

INSIDE

Foreign Secretary reviews relations with U.S. officials

WASHINGTON
Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra met with senior U.S. officials including Deputy Secretary of Defence Kathleen Hicks and discussed the importance of expanding the scope of bilateral military engagements, the Pentagon said on Saturday.

» PAGE 3

Cong. flays Modi govt. for 'muck' border policy

NEW DELHI
Reacting to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's remarks that "China has not occupied our land", Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge castigated the Centre's "muck" Chinese policy.

» PAGE 3

Terror attacks leave 11 persons dead in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD
At least 11 persons, nine from Punjab province, were shot dead by militants in Pakistan's Balochistan in two separate incidents, authorities said on Saturday. No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks so far.

» PAGE 12

17 Indians aboard Israeli cargo vessel seized by Iran

India in touch with Iranian authorities through diplomatic channels in Tehran and Delhi, seeking security and early release of Indian crew, say sources. Israel terms seizure a 'pirate operation'

Dinakar Peri
Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Indian officials said they were in touch with Iranian authorities after an Israel-affiliated container vessel *MSC Aries* was seized by Iran's Revolutionary Guard in the Gulf of Hormuz on Saturday. There were 17 Indians among the 25 crew members on board the Portuguese-flagged vessel, including the Master of the ship, as well as four Filipinos, two Pakistanis, one Russian, and one Estonian, official sources said.

"We are aware that a cargo ship *'MSC Aries'* has been taken control by Iran. We have learnt that there are 17 Indian nationals on board. We are in touch with the Iranian authorities through diplomatic channels, both in Tehran and in Delhi, to ensure the security, welfare, and early release of Indian nationals," official sources said. The vessel was sailing from the United Arab Emirates to India when the incident occurred.

A video that went viral on X showed Iranian Revolutionary Guard commandos rappelling from a helicopter onto the *MSC Aries* near the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday. The vessel has 25 crew members on board. AP



Under siege: Screengrab from a video shows commandos rappelling down from a helicopter onto the *MSC Aries* near the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday. The vessel has 25 crew members on board. AP

Israeli-linked commercial shipping on the high seas was hit by ballistic missiles and drones. In the last 48 hours, Israel and the U.S. have been gearing up for possible missile and drone attacks by Iran, directly or through its proxies in the region, as a retaliation against the recent air strike on Iran's consulate in Damascus that killed senior Iranian personnel.

Pirate operation: Israel in a post on X, Iranian state-run news agency IRNA quoted an informed source to confirm the seizure of the "foreign vessel" in the Persian Gulf, near the Strait of Hormuz. Other Iranian media reported that the vessel was the *MSC Aries*. The United Kingdom's Maritime Trade Operations agency also confirmed the incident, only

stating that the ship had been seized by "regional authorities" off the coast of Fujairah in the UAE. The vessel is owned by London-headquartered Zodiac Maritime, which is owned by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer, and has been chartered to the Mediterranean. In response, the Indian Navy has deployed in strength and thwarted several piracy attempts. From December 2023 till late March 2024, this has involved the deployment of over 5,000 personnel at sea in more than 21 ships, and 900 hours of flying by maritime surveillance aircraft to address threats in the maritime domain. Navy Chief Adm. R. Hari Kumar had said on March 25, as Operation Sankalp completed 100 days.

ISRAEL WARNS IRAN
» PAGE 12

Iran-Israel tensions cloud future of Indians hired for Israeli construction sites

Subhasini Haldar
Mayank Kumar
NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

War clouds between Iran and Israel have cast a shadow over the future of more than 5,000 Indians who have been recruited for construction work in Israel, even as experts questioned the government for allowing the recruitment at this time.

In an advisory issued on Friday evening, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) asked all Indians "not to travel" to Iran or Israel until further notice, in view of escalating tensions between the two countries after Iran threatened reprisal for bombing of its consulate in Damascus, which was blamed on Israel.

At least 900 Indians, who were hired after a process facilitated by a national skill development council (NSDC) along with Israel's Population, Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA), have already flown to Israel since April 2, when the first group of 64 workers were flagged off in a ceremony hosted by the Israeli Embassy in Delhi. When asked, NSDC officials who facilitated the recruitment drive said that the advisory is for all citizens, and hence the process had witnessed "temporary disruption".

Unnao-based Sarish Kumar, who was among a group of 325 Indians who were packed and ready to leave India on April 16, says he is anxiously following news by employers but in the region through so-



Labour woes: A batch of over 60 workers who were flagged off to Israel on April 2 after a ceremony in Delhi. SIPHICAL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

cial media chat groups. "On Friday, we were informed that all plans had been put on hold until further notice," he told *The Hindu* over the telephone from Unnao. "We have been assured that the 665,000 paid by us for flight tickets and other charges will not be lost, that the delay is temporary, but I am very worried," he added, explaining that he had taken a loan from the expenses ahead of the trip.

Own expense
According to the terms of contract, the workers are expected to travel at their own expense and will only receive contracts once they land in Tel Aviv. A sample contract available on the PIBA website seen by *The Hindu* details that insurance, accommodation, and food will be arranged by employers but their costs will be deducted from workers' salaries.

On Thursday, an Israeli government statement announced that more than 6,000 Indian workers would reach Israel during April and May, with the government approving ticketed chartered flights for the workers. The MEA had also been helping facilitate the process, despite an earlier advisory issued by the Indian Embassy in Israel regarding the safety of workers, after an Indian was killed and two injured in a Hezbollah rocket attack. K.C. Singh, a former Ambassador to Iran and the United Arab Emirates, said the Union government's actions "reflected poorly" on its planning for this eventuality. "The government has known for several months about tensions in the region. If an advisory was in the works, how morally justified was it to send workers there at this time?" he asked, in comments to *The Hindu*.

Sydney shocked

Medical Retrieval

People being led out from the Westfield Shopping Centre in Sydney, Australia on Saturday when a man stabbed six people to death before he was fatally shot

The Australian police said multiple people, including a nine-month-old baby, were injured by the unidentified assailant, who was tracked down and shot dead by a policeman

The mall has been locked down and police have urged people to avoid the area

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 12

Dalkhola, a Bengal watering hole for Bihar tiptlers

Business from drinkers of the dry State is transforming the West Bengal town, which lies wedged between two Bihar towns with hotels, motels and plenty of eateries, to a major business hub with a steady influx of customers and tidy cash inflow

Amarnath Tewary
DALKHOLA

In dry Bihar, the town of Dalkhola, nestled between National Highway 31 and 27 on the Purna-Kishanganj highway, is an oasis for tiptlers. They stop here for a peg or two of alcohol and enjoy an overnight stay at the comfortable motels that have sprung up on a 30-km stretch of the highway before journeying on to Bihar. Since April 2016, Bihar has been a dry State, with strict penalties for those who violate the ban on liquor. Dalkhola is a municipality town of West Bengal's Uttar Dinajpur district, just a small portion of the town juts into Bihar. It lies

about 37 km north of Bihar's Purna, Kishanganj lying almost the same distance further to the north. As one travels between the two Bihar towns, one suddenly enters little Bengal, hearing Bangla voices, seeing the Bangla script on everything from shop signboards to car number plates. The display boards at the gates of the town openly advertise "Beer" and "Soni Ras Bar". They are all abuzz with truckers, drivers, and people travelling between Purna and Kishanganj, all lined up to enjoy a drink. "The place has become a major transit point for liquor from Bihar, a water at a local motel. He has been working at



Close watch: Checkpoints set up by the Bihar government to monitor movement to Dalkhola in West Bengal. AMARNATH TEWARY

the motel for nearly three years. He has seen an influx of customers and steady cash inflow for the motel's owner, who said to come from Bihar but has now settled in Shilguri. Local residents told *The Hindu* that the price of liquor has risen manifold in Dalkhola ever since Bihar was declared a dry

State in 2016. "People from Kishanganj, Purna and other parts of Bengal too come here daily looking for a plot of land on the highway to open a hotel, a motel, a *dhaba* (eatery), a bar, or a liquor shop or vend," said a middle-aged owner of a small eatery in Dalkhola. From time to time, the

Purna and Kishanganj administrations hold meetings with West Bengal police officials at Dalkhola to urge them to cooperate in the implementation of Bihar's liquor laws. Checks and barriers The Bihar police, excise, and prohibition department officials have put up checkpoints and barriers as one enters the stretch of the highway winding breath analysers and searching for illicit liquor but they rarely catch anyone. "Most of those who take liquor at Dalkhola stay there for a night and continue their journey next day to avoid being caught," said an Excise Department official who did not want to be named.

IN BRIEF

NHRC flags 'violation' of human rights in Sandeshkhali

In a spot inquiry into the Sandeshkhali case in West Bengal, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has flagged "several instances of atrocities", saying it indicates that there was a "violation of human rights" due to "negligence" in the prevention of such incidents. The NHRC, in its report, also observed that the "pervasive fear of reprisal, coupled with the power dynamics at play, acted as a formidable barrier", preventing individuals from voicing their grievances. The panel has sought an action taken report within eight weeks from the government of West Bengal, the NHRC said.

Air India, Vistara flights to avoid Iranian airspace

Amid rising tensions in West Asia, Air India and Vistara decided on Saturday to avoid the use of Iranian airspace, which is expected to affect flight schedules to Frankfurt, New York and Newark and result in higher fares. Air India and Vistara flights to Frankfurt on Saturday bypassed Iran and flew over Tajikistan resulting in a flight duration of eight hours. "Contingency routes, which are kept available to ensure operational continuity during such eventualities, are being used," said a Vistara spokesperson. It remains to be seen what route Air India's ultra long-haul flights to the U.S. will take. In a statement, Air India said: "Our aircraft will operate on alternate flight paths to and from India."

President asks people to adopt Ambedkar's ideals

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday greeted citizens on the eve of the birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution, and asked all to adopt his ideals to work collectively for the inclusive development of the country. Babasaheb Ambedkar, a pioneer of social change and a versatile personality, made exceptional contributions to our nation's history and society as a jurist, educationist, economist, social reformer and political leader, she said. Even today, his strong belief in the constitutional system is the foundation of our democracy and good governance, the President said.

Remove beverages from 'health drinks' category: govt.

The government has asked all e-commerce companies to remove drinks and beverages, including Bournvita, from the health drinks category from their portals. "National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, a statutory body constituted under section 63 of the Commission of Protection of Child Rights Act 2005 after its inquiry under Section 14 of CRPC Act 2005 concluded that there is no 'health drink' defined under Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, rules and regulations submitted by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and Mondelez India Food Pvt Ltd," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in an advisory to all e-commerce companies.

SUDOKU

9x9 grid with numbers and empty cells for a Sudoku puzzle.

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

9x9 grid with the solution to the Sudoku puzzle.

Congress clears candidates for 16 US constituencies in four States

The party's Central Election Committee names Manish Tewari for Chandigarh, Deepender Hooda for Rohtak, Srikant Kumar Jena for Balasore; Vikramaditya Singh will face BJP candidate and actor Kangana Ranaut in Mandi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday announced the names of its candidates for 16 Lok Sabha constituencies across four States. The notable names include former Union Minister Manish Tewari for the Chandigarh seat, shifting him from Anandpur Sahib which he won in the 2019 election. He will face the BJP's Sanjay Tandon, who is the son of former Governor Balamrji Das Tandon.

The party also cleared the name of Himachal Pradesh Minister Vikramaditya Singh, son of former Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh and State party chief Pratibha Singh, from Mandi. He will be facing BJP candidate Kangana Ranaut.

Former Union Minister Srikant Kumar Jena who has recently returned to the Congress will be con-



Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvir Singh Sukhu is flanked by Congress State president Pratibha Singh and Deputy CM Mukesh Agnihotri during the CEC meeting in New Delhi on Saturday. ANI

testing from Balasore in Odisha. Former Leader of the Opposition Parash Dhanani has been fielded from Rajkot against Union Minister Purshottam Rupala. Mr. Rupala is at the centre of a controversy, with his remarks against Rajputs and inciting protests from many within the Gujarat BJP. After 22 years, Mr. Rupala and Mr. Dhanani are

fighting against each other. The party were announced after a meeting of the party's Central Election Committee according to sources, candidates for Haryana and Delhi were also discussed. In Haryana, the party, according to sources, has finalised the names of Rajya Sabha member Deepender Hooda from Rohtak and Kumari Shejla from

Sirsa. However, Ms. Shejla has been announced as she will contest or not. Sources also said that in Punjab Congress AAP leader Dharamvir Gandhi's name was cleared for Patiala. The party, which is racked with in-fighting in Himachal Pradesh, is hoping that Mr. Singh's candidature will bring stability. Differences that were simmering between CM Suk-

winder Singh Sukhu and the party's State unit shrapnel during the recent Rajya Sabha election when Congress candidate Abhinav Singh was defeated due to cross-voting by six MPs from the ruling party. The fault lines within the party were visible, with Mr. Vikramaditya Singh and his mother Ms. Singh, blaming the CM for the Rajya Sabha loss.

Names for candidates for five Assembly seats in Gujarat coming up for by-polls were also cleared. There is still no word on the party's candidate from Ahmedabad and Rae Bareilly, where several sections in the party are hoping that the former Congress AAP leader Rahul Gandhi and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will contest. The meeting was attended by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, and AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal.

AAP Minister in a soup over casteist remark

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Minister in Punjab Laljit Singh Bhullar landed himself in a controversy after his alleged casteist remark against a community, inviting sharp criticism and a demand for stern action against him by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Congress on Saturday. Mr. Bhullar, AAP minister from the Khadoor Sahib constituency, spoke against former Congress MLA Harminder Singh Gill and allegedly made casteist remarks. He later apologised and stated that his remarks were solely against Mr. Gill and he never intended to hurt the sentiments of any community. Demanding that the Election Commission take action, senior SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema said, "... This action of the Minister is criminal, highly condemnable and has exposed the real face of AAP leaders. It has gravely hurt the feelings of the people of the State."

BJP's Rajput trouble comes to the fore in western Uttar Pradesh

Anul Kumar
GHAZIABAD

With less than a week left for the first round of Lok Sabha polls in the western Uttar Pradesh, it is casting its shadow on the BJP's Hindutva juggernaut.

Miffed at being sidelined in ticket distribution at the expense of Gurjars and Jats, and their self-esteem being crushed by certain remarks by BJP MPs and MLAs, Thakur leaders are holding panchayats across the region. Going by the field tally, it appears that the discontent is taking electoral shape.

After conducting panchayats in Saharanpur, Meerut, and Ghaziabad, a Kabhatiya Swabhimani Sammelan has been scheduled in Sardhana in the Muzaffarnagar constituency.

This has come after BJP leader and Union Minister Arun Gowil said in a statement that the government created a widespread rumour in Gujarat.

Thakurs or Rajputs con-

The BJP and its ally have focused their attention on Jats and Gurjars in the Brj region

stitute 10-13% of the Uttar Pradesh population and their vote could affect the prospects of a party in Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Meerut, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Kairnagar and Bijnor. But this time the BJP has not fielded any Thakur candidate for these seats. The only exception is Thakur Sarvesh Singh from Moradabad whom the party has repeated despite losing in 2019. The party and its ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) have focused their attention on Jats and Gurjars in the Brj region.

Discontent surfaced The discontent surfaced on a night before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally in Meerut, the cavalrycade of Muzaffarnagar MP

and Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan was attacked in a Thakur-dominated village. It was seen as the work of the supporters of Sangroop Som, a firebrand Thakur leader who surprisingly lost the 2022 Assembly polls from Sardhana. His supporters hold Mr. Balyan responsible for his electoral loss two years ago.

Both the BJP and its ally leaders emerged out of the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013 but Mr. Balyan made bigger political strides than Mr. Som. The latter was seeking Lok Sabha ticket from Meerut but his ambition was cut short by the entry of celebrity candidate Arun Gowil. Adding salt to the wounds, members of the community feel that General V.K. Singh (ret.D), the two-time MP from Ghaziabad, was forced to sit out of the election. They see Mr. Modi's roadshow in Ghaziabad as a move to modify the disgruntled community.

Thakur Purnan Singh, president of the Kisan Maz-

door Sangathan, has taken up the cause of the caste. Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Singh, whom the locals describe as close to the Sangroop Party, said: "It has become a matter of our self-esteem. The Thakur youth were nursing anger against the BJP since the party has allowed Gurjar control over the Kabhatiya identity of Rajya MLAs. The Kabhatiya kings, he said, belong to all but the way a community was allowed to put its identity before the king's name was unacceptable. "Also, the way BJP MPs and MLAs of Haryana and U.P. participated in the Gurjar panchayats where Rajputs are targeted, hurt us. Now, Parshottam Rupala has added fuel to the fire by his statements."

However, M.S. Tarwar, president of Rashtriya Kabhatiya Mahasabha, said: "There are local issues and personal agendas and we hope the party will provide a proper answer to all the communities."

BJP, Sena yet to seal the deal on Thane, Mumbai South seats

Ateeq Shaikh
MUMBAI

With just 20 days to go for the final round of nominations, two of the Maharashtra allies - the BJP and Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) - are yet to reach a consensus on the crucial seats of Mumbai South and Thane.

For the Mumbai South constituency, earlier the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena wanted to field Hitesh Nandgaonkar but backed out and announced unconditional support for the NDA. With both the BJP and Shiv Sena unrelenting, the wait continues.

The contenders from Shiv Sena for this prestigious constituency are General V.K. Singh (ret.D) and Hitesh Nandgaonkar, who earlier this year joined the party after quitting the Congress, and former Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation Standing Committee's chairman and House Leader Anant Purnan, Mr. Jadhav is a three-time

councillor and had shifted his loyalties from the Shiv Sena (UBT) after he came under the Enforcement Directorate (ED) scanner. Party insiders said if the Shiv Sena's Hitesh Nandgaonkar is not elected, Mr. Deora would be the frontrunner, despite him being elected as Rajya Sabha member. However, his Rajya Sabha position may become a point for BJP to eventually keep the seat. In Mr. Jadhav's case, the BJP tag may make him a less popular choice. The contenders from the BJP Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker Narwekar and five-time MLA Mangal Prabhat Lodha. In the 2014 Lok Sabha election, on being denied ticket, Mr. Narwekar joined the Nationalist Congress Party. In 2019, he was elected MLA from Golbaha, a constituency in South Mumbai. The BJP seems inclined to field Sanjeev Natik, who was elected MP in 2019 on NCP ticket.

Chargesheet against two accused in car blast case

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against two accused, including the key conspirator, in last year's Manipur car bomb blast case in which three people were injured, an official statement issued on Saturday said.

The agency filed the chargesheet before a special NIA court in Manipur's Bishnupur on Friday, it said.

They have been charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the Explosive Substances Act, 1908 and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984. Further investigation is under way to trace other accused in the case, the NIA said.

