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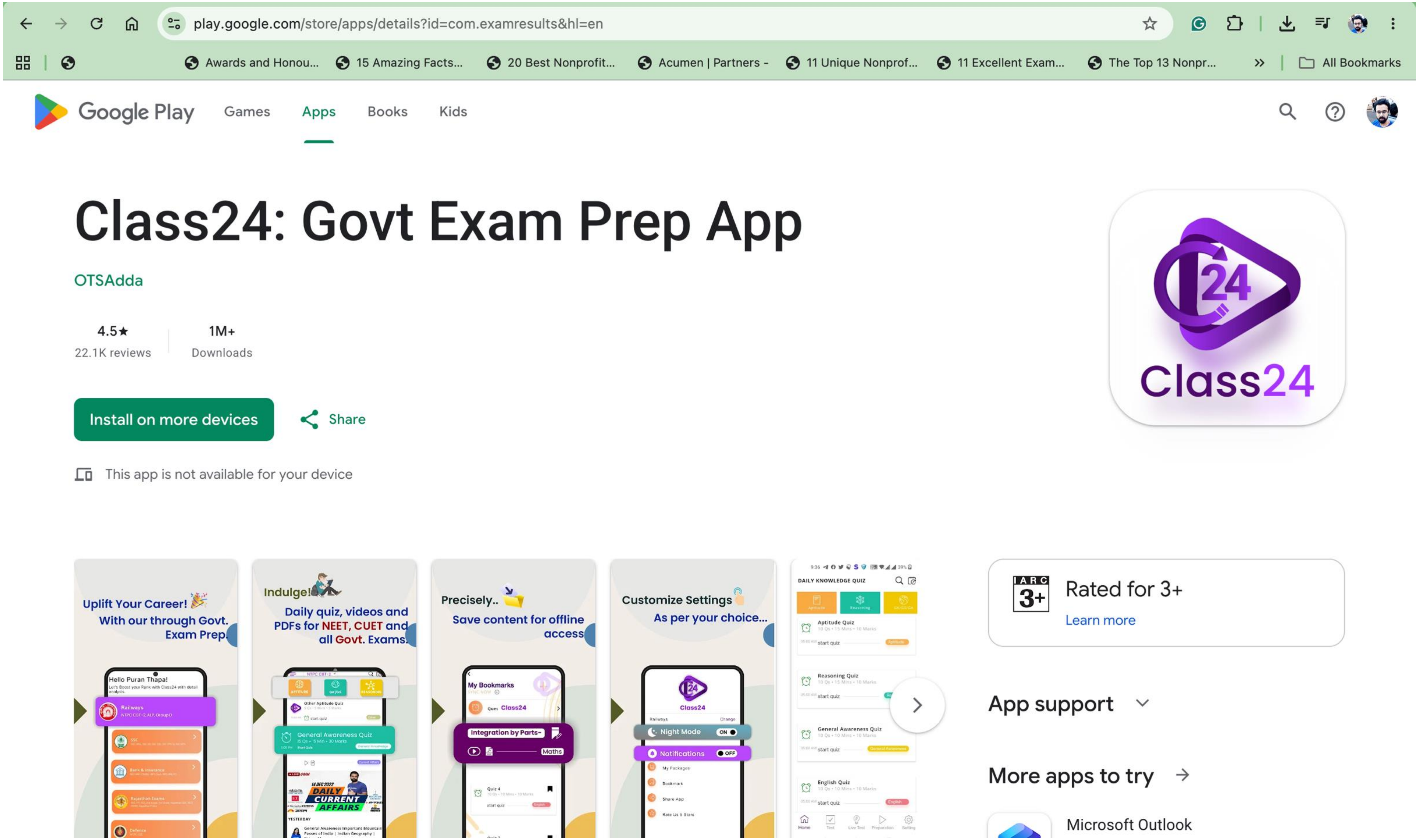
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EU warns Meta over 'addictive design'
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INSIDE

Police freeze 12 bank accounts of Trinamool

KOLKATA
The West Bengal Police on Friday froze 12 more bank accounts of the Trinamool Congress with deposits of over ₹1,000 crore, on complaints of illegal diversion of funds. The action was taken based on a complaint by Sandipan Saha, MLA, part of the Ritabrata Banerjee faction. » PAGE 3

Probe Bengal 'encounter', say rights groups

KOLKATA
The Criminal Investigation Department of West Bengal Police started a probe into the alleged encounter of an accused in the rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl in Baruipur in South 24 Parganas district on Friday. Several civil rights organisations, however, raised suspicion and demanded a judicial probe into the incident. » PAGE 3

Burnham set to be appointed U.K. PM on July 20

LONDON
Former Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham is all but certain to be U.K. PM Keir Starmer's successor after he secured the support of 322 of 403 party MPs to stake claim to the office at No. 10 Downing Street. He is expected to be chosen Labour leader by the end of next week and Prime Minister on July 20. » PAGE 12

HC halts byelections in 5 T.N. constituencies

- PIL says notifying bypolls before pending election pleas are cleared may create anomalous situation
- The elected representatives resigned, but their victories are under challenge before the court
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Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and Justice G. Arul Murugan passed the interim order following a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by K. Venkatachalapathy of Tirunelveli.

He had contended that the conduct of byelections before the disposal of the election petitions could lead to an anomalous situation of the constituencies being represented by two individuals if the petitions were allowed.

The court passed the interim orders after hearing the preliminary submissions made by senior counsel G. Masilamani for Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay; Advocate-General Vijay Narayan for the Legislative Assembly Secretary; advocate V.R. Shanmuganathan for the PIL petitioner; and EC counsel Niranjan Rajagopalan. The judges granted the respondents time till July 31 to file their counteraffidavits to the main case.

The PIL petitioner had contended that the EC could not treat the vacancies that had arisen due to the resignation of five legislators as a 'clear vacancy' under Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, since such vacancies would be subject to the result of the election petitions. He claimed that the conduct of byelections to these constituencies would run contrary to three Supreme Court decisions on the matter.

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MLAs who resigned after winning the 2026 Assembly election; the election results are under challenge before the Madras High Court

Tiruchi East: C. Joseph Vijay (TVK)
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His counsel Mr. Shanmuganathan, argued that the top court had in *Sanjeevayya vs Election Commission of India* (1967), *Election Commission of India vs Telangana Rashtra Samithi* (2011), and *Pramod Laxman Gudadhe vs Election Commission of India* (2018), had held that byelections could not be conducted if election petitions related to those constituencies were pending adjudication.

