

# Daily Current Affairs





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# UMANG 360



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## Umang 360 Current Affairs Magazine 2026-27 by Bhunesh Sir

Umang 360 Current Affairs Magazine 2026-27 by Bhunesh Sir covers national & international events, key facts, MCQs, and analysis. Ideal for SSC, UPSC, RRB & other exams preparation.

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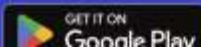


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Umang 360 Current Affairs Magazine 2026-27 is made very simple and easy to understand in a user-friendly and simple format for competitive exam aspirants. It includes all the important current affairs between the period of March 2026 and April 2027; Current Affairs Magazine covers all national and international events, schemes of the government, important updates, as well as exam-related MCQs. The information is articulated in a clear and tight manner, making it straightforward and quick to revamp. The magazine saves you time and boosts preparation by bringing everything together and helping you prepare effectively. Umang 360 is a good choice to help you succeed in the exams, should you need a reliable and effective source of current affairs. It is available in e-PDF format for easy access anytime, anywhere.

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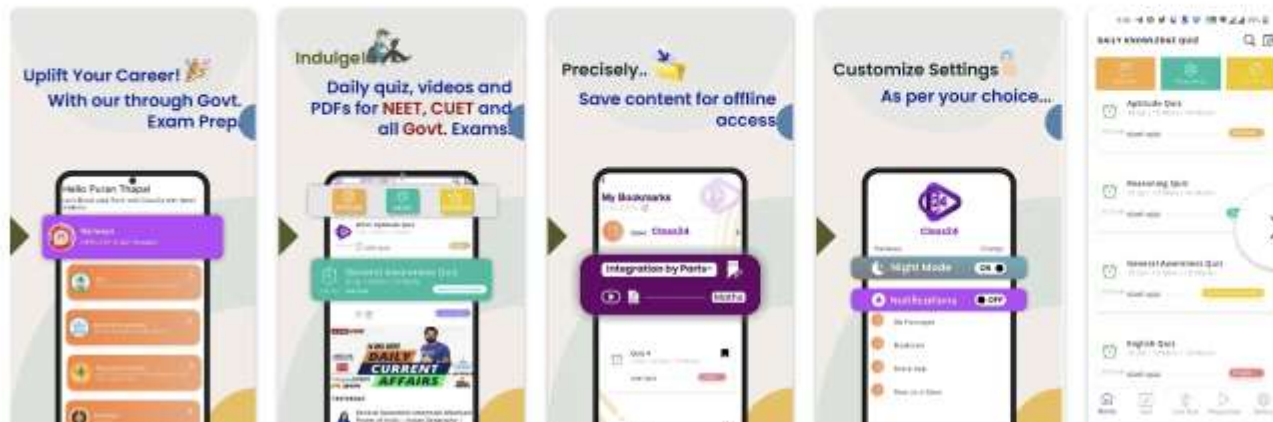
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**CHANGING PATTERN**

## Droplets that fail to reach the ground

One-fourth of India's monsoon rain evaporates mid-air, says new study

NEWS PAGE 2

## An Indian quantum algorithm to beat computers

SCIENCE PAGE 10

## More than 20 lakh voters deleted in draft list of 4 States, 1 U.T.

NEWS PAGE 8

## Merino's strike takes Spain to the semifinal

SPORT PAGE 15

**INSIDE**

**'Strictly comply with Yande Maturam order'**

NEW DELHI  
The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has asked the States and Central Ministries to "strictly comply" with its directive that National Song Yande Maturam be played before Janta Ghar Mee, the National Anthem, whenever both are performed at official events. PAGE 4

**'U.S. Lebanon null Israel pilot zone withdrawal'**

BEIRUT  
A United States military delegation has met with Lebanon's Army in Beirut to discuss the implementation of Israel's withdrawal from one of the "red zones" in the occupied territory, a Lebanese military official said on Saturday. PAGE 18

**Indian Navy commissions I/N Mahendragiri**

MAHABALASURAM  
The Indian Navy commissioned its 10th advanced P17A1 stealth frigate INS Mahendragiri in Mahabalasuram on Saturday. The commissioning marked a new low in India's capacity to design, construct, and deploy state-of-the-art naval platform independently. PAGE 16

# 15 Indian tourists killed in Vietnam boat accident

21 persons rescued after sightseeing boat overturns near Phu Quoc, a major tourist attraction; 10 persons from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh, and two from Kerala among the victims

**The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI**

**R**ifteen Indian tourists were killed in Vietnam on Saturday when a sightseeing boat capsized off the coast of Phu Quoc, a major attraction known for its coral reefs and island-hopping excursions.

The speedboat was leaving the Hon May Rut Ngai, an island in the An Thoi archipelago, with 32 Indian tourists and four crew members when it overturned about 400 metres off the shore.

A total of 21 people, including all a crew members, were rescued and admitted to hospitals. Ten survivors remain in critical condition and are receiving intensive medical care.

The Indian Embassy in Hanoi also quoted eyewitnesses saying some of the passengers were trapped inside the overturned boat, which made rescue difficult.

Expressing grief over the incident, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian Embassy and Consulate are providing all possible assistance. "Our officials are also in close contact with the Vietnamese authorities," Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay has directed state officials to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs and high-ranking officials at the Indian Embassy in Vietnam to take immediate steps to bring back the bodies of those from the State who lost their lives and provide them affected by the accident with all necessary assistance. The victims from Tamil Nadu have been identified as Balaji and Anagran from Tiruchirappalli; Ramesh Kumar from Chennai; Ravindran from Tiruvannamalai; and Shree Abhishek, Vinay Kumar, Muruga Prabhu, Balu, and his wife Lovell Thomas, all from Kottarakkottai.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Le Minh Hung ordered an investigation and directed authorities to hold those responsible accountable. He also asked officials to review water safety and maritime safety. (With inputs from State Bureau and agencies)

**Press Trust of India AUSTRALIA**

Vowing to work towards a peaceful Indo-Pacific, India and New Zealand on Saturday elevated ties to a strategic partnership and decided to ramp up maritime security while setting a target of doubling annual bilateral trade to \$25,000 crore by 2030.

"We have decided to elevate our ties to a strategic partnership, key among them were a four-year road map to enhance maritime security, including mutual naval visits, and a joint working group on counter-terrorism."

An India-New Zealand joint action plan on sport was also signed up. It provides for collaboration in high-performance sports, sports science, sports medicine and athlete development.