Entrepreneur and pilot, Gopichand Thotakura is aiming for a place in Indian space history

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Earlier this month, Jeff Bezos-owned Blue Origin announced six crew members who would be part of a forthcoming commercial flight to space. Of interest to India is one participant, Gopichand Thotakura, an Indian businessman and pilot, who is based in the United States.

While an actual launch date has not been specified, a successful trip to space could make Mr. Thotakura the first Indian in space since Rakesh Sharma, who in April 1994 became the first Indian to venture only Indian to have the honour, when he went aboard the Russian Soyuz T11 spacecraft.

In a media statement, Mr. Thotakura describes himself as the "first civilian Indian astronaut". In response to questions from



New frontiers: Gopichand Thotakura. PTI

The Hindu, he reasoned that he would be an astronaut because anyone who crosses the Kármán Line - the boundary that separates Earth's atmosphere and outer space, and is at about 80 km above sea level - is considered one.

Given that the New Shepard rocket (NS-20), the Blue Origin vehicle, climbs to a 100 km from earth's surface, stays in space long enough for the crew

until then involved military personnel and astronauts who were trained as such and part of missions that involved either living in space or being part of test flights.

"The United States' Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which issues commercial space licenses and verifies launch or re-entry vehicles that carry humans, has since 2021 stopped designating space-farers as "astronauts". Russian astronauts are called "cosmonauts", and Chinese ones "taikonauts" and prospective Indians, are colloquially "yoanauts" or "ganyanauts", suggesting that countries are yet to define space travellers in their own terms. S. Somnath, Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), told The Hindu that were Mr. Thotakura's flight to be successful and prior to the Ga-

ganyanaut missions, he would be the "... second Indian in space and technically, an astronaut". Mr. Thotakura, born in Vijayawada and schooled in Visakhapatnam, studied aeronautical engineering and trained to be a pilot in the United States. "I've always aspired to go to space. When I came to the U.S. in 2010, this meant either going via NASA or being a U.S. citizen and these were barriers for me. Blue Origin opened up opportunities for me," he said.

Mr. Thotakura, who is the co-founder of Preserve Life Corp, an Atlanta-based health and wellness company, did not disclose how he bagged a seat on NS-25. "There was no real selection process or criteria. I was hell bent on getting aboard a manned mission. It is a desire to carry Indian blood (ethnicity) to space," he added.

Remove beverages from 'health drinks' category: govt.

The government has asked all e-commerce companies to remove drinks and beverages, including Bournvita, from the health drinks category from their portals. “National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, a statutory body constituted under section (3) of the Commission of Protection of Child Rights Act 2005 after its inquiry under Section 14 of CRPC Act 2005 concluded that there is no ‘health drink’ defined under Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, rules and regulations submitted by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and Mondelez India Food Pvt Ltd,” the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in an advisory to all e-commerce companies. PTI

MALT-BASED BEVERAGES

Sugar Content (Per 100 Gms)

37



21.8



9.5



13.5



Bournvita

☞ All our claims are verified and transparent and all ingredients have regulatory approvals. All the necessary nutritional information is mentioned on the pack for consumers to make informed choices.



Bournvita

...Every serve of 20 gm of Bournvita has 7.5 grams of added sugar, which is approximately one and a half teaspoons. This is much less than the daily recommended intake limits of sugar for children.





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How Healthy Are Bournvita, Horlicks, Complan For Children? Dietician Comments On The Nutritional Value Of All - HealthBeat

TheLiverDoc on Twitter wrote about Bournvita and its effects on health. On the one hand, the brand claims that adding the mix to milk can help improve brain function in children along with immunity, and bone and muscle strength. But on the other, studies associated it with health problems citing the high sugar content.

Simran Arora | Updated Apr 18, 2023, 15:54 IST



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Entrepreneur and pilot, Gopichand Thotakura is aiming for a place in Indian space history

Jacob Koshy

NEW DELHI

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While an actual launch date has not been specified, a successful trip to space could make Mr. Thotakura the first Indian in space since Rakesh Sharma, who in April 1984 became – and remains – the only Indian to have the honour, when he went aboard the Russian Soyuz T-11 spacecraft.

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New frontiers: Gopichand Thotakura. PTI

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Given that the New Shepard rocket (NS-25), the Blue Origin vehicle, climbs to a 100 km from earth’s surface, stays in space long enough for the crew

aboard to experience weightlessness and allows one to observe earth’s curvature, it ticks all the boxes for a space trip. Rakesh Sharma, who spent a week in the Russian space station, fits the classical definition of an astronaut, however it is unclear if Mr. Thotakura would be described as one.

Until 2021, these distinctions did not matter because all human spaceflight

until then involved military personnel and astronauts who were trained as such and part of missions that involved either living in space or being part of test flights.

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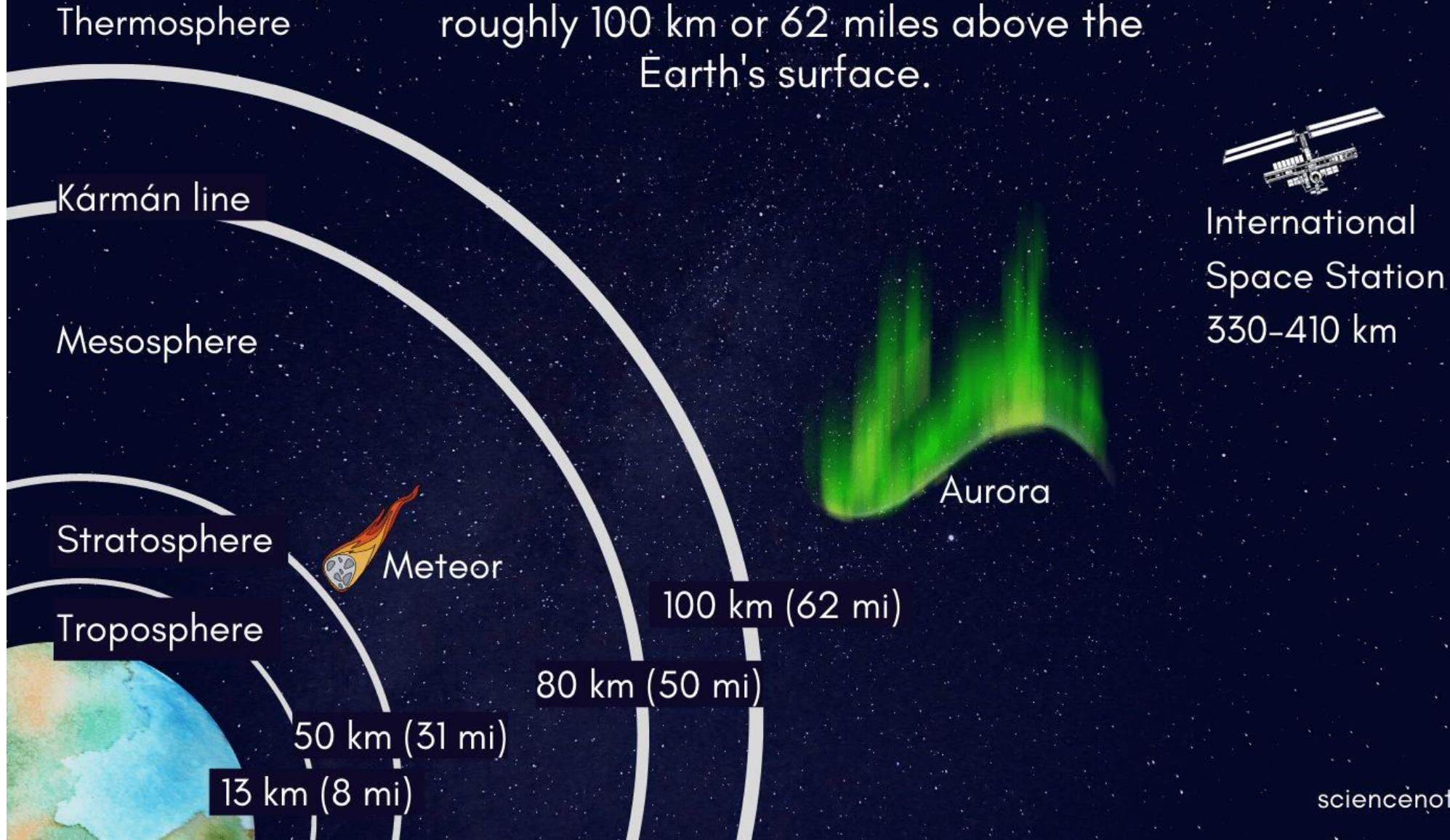
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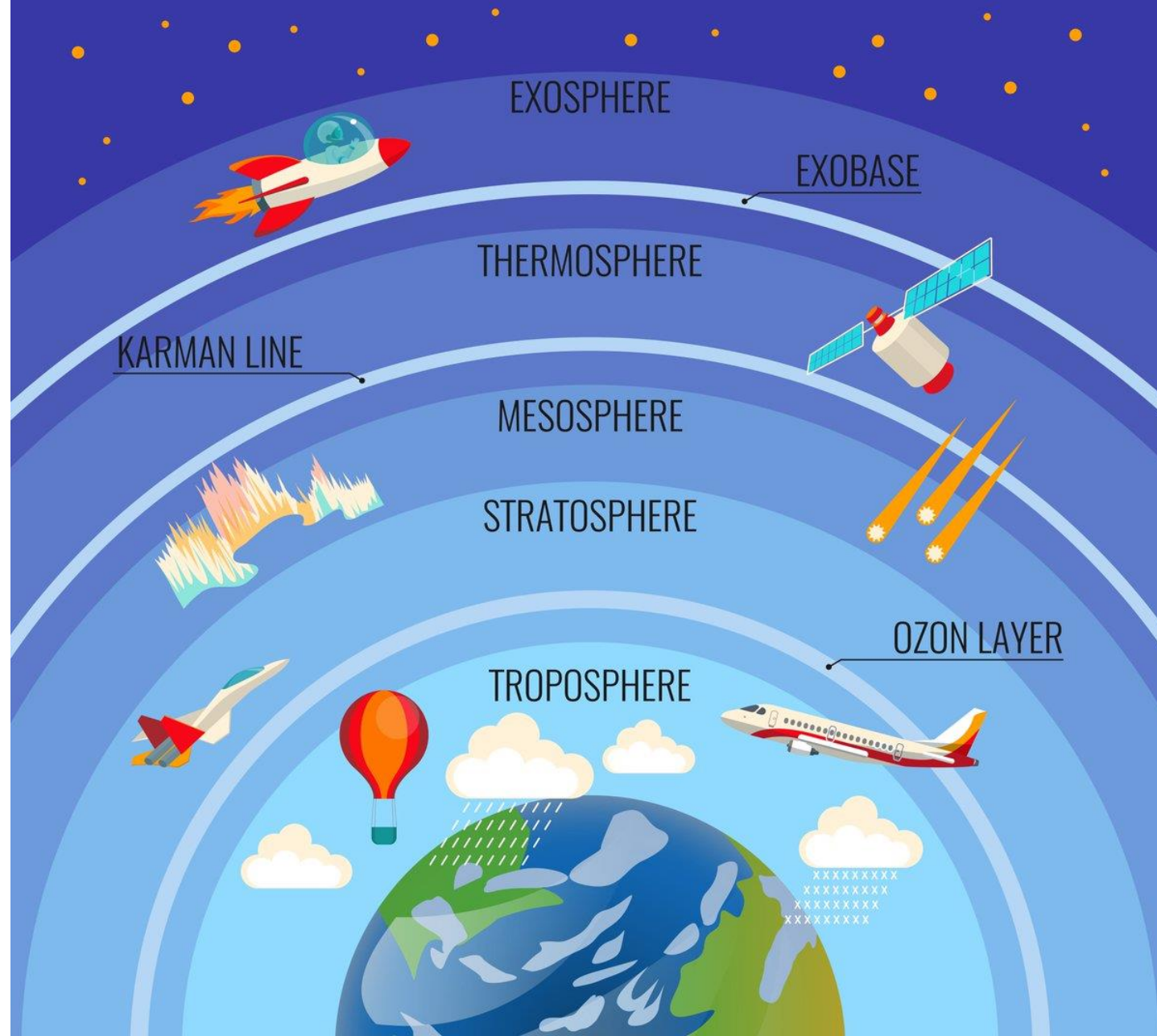
Mr. Thotakura, who is the co-founder of Preserve Life Corp, an Atlanta-based health and wellness company, did not disclose how he bagged a seat on NS-25. “There was no real selection process or criteria. I was hell bent on getting aboard a manned mission. It is a desire to carry Indian blood (ethnicity) to space,” he added.

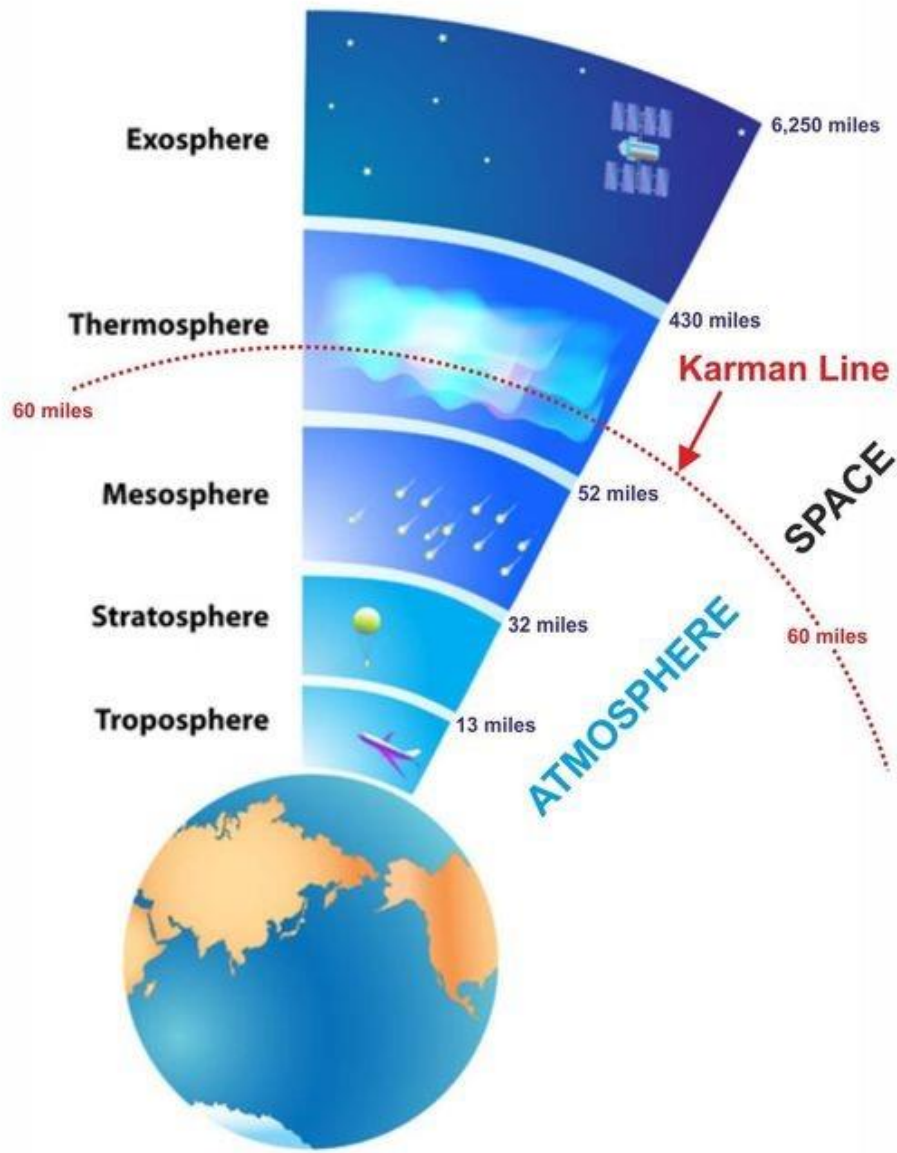
Where Does Space Begin?

Space begins at the Kármán line, which is roughly 100 km or 62 miles above the Earth's surface.



THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE





IN BRIEF



Gill finishes in top-three on the first day of Otago Rally

Gaurav Gill of JK Tyre put himself in contention for a podium finish after grabbing a top-three spot at the end of the opening day of the Otago Rally in New Zealand. Gill and New Zealand-based co-driver Jared Hudson were third on the timesheets, a little over 30 seconds behind overall leader Jack Hawkenwood and 11 seconds adrift of second-placed Robbie Stokes. Gill and Hudson were piloting 2022 APRC champion and 10-time Otago Rally winner Hayden Paddon's Hyundai i20 N Rally2 machine.

Silver for Radhika while Shivane takes bronze

Indian women managed a silver and a bronze medal in the Asian wrestling championships at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on Saturday. Radhika Jaglan, a 2022 silver medalist in 65kg, bagged another silver in 68kg, while Shivane Pawar secured a bronze in 50kg. Fighting the final against Japan's Nonoka Ozaki — a 65kg World champion who went up in weight class to beat Asian champion compatriot Ami Ishi in a playoff to take Japan's 68kg slot in the Paris Olympics — Radhika was convincingly beaten 15-2, 12 minutes left on the clock. Shivane defeated Mongolian Olgunzul Dalgajav 9-7 to win the bronze. Pushpa Yadav (59kg) and Priya (76kg), who got pinned while leading 4-2, lost their respective bronze medal matches. Tamanna (55kg) exited in the repechage round.

Ariun and Jeevan make the doubles final in Mexico

Arjun Kadhe and Jeevan Nedunchezhian defeated top seeds Luke Johnson and Skander Mansouri 4-6, 7-6(5), 10-8 to set up a title clash with second ranked Piotr Matusewski and Matthew Romko in the \$82,000 Challenger tennis tournament at Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Other result: Doubles, semifinals: Piotr Matusewski (Pol) & Matthew Romko (Aus) bt Erikah Poltopali & Niki Poonacha 6-4, 3-6, 10-7.



Northeast United FC esal port Odisha FC in the ISL

Northeast United FC breezed past Odisha FC 3-0 in an Indian Super League match at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium in Guwahati on Saturday. Parthib Goswami, Nestor Albuchi, and Komsam Phalguni Singh found the net for Juan Bernal's side. NEUFC finished its season with 26 points from 22 outings while Odisha goes into the playoff clash against Kerala Blasters after finishing the league stage with 39 points from 22 matches.

The result: Northeast United FC 3 (Gogoi 12, Alibach 16, Phalguni 45-3) bt Odisha FC 0.