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'Great confusion'

Therefore, conducting byelections to those constituencies even before the disposal of the election petitions would cause great confusion owing to the election of the new representatives, he said. On the other hand, the A-G said, there must be a distinction between those who had resigned before the filing of the election petitions and those who had resigned after they were filed.

He said the Chief Minister had resigned from Tiruchi (East) on May 10 itself, but his rival candidate S. Inigo Irudayaraj had filed the election petition much later. Pointing out that a few others, too, had resigned much before the filing of the election petitions challenging their victory, the A-G sought time to file a detailed counter-affidavit to the PIL petition.

On his part, Mr. Masilamani, representing Mr. Vijay, questioned the *locus standi* of the PIL petitioner to dictate what the EC must do or what it must not do. The senior counsel said the PIL petition was premature since the EC had not taken any decision so far on conducting byelections to the five constituencies, and no notification to that effect had been issued.

After hearing all of them, the Chief Justice's Bench said that in matters touching upon the purity of the democratic process, a narrow and pedantic interpretation of *locus standi* could not be applied. The judges, however, agreed that the A-G's nuanced arguments concerning the date on which the vacancy had arisen compared with the dates on which the election petitions had been filed required a deeper examination. It decided to pass final orders on the PIL petition after issuance of notice to all the respondents and filing of counteraffidavits by them.

Govt. defends E20, admits mileage may drop by 3-5%

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

While admitting that E20-blended fuel could result in a 3%-5% reduction in the fuel economy of "some vehicles", the government has sought to explain why the blended fuel is not currently cheaper than pure petrol or fuel with lower ethanol levels.

The core reason, it said, was that the government is seeking to compensate farmers adequately, and so E20 fuel becomes relatively more expensive to produce than pure petrol whenever oil prices fall to around $70 a barrel.

This statement, issued on Friday as an FAQ document by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, comes at a time when critics are questioning why fuel with 20% ethanol is not cheaper than pure petrol or fuel with 10% ethanol.

The document added that E20 fuel has a higher-octane rating and provides several other vehicular and emission-related advantages over unblended fuel.

"It is true that in some vehicles there may be a 3-5% reduction in fuel economy," the Ministry said. "But mileage is only one parameter. E20 offers a significantly higher-octane rating, superior anti-knock characteristics, faster combustion, better pickup, smoother acceleration and cleaner engine operation."

"It produces negligible particulate emissions and substantially reduces lifecycle carbon emissions by around 40%," it added.

"Today, the government purchases ethanol at remunerative prices so that Indian farmers are fairly compensated," it said. "Take maize-based ethanol. We have progressively increased its procurement price and today it is around ₹71.86 per litre, even before GST, transportation, storage and depot handling costs." "Therefore, if international crude oil is trading at around $70 per barrel, E20 is actually costlier to produce than pure petrol," the government explained.

However, it added that the price advantage of ethanol kicks in when crude oil prices reach $120-130 per barrel, as the economics naturally reverse and ethanol becomes even cheaper.

The fact that 20% of the fuel sold in India is ethanol has also insulated the Indian market against global oil price volatility and allowed the Indian government to pass on much lower fuel price hikes than in comparable nations.

Overall, the government also sought to assure the public that the decision to move to ethanol-blended fuel was not a "rushed" one.

"This has been a journey spanning over two decades from pilot projects in 2001, policy notification in 2013, institutional reforms after 2018, massive investments beginning in 2021, and then a carefully calibrated, phased increase in blending levels," the document said.

The document added that all stakeholders, including automobile manufacturing companies, testing agencies, oil marketing companies, and the Department of Food and Public Distribution, were consulted before rollout.

Youth Congress workers protest in Delhi on Friday against the Centre's E20 fuel policy. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Catholic body flags concerns over FCRA Bill to Amit Shah

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) submitted a memorandum against the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, to Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday, Jonathan Lalremruata, adviser to the CBCI, said.

Cardinal Anthony Poola, Metropolitan Archbishop of Hyderabad and CBCI president, and Anil Couto, Metropolitan Archbishop of Delhi, were present at the meeting. They wanted to raise concerns about the Bill and the FCRA Amendment Rules.

FULL REPORT ON » PAGE 4

IITs, IIMs, Central varsities push back against VBSA norms

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Institutes of National Importance (INIs), including IITs and IIMs, have pushed back against the Centre's Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, asking to be exempted from many provisions of the Bill that intends to overhaul India's higher education regulatory framework.

These institutes, along with Central Universities, have cited the need to protect institutional autonomy, flagging contradictions in the Bill and criticising aspects such as the provisions for centralisation.

The Bill is under review by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) headed by BJP MP D. Purandeswari. Submissions to the JPC show that the NDA-ruled States of Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Madhya Pradesh have objected to the provisions, as reported by *The Hindu* on Friday.

The Bill seeks to repeal statutory Acts governing the UGC, AICTE, and NCTE, and replace them with a single apex body. FILE PHOTO

Structural overhaul

The Bill proposes a structural overhaul of higher education in the country by repealing the statutory Acts governing the University Grants Commission, the All India Council for Technical Education, and the National Council for Teacher Education and replacing them with a single apex body called the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan, with regulatory, accreditation, and standards councils under it.

The government has defended the Bill by citing Clause 49, which promises to protect the autonomy of INIs and Institutes of Eminence.

The IITs, IIMs, along with institutes such as the Indian Institutes of Information Technology and IISERs, called for the Bill to explicitly include language exempting these institutes from the scope of the new regulatory structure.

While IIT-Kanpur, IIT-Hyderabad, IIM-Sambalpur, and IISER, Mohali, sought total exemption, IIT Madras said the IITs should be excluded from certain clauses on regulatory approvals for online programmes, opening new colleges, and the applicability of the Bill's penalty provisions.

Several other IITs, IIMs, and IISERs have expressed the need to ensure complete institutional autonomy for research, curriculum, and academic activities. The IIT-Dhanbad, IISER, Kolkata, and the University of Hyderabad have pointed out that there are other provisions in the Bill which imply that the new Bill will take precedence over the laws under which the IITs, IIMs, and IISERs were set up.

Graded penalty system

The IIT Bombay has questioned the logic of leaving law and medicine out of the Bill's scope.