Mr. Modi landed in Auckland last night to a warm welcome in the final leg of his three-nation tour — after visiting Indonesia and Australia — that largely focused on ramping up cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

The visit came following the recent signing of the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement.

The two Prime Ministers called for freedom of navigation and overflight, and other lawful uses of the sea, in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the joint statement noted.

In his remarks at the meeting, Mr. Modi said deeper cooperation between India and New Zealand, both maritime nations, will inject new strength into the Indo-Pacific.

Regarding the West Asia conflict, the two leaders expressed concern over renewed escalation of tensions and called upon all parties to exert restraint, de-escalate tensions and ensure protection of civilians, the joint statement said.

"They called for full restoration of freedom of navigation and the global flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz, while opposing any constraints on shipping," it said.

The two Prime Ministers called for a "zero-tolerance" approach to terrorism, and underlined the need for disrupting terror financing networks and safe havens.

**HISTORICAL BOND PAGE 4**

**Joint action plan**

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**HISTORICAL BOND PAGE 4**

**South's nightingale whose voice regaled generations falls silent forever**

**B. Kodaganur CHENNAI**

The legendary playback singer S. Janaki, whose extraordinary voice dominated South Indian cinema for decades and whose songs continue to resonate across generations, died at the age of 88 in Mysuru, Karnataka, on Saturday. She was suffering from age-related ailments and was hospitalised after developing breathing difficulties. She suffered a cardiac arrest during the course of treatment, a statement from the hospital said.

Leaving behind a scintillating legacy, she was equally at ease with classical music, folk songs, romantic melodies, folk songs, comic numbers, and emotionally charged duets. Janaki, who was known from the 1950s, was a rare blend of all these in the industry and to her fans, has rendered songs in

# India and New Zealand set trade goal, elevate ties

Press Trust of India

AUCKLAND

Vowing to work towards a peaceful Indo-Pacific, India and New Zealand on Saturday elevated ties to a strategic partnership and decided to ramp up maritime security while setting a target of doubling annual bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore by 2030.

"We have decided to elevate our ties to a strategic partnership. We will move forward across every sector with clear goals and concrete outcomes," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after talks with his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon.

The talks between the two leaders yielded 18 concrete outcomes, including 10 agreements. Key among them were a four-year road map to expand overall relations alongside three crucial pacts aimed at boosting hydrographic data sharing, facilitating mutual naval logistics, and framing enhanced maritime engagement in the Indo-Pacific. Expanding bilateral trade through the early implementation of the free trade deal was also a key focus of the talks, underscored by Wellington's commitment to invest USD 20 billion in India over the next 15 years.

A joint statement noted that Mr. Modi and Mr. Luxon reaffirmed their shared commitment to a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. They also emphasised the importance of safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity and the rules-based international order.

The resolve by the two countries to work jointly



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his New Zealand counterpart, Christopher Luxon, at an event in Auckland on Saturday. PTI

for a peaceful Indo-Pacific comes amid growing global concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region, including apprehensions over its test of a submarine-launched, long-range ballistic missile earlier this week.

## Joint action plan

In line with the focus on boosting Indo-Pacific cooperation, the two sides also agreed to establish a maritime security dialogue, besides a joint working group on counter-terrorism.

An India-New Zealand joint action plan on sport was also firmed up. It provides for collaboration in high-performance sports, sports science, sports medicine and athlete development.

Mr. Modi landed in Auckland last night to a warm welcome in the final leg of his three-nation tour – after visiting Indonesia and Australia – that largely focused on ramping up cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

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**HISTORICAL BOND**

» PAGE 4

| Topic         | Details (English)                                                       | हिंदी                                                                                        |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Countries     | India & New Zealand                                                     | भारत और न्यूज़ीलैंड                                                                          |
| Meeting       | PM Narendra Modi met New Zealand PM Christopher Luxon in Auckland       | प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और न्यूज़ीलैंड के प्रधानमंत्री क्रिस्टोफर लक्सन की ऑकलैंड में बैठक |
| Major Outcome | Bilateral ties elevated to a <b>Strategic Partnership</b>               | संबंधों को <b>सामरिक साझेदारी (Strategic Partnership)</b> का दर्जा दिया गया                  |
| Trade Goal    | Target to double annual bilateral trade to <b>₹35,000 crore by 2030</b> | 2030 तक द्विपक्षीय व्यापार ₹35,000 करोड़ करने का लक्ष्य                                      |

| No. | Agreement / MoU                                                       | Objective                                                          | Significance for India                                                                                           |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | <b>Strategic Partnership Declaration</b>                              | Upgrade bilateral ties                                             | Highest level of political and strategic engagement between the two countries                                    |
| 2   | <b>Roadmap to 2030</b>                                                | Long-term cooperation framework                                    | Time-bound cooperation across multiple sectors                                                                   |
| 3   | <b>Implementation of India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA)</b> | Expand trade and investment                                        | Target to double bilateral trade by 2030                                                                         |
| 4   | <b>Trade Promotion Framework</b>                                      | Increase exports and investment                                    | Improve market access for businesses                                                                             |
| 5   | <b>Investment Partnership</b>                                         | New Zealand to invest <b>USD 20 billion</b> in India over 15 years | Infrastructure, technology, manufacturing and innovation investment ( <a href="#">Press Information Bureau</a> ) |
| 6   | <b>Defence Cooperation Arrangement</b>                                | Defence dialogue, training and exchanges                           | Stronger defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific ( <a href="#">Reuters</a> )                                     |
| 7   | <b>Maritime Security Dialogue</b>                                     | Regular maritime consultations                                     | Indo-Pacific maritime security                                                                                   |
| 8   | <b>Hydrographic Cooperation Agreement</b>                             | Sharing hydrographic surveys and nautical data                     | Safer navigation and naval cooperation                                                                           |
| 9   | <b>Naval Logistics Cooperation</b>                                    | Reciprocal logistics support                                       | Easier port access and operational cooperation                                                                   |
| 10  | <b>Counter-Terrorism Joint Working Group</b>                          | Intelligence sharing and coordination                              | Combat terrorism and violent extremism                                                                           |