Hockey: Indian men go down to Australia again

The Indian men's hockey team failed to avoid a 0-5 series whitewash after going down 2-3 in the fifth Test against Australia here on Saturday. Skipper Harmanpreet Singh (fourth) and Bobby Singh Dhani (53rd) were the goal scorers for India, while Australia sounded the board through Jeremy Hayward (20th), Ky Wilcott (8th) and Tim Brand (30th). The Indians started the game with an attacking mindset. Jugraj Singh lobbed the ball up to Jarnpanpreet Singh in the Aussie half but failed to connect with the forward line. India took the lead in the fourth minute through Harmanpreet from a penalty corner, as he registered his third goal of the series. Australia equalised in the 20th minute through Hayward, who scored his seventh of the series from a set piece. India's reserve custodian Suraj Karker made a fine save to deny Nathan Ephraums. Seconds from half-time, Australia secured a penalty corner but Suraj Karker kept India in the hunt by making an excellent save with his right leg to deny Hayward. India started brightly after the change of ends and secured a penalty in the 37th minute but Harmanpreet's flick missed the target. Australia added salt to India's wounds by extending the lead through Brand.

A roller-coaster ride for leader Nepo: Pragg and Tan very impressive

Gukesh will have to put the disappointment of the Frouzja game aside, experienced players are more relaxed when things are not going their way



Vishwanathan Anand

In an Nepomniachchi, the sole leader at the Candidates tournament after seven rounds, had a roller-coaster ride over the last three days.

Against R. Praggnanandhaa, he faced a very difficult opening test, did not solve it, and managed to stumble into a lost position where the winning move was incredibly difficult to find. Praggnanandhaa tried but only managed a draw.

The next day, Nepomniachchi did not try hard against Fabiano Caruana. In the seventh round, Hikaru Nakamura also put him through a test of fire. Once again, he came very close to losing, but he managed to create practical problems and Hikaru Nakamura went wrong, he got a draw.

D. Gukesh had a very impressive victory over Nijat Abasov; he won by sheer persistence. He drew with Nakamura in the sixth round and then tragically occurred in the seventh.

His position against Alireza Firoozja, who had lost three games, looked better than it might have been.

Dangerous opponent Even in the shakiest of forms, Firoozja is a dangerous opponent. As the time pressure increased, Gukesh suddenly collapsed and lost. Though he is playing very, very well, he will have to put this disappointing aside.

Caruana escaped against Vidit Gujrathi in the fifth round. After drawing with Nepomniachchi, he pressed against Praggnanandhaa but was matched completely.

So he has had three quiet draws. It is noticeable that the experienced players are more relaxed when things are not going their way.



In contrast: Tan is ahead by half-a-point going into the second half and looks the favourite. 101

Praggnanandhaa's play is very impressive. He managed to give himself a chance to beat Nepomniachchi and then proceeded to defeat Abasov.

He effortlessly held against pre-tournament favourite Caruana with black. He constantly switched his openings and is very well poised for the second half. Nakamura managed to win against Firoozja more or less by sheer will power.

It has allowed him to counterback with a 50% score, but he is well off the pace. He will have his chances.

He drew with Nakamura in the sixth round and then tragically occurred to beat Caruana.

He defeated Alireza for the second time this year and came close to winning his seventh round game against Abasov. Though he is only on a 50% score, he is able to create chances every day.

In the women's tournament, Tan Zhongyi is looking very impressive. There was a wobble or two in her victory over Anura Khuy-chuk but she played that game very well until that point.

She takes a half-a-point lead into the second half and I think she is now the favourite.

Aleksandra Goryachkina, the highest-rated player, won one more game to keep up with Zhongyi and was unable to beat her manager's rival in the seventh round. She trails the leader by half-a-point.

Airee smashes 36 in an over against Qatar

CRICKET

Press Trust of India AL AIN, QATAR

Nepal's Dipendra Singh Airee became the third batter to smash six sixes in an over in T20Is here on Saturday. Airee achieved the feat against host Qatar during the ACC Men's Premier Cup T20I.

Airee joined Yuvraj Singh (against Stuart Broad during the T20 World Cup in 2007) and Kieron Pollard (against Sri Lanka's Alistair Daniel in 2002) as batters with six maximums in an over.

The 24-year-old Airee remained unbeaten on a 21-ball 64 that included three fours and seven sixes at a monstrous strike rate of 304.76.

The Nepal man became the fifth batter to achieve this rare feat in interna-



Airee... in familiar territory. CRICKET NEPAL

tional cricket, with Herschelle Gibbs of South Africa and USA's Jaskaran Malhotra completing it in ODIs earlier.

However, Airee is no stranger to hitting six sixes. During Nepal's Hangzhou Asian Games T20I clash against Mongolia in September last year, he had pummeled six consecutive sixes across two overs.

Three-way tie after two rounds; Woods claims another Major record

GOLF

Reuters AUGUSTA

Bryson DeChambeau, Max Homa, and Scottie Scheffler weathered a wild windy day seldom seen at Augusta National to share the Masters second round lead on Friday while Tiger Woods targeted a sixth Green Jacket after claiming another Major record.

First round leader DeChambeau had looked poised to spend another night alone atop until a bogey at the 18th left the 2020 U.S. Open champion with a one-over 73 and a two day total of six-under 138.

Scheffler also had a chance to take solo possession of top spot, but the World No. 1 cruising along with a five-shot lead until a bogey into trouble where so many have at par five 13th.

Landing his approach in Ray's Creek, Scheffler did well to escape with bogey but playing error free to the finish, signing for an even par 72.

Homa, who had never broken 70 at Augusta until wrapping up his weather-delayed first round on Friday morning with a five-under 67, was quickly back on the course and on



Small setbacks: First-round leader DeChambeau, after a bogey at the 18th, shares the top spot with Homa and Scheffler. AFP

the move with birdies at the second and fourth.

Americans Akshay Bhatia and Sahithi Theegala made the 36-hole cut. Bhatia, 22, who won the Valero Texas Open last week, shot 72, 73 to be T-30, while Theegala (74, 74) was T-35, despite a triple bogey after the second round.

Leading scores, second round: 138: Max Homa (USA, 67, 71), Scottie Scheffler (USA, 66, 72), Bryson DeChambeau (USA, 65, 73).

140: Nicolai Hojgaard (Den, 67, 73).

141: Cameron Davis (Aus, 69, 72); Colin Morikawa (USA, 71, 70).

142: Ludvig Aberg (Swe 73, 69).

Nadal to make ATP return in Barcelona

TENNIS

Agence France-Presse PARIS

Rafael Nadal will make his return to ATP competition for the first time since January when he plays Flavio Cobolli in the Barcelona Open next week.

The 22-time Grand Slam champion has featured just once, in an exhibition match against the 19-year-old Cobolli in January. He was injured by a quarrel during his quarter-final defeat by Jordan Thompson in the Brisbane Open.

The tournament has also been boosted by the return of Nadal's compatriot Carlos Alcaraz, the World No. 3, who withdrew from this week's Monte Carlo Masters due to a right arm injury.

Nadal, 37, missed virtually all of the 2023 season through injury and has only played at the Brisbane International this season. The injury in Brisbane prompted the record 14-time French Open winner's withdrawal from the Aus-



Nadal, AFP

tralian Open as well as Doiran and Indian Wells, where he had first intended to make his comeback.

His one appearance since Brisbane came in an exhibition match against Alcaraz in Las Vegas in March where observers noted some discomfort in his back. With this potentially Nadal's last year on tour, he may want to play more preparation time as he seeks to win a record 15th French Open title.

NZ dashes India's qualification hopes

Sports Bureau

New Zealand scotched India's hopes with a 2-1 victory in the last league match of the Asia-Oceania group-1 Billie Jean King Cup week.

India, who had first intended to play on the clay courts of Changsha, China, on Saturday, were routed by New Zealand. Had India won the tie against New Zealand, it would have qualified with four wins.

After such fighting victories against Taiwan and Korea, it was a heart break for the Indian team.

While China and Korea qualify for the World group play-off, Taiwan and Pacific Oceania got relegated to Asia-Oceania group-2.

India and New Zealand will continue to stay in group-1 for next season.

For the second qualification spot between Korea, India and New Zealand, behind the all-conquering Chinese.

Korea took the second qualification berth as it had won 11 individual matches from five ties, to eight by India and seven by New Zealand.

India and New Zealand were tied on the number of wins. After such fighting victories against Taiwan and Korea, it was a heart break for the Indian team.

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India and New Zealand will continue to stay in group-1 for next season.

Osaka keen to play at the Olympics if given a chance

Agence France-Presse TOKYO

Former World No.1 Naomi Osaka said on Saturday that she "would love to play" at this year's Paris Olympics if she is granted a spot by tennis chiefs.

The four-time Grand Slam champion may need to go through an appeals process to claim a place after failing to make a mandatory two appearances for Japan in the Billie Jean King Cup during the current Olympic cycle.

"I would love to play" Osaka said. "I have high ambitions of myself and I hope that I can do really well and get a medal," she said.

Osaka's world ranking has risen from 113 since she began her comeback. However, she has not gone beyond the quarter-finals in six tournaments.

Osaka keen to play at the Olympics if given a chance



Osaka, AFP

"I thought it brought everyone together and just to be able to be an athlete and interact with other athletes is one of the finest things that I've ever done."

She said she intended to play "a full clay court season and probably a full grass court season" over the coming months.

Airee smashes 36 in an over against Qatar

CRICKET

Press Trust of India

AL AMERAT (QATAR)

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Airee... in familiar territory.

CRICKET NEPAL

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However, Airee is no stranger to hitting six sixes. During Nepal's Hangzhou Asian Games T20I clash against Mongolia in September last year, he had pummelled six consecutive sixes across two overs.

THE CITY
L-G SAYS DELHI GOVT SCHEMES FOR POOR WILL CONTINUE
 PAGE 4

THE WORLD
6 KILLED IN SYDNEY MALL STABBING; ATTACKER SHOT DEAD
 PAGE 8

PLAN SHELVED EARLIER DUE TO FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS
Eye on eastern Ladakh, new Army division likely to be raised this year

72 Div, planned as part of 17 MSC, set to be raised under Northern Command

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 13

A LONG-PENDING plan to raise a new Army division for possible deployment in eastern Ladakh is likely to be implemented this year as part of a series of changes for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the Ladakh region. The Indian Express has learnt.

According to sources, the Army is considering raising the 72 Division — which was to originally function under the 17 Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) based in Panagarh (West Bengal).

— for possible deployment in eastern Ladakh under the Northern Command. A division has approximately 14,000 to 15,000 troops. However, instead of receiving additional manpower, the Army is likely to reorganise existing personnel for deployment in the new division from other formations. A strike corps is responsible for offensive trans-border action. Currently, the Army has four strike corps — the Mathura-based 1 Corps, Ambala-based 2 Corps, Bhopal-based 21 Corps, and 17 MSC in Panagarh. However, till 2021, only the

EXPLAINED
2-pronged strategy

THE DECISION is part of overall redeployment changes being planned in the Northern Command, with a two-pronged strategy focused on eastern Ladakh amid the standoff along the LAC with China, and on ensuring no gap in training of strike corps elements. 17 MSC — which was partially raised then — was focused on China. The other three were focused on Pakistan. But in the backdrop of the military standoff with China which began in 2020, a restructuring was carried out in 2021 to keep two of the strike corps for the mountains facing China. The 1 Corps and 17 Corps were restructured to focus on the northern and eastern borders to tackle Chinese threats. The role of the 1 Corps was reoriented to focus on the northern borders with China with two infantry divisions. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Iran seizes cargo ship linked to Israel, 17 Indians in crew

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 13

IRANIAN COMMANDOS Saturday seized an Israeli-affiliated container ship carrying 17 Indian crew members, the latest escalation in West Asia's spiralling tensions in which New Delhi has now found itself caught up.

Members of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard rappelled down from a helicopter onto the Portuguese-flagged MSC Aries near the Strait of Hormuz and, according to state-run IRNA news agency, were taking the ship into Iranian territorial waters.

The seizure followed a suspected Israeli strike this month on an Iranian consular building in Syria's Damascus that killed 12 people, including a senior general, and that officials were in touch with Tehran for the security, welfare and early release of the Indian crew. One source said: "We are aware that a cargo ship

is associated with the London-based Zodiac Maritime. Zodiac Maritime is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



Revolutionary Guard commandos rappel down from a helicopter onto the ship on Saturday.

ALONG ERODE-TIRUPPUR HIGHWAY
Migrant labour, Jharkhand dhaba, Ukraine war tell a 2024 TN story

With demand down, Tamil Nadu's Kongu region faces labour shortage — and sees businessmen talk of change

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER
 ERODE, TIRUPPUR
 COIMBATORE, APRIL 13

EN ROUTE to Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu that accounts for more than half of India's garments exports, on the Erode-Tiruppur highway, Mohamed Saadiq Khan's dhaba stands out for its name: Jharkhand Dhaba. He has been here for seven years, and employs more than 100 from his home state Jharkhand. Saadiq Khan has seen "trains

full of migrants" getting down at Tiruppur to work in looms and garment factories, hotels and restaurants, and even in agriculture, of late. "Labour for loom problem not at all," he says, emphasising they do not face any

PARUL KULSHRESTHA
 KUCHAMAN (RAJASTHAN), APRIL 13

THE HOARDINGS put up by academics promising to help you get into the Armed Forces begin from 5 km away as one approaches Kuchaman city in Nagaur district. The city's entrance gate has a welcome sign: "Shiksha ki Nagri Kuchaman (Education City Kuchaman)".

Past those gates though, Kuchaman is almost a ghost town. Its deserted coaching institutes and hostels a reflection of the dwindling charms of an Army

ARMY COACHING GROUND ZERO IN RAJASTHAN
Agnipath turns business cold in Nagaur, heats up poll campaign

Opp targets recruitment scheme; BJP tries to dodge question, Rajnath suggests changes in policy possible

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SARATH REDDY STATEMENT IN EXCISE POLICY CASE
3 months before Kejriwal arrest, ED no to approver's visit abroad: 'May not return to support case'

Court allowed Reddy to go; ED said his absence will seriously affect probe

P Sarath Chandra Reddy; Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal



P Sarath Chandra Reddy; Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 13

KEY TO the Enforcement Directorate's case that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is the "kingpin" in the excise scam is the statement of non-executive director of Hyderabad-based Aurbindo Pharma, P Sarath Chandra Reddy, recorded on April 25, 2023, about his alleged meeting with Kejriwal who purportedly told him about a "win-win" arrangement.

Reddy was arrested in the case on November 10, 2022, and on May 29, 2023, a special court in Delhi, then presided over by Special Judge M K Nagpal, allowed Reddy to turn approver and granted him parole. On March 19 this year, Nagpal was transferred and, a day later, the case was taken over by Special Judge Kavari Banowala. Court records show that as recently as January this year, six months after he turned approver and three months before Kejriwal's arrest, the ED questioned the approver's intentions. The agency expressed "apprehensions" that Reddy would not return to "support" its case if he were allowed to travel overseas. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

SC to hear CM plea against HC order on arrest tomorrow

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 13

THE SUPREME Court is scheduled to hear Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's plea against the High Court's decision to uphold his arrest in the excise policy case, on April 15. The matter has been listed before a two-judge bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Gupta.

Earlier this week, the Delhi HC had dismissed Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), saying the agency was in "possession of enough material" to arrest him. Arrested on March 21, Kejriwal is in judicial custody till April 15 and is lodged in Tihar jail. Kept away from the public, the HC's April 9 ruling, Kejriwal questioned the timing of his "alleged" arrest under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), saying it was "in the middle of

the rights body after it took suo motu cognisance of the allegations and is based on a visit to the West Bengal village and conversion of the same into a case. The three, as well as Shahjahan, are currently under arrest. Shahjahan first made headlines in the beginning of 2023 when an Enforcement Directorate (ED) team of investigators conducted searches at his residence, came under arrest by his supporters. He went on to spend a month later, protests erupted in the city. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

'Gangrapes at TMC office': NHRC submits report on Sandeshkhali

Police told victims to compromise with perpetrators: Report

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA
 CALCUTTA, APRIL 13

WOMEN ALLEGEDLY gangraped at a Trinamool Congress (TMC) office, victims told by police to reach a compromise with perpetrators, young girls sent away from the village, and the women were safe — the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has made grave allegations in its inquiry report on the Sandeshkhali incident. The report was prepared by

the rights body after it took suo motu cognisance of the allegations and is based on a visit to the West Bengal village and conversion of the same into a case. The three, as well as Shahjahan, are currently under arrest. Shahjahan first made headlines in the beginning of 2023 when an Enforcement Directorate (ED) team of investigators conducted searches at his residence, came under arrest by his supporters. He went on to spend a month later, protests erupted in the city. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

India's football map skewed, 65% of top players from just 5 states: Study

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

MIHR VASAVDA
 MUMBAI, APRIL 13

LIKE HIS predecessors, FIFA president Gianni Infantino was keen searching for answers during a visit to India in October 2022. "It's a country of more than 1.3 billion, so there must be enough talent in India," he remarked.

It wasn't the first time a direct correlation was made between the country's burgeoning

population and its sporting success, or the lack of it. Seen through this prism, India's reputation as a level 11 world-class footballers has mystified observers at home and abroad. However, a new study has some answers.

Research conducted by Richard Hood, UEFA 'A' and AFC Pro licence coach and former head of player development of All India Football Federation (AIFF), has revealed that in a sprawling country of a billion-plus people, over 65 per cent of the elite-level footballers hail from only five states — Manipur, Mizoram, West Bengal, Punjab

and Goa — whose total population, as per 2011 Census, was approximately 12.43 crore. These are the male players — a total of 1,112 — who have played for India in the junior and senior national teams, and the top two divisions of the domestic leagues in the last 22 years. To further extrapolate this data, Hood's analysis showed that nearly 90 per cent of India's footballers hailed from nine states and one city — Greater Mumbai, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya and Sikkim in addition to the five states mentioned above — whose collective population was a little over 25 crore

according to the 2011 Census. In other words, about 20 per cent of India's population contributes to 90 per cent of its footballers.

The tiny states of Manipur and Mizoram have contributed most to India's player pool, accounting for almost 31 per cent of elite-level footballers in the country, followed by West Bengal (14.5 per cent), Punjab (11.81 per cent) and Goa (9.71 per cent).

In addition, of the 152 players who have played for India since 2002, almost 80 per cent came from just six states and one city (Greater Mumbai), with Punjab leading the chart. So, if one were to draw India's



Days before polling, two killed in fresh violence in Manipur

killings — police said the videos are prima facie from Saturday — showed the bodies being stamped on, disfigured and dragged.

SUKRITA BARUAH
 DISHWATI, APRIL 13

IN A violent flare-up after a period of relative peace lasting over 40 days, two persons were killed on Saturday morning in an area at the border of Meitei-majority Imphal East district and Kuki-Zomi-majority Kangpokpi district.

Kuki-Zomi organisations identified the victims as Kamminial Lupheng (23) and Kamminial Lunikim (22), both residents of Kangpokpi.

The Committee of Tribal Unity, a Kuki-Zomi group based in Kangpokpi district, called for a 24-hour shutdown in the district on Sunday.