Several institutes have criticised the proposed penalty structure. The Bill introduces a graded penalty system that could go up to ₹75 lakh in fines and/or closure of the institution.

While IIT Madras submitted that IITs should be left out of the clause, the University of Hyderabad suggested that penalties of a particular amount and above should be imposed only after the decision of an "independent adjudicator".

The Central Tribal University (CTU) of Andhra Pradesh, however, cautioned that the penalty clause could have "differential and unintended" consequences for small and rural institutions serving tribal or underserved areas. It said these institutes may fall short on indicators such as availability of faculty but "not due to institutional negligence, but because of structural and regional constraints".

IIT Madras said the idea of the envisioned single, unified, and institutional accreditation body may not be adequate to deal with the performance of different types of higher educational institutions in the country.

Hasina plans return to Bangladesh in Dec.

Reuters
NEW DELHI

Ousted Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, facing a death sentence back home where her party is banned, said she and senior party colleagues plan to return from exile in India around December and surrender.

The South Asian nation's longest-serving leader said she and members of her Awami League aim to return voluntarily to the country they left two years ago and present themselves in court, testing the current government's handling of its most prominent political opponent.

"They may arrest me on my return, they may even kill me," Ms. Hasina, 78, said in the nearly hour-long telephone interview late on Thursday and into Friday.

"Still, I have to go," she said. "My party leaders and workers are being subjected to tremendous repression. If death comes, I want it to come on my own soil, where my parents are buried and where their blood was shed."

Ms. Hasina left Bangladesh in 2024 after protests ended her 20 years as Prime Minister across multiple terms.

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Aspect	Details
Court	Madras High Court
Bench	Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and Justice G. Arul Murugan
Petitioner	K. Venkatachalapathy, a voter from Tirunelveli
Respondent	Election Commission of India and others
Issue	Whether by-elections should be held while election petitions concerning the original results are pending
Interim decision	ECI restrained from issuing by-election notifications
Period of restraint	Until **31 July 2026**
Next procedural step	Respondents have been given time to file counter-affidavits
Nature of decision	Interim order, not a final judgment

Stage	Development	Legal problem
1	Candidate A wins	A becomes MLA
2	Candidate B files election petition	A's victory is under judicial challenge
3	A resigns	Seat apparently becomes vacant
4	ECI holds by-election	Candidate C may become MLA
5	Court later declares B entitled to relief	Competing claims may arise

Legal framework	Relevance
Article 190, Constitution	Vacation and resignation of seats in State Legislatures
Article 324	ECI's constitutional power of superintendence, direction and control of elections
Section 151A, Representation of the People Act, 1951	General rule requiring a by-election to fill a vacancy within six months, subject to statutory exceptions and legal context
Election petition mechanism	Allows election results to be judicially challenged

Constituency	Elected representative shown in the report	Party in the report	Present complication
Tiruchi East	C. Joseph Vijay	TVK	Resignation + election petition
Perundurai	S. Jayakumar	AIADMK	Resignation + election petition
Ambasamudram	Esakki Subaya	AIADMK	Resignation + election petition
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1. What does the VBSA Bill propose?

Area	Existing framework	Proposed VBSA framework
University regulation	UGC	Brought under a new unified framework
Technical education	AICTE	Existing statutory structure proposed to be replaced
Teacher education	NCTE	Integrated into new framework
Overall structure	Multiple specialised regulators	Single apex institutional architecture
Main functions	Spread across different bodies	Regulation, accreditation and standard-setting under the new architecture
Objective	Sector-specific regulation	Simplification and unified governance
Major concern	Fragmentation and overlapping regulation	Excessive centralisation and loss of institutional autonomy

2. Who is opposing or seeking changes?

The article reports objections or demands for exemptions from several categories of institutions:

Category	Examples mentioned	Main demand
IITs	IIT Kanpur, IIT Hyderabad, IIT Madras, IIT Bombay, IIT Dhanbad	Full or partial exemptions
IIMs	IIM Sambalpur and other IIMs	Protection of institutional autonomy
IISERs	IISER Mohali, IISER Kolkata and others	Exemption or protection from overlapping regulation
IIITs	Indian Institutes of Information Technology	Explicit exclusion language
Central Universities	University of Hyderabad, Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh	Fair penalty and differentiated regulatory framework
State governments	Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya and Madhya Pradesh mentioned	Objections to certain provisions

3. Major objections raised by institutions

A. Threat to institutional autonomy

The biggest concern is that institutions created through their **own Acts of Parliament** already have governance structures, Boards, Senates and statutory powers.

Institutions argue that adding another regulatory layer could create:

- duplication of authority;
- conflict between parent Acts and the new law;
- bureaucratic delay;
- interference in curriculum;
- restrictions on research freedom;
- problems in launching new academic programmes.

Core question

> Should an IIT created under a special parliamentary law be regulated in the same manner as every other higher education institution?

The institutions argue that **uniform regulation does not necessarily mean appropriate regulation**.

B. IITs and IIMs want explicit exemption

The article makes an important distinction between institutions.

Institution position	Demand
IIT Kanpur	Total exemption
IIT Hyderabad	Total exemption
IIM Sambalpur	Total exemption
IISER Mohali	Total exemption
IIT Madras	Exemption from selected provisions rather than necessarily the entire framework
Other IITs/IIMs/IISERs	Strong protection for research, curriculum and academic autonomy

IIT Madras reportedly sought exclusion from certain provisions relating to:

1. regulatory approvals;
2. online programmes;
3. opening new colleges;
4. penalty provisions.

Existing system	Possible problem under new system
IIT Council and individual Boards	New regulator may exercise overlapping authority
Academic Senate decides curriculum	External standards may limit flexibility
Institute launches innovative programmes	Additional approvals may be required
Board controls research priorities	Centralised regulation could influence autonomy
Special parliamentary Act	New umbrella law may create legal overlap

7. IIT Bombay's question: Why exclude law and medicine?

IIT Bombay has reportedly questioned the rationale for keeping **law and medical education** outside the proposed framework.

This raises the issue of regulatory consistency:

Sector	Traditional regulator
Higher education	UGC
Technical education	AICTE
Teacher education	NCTE
Medical education	National Medical Commission
Legal education	Bar Council of India

Critical question

If the objective is a genuinely unified higher-education regulatory framework, **why should certain professional disciplines remain outside it?**

Conversely, medical and legal education have highly specialised professional requirements, which supports the argument for sector-specific regulation.