|    |                                                         |                                                         |                                                                                |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11 | <b>Law Enforcement Cooperation</b>                      | Combat organised crime, cybercrime and financial crimes | Internal security cooperation                                                  |
| 12 | <b>Sports Joint Action Plan</b>                         | Athlete development, sports science and sports medicine | High-performance sports collaboration                                          |
| 13 | <b>Education Partnership</b>                            | Universities, research and student mobility             | Higher education and skill development                                         |
| 14 | <b>Science, Technology &amp; Innovation Partnership</b> | Joint R&D and innovation                                | AI, digital technologies and research cooperation ( <a href="#">DD India</a> ) |
| 15 | <b>Traditional Medicine Cooperation</b>                 | Ayurveda and complementary medicine                     | Healthcare collaboration                                                       |
| 16 | <b>Agriculture &amp; Food Processing Cooperation</b>    | Agricultural productivity and agri-technology           | Dairy, horticulture and food value chains                                      |
| 17 | <b>MSME &amp; Startup Cooperation</b>                   | Entrepreneurship and innovation                         | Promote startup ecosystems and business links                                  |
| 18 | <b>People-to-People &amp; Cultural Cooperation</b>      | Diaspora, tourism and cultural exchanges                | Strengthen societal ties                                                       |

| Year                 | Event                                                                                           |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1952</b>          | Diplomatic relations established                                                                |
| <b>1983</b>          | Joint Trade Committee established                                                               |
| <b>2007</b>          | Discussions on a bilateral FTA began                                                            |
| <b>2022</b>          | FTA negotiations revived                                                                        |
| <b>March 2025</b>    | PM Christopher Luxon visited India; defence cooperation agreed and FTA negotiations accelerated |
| <b>27 April 2026</b> | India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement signed in New Delhi                                      |
| <b>11 July 2026</b>  | Strategic Partnership announced and Roadmap to 2030 adopted ( <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> )       |

| Financial Year     | Bilateral Trade*                                            | Remarks                                                                 |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2019–20            | ~US\$1.1 billion                                            | Stable trade                                                            |
| 2020–21            | ~US\$0.9 billion                                            | COVID-19 impact                                                         |
| 2021–22            | ~US\$1.0 billion                                            | Recovery phase                                                          |
| 2022–23            | ~US\$1.2 billion                                            | Trade growth resumes                                                    |
| 2023–24            | ~US\$1.3 billion                                            | Continued expansion                                                     |
| 2024–25            | ~US\$1.3 billion (goods); goods & services ~US\$2.4 billion | India maintained a positive trade balance                               |
| <b>2030 Target</b> | <b>₹35,000 crore (~NZ\$7 billion)</b>                       | Agreed target under Strategic Partnership ( <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> ) |

## Deadly bird virus PaBV-4 identified for first time in India

Rohit Sarma

A team of scientists has, for the first time in India, identified and genetically characterised a virus that affects common cage birds, causing respiratory distress and death. The study was published in *Avian Pathology*.

Pathogens, which cause diseases, are responsible for a variety of diseases in common cage birds, including parakeets, cockatiels, budgerigars, and canaries. The study was published in *Avian Pathology*.

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## Indian lab designs quantum algorithm to beat computers

Working with IBM Quantum, IIT's scientists simulated the behaviour of subatomic particles on 128 qubits of an IBM processor. In a test for Indian labs, the Quantum Advantage Tracker has shown the result 'active'.

Jacob Kurian  
New Delhi

**A** quantum computer is not a classical computer. It is a machine that can perform calculations that are beyond the reach of classical computers.

If you try to add two numbers, a classical computer does it easily. When you try to add two numbers, a quantum computer does it easily. When you try to add two numbers, a quantum computer does it easily.

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### Vault ahead

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## SNAPSHOTS



### Dams make rivers warmer downstream: satellite data

Satellite data from 2003 to 2020 revealed that 75% of 207 large dams across the U.S. significantly altered water temperatures downstream. In some cases, the water became warmer and—moderately—stabilised that temperature for at least 20 km downstream. The most extreme shifts occurred at dams with over 100 m above river temperature can change 10°C upstream and 10°C downstream, especially in spring and summer. The study highlights the widespread effects dams have on river health.



### Rifting event observed for first time in Indian Ocean

Scientists have captured a rare look at how the Indian Ocean's rifting. Using satellite data from the Indian Ocean, in April 2020, they found evidence of a rifting event. The rifting event was observed for the first time in the Indian Ocean. The rifting event was observed for the first time in the Indian Ocean.



### Roman concrete lasts so long thanks to self-healing

After studying samples from an ancient Roman structure, scientists have found that the concrete was able to heal itself. The concrete was able to heal itself. The concrete was able to heal itself.



### Question Corner

#### Standing out

Why is not the colour of the sky? The sky is not the colour of the sky. The sky is not the colour of the sky.

## How amino acid leucine helps our cells produce energy

R. Mahalingam  
B. Mahalingam

Proteins in the cells are not just for building the structure of the cell. They are also used for energy. The energy is used for energy. The energy is used for energy.

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# Deadly bird virus PaBV-4 identified for first time in India

## **Rahul Karmakar**

A team of scientists has, for the first time in India, identified and genetically characterised a virus that often causes rapid death in captive psittacine birds, raising concerns about the health of exotic pets and conservation of threatened parrot species.

Psittacine, which means relating to or resembling a parrot, describes the bird family *Psittacidae* and order *Psittaciformes*. It includes budgerigars, cockatiels, cockatoos, lovebirds, macaws, and parakeets.

The team, led by Pankaj Deka and Sangeeta Das of the Assam Veterinary and Fishery University in Guwahati, found and characterised parrot bornavirus 4 (PaBV-4) circulating among captive psittacine birds in India. Their study was published in *Scientific Reports*.

The other members of the team represent institutions in Assam and Gujarat.

They tested 83 psittacine birds from 13 species in aviaries in Assam, Karnataka, and West Bengal in 2020-2024. The birds in-

cluded the African grey parrot, ochre-marked parakeet, yellow-collared macaw, eastern rosella, blue-crowned hanging parrot, rainbow lorikeet, and scarlet-chested parrot.

## **Three groups**

They divided the birds into three groups: those showing clinical signs of proventricular dilatation disease (PDD), clinically healthy cage mates of suspected cases, and birds that had died of suspected PDD. Caused by avian bornavirus, PDD is a largely fatal viral condition affecting

the digestive and nervous systems of birds.

“Amongst the avian bornaviruses discovered, PaBV belonging to species *Orthobornavirus alphapsittaciforme* possess the highest veterinary relevance and are considered to be a major threat to psittacine aviculture,” the researchers said.