Saturday's killings came less than a week before polling takes place. Purported videos of the

killings — police said the videos are prima facie from Saturday — showed the bodies being stamped on, disfigured and dragged.

According to sources, there was heavy cross-firing between two armed groups at about 8 am. The incident took place in an area under the jurisdiction of Imphal East district, where the districts of Imphal East, Kangpokpi and Manipur meet.

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population and its sporting success, or the lack of it. Seen through this prism, India's repeated failure to find 11 world-class footballers has mystified observers at home and abroad.

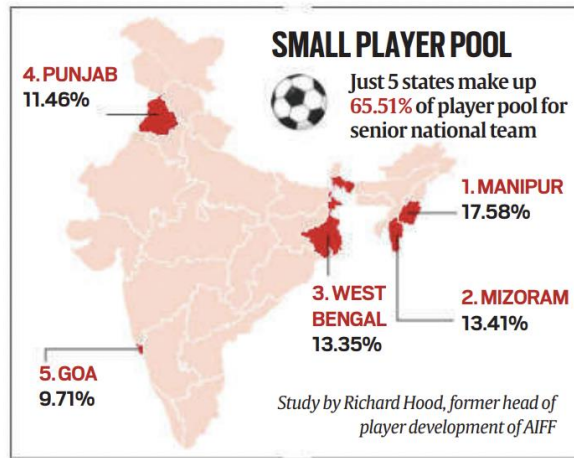
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In addition, of the 152 players who have played for India since 2002, almost 80 per cent came from just six states and one city (Greater Mumbai), with Punjab leading the chart.

So, if one were to draw India's

football map, there would be a giant hole in the middle, indicating that the world's most popular sport has made virtually no inroads into the densely-populated Hindi heartland.

Hood underlined that the pattern in India is not different from most countries, including France, Argentina and Brazil, where a handful of pockets produce a majority of players.

However, for a country that has a poor scouting system and struggles to form a team that can beat a war-ravaged nation like Afghanistan, Hood hoped the research could help "identify areas that require targeted interven-

tions". "This could lead to more strategic talent identification and development efforts, tailored to leverage unique strengths and address the specific challenges of different regions," he noted.

The project is aimed to examine the "birthplace effect" in Indian football. It looks at how "a range of environmental, social and infrastructural factors, such as access to quality coaching, facilities, and competitive opportunities, as well as socio-economic and cultural aspects" have encouraged or hindered sporting participation.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Current Men's ranking

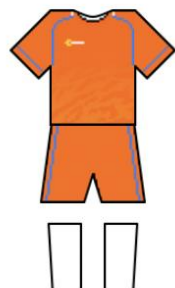
Last update: 04 April 2024 Next update: 20 June 2024 (65 days)

Rk.		Team
119	•	 Tanzania
120	↓ 5	 Lebanon
121	↓ 4	 India
122	↑ 2	 Zimbabwe
123	•	 Estonia

Nickname(s)	The Blue Tigers
Association	All India Football Federation (AIFF)
Confederation	AFC (Asia)
Sub-confederation	SAFF (South Asia)
Head coach	Igor Štimac
Captain	Sunil Chhetri
Most caps	Sunil Chhetri (150) ^[1]
Top scorer	Sunil Chhetri (94) ^[1]
Home stadium	Various
FIFA code	IND



First colours



Second colours

FIFA ranking


Current	121 ▼ 4 (4 April 2024) ^[2]
Highest	94 (February 1996) ^[2]
Lowest	173 (March 2015) ^[2]

First international

Pre-independence:

 **Australia** 5–3 **India** 
(Sydney, Australia; 3 September 1938)

Post-independence:

 **India** 1–2 **France** 
(London, England; 31 July 1948)

Biggest win

 **India** 7–0 **Sri Lanka** 
(Bangalore, India; 7 December 1963)

Biggest defeat

 **Soviet Union** 11–1 **India** 
(Moscow, Soviet Union; 16 September 1955)

Summer Olympics

Appearances	4 (<i>first in 1948</i>)
Best result	Semi-finals (1956)

Asian Cup

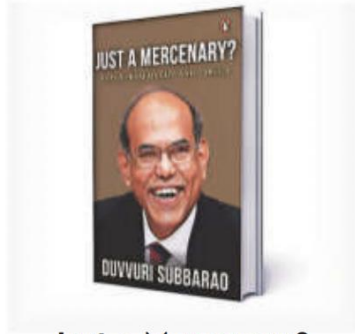
Appearances	5 (<i>first in 1964</i>)
Best result	Runners-up (1964)

Asian Games

Appearances	11 (<i>first in 1951</i>)
Best result	Champions (1951, 1962)

SAFF Championship

Appearances	13 (<i>first in 1993</i>)
Best result	Champions (1993, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2011, 2015, 2021, 2023)



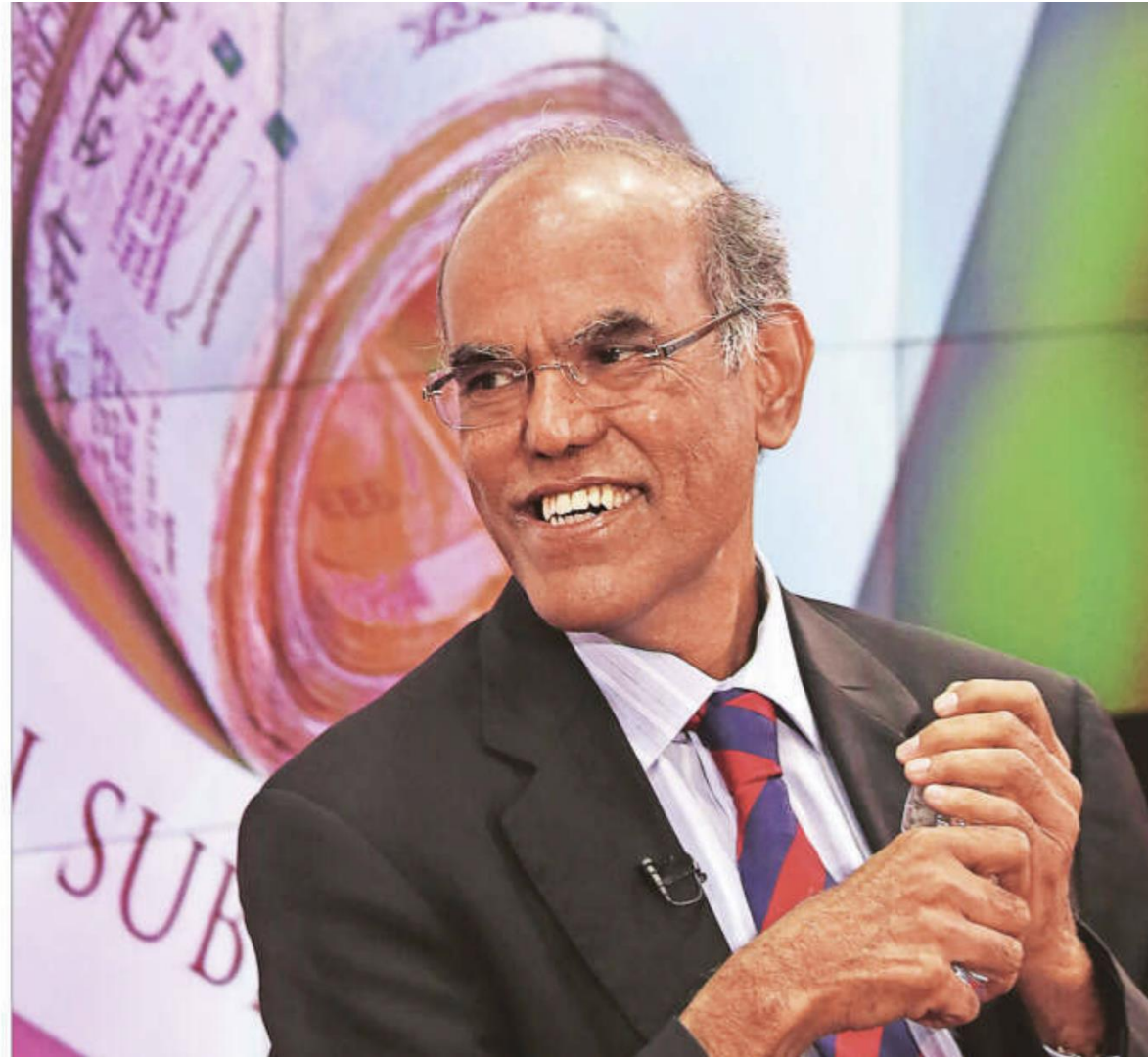
**Just a Mercenary?
Notes From My
Life and Career**

Duvvuri Subbarao
Penguin Random House
Pp 435, ₹799

ship between the people's representatives and the bureaucracy. It is a situation where realpolitik trumps idealism.

Why does the book relate to people outside civil services? Why should we be interested in someone's journey at all? The answers lie in the strength of the book. The charm of the book is that this person at the core of the narrative disappears the moment the choices are thrown open, challenges are discussed and the morality of the situation is weighed in. Suddenly these become our lives —universal and relatable. As the writer reflects

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IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva wins second term

BLOOMBERG
April 13

KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA **WON** a second five-year term as the head of the International Monetary Fund, allowing her to continue leading the crisis lender as it confronts challenges including lower global growth prospects, climate change and distressed debt in developing nations.

The decision came after several discussions between Georgieva, who was the sole candidate for the job, and the IMF executive board, the fund said in a statement.

The board commended Georgieva's "strong and agile



IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva

REUTERS

leadership" and said that it looks forward to continuing to work with her.

The announcement was

made just before IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington next week, which are expected to draw

thousands of delegates, observers and journalists from the fund's 190 member countries. Now that it's known Georgieva will stay on as the IMF's managing director, visitors can focus on economic issues rather than the IMF's internal workings.

A Bulgarian economist whose current term started in 2019 and runs through the end of September, Georgieva received the backing of European Union finance ministers last month, including France and Germany.

The leader of the Washington-based fund has always been a European chosen by European nations, a post-World War II understanding

with the US, which in turn chooses the president of the World Bank.

Georgieva was the World Bank's chief executive officer before becoming the chief of the IMF.

Georgieva, 70, led the fund's efforts to aid indebted countries through the pandemic and has more recently warned about the global economic impact of trade fragmentation caused by worsening US-China relations. She's also advocated re-balancing the representation of countries at the IMF, where members like China and India have voting shares much smaller than their share of global economic output.

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

Decoding the judgment on Jim Corbett

In its ruling in March, the Supreme Court brought to light the unholty nexus of environmentalists, politicians, and local contractors responsible for the felling of 6,000 trees in the Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand. This state of affairs underlines one fact clearly: despite conservation goals receiving priority through policies and laws including the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Project Tiger, and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, the state's main interest remains increasing revenue. The illegal destruction of trees in Jim Corbett can be seen in contrast to the 1983 Supreme Court judgment in *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra vs. State of Uttar Pradesh*, which said that "economic growth cannot be achieved at the cost of environmental destruction and people's right to healthy environment."

The judgment
National and state forest authorities have leaned on ecotourism to simultaneously attain conservation goals, enhance revenue, and improve the livelihoods of local people. In its recent judgment, instead of treating ecotourism as a panacea for conservation and revenue generation, the Supreme Court said that the approach must be eco-centric and not anthropocentric. The court directed the banning of tiger safaris in core areas and the constitution of a committee to assess the feasibility of permitting tiger safaris in peripheral areas in not just Jim Corbett, but across India. It also disagreed with the 2019 guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority permitting a tiger safari on the lines of a zoo and a national park. The court stressed that tigers should be sourced from the same landscape as where the safari is being conducted and not outside the tiger reserves.
According to British environmentalist Norman Myers,

Anwar Sadat
teaches international law, writes for Society of Environmental Law, at the International Law, Email: anwarshahag@gmail.com

the precautionary principle is becoming an established principle for policymakers tackling environmental problems. The principle says "where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." On banning safaris in core areas, the Court invoked this principle to ensure that there is no damage to the environment. Myers had said, "In salient respects, the principle applies to biodiversity more than any other environmental problem. This is because the mass extinction gathering force will, if proceeds unchecked, not only eliminate but or more species but will leave the biosphere impoverished for at least 5 million years." The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species monitors 1,222 animal species in India. In 2021, it found that 12% of them are endangered. According to a report of the Centre for Science and Environment in 2021, India has lost 90% of the area under its four wildlife hotspots. The precautionary principle therefore applies not only to tigers, but also other species, especially endangered ones.

What the court missed
However, the Court's decision to assess the damage done to the green cover of Jim Corbett so as to restore and recover the same from the errant individuals and officers appears to be a muddle in the absence of a well-defined methodology. Restoring the cost of restoration and recover the same appears to be a mirage in the absence of a well-defined methodology

distribution, structure, and functions as well as the long-term survival of its typical species." In India, the framework of valuation which predated the *T.N. Godwinvarman* case, which was aimed at replacing lost natural forest with compensatory plantations. The two choices which are supported legally and institutionally and serve as the background for the valuation of forest land in India are now compensatory afforestation levy and net present value (NPV). The levy is essentially a form of replacement cost, designed to replace the forest land which was lost as a result of diversion of forest towards non-forestry use. Since the levy is found to be insufficient in terms of making good the loss, the Court introduced the NPV in 2002 as an additional payment obligation. But both these methodologies do not rightly account for the correlation between the removal of trees and the harm caused to other environmental goods and services.

In the context of the growing degradation of biodiversity hotspots and the support to revenue-generating eco-tourism, a valuation method which is based on ecosystem services (food, water, and services regulating the climate and floods, etc.) is a must. The system refers to the benefits people obtain from natural ecosystems in contrast with man-made structures. The Court could have set a precedent by saying that ecosystem services are more important and generate more revenue than eco-tourism or raised the need of putting in place a precise law and policy relating to ecosystem services. The reasoning provided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in *Costa Rica v. Nicaragua* (2018) could have been used to understand the methodologies in evaluating damage to the environment. The ICJ asserted that damage to the environment, and the consequent loss of the ability of the environment to provide goods and services, is compensable.

An offer, an uproar, and a rejection

The Congress was wise in rejecting the SDPI's offer in Kerala

STATE OF PLAY

Riju Govind
rijugovind@pfechennai.com

On April 1, the president of the Kerala unit of the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), Muvattupuzha Ashraf Moulvi, presented a proposal and offered support to the Congress in the State in the Lok Sabha elections. The SDPI is the political arm of the proscribed Popular Front of India (PFI).

Congress leaders were guarded in their response. The convener of the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF), M.M. Hassan, stressed that the party would hold discussions on whether or not to accept the support offered. The Leader of the Opposition, V.D. Satheesan, clarified that the UDF had not held any discussions or reached any understanding with the SDPI. Congress leader Ramesh Cheluviala pointed out that in a democratic setup, individual and not parties, voted during elections and the party would not refuse votes from people who voted for the Congress had not had any discussions with the Congress.

SDPI leader Ramesh Cheluviala pointed out that in a democratic setup, individual and not parties, voted during elections and the party would not refuse votes from people who voted for the Congress had not had any discussions with the Congress. BIP State chief K. Surendran questioned Congress leader Ramesh Cheluviala, who is seeking re-election from Wayanad, alleged that damage to the environment, the killings of Hindus and Christians and was implicated in several violent incidents. By aligning with an outfit that is trying to "disintegrate the na-



tion," the Congress was betraying citizens, he said. The State secretary of the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist), M.V. Govindan, also criticised the Congress in a similar vein. He said that the Congress had a history of forming the CoLeB (an acronym for Congress-League-BJP alliance) and was now prepared to receive support from another controversial political element. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan stressed that the statements of Congress leaders revealed a clear deal between the Congress and the SDPI.

The controversy also played out at the national level, with Union Home Minister Anrit Shah and Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur lashing out at the Congress. Four days after the SDPI's press conference, recognising the potential backlash from both Hindus and Christians, the Congress leadership rejected the offer of support from the SDPI. Mr. Satheesan stressed that the Congress saw both majority and minority voters as two sides of the same coin. Citizens vote as individuals and the UDF reacts to get their endorsement on the merit of its manifesto and political agenda, he said.

Whatever be the Congress's stand, UDF candidates perceived the SDPI's votes as crucial in a tight contest, not only

in the Malabar region but also in some constituencies in south Kerala. The SDPI holds some influence in pockets including Ponnani, Malappuram, Vadakara, and Kannur. In the 2014 parliamentary polls, it contested 20 seats and garnered 1.7% of the votes polled. The party also contested second in two Assembly segments — Malappuram and Vengara — in the Malappuram Lok Sabha constituency. But in the 2019 polls, the party contested only 10 seats, securing 0.4% of the vote share.

Before the announcement of the Lok Sabha elections, the SDPI organised a procession with the theme "Reclaiming the country" and raised issues such as protection of constitutional values, conduct of caste census, withdrawal of anti-people laws, conservation of federalist principles, correction of anti-farmer policies, and a solution to the unemployment problem. It refrained from fielding candidates, possibly due to scrutiny following the ban on the PFI under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in September 2022. Though the party espouses the cause of Muslims, its political approach has been vehemently criticised by mainstream Muslim organisations.

Had the Congress leadership accepted the offer of the SDPI, they would have faced an electoral setback in Kerala. The party did not allow the controversy to fester as they have done in the past. Citizens vote as individuals and the UDF reacts to get their endorsement on the merit of its manifesto and political agenda, he said. Whatever be the Congress's stand, UDF candidates perceived the SDPI's votes as crucial in a tight contest, not only

Fertility levels drop below one in many Asian nations

Couples choosing to not have children, citizens opting to remain single, and spiralling costs to raise children may all have contributed to the dip

DATA POINT

Jasmin Nihalani

In many countries in East and Southeast Asia are in the middle of a population crisis, with fewer births every year and record-low fertility rates. In March this year, several hospitals in China stopped offering newborn delivery services due to declining demand, Reuters reported. In fact, with the fertility rates in South Korea hitting rock bottom, the city of Seongnam, the fourth largest in the country, resorted to hosting mass blind dates hoping that the falling birth rates would reverse.
This was not always the case. Between 1950 and 1970, fertility rates in East Asian and Southeast Asian countries ranged from 2.5 to 7.5. The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime. A TFR of 2.1 (the 'replacement level') is required to ensure that the population size remains stable.
Currently, in four countries — South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan — the fertility rates are lower than one. This means that while the majority of women in these countries have one child, many are also not choosing to have children, pulling down the average below one. For instance, in South Korea, the TFR slid to a record low of 0.72 in 2023, while in Hong Kong, the TFR was 0.70 in 2022. Both these countries currently have among the lowest fertility rates in the world. Chart 1 shows the TFR in six countries, including China and Japan, over a period of time.
In the six countries considered, not only is the TFR significantly lower than 2.1, it has seen a drastic reduction over time. This is evident when the TFR of these countries is compared with that of Ukraine, Finland, Italy, and Spain — countries which also have among

the lowest TFRs in the world currently (Chart 2). For instance, in a span of 50 years, China reduced its TFR from 6.51 (1968) to 1.16 (2022) through various policies, while Spain's TFR came down gradually from 2.87 to 1.28. India's TFR also witnessed a drop from over 5.7 to 2.03 in the same period, though not as sharp as that of China's.
The sharp fall in China's TFR is attributable largely to policies its government adopted to control population growth. South Korea's slogan in the 1960s, "Even two children per family are too many for our crowded country", and Singapore's slogan for its two-child policy, "The more you have, the less they get" — two is enough", are examples of strict family planning measures.