Kerala birth rate has reached an all-time low: 7 takeaways

Shaju Philip
Thiruvananthapuram, July 10

KERALA'S CRUDE birth rate (CBR) has dropped into single digits for the first time, according to the vital statistics report of 2024 published by the state economics and statistics department. The data also shows that 2023 and 2024 recorded the sharpest back-to-back annual declines in the CBR in recent decades. Here are the key numbers:

CBR FALLS BELOW 10 FOR THE FIRST TIME: The state's CBR stood at 9.64 in 2024, down from 11.06 in 2023. CBR measures the total number of live births per 1,000 people in a population during a given year. For comparison, India's CBR, according to the Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2024, is 18.3.

LIVE BIRTHS DROP SHARPLY: The number of live births registered fell to 344,766 in 2024, down from 393,231 in 2023.

TWO CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF THE STEEPEST DECLINES ON RECORD: The CBR fell by 1.42 during 2023-24, following a decline of 1.47 during 2022-23. An analysis of Kerala's CBR since 1992 shows these are the sharpest annual declines in two consecutive years, indicating that the state's demographic transition – and its looming population crisis – has accelerated significantly.

A BRIEF POST-PANDEMIC REVERSAL IN 2022: The downward trend temporarily reversed in 2022, the year after the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. CBR rose from 11.94 in 2021 to 12.53 in 2022, an annual increase of 0.59, before resuming its decline.

THE TREND SINCE 1992: Kerala's CBR was 17.67 in 1992 and stayed around that level for several years. It slipped to 16.63 by 2006 and 15.75 by 2010. The rate fell below 15 for the first time in 2016, at 14.48, before dropping again to 13.79 in 2019. It then declined by 1.02 between 2019 and 2020, and by 0.83 between 2020 and 2021.

A NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE IN DISTRICT-LEVEL BIRTH RATES: Alappuzha has the lowest CBR in the state at 5.28, followed by Kollam at 6.63. Central Kerala districts – Pathanamthitta, Idukki and Ernakulam – range between 9.30 and 7.69.

DEATH RATE STABILISES AFTER COVID-19 SPIKE: Kerala's crude death rate (CDR), which rose to 9.66 in 2021 and 9.16 in 2022 due to the pandemic, has since eased. The CDR stood at 8.77 in 2024, up slightly from 8.59 in 2023.

NO.	KEY DEVELOPMENT	IMPORTANT DATA	SIGNIFICANCE
1	CBR below 10 for first time	**9.64 in 2024**	Historic demographic low
2	Live births decline sharply	**3,44,766 in 2024** vs 3,93,231 in 2023	Fall of about **48,465 births** in one year
3	Two consecutive steep declines	−1.47 points in 2022–23; −1.42 in 2023–24	Fastest consecutive annual declines in the period analysed
4	Temporary post-Covid reversal	11.94 in 2021 → 12.53 in 2022	Short-lived increase before decline resumed
5	Long-term decline	17.67 in 1992 → 9.64 in 2024	CBR declined by about **45%**
6	Strong district disparity	Alappuzha 5.28; Kollam 6.63	Southern and central districts show extremely low rates
7	Death rate stabilising	CDR 8.59 in 2023 → 8.77 in 2024	Natural population increase is becoming very small

2. Most striking number: live births fell by over 12% in one year

Year	Registered live births	Change
2023	3,93,231	—
2024	3,44,766	**–48,465**
Percentage decline	—	**≈12.3%**

This is more significant than the CBR decline alone because it shows a substantial fall in the **absolute number of children entering Kerala's population pyramid**.

The effects will appear sequentially:

Fewer births → fewer school admissions → smaller college-age population → smaller labour-force entry → accelerated population ageing.

3. Kerala's long-term demographic transition

Year/Period	CBR per 1,000	Development
1992	17.67	Beginning point mentioned in report
2006	16.63	Gradual decline
2010	15.76	Continued fertility transition
2016	Below 15 for first time	Major demographic threshold
2019	13.79	Continued decline
2021	11.94	Low point after pandemic period
2022	12.53	Temporary reversal
2023	11.06	Sharp decline resumes
2024	**9.64**	**First-ever single-digit CBR**

From 1992 to 2024:

$$\frac{17.67 - 9.64}{17.67} \times 100 \approx 45.4\%$$

Thus, Kerala's CBR has fallen by approximately **45% in 32 years**.

4. What is Crude Birth Rate?

Crude Birth Rate (CBR) = Number of live births per 1,000 people in a year.

$$CBR = \frac{\text{Live births during year}}{\text{Mid-year population}} \times 1000$$

CBR vs TFR: Important for exams

Indicator	Meaning	Unit
CBR	Births per 1,000 population per year	Rate per 1,000
TFR	Average number of children a woman is expected to have	Children per woman
Replacement-level fertility	Fertility required for long-term generational replacement	Around 2.1
CDR	Deaths per 1,000 population per year	Rate per 1,000

Exam trap: CBR and TFR are **not interchangeable**. CBR is affected by the age structure of the entire population, whereas TFR focuses on fertility among women of reproductive age.

5. Kerala versus India: demographic contrast

The article gives India's CBR as **18.3**, compared with Kerala's **9.64**.

Indicator	Kerala	India	Observation
CBR	**9.64**	**18.3**	Kerala is nearly half the national level
Demographic stage	Advanced transition	National average masks interstate variation	Kerala is ageing faster
Main challenge	Ageing and future workforce pressure	Employment and human-capital absorption	Different states need different demographic policies

Key insight

India simultaneously faces **two demographic realities**:

- Some States have relatively young populations and need **jobs, education and skilling**.
- States such as Kerala face **ageing, low fertility and future care-economy pressures**.

Therefore, a single national population policy may not suit every State equally.

Factor	How it affects fertility
High female literacy	Greater awareness and reproductive choice
Female education	Delays marriage and childbirth
Urbanisation	Raises the cost of raising children
Migration	Alters household and marriage patterns
High aspirations	Greater investment per child
Healthcare improvements	Lower infant mortality reduces the perceived need for larger families
Contraceptive access	Better fertility planning
Delayed marriage	Shortens reproductive window
Housing and education costs	Increase economic burden of larger families
Changing family preferences	Shift toward one-child or small-family norms

8. Birth rate and death rate are converging

This may be the most consequential long-term trend.