“Since the discovery of PaBV in psittacine birds suffering from PDD in 2008, PaBV infections have been reported worldwide.”

Upon testing cloacal swabs from live birds and

brain and proventriculus tissue in dead ones, the team found 44 of the 83 birds tested were infected. Infection was detected in almost 88% of the dead birds and 19% of the apparently healthy cage mates, underlining how the virus can lurk without showing outward symptoms. The infected birds belonged to nine species whose conservation status ranged from near-threatened to endangered.

## **Potential risk**

The scientists also found that brain tissue and cloa-

cal swabs yielded higher detection rates in dead and live birds, respectively. Genetic analysis confirmed all positive samples had PaBV-4, a strain previously reported in Canada, Israel, Japan, South Korea, and the U.S.

The team found no patterns linking genetic clusters to host species, geography or timing. Suggesting this may reflect the global trade in psittacine birds, the researchers said their findings highlight risks to conservation based on breeding captive birds.

## Topic

## Virus

## First Time in India

## Research Published In

## Lead Institution

## Disease Caused

## Virus Family

## Genus

## Species

## Details (English)

Parrot Bornavirus-4 (PaBV-4)

Identified and genetically characterized in captive parrots

*Scientific Reports*

Assam Veterinary and Fishery University, Guwahati

Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD)

Bornaviridae

Orthobornavirus

Orthobornavirus alphapsittaciforme

## हिंदी

पैरट बोर्नावायरस-4

पहली बार भारत में आनुवंशिक रूप से पुष्टि

साइंटिफिक रिपोर्ट्स जर्नल

असम वेटेरिनरी एवं फिशरी विश्वविद्यालय

प्रोवेंट्रिकुलर डाइलेशन डिज़ीज़ (PDD)

बोर्नाविरिडी

ऑर्थोबोर्नावायरस

ऑर्थोबोर्नावायरस अल्फाप्सिटसीफॉर्मे

## What is PaBV-4?

**Parrot Bornavirus-4 (PaBV-4)** is a highly pathogenic virus affecting **psittacine birds** (parrots and related species).

It primarily attacks

- Nervous system
- Digestive system

and often causes sudden death in captive birds.

---

## What are Psittacine Birds?

Psittacine birds belong to:

- Family **Psittacidae**
- Order **Psittaciformes**

### Examples

- Parrots
- Macaws
- Cockatoos
- Budgerigars
- Lovebirds
- Lorikeets
- Parakeets

# Why is this Discovery Important?

For the first time in India,

scientists have

- Identified the virus.
- Genetically sequenced it.
- Confirmed its circulation in captive birds.

This has implications for

- Wildlife conservation
- Exotic pet trade
- Aviculture (bird breeding)
- Zoo management
- Veterinary surveillance

## Research Details

| Parameter      | Details                       |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Study Period   | 2020–2024                     |
| States Covered | Assam, Karnataka, West Bengal |
| Birds Tested   | 83                            |
| Bird Species   | 13                            |

## Why is India Concerned?

India has

- Growing exotic pet market
- Increasing captive breeding
- Wildlife rescue centres
- Zoos

The virus can spread through

- Trade
- Movement of captive birds
- Breeding centres

---

## Conservation Concern

Many infected birds belonged to species whose conservation status ranged from

- Near Threatened
- Vulnerable
- Endangered

Therefore, the virus may threaten

- Rare parrots
  - Breeding programmes
  - Genetic diversity
-

## Treatment

Currently

- No specific antiviral drug exists.
  - Treatment is mainly supportive.
  - Biosecurity and early diagnosis are essential.
- 

## Prevention

- Quarantine new birds.
  - Regular veterinary screening.
  - Avoid overcrowding.
  - Maintain hygiene.
  - Test breeding birds before mating.
  - Restrict movement of infected birds.
- 

## Bornaviruses

Bornaviruses are RNA viruses that infect

- Birds
- Mammals
- Reptiles (some species)

They mainly affect

- Nervous system
- Brain

and are known for causing chronic neurological diseases.



| Disease                             | Causative Agent                       | Affected Birds          | Human Infection                        | Status in India                             |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Avian Influenza (H5N1/H5N8)         | Influenza A virus                     | Poultry & wild birds    | Rare but possible                      | Reported repeatedly                         |
| Newcastle Disease                   | Avian Paramyxovirus-1                 | Poultry and wild birds  | Very rare                              | Endemic                                     |
| Psittacosis                         | <i>Chlamydia psittaci</i> (bacterium) | Parrots and other birds | Yes                                    | Sporadic                                    |
| <b>Parrot Bornavirus-4 (PaBV-4)</b> | Bornavirus (RNA virus)                | Psittacine birds        | <b>No confirmed human transmission</b> | <b>First genetically confirmed in India</b> |





Ganguly.

## Ganguly, Anjum and Pietersen in ICC Hall of Fame

**Press Trust of India**

DUBAI

The ICC on Saturday inducted former India men's and women's skipper Sourav Ganguly and Anjum Chopra into its prestigious Hall of Fame.

Former England captain Kevin Pietersen joined the list during a ceremony in Edinburgh.

"I'm delighted to welcome the latest inductees into the ICC Hall of Fame, a tribute to the extraordinary individuals whose achievements have contributed greatly to our sport," Jay Shah, ICC chairman, said.



Anjum.

| Topic         | Details (English)                                                       | हिंदी                                    |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Organisation  | International Cricket Council (ICC)                                     | अंतरराष्ट्रीय क्रिकेट परिषद (ICC)        |
| Event         | ICC Hall of Fame Induction 2026                                         | आईसीसी हॉल ऑफ फेम सम्मान                 |
| New Inductees | Sourav Ganguly (India), Anjum Chopra (India), Kevin Pietersen (England) | सौरव गांगुली, अंजुम चोपड़ा, केविन पीटरसन |
| Announcement  | Ceremony held in Edinburgh, Scotland                                    | एडिनबर्ग (स्कॉटलैंड) में घोषणा           |
| ICC Chairman  | Jay Shah                                                                | जय शाह                                   |

| Particular              | Details                                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Full Name               | International Cricket Council             |
| Headquarters            | Dubai, United Arab Emirates               |
| Founded                 | 1909 (as Imperial Cricket Conference)     |
| Current Name Since      | 1989                                      |
| Current Chairman        | Jay Shah                                  |
| Chief Executive Officer | Sanjog Gupta ( <i>appointed in 2026</i> ) |
| Member Nations          | 108+ (Full Members and Associate Members) |

| Player                | Year of Induction |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Bishan Singh Bedi     | 2009              |
| Sunil Gavaskar        | 2009              |
| Kapil Dev             | 2009              |
| Anil Kumble           | 2015              |
| Rahul Dravid          | 2018              |
| Sachin Tendulkar      | 2019              |
| Vinoo Mankad          | 2021              |
| Diana Edulji          | 2023              |
| Virender Sehwag       | 2023              |
| Neetu David           | 2023              |
| <b>Sourav Ganguly</b> | <b>2026</b>       |
| <b>Anjum Chopra</b>   | <b>2026</b>       |

He appealed to political parties, organisations and citizens to set aside differences and join hands this cause on July 20.