The drastic drop in fertility rate can also be attributed to women now having more opportunities to build a career, dropping marriage rates, the spiralling cost of raising a child, and income lost when a pregnant woman's career is interrupted, according to the think tank, East-West Centre.
Poor fertility rates lead to an imbalance in the population, with older people forming a larger share. As of 2023, a third of the population was aged over 65 in Japan and by the early 2030s, the share of people aged over 65 will increase to 30% in South Korea and Hong Kong. Chart 3 shows the year when about 5%, 15%, and 30% of a country's population was or will be aged over 65. While countries took many years to reach the 15% mark from 5%, they are estimated to reach it in a relatively quicker manner, indicating the rapid ageing of the population.
Chart 4 lists the financial support and other expensive programmes that governments have introduced to incentivise child-births in select countries. South Korea, for instance, has spent \$21 billion to increase fertility rates since 2006, but the fertility curves of these countries haven't reversed yet.

And then it was less than one

The data were sourced from national statistical organisations, World Population Prospects, and World Bank



Fertility crisis: A pedestrian crossing a street with a child in Tokyo, AP

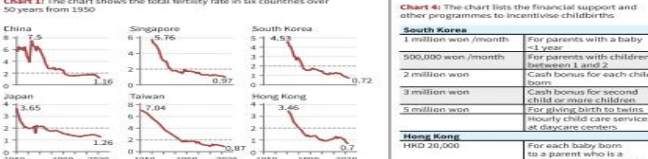
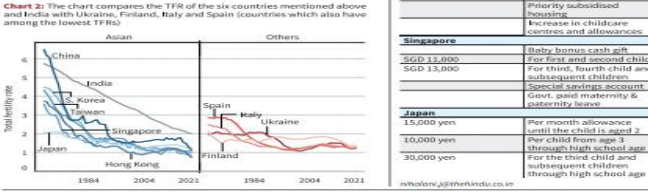


Chart 3: The chart shows the total fertility rate in six countries over 50 years from 1950



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 15, 1974

Big-scale fighting between Syrian and Israeli troops

Damascus, April 14: Syrian forces to-day faced an Israeli attack on Syrian positions on Mount Hermon and air defence batteries shut down three Israeli warplanes, a Syrian military communique said.
Israeli forces in to-day's fighting, which started at 5-15 a.m. (8-45 IST), were estimated at 80 troops killed or wounded according to the communique. Including the three planes shot down to-day, Syria had brought down seven Israeli warplanes since the last October Arab-Israeli war, the communique said.
According to the communique, fighting was still continuing five hours later between Syrian and Israeli forces both on Mount Hermon and at several places on the Golan Heights.
According to military sources in Damascus, the Syrians have seized new positions previously held by the Israelis in Mount Hermon. The Israelis, the sources said, were trying to drive the Syrians out of those positions and recapture Mount Hermon.
Military sources in Tel Aviv said that Israeli soldiers discovered the Syrian force just before dawn to-day and a fierce battle began at around 4-15 local (07-45 IST).
Israeli forces claimed to-day to have beaten off another Syrian attempt to occupy key northern ridges, providing excellent strategic and observation posts, on the 2,500 metre high snow-capped Mount Hermon at the northern end of the Golan Front.
The fighting for the ridges, involving Israeli fighter planes as well as Syrian commando troops backed by artillery, was seen here as marking a definitive end to the uneasy Golan Front truce imposed by the United Nations Security Council on October 24.
An official spokesman announced to-day that an Israeli army unit last night wiped out a Syrian unit, believed here to have been a company of about 30 men, which took up positions high on the mountain.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 15, 1924

Pirates in China

Hongkong, April 14: The combined meeting of China coast officers and marine engineers guilds has decided to suspend the Hongkong-Kingdom Service until naval escorts are provided against attacks of pirates.

And then it was less than one

The data were sourced from national statistical organisations, World Population Prospects, and World Bank



Fertility crisis: A pedestrian crossing a street with a child in Tokyo. AP

Chart 1: The chart shows the total fertility rate in six countries over 50 years from 1950

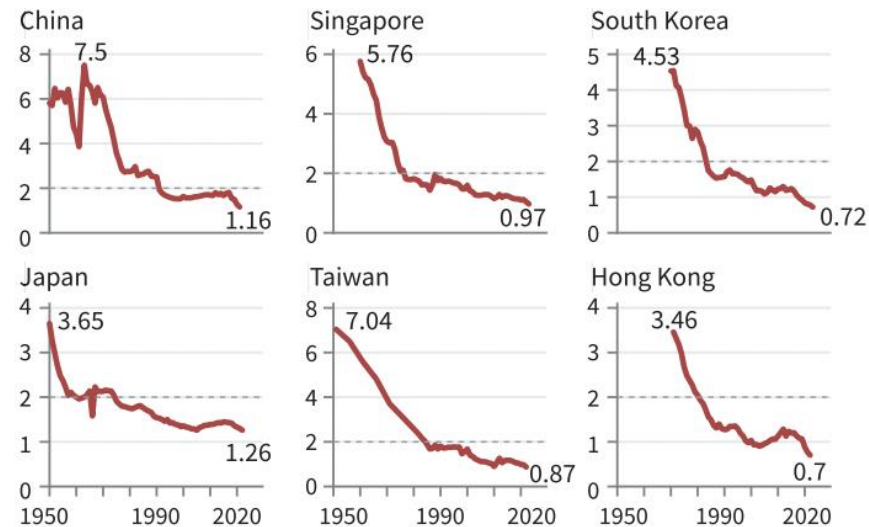


Chart 3: The year when about 5% (■), 15% (■) and 30% (■) of a country's population had aged or will be ageing

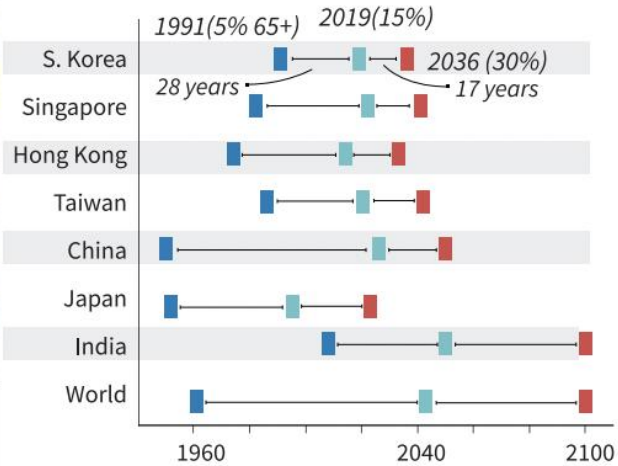


Chart 4: The chart lists the financial support and other programmes to incentivise childbirths

South Korea	
1 million won /month	For parents with a baby <1 year
500,000 won /month	For parents with children between 1 and 2
2 million won	Cash bonus for each child born
3 million won	Cash bonus for second child or more children
5 million won	For giving birth to twins
	Hourly child care services at daycare centers
Hong Kong	
HKD 20,000	For each baby born to a parent who is a permanent resident of Hong Kong

Chart 1: The chart shows the total fertility rate in six countries over 50 years from 1950

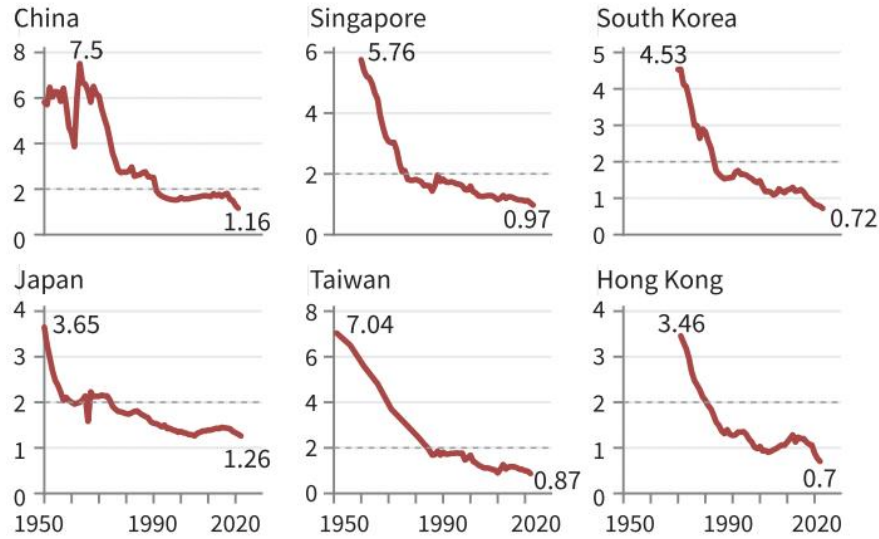


Chart 2: The chart compares the TFR of the six countries mentioned above and India with Ukraine, Finland, Italy and Spain (countries which also have among the lowest TFRs)

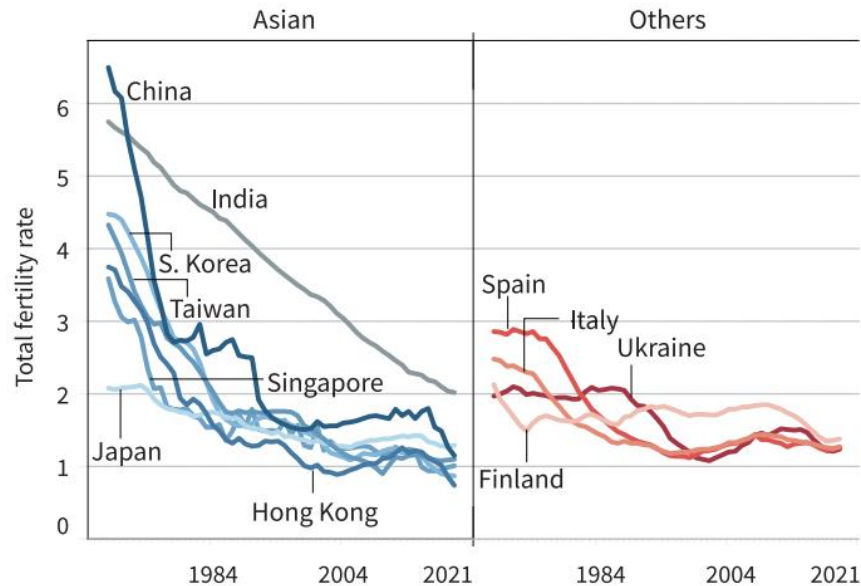


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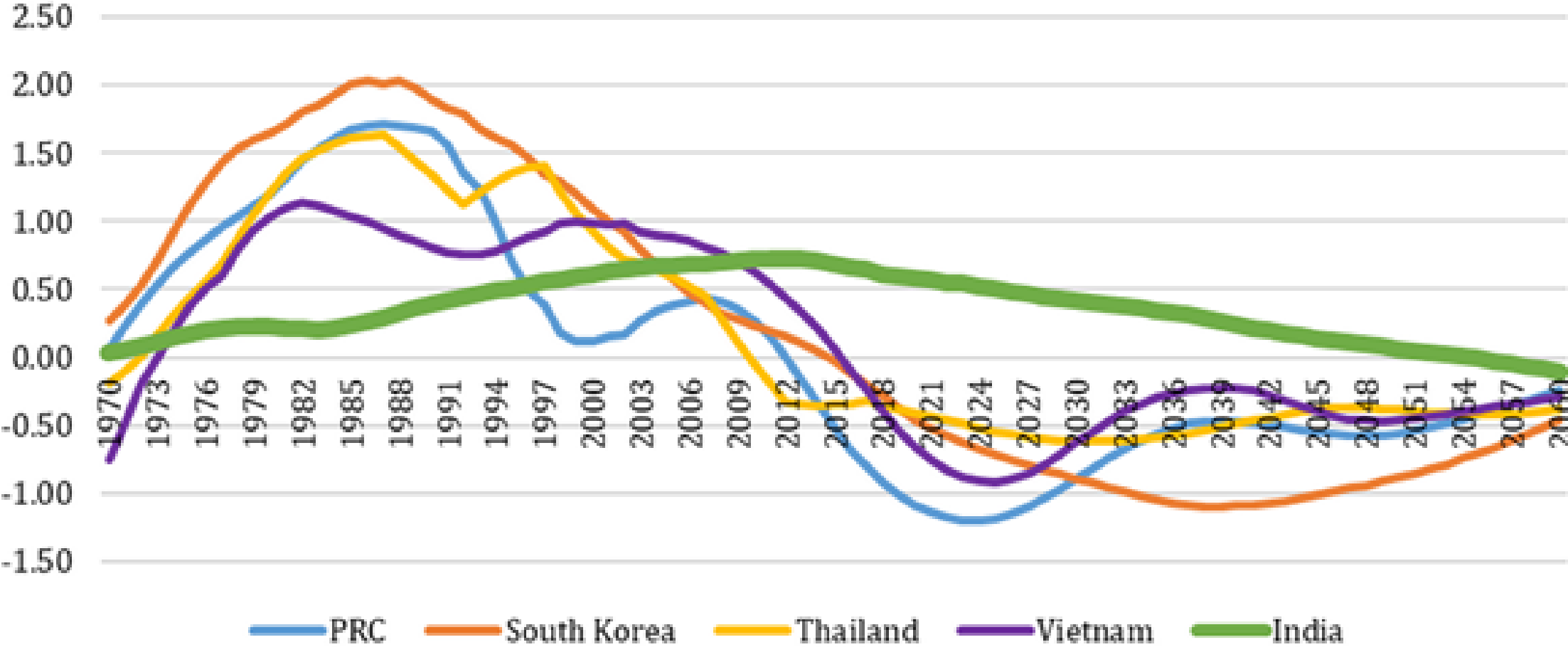
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2 million won	Cash bonus for each child born
3 million won	Cash bonus for second child or more children
5 million won	For giving birth to twins
	Hourly child care services at daycare centers
Hong Kong	
HKD 20,000	For each baby born to a parent who is a permanent resident of Hong Kong
	Priority subsidised housing
	Increase in childcare centres and allowances
Singapore	
	Baby bonus cash gift
SGD 11,000	For first and second child
SGD 13,000	For third, fourth child and subsequent children
	Special savings account
	Govt. paid maternity & paternity leave
Japan	
15,000 yen	Per month allowance until the child is aged 2
10,000 yen	Per child from age 3 through high school age
30,000 yen	For the third child and subsequent children through high school age

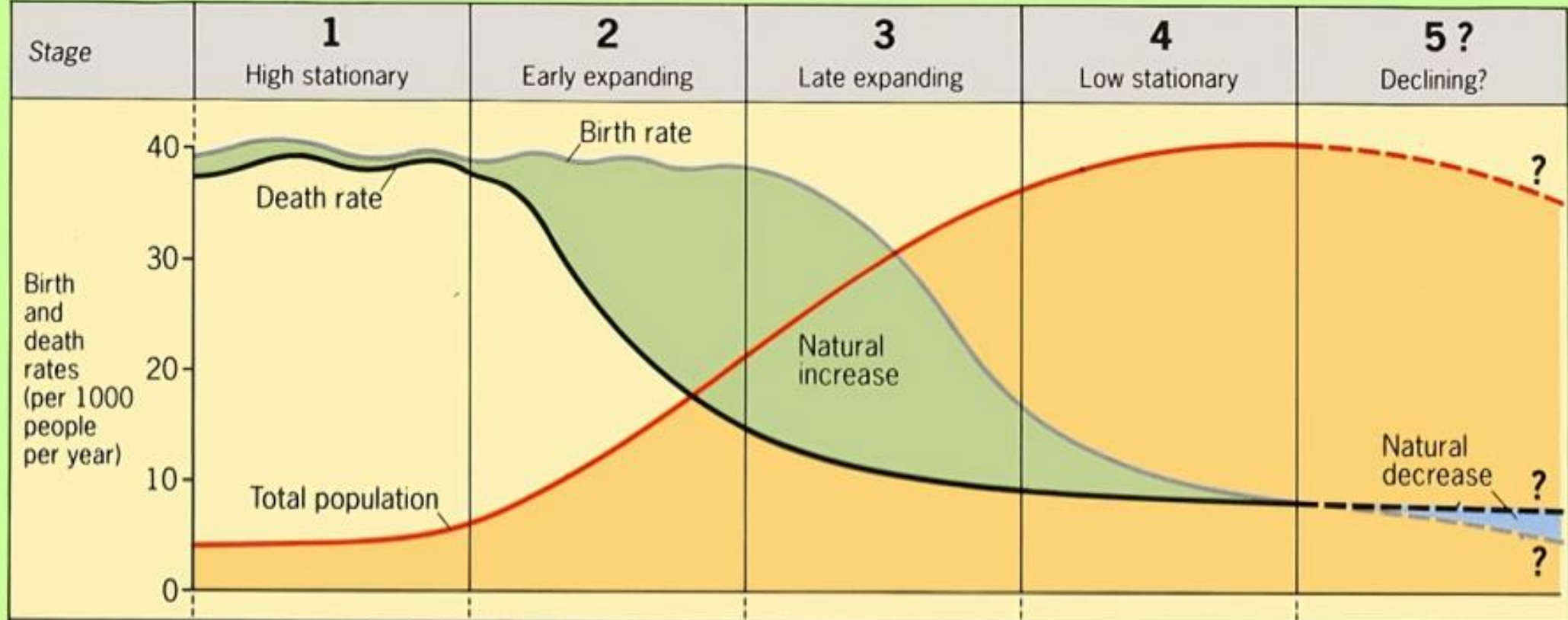
It shifts the focus to a crucial but lesser-discussed aspect, declining fertility rates, which according to the Lancet Report is projected to go down to 1.29 by 2051.

The government's projected Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for the period 2021-2025 (1.94) and 2031-2035 (1.73) is higher than estimates from The Lancet study and NFHS 5 data.

This suggests that India's population may stabilise below 1.7 billion earlier than 2065.