Indicator, 2024	Rate per 1,000
Crude Birth Rate	**9.64**
Crude Death Rate	**8.77**
Approximate natural increase	**0.87 per 1,000**

The natural increase is:

CBR – CDR = 9.64 – 8.77 = 0.87 per 1,000

This means that, excluding migration, Kerala's population is close to **natural demographic stagnation**.

If deaths eventually exceed births:

> **Natural population increase becomes negative.**

This does not necessarily mean the total population immediately declines, because **net migration** can alter population growth.

Stage	Birth rate	Death rate	Population growth	Kerala's position
Stage I	High	High	Very low	Historical
Stage II	High	Falling	Rapid	Passed
Stage III	Falling	Low	Slowing	Passed
Stage IV	Low	Low	Stable	Advanced
Stage V*	Very low	Deaths may exceed births	Possible decline	Kerala moving towards this risk

Sector	Short-term impact	Long-term impact
Schools	Lower enrolment	Consolidation or closure pressure
Higher education	Smaller local student pool	Greater dependence on interstate/international students
Labour market	Limited immediate effect	Workforce shortages
Healthcare	Growing geriatric demand	Expansion of care economy
Pensions	Increasing fiscal burden	Higher dependency pressure
Housing	Household structure changes	More elderly-only households
Migration	Continued importance	Greater reliance on migrant workers
Consumption	Changing demand	More healthcare and senior-care spending

LEGAL

Behind *Satluj* takedown, the parallel regimes for theatrical and OTT releases

Apurva Vishwanath
New Delhi, July 10

AFTER BEING stuck for nearly three years over certification issues, the movie *Satluj*, based on the life of rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, premiered on ZEE5 on July 3. Just two days later, however, it was taken off the platform. While the film remains available internationally on ZEE5 Global, it is unavailable in India "until further notice".

Government sources have cited "security concerns" over the film. An Inter-Departmental Committee, constituted by the government under the Information Technology Rules 2021, is set to take up the matter.

The takedown of a film that was never allowed a theatrical release has put the spotlight on the parallel regulatory regimes in India — the Cinematograph Act for theatrical releases and the Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021 for streaming platforms.

Why was Satluj banned?

The film chronicles Khalra, the Amritsar-based activist, who investigated the alleged illegal cremation of "thousands of unidentified bodies" by police during Punjab's militancy years. He was abducted and killed in 1995, a case in which several police officials were convicted.

The project, originally titled *Ghallughara*, changed its name to *Punjab '95* after the first round of scrutiny by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). The CBFC sought 127 cuts before it would clear a theatrical release, which the makers refused.

The film, therefore, never reached the cinemas and eventually landed on the over-the-top (OTT) platform — without the cuts — under the name *Satluj*. Parallelly, the makers challenged the CBFC's objections before the Bombay High Court in 2023, but later withdrew the petition.

How does CBFC certification work?

Theatre releases are governed by the Cinematograph Act, 1952. Under Section 4 of the Act, any person wishing to exhibit a film publicly must apply to the CBFC, a statutory body under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Screening uncertified films in a cinema is a criminal offence.

The CBFC certifies films into categories: U (unrestricted); UA (unrestricted with parental guidance); A (adults only), and S (restricted to specialised audiences).

The Cinematograph (Amendment) Act, 2023, further split the UA category into age-based sub-categories and made certificates perpetually valid, removing the earlier 10-year limit. The Act also empowers the board to refuse certifications or to grant them subject to excisions and modifications if a film is against the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India; the security of the state; friendly relations with foreign states; public order, decency or morality; or involves defamation or contempt of court. These are the "reasonable restrictions" on free speech under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.

Filmmakers have long criticised the wide discretion given to the examining and revising committee within the CBFC. Until 2021, a filmmaker, by a CBFC order in the form of a refusal or grant of a certificate or demands of cuts, could appeal to a dedicated tribunal under the act. A tribunal rationalisation reform abolished FCAT, transferring its functions to the High Courts, which is a slow and expensive process for time-sensitive releases. Critics also say that judges may lack the specialised engagement with cinema that a specialised tribunal would bring.

This is perhaps why the makers of Satluj withdrew the plea before the Bombay High Court and turned to streaming services where the CBFC has no jurisdiction.

How are OTT platforms regulated?

OTT platforms typically operated with minimal oversight. But as their influence and reach grow, the government has made attempts to regulate these platforms.

In 2019, the Karnataka High Court dismissed a writ petition seeking the regulation of content on OTT platforms also under the Cinematograph Act. The HC reiterated the distinction between public exhibition of films, which is governed under the Cinematograph Act, to a private viewing of content on an OTT platform by individuals in the privacy of their personal spaces.

The government had also opposed the plea, arguing that the provisions of the IT Act take care of the apprehensions expressed by the petitioner.

OTT content is regulated under part III of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which prescribe a code of ethics requiring publishers to exercise caution over content that may fall under the grounds for "reasonable restrictions" mentioned above.

The rules set up a three-tier grievance structure — self-regulation by the publisher, self-regulatory bodies and government oversight through the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. This framework is also under challenge. The Bombay and Madras High Courts have stayed this provision.

In the 2023 Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, which was subsequently withdrawn, the government attempted to define OTT platforms as a broadcasting service to bring them under its ambit.

In the case of *Satluj's* takedown, the government has reportedly used its powers under Section 69A of the IT Act.

What is Section 69A?

Section 69A involves the power to issue orders to block content. These orders are issued under the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009. The government must record the reasons for blocking in writing, and then a designated review committee examines these directions and can set aside orders if they do not comply with Section 69A.

The Information & Broadcasting Ministry has formed an Inter-Departmental Committee under Rule 14 of the IT Rules to look into *Satluj's* content and make recommendations to the government. It can recommend warnings, an apology or disclaimer, reclassification or modification of content, or deletion and blocking under Section 69A.