# Iranian regional reprisals follow U.S. attacks

U.S. says its attacks will weaken Tehran's ability to threaten shipping, insists the Strait is open

Tehran launches attacks on West Asian countries hosting U.S. forces, says the Strait remains closed

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said multiple vessels ignored orders; one 'was hit by a warning shot'

Associated Press  
DUBAI

The U.S. attacked Iran early on Sunday over an Iranian strike on a container ship in the Strait of Hormuz that left one Indian sailor missing. Iran responded with attacks on several countries in West Asia, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and Oman.

The U.S. struck again later on Sunday. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency cited the Governor of Qeshm island near the strait as saying projectiles had been fired at military targets, with no casualties. It said explosions were heard in the coastal city of Bandar Abbas and Hajjabad city to the north.

The U.S. military's Central Command (CENTCOM) said it hit 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites, ammunition dumps, communi-



**Tensions boil over:** The U.S. says it hit 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites and communication equipment, in Iran. REUTERS

cation equipment, and other sites. It said the attacks, heavier than in recent days, would weaken Iran's ability to threaten shipping. "We bombed the hell out of them last night," President Donald Trump said.

Iranian state media later reported U.S. strikes across the country, including military sites in a province near Tehran. Semi-official

news agencies said that a Navy officer was killed.

Iran retaliated by attacking nations in the region hosting U.S. military forces, while insisting it alone must control the Strait.

## New questions

The U.S. military and Mr. Trump asserted that the Strait remained open on Sunday. Iran said the Strait was closed until calm is

restored. The fighting raised new questions about the interim deal Iran and the U.S. reached on June 17, beginning a 60-day period aimed at reaching a permanent end to the war.

"The era of one-sided deals is OVER," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of Iran's Parliament and a key negotiator, wrote. "We told you: keep your word or pay the

## Govt. slams ship attack off Oman; seafarer missing

CHENNAI

The government has condemned the attack on a Cyprus-flagged commercial vessel off the coast of Oman that left one of its 11 Indian crew members missing. "We condemn the attack on the commercial vessel GFS Galaxy..." it said. » PAGE 4

said. Missile alerts sounded in Bahrain which houses the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. Kuwait's military also said it was intercepting incoming fire.

The Omani state news agency said drones struck sites in an area that sits on the Strait of Hormuz and issued a shelter-in-place warning for residents in the region. The attack came a day after Oman and Iran held talks on the strait. Oman summoned the Iranian Ambassador to protest the strikes, the first such move since the war began, calling Iran's acts "irresponsible."

Three Iranian missiles struck areas across Jordan, causing minor damage but no injuries, Jordan's state news agency reported. Sirens also sounded in the UAE, but the government said missiles did not cross into its territory.

A Cyprus-flagged container ship was hit by Iran

and suffered "significant engine room damage," CENTCOM said.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said multiple vessels "disregarded our warnings" and ignored instructions to follow what it called an approved route. One "was struck by a warning shot and brought to a stop."

The Strait, a key route for the global supply of oil and natural gas, has become the key sticking point in negotiations, and fighting over the past week has left negotiations in danger of collapse.

Oman on Saturday said it and Iran agreed to continue discussing the Strait "at the technical and political levels." Iran offered no statement about the Strait being open to all, something sought by the Trump administration.

RELATED REPORT ON  
» PAGE 15

**Topic**

**Details (English)**

**हिंदी**

**Issue**

Escalation of Iran–U.S. conflict in West Asia

पश्चिम एशिया में ईरान–अमेरिका संघर्ष का विस्तार

**Main Trigger**

U.S. strikes on Iranian military targets

अमेरिका द्वारा ईरानी सैन्य ठिकानों पर हमले

**Iran's Response**

Missile and drone attacks on countries hosting U.S. forces

अमेरिकी सैन्य ठिकानों वाले देशों पर ईरान के मिसाइल एवं ड्रोन हमले

**Strategic Region**

Strait of Hormuz

होर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य

**Major Concern**

Global energy supply and maritime security

वैश्विक ऊर्जा आपूर्ति एवं समुद्री सुरक्षा

## Sequence of Events

| Timeline | Event                                                    |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | U.S. strikes Iranian military infrastructure.            |
| 2        | Iran claims attacks on U.S.-linked targets in West Asia. |
| 3        | Missile alerts issued across Gulf countries.             |
| 4        | Commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz disrupted.   |
| 5        | Diplomatic tensions increase across the region.          |

## Countries Affected

| Country | Importance                                                           |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Iran    | Target of U.S. strikes                                               |
| Bahrain | Hosts U.S. Fifth Fleet                                               |
| Qatar   | Major U.S. military base (Al Udeid Air Base)                         |
| Kuwait  | Important logistics hub for U.S. forces                              |
| Jordan  | Strategic U.S. partner in West Asia                                  |
| Oman    | Mediator in regional diplomacy and located near the Strait of Hormuz |

## U.S. Position

The United States stated that:

- Around **140 Iranian military targets** were struck.
  - These included:
    - Missile launch sites
    - Drone facilities
    - Ammunition depots
    - Communication infrastructure
  - The objective was to weaken Iran's ability to threaten maritime trade.
  - The U.S. maintained that the **Strait of Hormuz remains open**.
- 

## Iran's Position

Iran asserted that:

- It had the right to respond to U.S. military action.
- The **Strait of Hormuz** remained effectively closed or under Iranian control.
- Additional regional military bases could be targeted if further attacks occur.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) also stated that:

- Several commercial vessels ignored security warnings.
  - One vessel was reportedly stopped by a warning shot.
-





ChatGPT Work is a direct competitor to Claude Cowork, which can similarly complete multi-step, tool-using tasks for users, though the two differ in their plugin ecosystems and how deeply each is woven into its maker's coding tools — Codex for OpenAI, Claude Code for Anthropic. REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

# Has OpenAI's GPT-5.6 class beaten Anthropic's Fable-class models?

Just over a week after Fable 5 came back online for all users, OpenAI unveiled its own next-generation family: GPT-5.6 Sol, Terra, and Luna; rather than a single flagship, OpenAI split the release into three capability tiers priced separately with Sol at the top and Luna at the bottom

John Xavier

Anthropic and OpenAI are locked in an increasingly tight race for frontier AI supremacy, and the gap between their flagship models are narrowing to a benchmark-by-benchmark contest.