Demographic Dividend: India vs. Others





<i>Examples</i>	A few remote groups	Egypt, Kenya, India	Brazil	USA, Japan France, UK	Germany
<i>Birth rate</i>	High	High	Falling	Low	Very low
<i>Death rate</i>	High	Falls rapidly	Falls more slowly	Low	Low
<i>Natural increase</i>	Stable or slow increase	Very rapid increase	Increase slows down	Stable or slow increase	Slow decrease
<i>Reasons for changes in birth rate</i>	Many children needed for farming. Many children die at an early age. Religious/social encouragement. No family planning.		Improved medical care and diet. Fewer children needed.	Family planning. Good health. Improving status of women. Later marriages.	
<i>Reasons for changes in death rate</i>	Disease, famine. Poor medical knowledge so many children die.	Improvements in medical care, water supply and sanitation. Fewer children die.		Good health care. Reliable food supply.	

What are the Challenges of Demographic Transition in India?

Dependency Ratio Shift:

Uneven Transition Across States:


Labour Productivity and Economic Growth

What are the Opportunities of Demographic Transition in India?

Enhanced labour Productivity:

Reallocation of Resources

Increased Women Participation in Workforce:

- 
- **In the context of any country, which one of the following would be considered as part of its social capital? (2019)**
 - **(a) The proportion of literates in the population**
 - **(b) The stock of its buildings, other infrastructure and machines**
 - **(c) The size of population in the working age group**
 - **(d) The level of mutual trust and harmony in the society**

- 
- **2. India is regarded as a country with “Demographic Dividend”. This is due to (2011)**
 - **(a) Its high population in the age group below 15 years**
 - **(b) Its high population in the age group of 15-64 year**
 - **(c) Its high population in the age group above 65 years**
 - **(d) Its high total population**

Chennai • Coimbatore • Bangalore • Hyderabad • Mumbai • Raipur • Vishakhapatnam • Thiruvananthapuram • Kolkata • Guwahati • Mangalore • Thiruvananthapuram • Kollam • Hubli • Mysore • Madurai • Tiruppur • Lucknow • Cuttack • Patna



MANIPUR UNREST
Death of two Kuki-Zo people sparks protests
NEWS » PAGE 6



POLL DISCOURSE
Deep-rooted fault lines revealed in western U.P.
NEWS » PAGE 8



GUNMEN UNIDENTIFIED
Shots fired outside Salman Khan's house
NEWS » PAGE 6



DATA POINT
Fertility levels drop in many Asian nations
Region faces a population crisis
OPINION » PAGE 9



SUPER KINGS' DAY OUT
Dhoni and Pathirana sizzle in CSK's win
SPORT » PAGE 16

INSIDE



Mayawati vows Statehood for western U.P.

LUCKNOW
Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati on Sunday said her party would take steps to make western Uttar Pradesh a separate State if voted to power at the Centre. She also advocated for the need for unity among Muslims and members of Jat community in the region. » PAGE 2



Police to step up security for A.P. Chief Minister

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Director-General of Police K.V. Rajendranath Reddy has asked the police department to step up security for Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy after the latter was injured in a stone-throwing incident during a poll campaign in Vijayawada on Saturday. » PAGE 3

Ex-Punjab CM, Kanhaiya in Congress list

NEW DELHI
Former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and former Jawaharlal Nehru University students' union chief Kanhaiya Kumar are among the 10 Lok Sabha candidates that the Congress announced on Sunday. In Punjab, Mr. Chane has been named from Jalandhar-SC seat. » PAGE 4

Need a 'strong govt.': Modi at BJP manifesto launch

PM says a stable government with a resounding majority is imperative in times of global unrest

Says the 'Sankalp Patra' promises a govt. that will fortify the nation's economy and propel it forward

It is India's time for exponential growth, reads a letter by Modi enclosed with the manifesto

NEW DELHI
On Sunday when the conflict in West Asia appeared to be escalating, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that a "strong government with a full majority was necessary" in an uncertain international situation that exists currently, saying his government had time and again managed to bring back Indians stuck in conflict situations abroad.
Mr. Modi said this while releasing the BJP's manifesto at the party's headquarters, but avoided any explicit mention of specific international conflicts.
"Today, there is a cloud of uncertainty and tension looming over the world. There are conflicts everywhere. In such an hour of crisis, the safety of the



Patra promises Prime Minister Narendra Modi releases the BJP's manifesto in New Delhi on Sunday. BY MOORTHY

Modi addressed to the nation, which expanded on this being "India's time" for exponential growth, and on the international scene.
"During an address from the ramparts of the Red Fort, I had said, 'Yahi Samay hai, Sahi Samay hai' [This is the time, this is the correct time]. Today, many respected voices across the globe are also saying that this is India's time. In fact, today India is seen as

an important player in the global efforts to create a better future," he wrote.
He added that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by him had positioned India as a "Vishwa Bandhu" (a

friend to the world), but that it was also a government that could also take "big and tough decisions in the interest of the country".
"Universal friend"
The BJP's manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls is entitled "Modi ki Guarantee 2024, committed to building Viksit Bharat by 2047", and terms the section on foreign policy as "Modi ki Guarantee" for "Vishwa Bandhu Bharat" or the universal friend. It states that the Modi government has managed to evacuate 1.5 crore Indians stuck in conflict zones.
In it, apart from stating that the Modi government in the past managed to evacuate 1.5 crore Indians stuck in conflict zones, it is said: "We have established Bharat as a reliable, trusted

and dependable voice globally in the last 10 years. We have demonstrated Bharat's independence of thought and action for the benefit of humanity. Our human-centric worldview has helped to be a consensus builder, fair responder and a voice for the Global South," it adds.
Indian nationals were evacuated from war-hit Ukraine and Israel apart from other conflict zones.
This comes as the Ministry of External Affairs on Sunday expressed serious concern at the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran and called for an "immediate de-escalation, exercise of restraint, stepping back from violence and return to the path of democracy".

MORE REPORTS
» PAGE 4

Festive dip



Bathed in devotion: People perform rituals on the banks of the Ganga on the occasion of Chaiti Chhath festival, in Patna, Bihar on Sunday. BY

Modi's guarantee is empty jugglery of words, says Kharage

Abhinav Deshpande
NAGPUR
Congress President Mallikarjun Kharage derided the ruling Bharatiya Janata party's (BJP) manifesto as the "biggest junk" and dismissed it as "just empty jugglery of words."
In an exclusive interview with *The Hindu*, he questioned the Narendra Modi-led NDA government's failure to deliver on promises such as providing two crore jobs annually to the youth, doubling the income of farmers, ensuring Cost plus 50% on MSP for farmers, and depositing ₹15 lakh in each bank account. He said that BJP's manifesto was silent on issues such as rising food prices and unemployment. "He (Mr. Modi) did not do any major work during his tenure that could have benefited the people of the country," he said.
He also said that safeguarding the Constitution and democracy was the priority of the INDIA bloc.

INTERVIEW ON
» PAGE 4

Iran warns Israel retaliation will trigger 'larger response'

Reuters
JERUSALEM/DUBAI/WASHINGTON

Iran warned Israel and the United States on Sunday of a "much larger response" if there is any retaliation for its mass drone and missile attack on Israeli territory overnight, as Israel said the campaign is not over yet.
"The threat of open warfare erupting between the arch West Asian foes and dragging in the U.S. and the region on edge as Washington said America did not seek conflict with Iran but would not hesitate to protect its forces and Israel.
Iran launched the attack over a suspected Israeli strike on its consulate in Syria on April 1 that killed top Revolutionary Guards commanders and followed



Fending off: Israel's anti-missile system in operation against drones and missiles launched by Iran on Saturday midnight. REUTERS

months of clashes between Israel and Iran's regional allies, triggered by the war in Gaza.
However, the attack from more than 300 drones and missiles, mostly launched from inside Iran, caused only modest damage in Israel, as most were shot down with the help of the U.S., Britain

Centre orders probe into foreigners receiving organs as the number of transplants surges

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Union government has ordered an investigation into organ transplants involving foreign nationals in India.
Worried over the surge in the number of organ transplants linked to foreigners in the country, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare called for close monitoring of such transplants by authorities of States and Union Territories concerned and action on the hospitals found to be violating the rules.
Sources in the Tamil Nadu Health Department told *The Hindu* on Sunday that the Centre had expressed concerns over reports of "commercial dealings" in organs being transplanted to foreigners. Data in the registry of the National Or-



The Health Ministry issued an alert to the External Affairs Ministry in February to prevent commercial dealings in organ transplants.

gan & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) revealed the substantial increase in foreign nationals getting organs through private hospitals.
Talking into account the seriousness of the issue, the Director-General of Health Services Atul Goel wrote to Director of Medi-

cal Education/Director of Health Services of all States and Union Territories to direct the appropriate authority appointed under the Transplantation of Human Organs & Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994, to investigate the issue of foreign nationals. He also called for action on complaints or any breach of any provision of the Act or any of the rules made thereunder.
Dr. Goel urged the health authorities to ensure that a unique NOTTO ID for both the donor and recipient of organs is generated by the hospital concerned in all cases of organ transplants.
Appropriate action
In case of violation under the THOTA was made out, the guidelines were to take appropriate action, including suspension of registration for performing organ transplants, or the hospitals involved in illegal activities.
To prevent commercial dealings in organ transplants, the Health Ministry issued an alert to the Ministry of External Affairs in February this year about many foreign nationals coming to India for organ transplants and possibility of violations of visa rules.
On June 12, 2018, *The Hindu* had published the report titled, "In Chennai, the hearts beat for foreigners", exposing alleged irregularities in the allocation of organs to foreign nationals bypassing Indian patients battling end-stage organ failure and on registered waiting list.
Weeks later, NOTTO revised the guidelines of organ allocation making it difficult for foreigners to get organs from donors or braindead patients. After the new guidelines came into force, the number of Indian patients getting life-saving organs went up by 56% compared to the previous year as per data shared by Transplant Authority of Tamil Nadu.

Text & Content

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The decrease in automobile exports from India in FY24

5.5 in percentage. Automobile exports from India declined to 45 lakh units in FY24 due to the monetary crisis in various overseas markets, according to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers. Overall exports stood at 47.6 lakh units in FY23. ❏

The renewable energy capacity added by India in FY24

18 gigawatt (GW). India added a record renewable energy (RE) capacity in 2023-24, over 21% higher than the 15.27 GW a year earlier. But, experts say that 50 GW of RE capacity must be added annually to reach the 2030 target of 500 GW renewable energy. ❏

The amount infused in equities by FPIs in the month of April

13,000 in crore. Foreign portfolio investors have infused this amount in first two weeks of the month owing to a resilient domestic economy with promising growth prospects. ❏

The rising inflation rate in Pakistan according to the ADB

25 in percentage. With a high inflation rate, Pakistan is growing at the fourth lowest pace of 1.9% in the region. Pakistan has the highest cost of living in all of Asia, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report. ❏

The number of drones and missiles launched by Iran on Israel

320 Israel claims that Iran fired 170 drones, more than 30 cruise missiles and more than 120 ballistic missiles, of which several reached Israeli territory, causing minor damage to an air base. ❏

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Fixing India's VVPAT-based audit of EVMs

While the Supreme Court has been indulgent towards the ECI due to its plenipotentiary role in the conduct of elections under Article 324 of the Constitution, it must compel the ECI to make public how it has defined the population, and most importantly, its decision rule in the event of a mismatch

FULL CONTEXT

K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has attracted criticism for reducing the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) based audit of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to an exercise in tokenism and for its lack of transparency in the matter. The uniform sample size of "five EVMs per Assembly constituency" prescribed by it for all Assembly constituencies and States does not conform to the fundamental principles of statistical sampling and leads to high margins of error.

At the same time, the ECI's critics are also guilty of demanding arbitrary, non-statistical sample sizes like "25 per cent samples" and "50 per cent samples" for VVPAT-based audit of EVMs, under the mistaken impression that a "bigger percentage" guarantees greater accuracy of results. Some are now demanding a 100% manual count of all VVPAT voter slips.

Using statistical sampling
The VVPAT-based audit of EVMs is a simple problem of statistical quality control. It is very similar to the "lot acceptance sampling technique" that is widely used in industry and trade. If the number of defectives found in a randomly drawn statistical sample is less than or equal to a specified acceptance number, the lot (or "population") is accepted; otherwise, the lot is rejected.

Here a "defective EVM" is defined as one with a mismatch between the EVM count and the VVPAT's manual count of voter slips due to EVM malfunction or EVM manipulation. Unlike industry and trade where a few defectives in the sample may be tolerated, in the context of elections, the acceptance number will have to be "zero defective EVM". In other words, even if there is a single instance of mismatch between the EVM count and VVPAT manual count in the randomly drawn sample of EVMs, the "population" of EVMs from which the sample was drawn should be "rejected". In this case, "rejection" means non-acceptance of the EVM counts for that "population" and doing manual counting of VVPAT slips for all the remaining EVMs of that "population". In such a scenario, the election result should be declared only on the basis of the VVPAT count.

Thus, VVPAT-based audit of EVMs involves three essential elements: (a) a clear definition of the "population" of EVMs from which the statistical sample would be drawn. It could be all the EVMs deployed in an Assembly constituency, a Parliamentary constituency, a State as a whole, India as a whole, a region (or group of districts) within a State, or any other. The population size (N) often vary widely depending on how we define the "population"; (b) determination of a statistically correct and administratively viable sample size (n) of EVMs whose VVPAT slips will be hand counted; (c) application of the "decision rule", viz., in the event of a mismatch between the EVM count and the VVPAT count in the chosen sample of "n" EVMs, the hand counting of VVPAT slips will have to be done for all the remaining (N-n) EVMs forming part of that "population".

However, the ECI has not specified the "population" to which its sample size relates. It has not explained how it arrived at its sample size. It has maintained silence about the "next steps" in the event of a mismatch between the EVM count and the VVPAT count in the chosen

Towards a new audit methodology

The hypergeometric distribution model should form the basis of the sampling plan for the VVPAT-based audit of EVMs because it is an exact fit.

Population size (N)	Sample size (n)	% of n to N
100	10	10
1,000	368	36.8
10,000	448	4.48
1,00,000	458	0.46
10,00,000	459	0.05

Population boundary	Population size (N) (number of EVMs)	Sample size (n) for the specified population	Probability that the ECI prescribed sample size of "five EVMs per Assembly constituency" will fail to detect a defective EVM
Assembly constituency	~20 to 300	20 to 235	99%
Parliamentary constituency	~40 to 2,800	40 to 423 (1/6 to 60 per Assembly constituency)	70%

Population boundary	Population size (N) (number of EVMs)	Sample size (n) for the specified population	Average no. of EVMs per Assembly constituency whose VVPAT slips are to be hand counted for this sample size	Probability that the ECI prescribed sample size of "five EVMs per Assembly constituency" will fail to detect a defective EVM
A State as a whole				
Tamil Nadu	589	315	10	14.8%
Nagaland	2,194	413	7	3.9%
Assam	24,890	459	4	0.2%
Rajasthan	51,796	457	3	0%
Maharashtra	91,329	458	2	0%
U.P.	1,50,000	458	2	0%
India as a whole	~10,50,000	459	1	0%

sample, and it has glossed over reported cases of mismatch. A system of VVPAT-based audit of EVMs in which these three vital issues have been left vague or unaddressed is categorically unacceptable.

Why ECI's sample size is erroneous
The hypergeometric distribution model should form the basis of the sampling plan for the VVPAT-based audit of EVMs because it is an exact fit. In the discussion that follows, we assume the percentage of defective EVMs in the population (P) to be 1% and calculate sample sizes for various population sizes, for 99% probability of detecting at least one defective EVM. We also compute the probability that the ECI-prescribed sample size of "five EVMs per Assembly constituency" will fail to

detect a defective EVM for different population sizes. The great merit of the hypergeometric distribution model is that the sample size is the greatest when P is very close to zero (which is what the ECI claims it is), and it becomes lesser as P increases.

As seen from Table 1, when the population size (N) of EVMs is 100, the sample size (n) required is 99, that is it is nearly as big as the population size. As N increases, it also increases but at a much slower rate and "hits a plateau" beyond some point so that further increases in population size have no effect on the sample size.

As seen from Table 2, if we define the EVMs deployed in an Assembly constituency or Parliamentary constituency as the "population", then in

view of the smaller population sizes (N), the sample sizes (n) required are rather big. Hence, these choices for "population" are administratively unviable. As seen from Table 3, if we define the EVMs deployed in a State as a whole or India as a whole as the "population", the sample sizes (n) required are very small. But the workload involved in hand counting the VVPAT slips for all the remaining (N-n) EVMs of the population, in the event of a mismatch, is very large and administratively unviable for India as a whole and for all States except the smaller States. The ECI glosses over this crucial point when it claims that the ISL, Kolkata had recommended a sample size of only 479 EVMs for India as a whole which works out to one EVM per Assembly constituency.

What next?
We can use the "plateau effect" of sample sizes to divide the bigger States into "regions" (an integral number of districts) with EVM population sizes of about 5,000 each. We treat "EVMs deployed in the region" as the "population". On average, there would be about 20 Assembly constituencies in a region. The sample size required is 438 and the average number of EVMs per Assembly constituency whose VVPAT slips are to be hand counted is 22. For example, U.P with 1,50,000 EVMs can be divided into 30 regions with roughly 5,000 EVMs each. In the event of a defective EVM turning up, the hand counting of VVPAT slips of the remaining EVMs will be confined to the region. This option is statistically robust and administratively viable.

Over the years, the Supreme Court has been indulgent towards the ECI due to its plenipotentiary role in the conduct of elections under Article 324 of the Constitution of India. But the Supreme Court cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the ECI making a mockery of the VVPAT-based audit of EVMs thereby defeating the very purpose of introducing the VVPAT. It must compel the ECI to make public how it has defined the population, how it has arrived at its sample size, and most importantly, its decision rule in the event of a mismatch. Only the Supreme Court's order of 2013 on VVPAT would be implemented faithfully in letter and spirit. We also compute the probability that the ECI-prescribed sample size of "five EVMs per Assembly constituency or Parliamentary constituency as the 'population'", then in

THE GIST

The Election Commission of India has attracted criticism for reducing the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) based audit of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to an exercise in tokenism and for its lack of transparency in the matter.

The VVPAT-based audit of EVMs is a simple problem of statistical quality control.