Stage	What happened
Subject	Film based on rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra
Original title	*Challughar*
Later title	*Punjab ’95*
OTT title	*Satluj*
CBFC scrutiny	Reportedly suggested **127 cuts** before theatrical clearance
Filmmakers' response	Refused to accept the demanded changes
Theatrical release	Did not take place
Legal challenge	Makers approached Bombay High Court in 2023
Later development	Petition was withdrawn and film moved to OTT route
OTT premiere	July 3
Takedown	Two days later in India
Reported government ground	Security concerns
Legal route for blocking	Section 69A of the IT Act framework

Aspect	Theatrical release	OTT release
Principal law	Cinematograph Act, 1952, as amended	IT Act, 2000 + IT Rules, 2021
Main institution	CBFC	Publisher self-regulation + self-regulatory body + government oversight
Regulation timing	**Pre-certification**	Primarily **post-publication oversight and grievance framework**
Prior approval	CBFC certificate necessary for public exhibition	No CBFC certificate required merely for OTT streaming
Content classification	U, UA, A and S framework with age-related subdivisions under amended law	Age-based OTT classification framework
Government blocking power	Cinema exhibition controlled through certification law	Online access may be blocked through Section 69A process
Core distinction	Public exhibition	Individual/on-demand digital viewing

3. How does CBFC certification work?

For public theatrical exhibition, a film must be submitted to the **Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)**.

The framework can result in:

- certification;
- certification subject to modifications;
- refusal of certification in legally permissible circumstances.

The regulatory grounds are linked broadly with constitutionally recognised restrictions on free speech, such as:

- sovereignty and integrity of India;
- security of the State;
- friendly relations with foreign States;
- public order;
- decency or morality;
- defamation;
- contempt of court.

These broadly correspond with the grounds under **Article 19(2)** of the Constitution.

7. What is Section 69A of the IT Act?

Section 69A is the crucial provision in the *Satluj* controversy.

It empowers the Central Government, subject to the statutory framework and prescribed procedure, to direct the blocking of public access to online information on specified grounds.

Broadly, the grounds include concerns connected with:

- sovereignty and integrity of India;
- defence of India;
- security of the State;
- friendly relations with foreign States;
- public order;
- prevention of incitement to cognisable offences relating to these grounds.

Procedure highlighted in the article

The article explains that blocking orders are issued through the procedural framework under the 2009 Blocking Rules. The government must record reasons, and a designated review mechanism examines the directions.

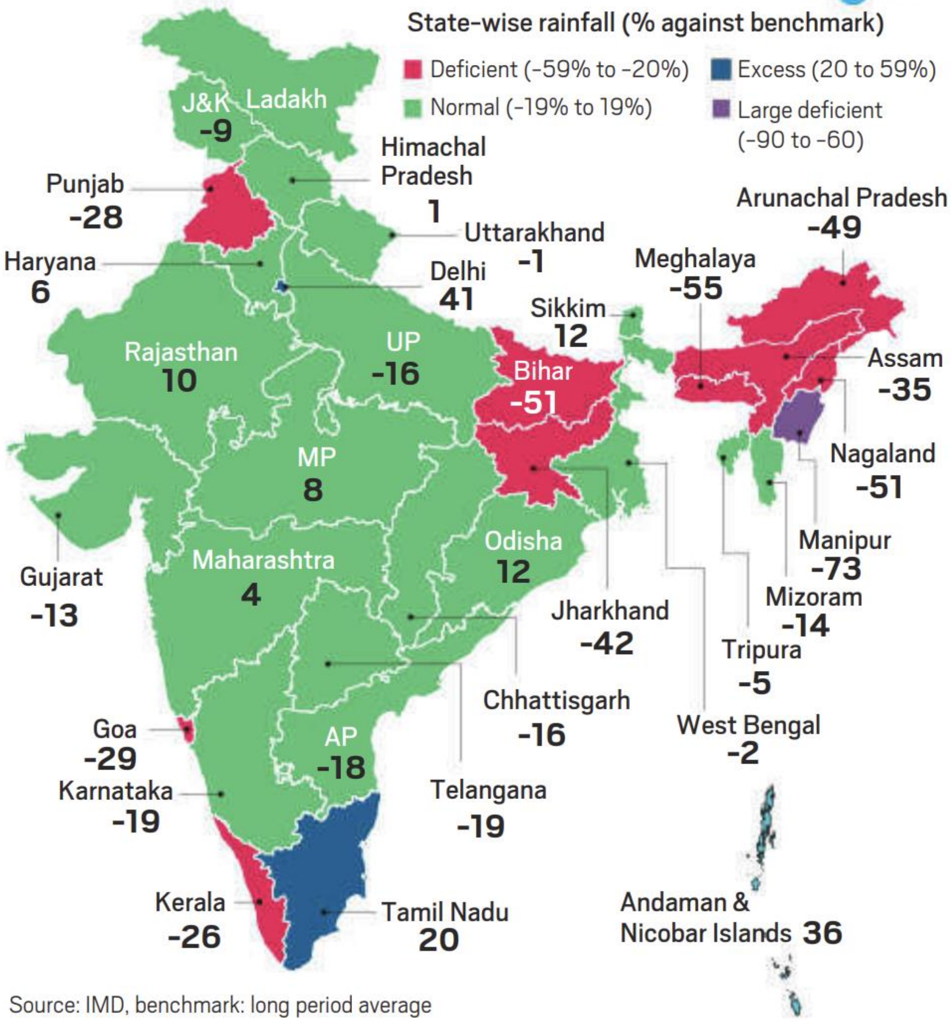
In the *Satluj* matter, the government reportedly relied on its powers under **Section 69A**.

MONSOON DEFICIT NARROWS TO 14.6%

Excess rainfall of over 40% so far in July has reduced the southwest monsoon deficit to 14.6% as of Friday from nearly 40% at the end of June, according to the India Meteorological Department, reports **Sandip Das**

Rainfall (in mm, Area-weighted, June 1 - July 10, 2026)

Actual	Normal	% departure
212.1	243	-14.6



Source: IMD, benchmark: long period average


India’s Hydrogen-Fuel Transport Pilot
on 10 Routes

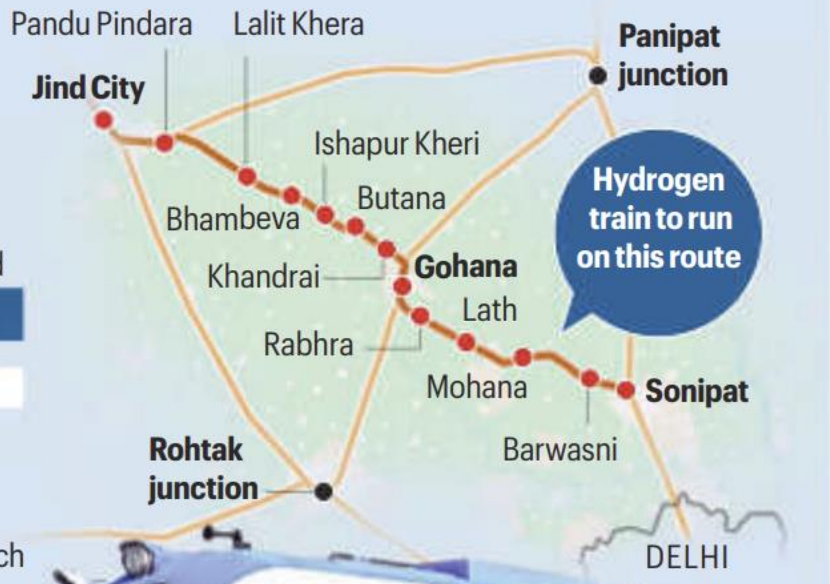
PM TO FLAG OFF HYDROGEN TRAIN ON JULY 17