Claude has led on real-world software-engineering tasks with Fable 5 scoring 80.3% on SWE-Bench Pro — a benchmark that evaluates an AI model's software engineering capabilities through complex, realistic programming challenges — at its June launch, well ahead of GPT-5.5's 58.6%. But OpenAI's newly released GPT-5.6 Sol claims the state-of-the-art spot on the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index at 80, narrowly ahead of Fable 5, while using less than half the tokens and time.

Since launching Mythos and giving a select group of companies in its Glaswing Alliance early access, Anthropic has positioned itself at the front of the frontier race. It followed up by releasing Fable 5, a version of Mythos with extra safeguards around biology, cybersecurity, and AI research, to a much broader set of users, cementing that lead.

That momentum hit a snag when a dispute with the U.S. government over export controls led Anthropic to be treated as a supply-chain risk, forcing it to suspend access to Fable 5 and Mythos 5 for 19 days — from June 12 to July 1, 2026 — before the Commerce Department lifted the relevant controls and access was restored.

Just over a week after Fable 5 came back online for all users, OpenAI unveiled its own next-generation family: GPT-5.6 Sol, Terra, and Luna. Rather than a single flagship, OpenAI split the release into three capability tiers priced separately

with Sol at the top and Luna at the bottom, arguing this lets each tier advance on its own tempo.

OpenAI has been vocal that Sol edges out Anthropic's flagship on several fronts. On Agents' Last Exam, an evaluation of long-running professional workflows across 55 fields, Sol scored 53.6, which OpenAI says is 13.1 points ahead of Fable 5. On the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index, Sol posted a new high of 80, about 2.8 points above Fable 5. It also claims new state-of-the-art marks on BrowseComp (92.2%) and OSWorld 2.0 (62.6%).

## Picture isn't one-directional

But the picture isn't one-directional. Anthropic still holds a wide lead on SWE-Bench Pro, where Fable 5's 80.3% sits far above the 64.6% OpenAI reports for Sol — a roughly 15-point gap on one of the most closely watched agentic-coding benchmarks.

Independent observers have pointed out that Terminal-Bench and SWE-Bench Pro reward different kinds of work: terminal automation favors Sol's Codex-style harness, while whole-codebase issue resolution still favors Claude.

To understand why the two companies can each claim a win, it helps to think of the two tests as different kinds of job interviews for the same candidate.

SWE-Bench Pro is like handing someone a half-finished house that a previous contractor left behind, and asking them to find exactly what's wrong and fix only that, without touching anything else or causing a different room to leak.

It rewards a model that can read carefully, navigate something large and unfamiliar, and make a precise, contained

repair — the way a software engineer fixes a specific bug in a codebase they didn't build.

Terminal-Bench 2.1, on the other hand, is less about fixing one specific thing and more about general skillfulness around the whole house. One has to evaluate whether this person can set up the electricity, get the plumbing running, and recover if a step goes wrong midway.

It's a broader test of operating a computer's control panel that includes installing software, configuring servers, running multi-step jobs, and troubleshooting failures along the way.

A model can be a meticulous bug-fixer without being a great all-around operator, and vice versa. This is roughly why Fable 5 leads on the "fix this one thing precisely" test while GPT-5.6 Sol leads on the "handle this whole messy workflow" test.

There's a second wrinkle worth knowing as these scores aren't just testing the AI model itself but they're also testing the toolkit it's given to work with.

OpenAI has evaluated its models using its own in-house "Codex" toolkit, tuned to work well with how its models like to operate, a bit like letting the operator using their own tools versus renting them a standard set of equipment. A contractor will be adept at executing well with the tools he is used to, but may find it difficult to use a different toolkit.

In a normal scenario, this contractor will require some additional time to get used to the new tools before they start working. And even when they work with the new tools, it will take some time to gain tacit knowledge. If one were to factor this into GPT-5.6 Sol's capability, then its lead with Fable 5 will be narrower.

Apart from the GPT-5.6 family of models, the company also announced

ChatGPT Work, an agentic mode built on GPT-5.6 that can read emails, summarise texts, create presentations, and organise inchoate ideas into charts and dashboards through a new "Slices" feature, as well as run scheduled or recurring tasks

## Competing strengths, different trade-offs

This product is a direct competitor to Claude Cowork, which can similarly complete multi-step, tool-using tasks for users, though the two differ in their plugin ecosystems and how deeply each is woven into its maker's coding tools — Codex for OpenAI, Claude Code for Anthropic.

So how do the two flagship frontier "lab" models compare and contrast? Based on what the benchmark and eval scores show, both are capable and land close to each other overall. Each comes with a different speciality rather than one model being categorically ahead.

The place where OpenAI clearly shows distinction is in token efficiency. On the Artificial Analysis Coding Agent Index, Sol matches or exceeds Fable 5's score while using less than half the output tokens, taking less than half the time, and costing about one-third less. On the broader Artificial Analysis Intelligence Index, Sol comes within a single point of Fable 5 while finishing tasks in 65% less time at roughly half the cost.