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Election fever: Poll officials work on EVMs at a distribution center in Coimbatore on April 11. AP

The renewable energy capacity added by India in FY24

18 gigawatt (GW). India added a record renewable energy (RE) capacity in 2023-24, over 21% higher than the 15.27 GW a year earlier. But, experts say that 50 GW of RE capacity must be added annually to reach the 2030 target of 500 GW renewable energy. PTI

Renewable Energy

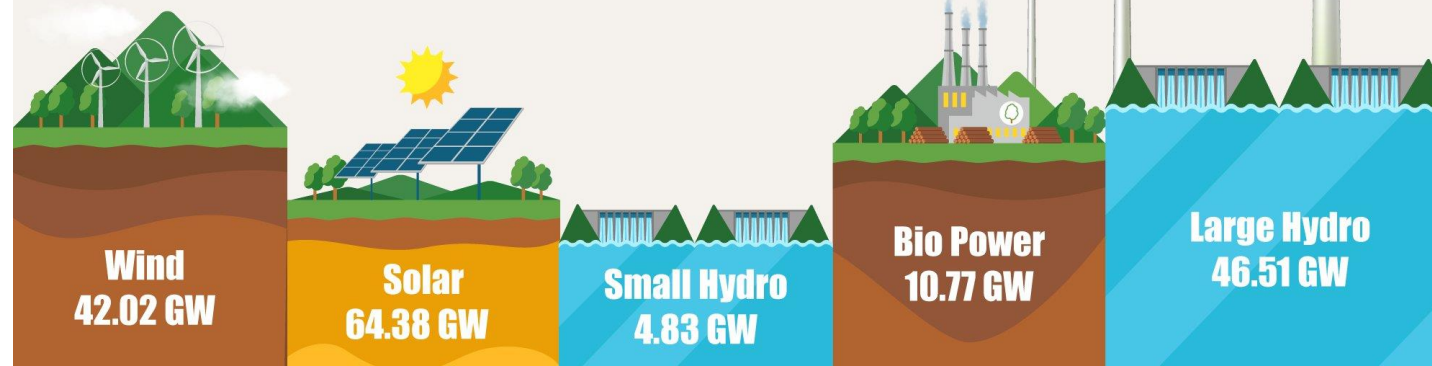
India is the world's third largest producer of renewable energy.

Targets

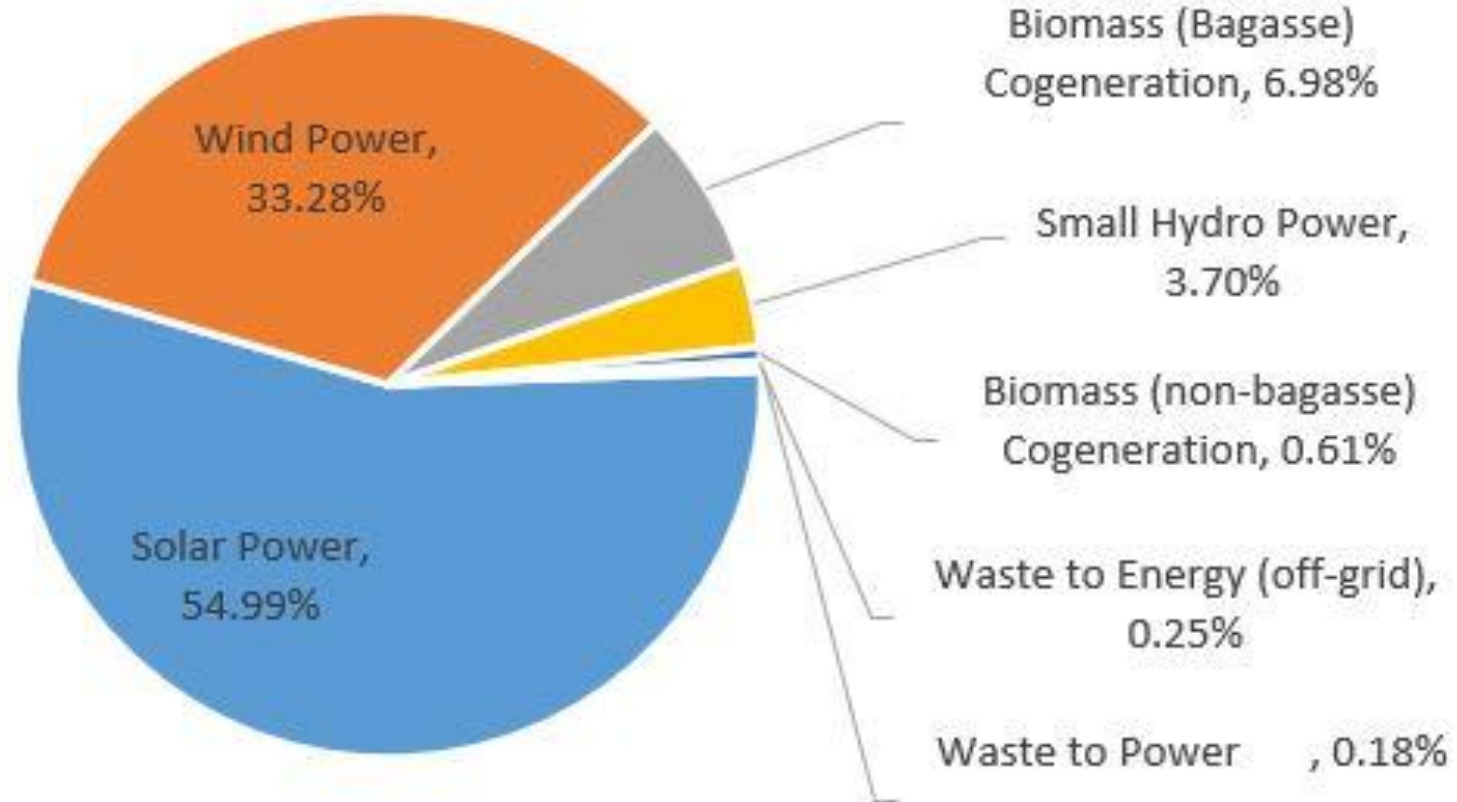


- Achieve net zero carbon emissions by **2070**
- Produce **5 Million Tonnes** of green hydrogen by **2030**
- **57** Solar Parks aggregate capacity of **39.28 GW**
- Wind Energy offshore target of **30 GW** by **2030**

Installed capacity of renewable sources of energy in India



India Renewable Energy Mix (January 2024)



Source: MNRE

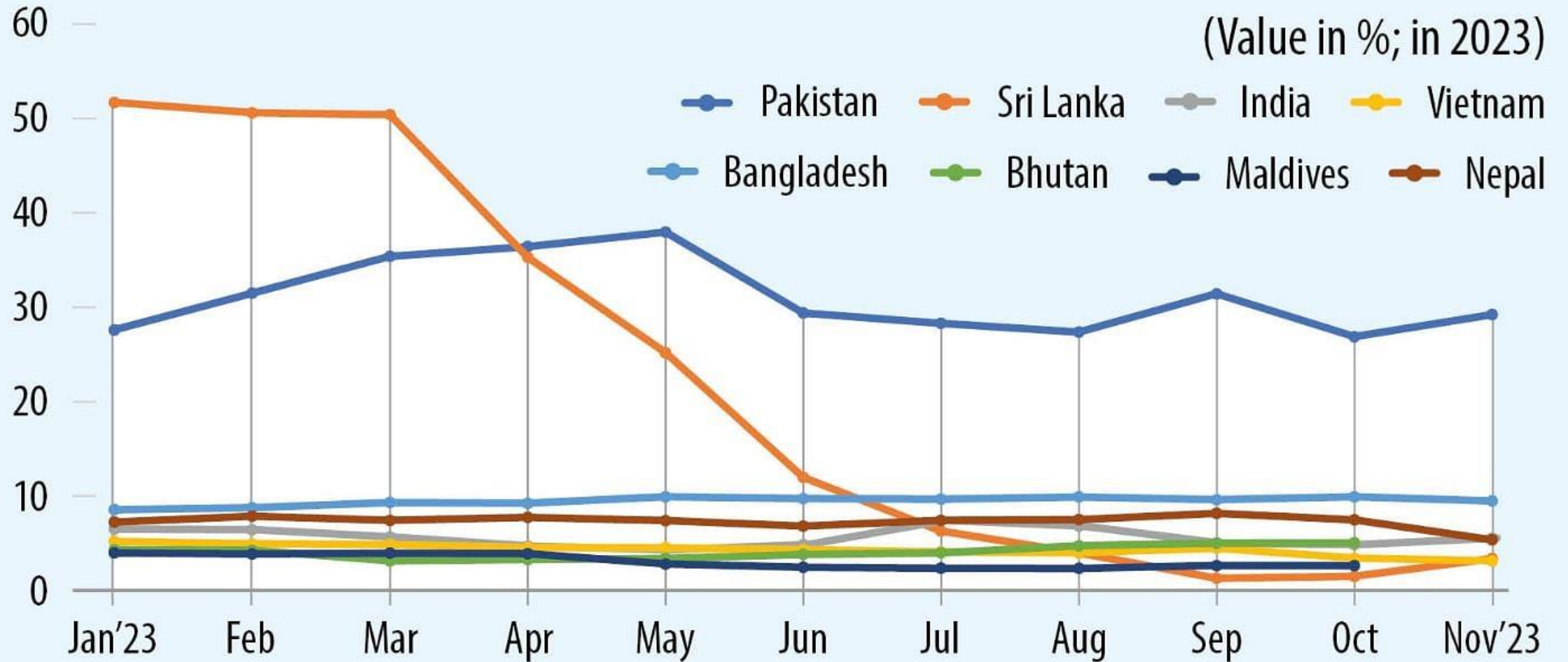
SolarQuarter Research

The rising inflation rate in Pakistan according to the ADB

25 in percentage. With a high inflation rate and its economy growing at the fourth lowest pace of 1.9% in the region, Pakistan has the highest cost of living in all of Asia, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report. PTI

INFLATION IN SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES

(Value in %; in 2023)



SOURCE: CENTRAL BANKS OF RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES

IN ELITE CLUB

Rohit becomes first Indian batter to smash 500 sixes in T20s



EMMANUEL YODINI

Rohit Sharma became the first Indian to hammer 500 sixes in T20 cricket. The Hitman achieved this milestone during Mumbai Indians' IPL game against Chennai Super Kings in Mumbai on Sunday. Rohit's six tally is now 502. Chris Gayle (1,056) tops the chart followed by Kieron Pollard (869), Andre Russell (678) and Colin Munro (648).

MAKING AN IMPACT

Haven't played a lot of T20 in last couple of years, took time: Starc



APP

Australian pacer Mitchell Starc said he needed some time to get used to T20 matches. "I haven't played a lot of T20 cricket in the last couple of years, so it has probably taken me a little bit longer than I would have liked to get back into the rhythm of things and make a better impact," said Starc after KKR's win over LSG on Sunday.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Skipper Dhawan will be out of action for at least 10 days: Bangar



SANDEEP SAXENA

Punjab Kings batting coach Sanjay Bangar said that captain Rishabh Pant was recovering from a shoulder injury and likely to be out of action for at least seven to 10 days. Bangar also commended his team for showing "character, fighting spirit, and gumption" in the closely fought last character against Multan Super Kings.

MATCH-WINNER

Mo Bobat says he is not worried about Kohli's strike rate



K. NURJALI KUMAR

RCB Director of Cricket Mo Bobat stated that he is not worried about Virat Kohli's strike rate. "The point Kohli's strike rate gets a lot of air time. But he has scored the most runs, and he is also offering a decent strike rate. I'm not spending too much time worrying about Kohli's batting," Bobat said.

Ageless Dhoni and sensational Pathirana prove the difference

The star ployman's four-ball 20, after aggressive half-centuries by Ruturaj and Dube, propels CSK to 206; the Sri Lanka's four for 28 breaks the back of MI's spirited chase led by Rohit's fine ton; Super Kings prevail in the famed rivalry by 20 runs

IPL-17

Amol Karhadkar MUMBAI

Shivam Dube returned to his halcyon home turf in style. Ruturaj Gaikwad registered his personal best as the Chennai Super Kings captain. Rohit Sharma's unbeaten hundred gave home fans multiple reasons to rejoice. And Mathewias Pathirana sealed a famous win for the visiting team in the mother of all Indian Premier League battles.

But the last four balls of the first innings will not only be remembered for ever in the IPL history, but also ended up being the difference between the two teams. Riding on a certain M.S. Dhoni doing a Dhoni with a hat-trick of sixes and Pathirana doing a Bumrah, Super Kings registered its first away win in IPL 2024.

Fourth loss Mumbai Indians, meanwhile, will head for a prolonged away-leg, having suffered its fourth loss in six games. Even though Rohit was going great guns, MI lost the plot, thanks to pitch-perfect bowling by the Super Kings bowlers in adverse conditions.

With Mumbai Indians requiring 89 runs off the last eight overs, Rohit and Tilak Varma were in search of a breakthrough over. However, Ravindra Jadeja finished his spell with a six-run over and Pathirana having struck twice in his opening over — came back to get rid of Tilak in the next. Shardul Thakur conceded two runs in the following over while Tushar Deshpande forced captain Hardik Pandya — who was booed a couple of times on the night — to hole out in the deep and give away



Nailing it: Dhoni and Pathirana showed that age has no relevance to performance. EMMANUEL YODINI

only three runs.

With 72 runs required off the last four overs, it was always going to be a lost battle. Rohit managing to raise his second IPL hundred and reduce the victory margin meant the Mumbaiers returned home with a wide smile on their face.

The full house was treated to the fullest by Dhoni, who ended the CSK essay with a four-ball cameo. Dube and Gaikwad's exploits — with the duo adding 90 runs off 46 balls —

were overshadowed by those 20 runs that Dhoni smashed in the four balls he faced.

His three sixes off Hardik off the first three balls — over long-short, long-on and square-leg, respectively — helped Super Kings cross the 200-run mark. It even

Next assignment

MI: April 18 vs PBKS, Mullanpur, 7.30 p.m.

CSK: April 19 vs LSG, Lucknow, 7.30 p.m.

usually proved critical with Super Kings winning by 20 runs.

The week ahead

Table with 4 columns: Date, Match, Time

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: Ajinkya Rahane c Hardik... Coetzee 5 (8b, 1x4), Ruchin Ravindra c Kabir b Shreyas...

MUMBAI INDIANS: Rohit Sharma (not out) 105 (82b, 11x4, 5x6), Ishan Kishan c Shardul b Pathirana 23 (25b, 3x4, 2x1), Suryakumar Yadav...

MUMBAI INDIANS: Rohit Sharma (not out) 105 (82b, 11x4, 5x6), Ishan Kishan c Shardul b Pathirana 23 (25b, 3x4, 2x1), Suryakumar Yadav...

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After Starc's burst, Phil rubs Salt into Super Giants' wounds



ANI

Y.B. Sarang KOLKATA

Aussie pace ace Mitchell Starc finally stepped up to his high price tag with a three-wicket haul and Phil Salt produced a match-winning knock as Kolkata Knight Riders posted an eight-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL at the Eden Gardens here on Sunday.

After restricting LSG, which sought home comfort by donning city-based sister concern Mohan Bagan's green-and-maroon colours, to 161 for seven, KKR achieved the target with 4.2 overs to spare to please its fans on Bengal New Year.

Right from the toss, the hosts were in control. Vaidhava Arora struck early to remove Quinton de Kock. Starc bowled a shorter length and utilised the bounce well to test the LSG batters. He tasted success in the third over of his extended first spell as Ramandeep took a spectacular diving catch at point.

Captain K.L. Rahul (59) played some handsome shots to build a platform. He hammered Andre Russell for a six over point before pulling him straight to deep midwicket.

KKR spinners Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarty kept it tight and picked up a wicket apiece. Varun

accounted for Marcus Stoinis while Narine removed Ayush Badoni (27). LSG's top run-getter Nicholas Pooran (45) tried to finish on a high. With his trademark strokeplay, he he smashed big sixes on the leg-side, including two in a row off Arora. But, Pooran nicked behind off Starc, who took two for six in the final over to record his best figures of the season.

In reply, KKR had a dream start as debutant West Indian pacer Shamar Joseph leaked 22 in the first

SCOREBOARD

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Phil Salt (not out) 89 (47b, 14x4, 3x6), Sunil Narine c Stoinis b Mohsin 6 (6b, 2x4), Angkrish Raghuvanshi c Rahul b Mohsin 7 (8b, 2x6), Shreyas Iyer (not out) 38 (28b, 6x4), Extras 9 (1, 6, 2), Total (for two wickets in 15.4 overs): 162

FALL OF WICKETS

3-22 Narine (1.3), 2-42 (Raghuvanshi, 3.1).

SUPER GIANTS' BOWLING: Shamar Joseph 4-0-47-0, Mohin 4-0-29-2, Krunal 3-0-14-0, Yash Thakur 2-0-25-0, Arshad 2-0-24-0, Bisheesh 2-4-0-17-0.

Toss: KKR; PM: Salt. KKR won by eight wickets with 20 balls remaining.

Next assignment

KKR: April 16 vs RR, Kolkata, 7.30 p.m.

LSG: April 19 vs CSK, Lucknow, 7.30 p.m.

Headaches aplenty for Royal Challengers as they host Sunrisers Hyderabad



Ashwin Achal BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru captain Faf du Plessis has nowhere to turn. His bowlers concede runs aplenty, and his batters have failed to get going. When RCB takes on Sunrisers Hyderabad at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Monday, only an exceptional individual performance can save the home team from a fifth straight loss.

RCB's primary concern is the bowling unit, which in the opinion of du Plessis, lacks potent weapons. It is down to the batters to get a massive total and

keep the side in the hunt, du Plessis said after a crushing loss against Mumbai Indians.

Not that simple If only it was that simple. The RCB batters share as much blame as the bowlers, as Virat Kohli & Co. have failed to get the team to the 200-run mark so far this season.

Kohli has been scoring runs by the heap, but this has not helped the team cause.

Dinesh Karthik has provided some cheer with his late hits, and RCB may be tempted to promote the 38-year-old up the order. RCB will find it hard to

Today's match

Match details for RCB vs SRH, including logos, time, and previous meeting info.

contain the explosive SRH batsmen. South African Heinrich Klaasen and opener Abhishek Sharma, although the top six-batters in the tournament, illustrate

Points table

Table with 6 columns: Team, M, W, L, Pts, NRR

After the MI-CSK match on April 14

SRH's aggressive intent. RCB will be encouraged by the confidence shown by uncapped Nitish Kumar

Reddy, who smashed a 37-ball 64 against Punjab Kings to give the unit a second straight win.

IN ELITE CLUB

Rohit becomes first Indian batter to smash 500 sixes in T20s



EMMANUAL YOGINI

▲ Rohit Sharma became the first Indian to hammer 500 sixes in T20 cricket. The Hitman achieved this milestone during Mumbai Indians' IPL game against Chennai Super Kings in Mumbai on Sunday. Rohit's six tally is now 502. Chris Gayle (1,056) tops the chart followed by Kieron Pollard (860), Andre Russell (678) and Colin Munro (548).