India joins elite group, only Japan, South Korea, the US and Canada have H-trains

Stations	Distance	Travel time
12	89 km	2 hours

Operational speed **75 kmph**

Maximum Speed **120 kmph**



TRAIN TIMING

Train no 74010
Leave Jind railway station at **7.40 am** and arrive at Sonipat at **9.40 am**

Train no 74009
Leave Sonipat railway station at **10.40 am** and reach Jind at **1.00 pm**

Total seats	Coaches
682	10

- Passenger capacity: **2,600**
- Power: **2400 kW**

Zero CO2 emissions and the only emission is water vapour

What is it?

Hydrogen trains, often referred to as 'hydrail'or 'H-trains' provide a viable alternative to diesel locomotives on non-electrified railway routes. The hydrogen fuel cells generate electricity chemically, meaning the only emission is harmless water vapour

"The train will operate as a special inaugural service on July 17. The date for the commencement of its regular passenger service has not yet been decided,"

SENIOR RAILWAY BOARD OFFICIAL

Parameter	Details
Programme	Hydrogen-powered transport pilot
Routes	**10**
Vehicles	**37 buses and trucks**
Fuel-cell vehicles	**15**
Hydrogen ICE vehicles	**22**
Hydrogen refuelling stations	**9**
Estimated allocation	About **₹208 crore**
Projects sanctioned	**26 March 2025**
Nodal sector	Road transport
Larger umbrella	National Green Hydrogen Mission
Primary purpose	Test vehicles, infrastructure, refuelling and route viability

2. What is hydrogen mobility?

Hydrogen mobility means using hydrogen as an energy carrier for transport.

There are two principal technological routes:

Technology	Working principle	Output at vehicle level	Main advantage	Major challenge
Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle — FCEV	Hydrogen reacts electrochemically with oxygen to generate electricity	Electricity powers electric motor	High efficiency and low tailpipe emissions	Expensive fuel-cell stack and hydrogen infrastructure
Hydrogen ICE — H_2-ICE	Hydrogen is combusted in a modified internal combustion engine	Mechanical power	Uses familiar engine-manufacturing ecosystem	Lower efficiency and possible NOx emissions

Simple mechanism

Fuel Cell Vehicle:
Hydrogen → Fuel Cell → Electricity → Electric Motor → Wheels

Hydrogen ICE Vehicle:
Hydrogen → Combustion Engine → Mechanical Energy → Wheels

3. Why is the government focusing on buses and trucks?

Hydrogen is often considered more promising for **heavy-duty and long-distance transport** than for ordinary passenger cars.

Vehicle type	Battery challenge	Potential hydrogen advantage
Heavy truck	Very large and heavy battery required	Faster refuelling and potentially higher payload efficiency
Interstate bus	Long daily operational cycle	Quick refuelling
Mining truck	Heavy load and continuous operations	Centralised refuelling possible
Long-haul logistics	Charging downtime	Potentially faster turnaround
City car	Battery EV already highly competitive	Hydrogen infrastructure may be uneconomic

NO.	ROUTE/CORRIDOR	BROAD REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE
1	Greater Noida–Delhi–Agra	NCR and major expressway corridor
2	Pune–Mumbai	Major industrial and commercial corridor
3	Ahmedabad–Vadodara–Surat	Gujarat industrial belt
4	Bhubaneswar–Konark–Puri	Odisha tourism and urban corridor
5	Sahibabad–Faridabad–Delhi	NCR urban-industrial mobility
6	Jamshedpur–Kalinga Nagar	Steel and heavy-industry corridor
7	Thiruvananthapuram–Kochi	Kerala's major urban corridor
8	Kochi–Edappally	Urban mobility application
9	Jamnagar–Ahmedabad	Gujarat industrial-energy corridor
10	NH-16 Visakhapatnam–Bayyavaram	Port and industrial connectivity

6. National Green Hydrogen Mission: larger context

India's hydrogen transport strategy should be understood within the broader National Green Hydrogen Mission.

Mission dimension	Strategic objective
Green hydrogen production	Build domestic production capacity
Electrolysers	Develop manufacturing ecosystem
Renewable energy	Provide low-carbon electricity
Industrial use	Replace grey hydrogen in refineries and fertilisers
Transport pilots	Test commercial viability
Shipping	Develop green-fuel corridors
Export potential	Position India as a producer/exporter
Energy security	Reduce fossil-fuel import dependence

Why green hydrogen matters

Not all hydrogen is equally climate-friendly.

Type	Production method	Carbon impact
Grey hydrogen	Natural gas/fossil fuel without carbon capture	High emissions
Blue hydrogen	Fossil fuel + carbon capture	Lower but not zero emissions
Green hydrogen	Renewable electricity-powered electrolysis	Very low operational carbon emissions

Parameter	Diesel truck	Battery-electric truck	Hydrogen fuel-cell truck
Tailpipe CO_2	High	Zero	Zero
Refuelling/charging	Fast	Generally longer	Fast
Infrastructure maturity	Very high	Growing	Very low
Energy efficiency	Low–moderate	**Highest**	Lower than battery EV
Vehicle cost	Lowest initially	High	Very high currently
Long-haul potential	Established	Improving rapidly	Potentially strong
Energy security	Oil dependent	Electricity based	Can use domestic renewable energy
Key problem	Pollution and imports	Battery weight and charging	Hydrogen cost and infrastructure