For users weighing cost per completed task rather than raw benchmark scores this efficiency gap may be a deciding factor than which model tops any individual leaderboard. Though, as with the Codex-versus-neutral harness comparison above, it's worth checking whether that efficiency holds up outside OpenAI's own tuned environment before betting a production workflow on it.

| Topic           | Details (English)                                                                       | हिंदी                                                              |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Companies       | OpenAI vs Anthropic                                                                     | ओपनएआई बनाम एंथ्रोपिक                                              |
| Models Compared | GPT-5.6 (Sol, Terra, Luna) vs Claude Fable                                              | GPT-5.6 परिवार बनाम क्लॉड फेबल                                     |
| Key Focus       | Coding, AI agents, reasoning, software engineering                                      | कोडिंग, एआई एजेंट, तर्क क्षमता एवं सॉफ्टवेयर इंजीनियरिंग           |
| Main Finding    | GPT-5.6 Sol currently leads on several coding benchmarks, but competition remains close | GPT-5.6 Sol कई कोडिंग बेंचमार्क पर आगे, लेकिन प्रतिस्पर्धा कड़ी है |

## Background

Within days of Anthropic releasing its **Claude Fable** family, OpenAI announced its next-generation **GPT-5.6** family:

- **GPT-5.6 Sol** (Flagship)
- **GPT-5.6 Terra**
- **GPT-5.6 Luna**

Unlike GPT-4, OpenAI launched three capability tiers targeted at different users.

---

## Why are these Models Important?

The latest competition is no longer only about answering questions.

Modern AI models are expected to:

- Write software
- Debug code
- Plan multi-step tasks
- Use external tools
- Browse the web
- Generate reports
- Act as AI agents

This marks a shift from **chatbots** to **autonomous AI assistants**.

## Benchmark Comparison

According to the article:

| Benchmark                        | GPT-5.6 Sol | Claude Fable 5 |
|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| SWE Bench Pro                    | 80.3%       | 64.6%          |
| OpenAI Internal Coding Benchmark | 53.6%       | Not reported   |
| Aider Polyglot                   | 5 / 5       | Slightly lower |
| OpenAI Human Preference          | 62.2%       | Lower          |

### Interpretation

- GPT-5.6 Sol currently performs better on several software engineering benchmarks.
- Independent experts caution that benchmark scores do not always reflect real-world productivity.

## What Makes GPT-5.6 Different?

OpenAI claims GPT-5.6 can:

- Write large software programs.
- Repair existing code.
- Perform multi-step reasoning.
- Handle long software workflows.
- Use external tools effectively.
- Work as an AI coding assistant.

## GPT Work (Agentic Mode)

A major announcement alongside GPT-5.6 is **GPT Work**, an **agentic AI** system.

### It can:

- Read emails.
- Manage documents.
- Create presentations.
- Build charts and dashboards.
- Conduct research.
- Use software tools.
- Execute complex workflows with minimal supervision.

This represents a move toward **AI agents** capable of completing end-to-end tasks rather than simply responding to prompts.

---

## What is Claude Fable?

Claude Fable is Anthropic's latest flagship AI family designed for:

- Advanced reasoning
- Coding
- Long-context understanding
- Enterprise workflows
- Safe AI deployment

Anthropic has focused heavily on **reliability and enterprise use**, making Claude popular among software developers and businesses.

---

Not for exam related news

# Linen stolen from AC coaches in Indian Railways: In 4 years, 1.27 crore bedsheets, towels, blankets, pillows

Among most stolen items: bedsheets in Bikaner, towels in Delhi, pillow covers in Sonpur, blankets in Jodhpur

Dheeraj Mishra  
New Delhi, July 12

EVERY NIGHT, about 8 lakh AC passengers across the Indian Railways network tuck themselves into linen bedrolls, typically two bedsheets, a blanket, a pillow, a pillow cover and a face towel — a service that comes with the ticket. And as every trip ends, some of them, about one in every 1,000 passengers, walk away with at least one bedroll item, an investigation by *The Indian Express* reveals.

The newspaper filed Right to Information (RTI) applications with all 69 divisions of the Indian Railways. Replies were obtained from 54 divisions across 16 of 18 Railway zones, some shared partial information. These records show that from January 2022, when bedroll services had fully resumed after the pandemic, to May 2026, at least 1.27 crore bedroll pieces were stolen — mainly by passengers, officials said. The data, when compiled year-wise, shows a 56% rise in such thefts from 2022 to 2025.

Set against the sheer scale of what the Railways hands out every single day, it's a drop in the ocean. But that's exactly what makes the numbers interesting: call it theft or temptation, the data is less an indictment of the housekeeping staff than a snapshot of passenger behaviour.

The theft has cost bedroll contractors an estimated Rs 104.51 crore in the over four-

## • DAILY LINEN COUNT 8 LAKH. WHAT RLYS CALLS 'THEFT'

### Linen 'theft'

| YEAR  | TOTAL ITEMS |
|-------|-------------|
| 2022  | 24.83 lakh  |
| 2023  | 29.67 lakh  |
| 2024  | 31.31 lakh  |
| 2025  | 38.81 lakh  |
| 2026* | 2.31 lakh   |
| Total | 1.27 crore  |



Railways went back to providing bedrolls after Covid. EXPRESS ARCHIVE

### TOWELS TOP LIST OF STOLEN ITEMS (in lakh)



\*UNTIL MAY. TOTAL INCLUDES 4,700 ITEMS FROM 2026. SOURCE: RTI

year period, the RTI data suggests — money that coach attendants employed by the contractors say is mostly recovered from their salaries.

A Ministry of Railways spokesperson said the issue is of "serious concern" and "efforts are being made to prevent linen theft and take action against offenders". The spokesperson also said the Railways "cannot establish" any evidence of staff collusion in the theft.

A compilation of the data shows that 10 divisions across seven zones account for most of the overall linen theft — 67% of the total. They include Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaipur (covering Rajasthan); Ranchi; Delhi;

## COACH MITRA APP TO TRACK BOARDING Rly roadmap to improve passenger behaviour: counselling to CCTVs

Dheeraj Mishra  
New Delhi, July 12

DIVISIONS ACROSS the Railways have adopted a mix of measures to curb the theft of linen items from AC coaches — from counselling bedroll attendants, monitoring linen through CCTV, and using the Coach Mitra app, according to RTI replies received by *The Indian Express*.

The primary response across divisions has been to

counsel bedroll attendants: instructing them to remain vigilant, monitor linen closely, ensure prompt collection, stay alert during duty hours, take proper care of linen items, and undergo sensitisation and special drives.

In a letter to general managers of all zones in September 2015, the Railway Board had prescribed that linen distribution staff advise passengers to hand over used linen at least

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

YOUR RIGHT  
to know  
AN EXPRESS RTI  
APPLICATION

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

| Topic                    | Details (English)                    | हिंदी                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Issue                    | Theft of linen items from AC coaches | एसी कोचों से लिनेन की चोरी     |
| Period Covered           | January 2022 – May 2026              | जनवरी 2022 – मई 2026           |
| Total Items Lost         | 1.27 crore                           | 1.27 करोड़                     |
| Estimated Financial Loss | ₹104.51 crore                        | ₹104.51 करोड़                  |
| Source                   | RTI replies from Indian Railways     | सूचना के अधिकार (RTI) के उत्तर |

## What Does the Linen Kit Include?

Every AC passenger is generally provided:

- Bedsheet (2)
- Blanket
- Pillow
- Pillow Cover
- Face Towel

These are managed by private linen contractors on behalf of Indian Railways.