PRIME MINISTER RELEASES BJP POLL MANIFESTO

Amid growth unrest, India needs stable govt with unequivocal majority: Modi

PM flags change in 'mindset', talks of next-gen reforms



PM Narendra Modi with Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman and BJP chief JP Nadda at the party manifesto release in New Delhi on Sunday. *Reuters/PTI*

10 yrs on, manifesto signals continuity: Expanding welfare and infra upgrade

No NRC mention, UCC goal reiterated

LIZ MATHEW & MANOJ CG NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

PITCHING FOR a third term, with two of its three core ideological projects—abrogation of Article 370 that gave special status to Kashmir and the construction of Ayodhya Ram Temple—com-

E.V. POLICY PUSH

When Musk lands in India, the red carpet for Tesla and a few red flags

Tesla under pressure in China, faces tech disruption: India hopes entry will boost domestic industry

ANIL SASI NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

WHEN TESLA chief Elon Musk is expected to land in India later this month to announce his electric vehicle (EV) investment plans, he will wish for a red carpet, no doubt—but there will also be a few red flags in the wings.

Under pressure in China where local players have outsmarted him, facing tech disruptions in the industry, and a general demand slowdown, for Musk, the India story is as important as the EV story is for India.

New Delhi hopes the entry of the marquee EV flagbearer, just as it was in China, will be a catalyst for its domestic electric four-wheeler push, so much so that after turning down Tesla's demand for upfront import duty cuts two years ago, it has now the latest cuts, with a post-dated investment pledge and progressive localisation targets, are worth it.

The key issues that will frame the talks with Tesla:

■ **Policy rethink:** The new EV policy, which effectively lowered import duties to 15 per cent from 100 per cent on car models costing over \$35,000 if its manufacturer promised to invest \$500 million in setting up a local factory, is being seen as a move to welcome Tesla. This marks a part reversal of the domestic manufacturing localisation targets, are worth it.



For Elon Musk, the India story is as important as the EV story is for India. *Reuters*

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

Does the promised time cycle of our leaders' no-over-thresholds? *UNNY*

IDEA EXCHANGE

'If Chinese threat were to disappear, then US and India wouldn't be nearly as friendly'

JOHN J MEARSHMEIER POLITICAL SCIENTIST PAGE 14

POLLS BONDS IN 14 TRANCHEs

TMC got ₹23 cr from 3 firms linked to ex-MP and Saradha accused

JAY MAZOOMDAR NEW DELHI, KOLKATA, APRIL 14

THREE COMPANIES linked to the family of former TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sriraj Bose, who was arrested by the CBI on charges linked to the Saradha chit fund case, donated ₹23 crore in electoral bonds to the ruling party in West Bengal in 14 tranches of ₹1.3 crore each beginning July 2021. According to data released by the Election Commission last month and investigated by The Indian Express, these donations began soon after the TMC won the 2021 Assam assembly polls and formed the state government in May that year.

Between July 2021 and July 2023, one of these companies, Ripley & Co Stevedoring & Handling Pvt Ltd, donated ₹1.5 crore in bonds to the TMC in seven tranches. Separately, one of its directors, Prashant Kumar

99% OF MISSILES, DRONES shot down, says Israel

Iran attack: Israel debates response, US says won't take part in retaliation

JAMES MACKENZIE, TARA HAFEZI & JEFF MASON JERUSALEM, QUILA, WASHINGTON, APRIL 14

PREsIDENT JOE Biden warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the US will not take part in a counter-offensive against Iran if it decides to retaliate for a mass drone and missile attack on Israeli territory overnight, a White House official said Sunday. The threat of open warfare erupted between the arch-rival Asia foes and dragging in the US has put the region on edge, triggering calls for restraint from global powers and Arab nations to avoid further escalation.

US media reported earlier on Sunday that Biden had informed Netanyahu he would not participate in retaliatory action in a phone call overnight. The marks were confirmed to Reuters by a White House official.

WORLD URGES RESTRAINT, G7 meets, condemns Iran attack

Iranian living abroad is our priority. In times of global unrest, the necessity for a strong, stable government with an unequivocal majority in India becomes an hour of crisis, the safety of



An Israeli anti-missile system seen in action from Ashkelon city after Iran launched a barrage of drones and missiles on Sunday. *Reuters*

Delhi calls for 'de-escalation' as Jaishankar speaks to both Foreign Ministers

SHUBHAJIT ROY NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

WITHIN HOURS of Iran's attack on Israel, India expressed "serious concern" at the escalation of hostilities between the two and called for "immediate de-escalation".

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to both Iran Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz and discussed the regional situation. In his conversation with Iranian FM, Jaishankar said he "discussed the current situation in the region" and "stressed the importance of avoiding escalation, exercising restraint and returning to diplomacy". And with the Israeli FM, Jaishankar said he "discussed the current situation in the region" and "stressed the importance of avoiding escalation, exercising restraint and returning to diplomacy".

Contrast with Oct 7: Why Delhi's stand marks 4 key shifts in Mideast diplomacy

C RAJA MOHAN NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

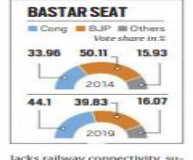
THE MIDDLE East is one of the most successful regions for Indian diplomacy over the last decade but it continues to test Delhi's ability to navigate the region's competing imperatives. The incident that led to escalation today in the aftermath of Iran's retaliatory strike against Israel stands in contrast to Delhi's initial expression of solidarity with Tel Aviv at the highest political level immediately after the October 7 terror attack by Hamas. That contrast highlights four broad transitions in India's engagement with the region. First, the call for regional restraint underlines the difference between responding to the brutality of a non-state actor's terrorism and a conflict between two major state actors locked in a long-standing regional rivalry. Delhi's stakes in the bilateral relationships with both Tehran and Tel Aviv are huge and it has never been a question of choosing between them. With Iran making clear that its retaliation against the Israeli attack on its embassy in Damascus is now complete, India will hope that Tel Aviv will avoid new military actions that will trigger a dangerous and wider war in the region. If India was seen as taking "Israel's side" on October 7, its position today urging restraint will be viewed as "balanced" and in favour of regional peace.

Development a poll issue in Bastar where Naxal shadow looms large

JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU JAGDALPUR, APRIL 14

CHITTIKARH'S BASTAR is set to be the state's sole seat going to polls in the first phase on April 19 owing to Maoist violence—already this year, left-wing extremism (LWE) has claimed 74 lives till April. Of the 74 killed, 50 were Maoists, which is more than twice the number across 2023, when 24 insurgents were killed.

The Bastar Lok Sabha seat falls in the state's Abujmadr region, an unsurveyed area larger than Goa and with a population of about 40,000 that is still a Naxal stronghold. While development in the region, which



Months after slapping trauma, UP boy dreams again: 'Want to be Ronaldo'

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

DHEERAJ MISHRA MUZAFFARNAGAR, APRIL 14

THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD has a smile on his face as he talks about his new school in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district. His eyes light up as he mentions his Hindi teacher, though she doesn't know her name. "She speaks warmly to me, and she liked the homegrown mulberries I had given her," the class 3 student says.

Mahatma Gandhi—filed a petition against a delayed action in the case by police. Now, the boy studies in what is considered one of the best schools in Muzaffarnagar, although it is 25 km from his home. In the new environment, he has found new interests, and a new dream. The new school is good, and I have made some friends. The playground is big... I saw football here for the first time, and now I play every Tuesday and Saturday. I want to be like Ronaldo," he says. Dressed in the new clothes he got for Eid—a red checkered

shirt, black jeans and black shoes—he has a delayed action in the case by police. Now, the boy studies in what is considered one of the best schools in Muzaffarnagar, although it is 25 km from his home. In the new environment, he has found new interests, and a new dream. The new school is good, and I have made some friends. The playground is big... I saw football here for the first time, and now I play every Tuesday and Saturday. I want to be like Ronaldo," he says. Dressed in the new clothes he got for Eid—a red checkered

education of the child". He says that the UP government had said it would enroll the boy in a new school, take care of his educational expenses, and provide him with uniforms, and provide ₹2,000 per day for transport expenses. The boy's father says that while his son has got admission in the new school, many of the expenses have not yet been fulfilled in a timely manner. "My son is going to school in old clothes this academic session because the department has not provided new uniforms. I am tired of calling department officials, they do not even pick up. They are required to pay at the rate of ₹200 per day for food. I take him to school and pick him up every day on my bike. That means I ride my bike for around 100 km daily, but my bike is around ₹2,000 per day for transport expenses. The boy's father says that while his son has got admission in the new school, many of the expenses have not yet been fulfilled in a timely manner. 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IRAN AND ISRAEL: A LONG HISTORY OF SHADOW WARS

1979: Iran's pro-Israel leader Mohammed Reza Shah swept from power in Islamic Revolution, new regime considers Israel an enemy.

1982: Israel invades Lebanon, Iran's Revolutionary Guards set up Hezbollah.

1983: Hezbollah uses suicide bombings to expel Western, Israeli forces. Israel later withdraws from much of Lebanon.

2002: Israel urges tough action against Tehran after revelation that Iran has secret uranium enrichment programme.

2006: Israel fights Hezbollah in a month-long war in Lebanon, unable to crush them.

2009: Iran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei calls Israel 'a dangerous and fatal cancer'.

2018: Benjamin Netanyahu hails US President Donald Trump's withdrawal from Iran's nuclear deal.

2020: Israel welcomes US assassination of General Qassem Soleimani.

2022: US President Joe



(Above) The Iron Dome system in action in central Israel; (and) celebrations in Tehran after Iran's airstrike. *AP, Reuters*

2023: Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid sign a joint pledge to deny Iran nuclear arms.

2024: Suspected Israeli air strike on Iranian embassy in Damascus kills two IRGC commanders.

Keeping fingers crossed



Displaced Palestinians make their way as they attempt to return to their homes in north Gaza on Sunday REUTERS

AT A TIME WHEN Indian markets are at all-time highs, bulls could find themselves caught in the crossfire due the escalation in tensions between Iran and Israel. The risk of a broader conflict in the West Asia may trigger volatile swings in the equity markets, as rising crude oil prices could spook investors, reports **FE Bureau**. There are chances that investors may seek to book profits and take some risk off the table.

Kargil war (1999)

Return in %	After 1 week	After 1-month	After 3-month
Sensex	-0.9	3.5	22.0
Nifty	-0.9	3.7	23.5
Dow Jones	-1.2	-1.4	4.6
S&P 500 Index	-0.8	0.8	4.4
Brent crude (\$ per barrel)	-3.8	7.4	33.0
Gold (\$ per ounce)	-1.4	-3.3	-6.1

Karabakh war between Azerbaijan & Armenia (2020)

Return in %	After 1 week	After 1-month	After 3-month
Sensex	3.5	18.0	25.6
Nifty	3.3	6.5	24.4
Dow Jones	2.4	1.9	11.1
S&P 500 Index	2.5	3.1	12.3
Brent crude (\$ per barrel)	-2.4	-3.5	22.4
Gold (\$ per ounce)	2.4	2.2	1.2

Iraq-US war (2003)

Return in %	After 1 week	After 1-month	After 3-month
Sensex	0.7	-4.4	10.7
Nifty	1.0	-6.3	8.8
Dow Jones	-0.4	0.9	11.1
S&P 500 Index	-0.5	2.2	13.8
Brent crude (\$ per barrel)	-5.5	-3.3	-1.7
Gold (\$ per ounce)	-1.8	-3.1	7.4

Russia-Ukraine war (2022)

Return in %	After 1 week	After 1-month	After 3-month
Sensex	1.1	5.6	-0.9
Nifty	1.5	6.0	-0.8
Dow Jones	1.7	4.5	-3.9
S&P 500 Index	1.7	5.4	-8.1
Russia IMOEX	20.0	25.3	11.4
Ukraine - PFTS	0.0	0.0	0.0
Brent crude (\$ per barrel)	11.5	20.1	14.6
Gold (\$ per ounce)	1.7	2.8	-2.0

Isarel-Hamas war (2023)

Return in %	After 1 week	After 1-month	After 3-month
Sensex	0.4	-1.6	8.1
Nifty	0.5	-1.2	9.5
Dow Jones	0.8	2.1	12.8
S&P 500 Index	0.4	1.3	10.6
Israel TA-35 Index	-6.4	-7.0	2.2
Palenstine - PASISI Index	-7.0	-8.7	-12.3
Brent crude (\$ per barrel)	7.5	0.7	-10.0
Gold (\$ per ounce)	5.4	7.9	10.6

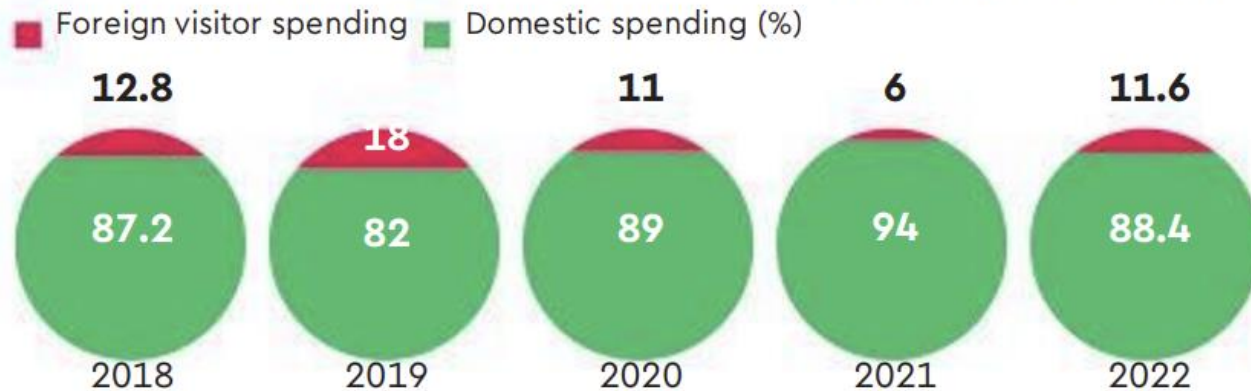


GLIDE PATH

- Indian travellers took 1.7 billion leisure trips in 2022; only 1% travelled abroad
- Indian travellers are expected to take 5 billion leisure trips by 2030; 1% of these will be international trips
- India is set to become the fourth-largest travel spender by 2030
- Spending by Indians on travel and tourism is expected to hit \$410 billion by 2030, up from \$150 billion in 2019
- About 52% of the hotels in tier-II and III cities are branded hotels, up from 27% in 2015

IN NUMBERS

Contribution of spending from tourism to GDP in India, by visitor origin



Source: Statista

Source: McKinsey and Booking.com report (Oct 2023)



Right to Privacy for Election Candidate

Recently, the Supreme Court of India in its recent judgement has ruled that every candidate contesting in the elections need not declare each and every movable asset it possesses.

The Court ruled that Candidates too have a Right to Privacy from the voters and they cannot lay their life out thread-bare for examination.

- What are the Key Facts About the Case?
- The SC was hearing a petition filed by an MLA from Arunachal Pradesh challenging a 2023 Guwahati High Court judgement that declared his election null and void for not declaring three vehicles as his assets in his affidavit filed in the form appended to the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.
- The petition said that the electoral candidate committed a “corrupt practice” under Section 123 of the Representation of People Act (RPA), 1951 by not declaring the ownership of said vehicles.

- Supreme Court said that a candidate's choice to retain his privacy on matters that were of no concern to the voters or were irrelevant to his candidature for public office did not amount to a "corrupt practice" under Section 123 of the RRA, 1951.
- Also, such non-disclosure would not amount to a "defect of a substantial nature" under Section 36(4) of the 1951 Act.
- The court said that voters have a right to the disclosure of information which was essential for choosing the candidate for whom a vote should be cast.




- **What is RPA 1951 and the Corrupt Practices under the Act?**

- **About:**

- **The RPA of 1951 governs the conduct of elections and the qualifications and disqualifications of elected representatives.**

- **Provisions:**

- **It regulates the conduct of elections.**
 - **It specifies the qualifications and disqualifications for membership in the parliament of legislative houses,**
- 

- **It provides provisions to curb corrupt practices and other offences.**
- **It lays down the procedure for settling doubts and disputes arising out of elections.**
- **Section 36(4) in the Act of 1951 mentions that the returning officer shall not reject any nomination paper on the grounds of any defect that is not of a substantial character.**

-

- **Corrupt Practices under RPA, 1951:**
- **Corrupt Practices:**
- **Section 123 of the Act defines ‘corrupt practices’ to include bribery, undue influence, false information, and promotion of “feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of the citizens of India on grounds of religion, race, caste, community, or language” by a candidate for the furtherance of his prospects in the election.**

In Abhiram Singh versus C. D. Commachen Case (2017) SC ruled that candidates are **prohibited from appealing for votes not only based on their own religion but also on that of the voters.**

Undue Influence: The section defines **undue influence as any direct or indirect interference**, including threats, that hinders the free exercise of electoral rights.

Disqualification: Section 123(4) allows **disqualification of an elected representative for certain offences**, corrupt practices, failure to declare election expenses, or having interests in government contracts or works.

Financing for Sustainable
Development Report 2024:
United Nations



- Recently, the United Nations (UN) has recently released the **‘Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024’** highlighting the urgent need for increased investment in sustainable development to achieve the SDGs.
- **About Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**
- These are a set of 17 goals established by the UN as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet.
- These goals, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership.
-

1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY




6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS




SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



- **The Journey of SDGs:**

- More than 178 countries adopted **Agenda 21**, a comprehensive plan of action to build a global partnership for sustainable development at the **Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992**.



- It continued through the **Millennium Summit** in 2000, the **World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa in 2002**, and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (**Rio+20**) in **Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**, in June 2012.




-

- **The Financing Gap:** The report estimated that the development financing gap has grown to USD 4.2 trillion annually, up from USD 2.5 trillion before the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - It represents a more than 50% increase over the pre-pandemic estimates.

Switzerland to Host Ukraine Peace Summit



- 
- Switzerland will host a high-level international conference with more than 100 countries invited to help chart a path towards peace in Ukraine after more than two years of war.
 - **Background and Purpose of conference**
 - Switzerland has taken the initiative at the request of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
 - The objective of the conference is to provide a platform for a high-level dialogue on ways to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine based on international law and the UN Charter.
 - Switzerland had earlier hosted a **Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC)** at Lugano in July 2022, and a **National Security Advisors Meeting in Davos** in 2024.



- **Swiss history of mediation**

- Neutrality is a foundational principle of Switzerland's foreign policy. It looked after the interests of both the Kingdom of Bavaria and the Grand Duchy of Baden during the **Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71**.
 - It acted as the protecting power during the two **World Wars**.
 - Switzerland represented India's interests in Pakistan and Pakistan's in India between 1971 and 1976.
 - It hosted talks between the government in **Colombo** and the **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam** in 2006.
 - Over the last two decades, Switzerland has been the protecting power between **Saudi Arabia and Iran, the US and Iran, Russia and Georgia**.
- 

Angara rocket

Russia successfully test-launched its Angara-A5 space rocket from the Vostochny Cosmodrome.

About

The Angara-A5 is a **42.7-metre**, three-stage rocket weighing about **773 tonnes** and capable of carrying **24.5 tonnes** into space.

It is set to replace the **Proton M** as Russia's heavy-lift rocket.

It is Russia's first post-Soviet space rocket

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Blockchain Course

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

Thank you
guys.