Potential benefits	Major challenges
Lower oil-import dependence	High green-hydrogen production cost
Cleaner heavy transport	Expensive vehicles
Renewable-energy integration	Low well-to-wheel efficiency compared with direct electrification
Industrial innovation	Storage and transportation difficulties
Reduced urban pollution	Lack of refuelling network
New manufacturing opportunities	Need for safety standards
Export opportunity	Green hydrogen requires large renewable electricity supply

Samriddh Gram Wins WSIS Prize 2026

Point	Details
Project	Samriddh Gram
Full project title	Integrated Phygital Service Delivery Model Enabled by BharatNet
Implementing body	Department of Telecommunications (DoT)
Ministry	Ministry of Communications
Award	WSIS Prizes 2026 – Global Winner
Category	Action Line C6: Enabling Environment
Award organisation	International Telecommunication Union (ITU)-led WSIS process
Award venue	Geneva, Switzerland
Award date	9 July 2026
Digital backbone	BharatNet
Service centre	Samriddhi Kendra
Model	Phygital: Physical + Digital
First Samriddhi Kendra	Umri village, Guna district, Madhya Pradesh
Main target	Last-mile digital and socio-economic inclusion in rural India

2. What is the Samriddh Gram Initiative?

The core idea is simple:

> **BharatNet provides connectivity, while Samriddhi Kendras convert connectivity into actual services.**

A village may technically have broadband connectivity but many citizens can still face barriers such as lack of devices, low digital literacy, difficulty navigating online services and absence of local assistance.

The **phygital model** attempts to bridge this gap by combining:

Physical component	Digital component
Samriddhi Kendra	BharatNet connectivity
Local facilitator	Online government platforms
Health ATM	Telemedicine
Smart classroom	Digital and AR/VR learning
Banking Correspondent	Digital banking
Agriculture support centre	IoT, drones and mobile applications
Community access point	FTTH and public Wi-Fi

Stage	Development
2011	National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) launched
2015	NOFN renamed BharatNet
Initial focus	Connect Gram Panchayats through optical fibre
Expanded approach	Last-mile connectivity through FTTH, Wi-Fi and other technologies
Current policy direction	Move from infrastructure creation towards actual service utilisation

Event	Year	Importance
First WSIS Phase	2003	Geneva
Second WSIS Phase	2005	Tunis
WSIS+20 context	2025–26 period	Review of two decades of digital-development commitments
WSIS Prizes 2026	15th edition	Recognition of ICT projects advancing WSIS Action Lines and SDGs

Fact	Details
Organisation	International Telecommunication Union
Established	1865
UN specialised agency	Since 1947
Headquarters	Geneva, Switzerland
Core area	ICT and telecommunications
Broader work	Spectrum coordination, satellite orbits, technical standards and digital development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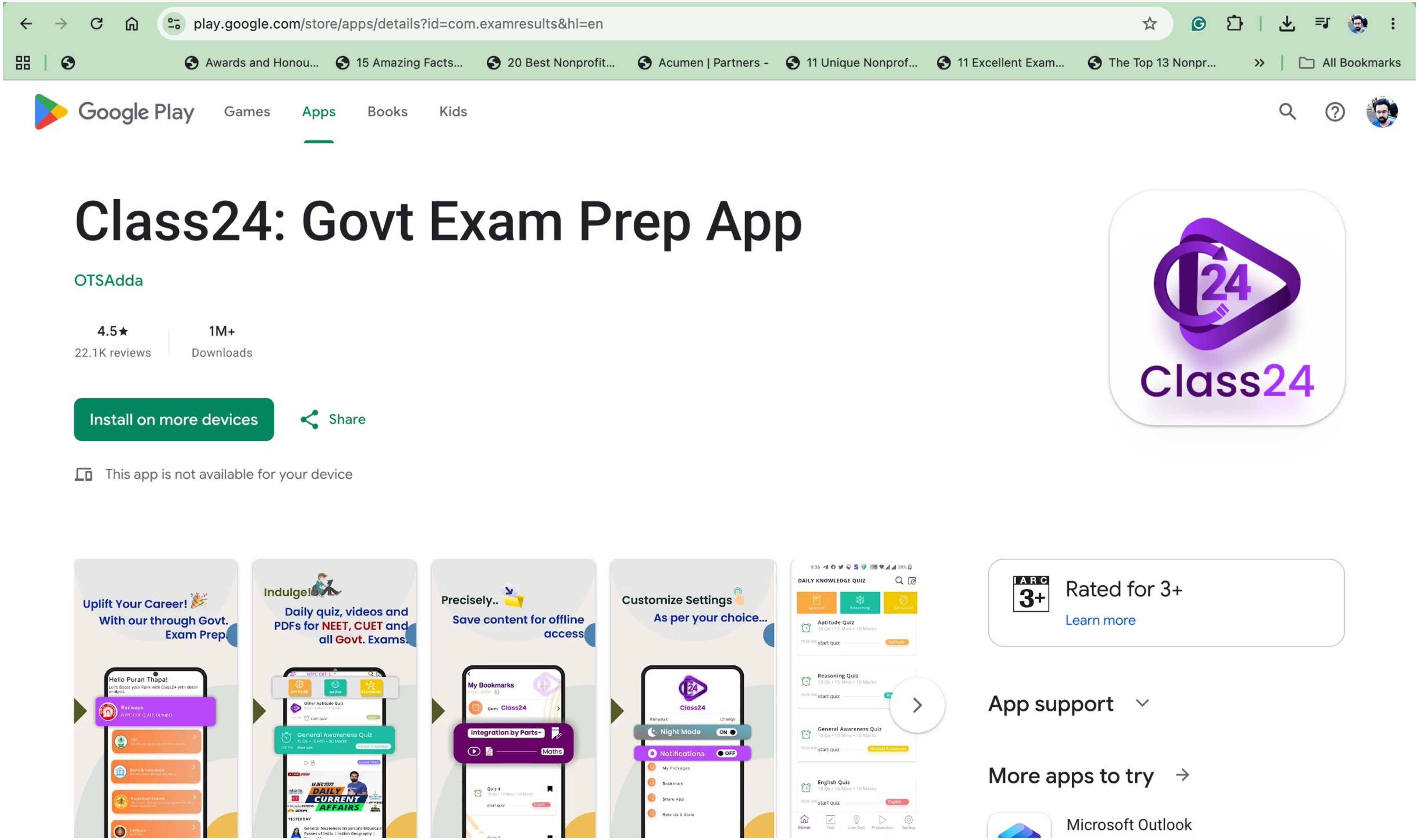
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