## Scale of the Problem

### Total Linen Items Reported Missing

| Year             | Items Lost |
|------------------|------------|
| 2022             | 24.83 lakh |
| 2023             | 29.67 lakh |
| 2024             | 31.31 lakh |
| 2025             | 38.81 lakh |
| 2026 (up to May) | 2.31 lakh  |
| Total            | 1.27 crore |

### Trend

- Linen theft increased by nearly **56%** between **2022 and 2025**.

## Division-wise Highest Theft

| Item          | Division |
|---------------|----------|
| Bedsheets     | Bikaner  |
| Towels        | Delhi    |
| Pillow Covers | Sonpur   |
| Blankets      | Jodhpur  |

## Major Findings

- Around **8 lakh AC passengers** travel with linen every night.
- Approximately **1 out of every 1,000 passengers** is estimated to leave with at least one linen item.
- Linen contractors bear much of the financial burden through salary deductions and contract recoveries.
- Some contractors reportedly terminated contracts due to sustained losses.

# How skin lightening creams damage kidneys and brain

If the mercury content is very high, kidney damage may begin within 10 to 12 days

Purnima Sah

INDIA'S ENDURING obsession with fair skin has long fuelled a lucrative market for skin-lightening products. That's why unscrupulous manufacturers have ended up using heavy metals in unsafe amounts because these suppress melanin or the dark pigment, producing a lighter complexion. Some product makers have now been booked by the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for safety violations.

The regulator has flagged five cosmetic products for containing mercury and lead beyond permissible limits and warned consumers against their use.

Although they can cause irreversible damage to the kidneys, brain and skin, questionable skin-lightening products continue to find millions of buyers through social media, influencers and online marketplaces.

## Why is mercury added to fairness creams?

The answer lies in the chemistry of skin colour. Melanin, the pigment responsible for skin colour, also protects the skin from ultraviolet radiation. Mercury salts inhibit the enzyme involved in melanin produc-

tion, reducing pigmentation and creating the appearance of lighter skin within days. "Mercury is added illegally because it blocks melanin production and gives a quick fairness effect, often within 10 to 15 days," says Dr Tushar Palve, medical superintendent of the government-run Cama and Albless Hospital, Mumbai. It is precisely this rapid effect that makes mercury attractive to illegal cosmetic manufacturers.

According to a senior Maharashtra FDA official, the permissible mercury limit in cosmetics is one part per million (ppm). Laboratory analysis of the products seized by the FDA found mercury concentrations 18 to 20 times higher, raising serious concerns about long-term exposure.

## How does mercury affect your health?

Mercury accumulates in kidney tissue, gradually damaging its filtering units. What makes the problem particularly dangerous is that early kidney disease often produces few or no symptoms.

"If the mercury content is extremely high, kidney damage may begin within 10 to 12 days. Even if the quantity is lower, using such creams every day for a few months can

The goal should be healthier skin rather than lighter skin, say doctors



gradually damage the kidneys and other organs. Sometimes symptoms do not appear for years, so patients continue using the toxic cream. They may show signs only when they have reached the stage of requiring dialysis," says Dr Palve. He referred to a case in Nagpur where 18 women reportedly developed kidney disease linked to prolonged use of a cream. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin capable of affecting the brain and nervous system. So prolonged exposure may lead to tremors, memory loss, irritability, anxiety, depression, insomnia and poor concentration. In severe cases, it may also affect hearing and vision.

## How does lead induce toxicity?

Unlike mercury, which has been deliberately used in some skin-lightening creams to inhibit melanin production, lead has no recognised skin-lightening function. Its presence in fairness creams is usually the result of contaminated raw materials, poor manufacturing practices or illegal production, making it a marker of unsafe cosmetics rather than an active ingredient.

"There is no safe level of lead exposure," Dr Palve says, noting that the combined exposure to mercury and lead increases the overall health risk. Lead accumulates in the body and can damage the brain and nervous system, kidneys, blood-forming organs (causing anaemia) and the reproductive system.

## So, the damage begins with the skin?

Ironically, products marketed to improve appearance may first damage the skin they are meant to beautify. Mercury-containing creams may cause persistent rashes, acne, abnormal pigmentation, skin discoloration and increased sensitivity. Prolonged exposure may thin the skin and make it more vulnerable to injury. "Persistent pigmentation should be evaluated by a dermatologist because different pigmentary disorders require different treatments. Daily sunscreen use, a proper diagnosis and evidence-based therapy are far safer than unsupervised use of potent depigmenting creams. The goal should always be healthy skin rather than lighter skin," says Dr Usha N. Khemani, associate professor in the Department of Dermatology at Grant Government Medical College and Sir JJ Group of Hospitals.

Her department OPD is seeing increasing numbers of young patients who have experimented with multiple cosmetic products before seeking medical care. "Teenagers, brides-to-be and regular social media users are among those most influenced by online beauty trends. By the time they come to us, their skin is damaged," she says.

## What should consumers look for?

Consumers should ensure that the label carries complete manufacturer details, manufacturing and expiry dates, batch number and a full list of ingredients.

**Topic**

**Issue**

**Main Concern**

**Health Impact**

**Regulator**

**Reason for Warning**

**Details (English)**

Toxic chemicals in skin-lightening creams

High levels of mercury and lead

Kidney damage, brain damage, skin disorders

Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Unsafe mercury levels found in cosmetic products

**हिंदी**

त्वचा गोरी करने वाली क्रीमों में विषैले रसायन

पारा (Mercury) और सीसा (Lead) की अधिक मात्रा

गुर्दे, मस्तिष्क और त्वचा को नुकसान

महाराष्ट्र खाद्य एवं औषधि प्रशासन

कॉस्मेटिक उत्पादों में अत्यधिक पारा पाया गया

## Background

India has a large market for **skin-lightening (fairness) creams**. Some manufacturers illegally add **heavy metals**, especially **mercury**, to produce quick skin-lightening effects by suppressing melanin production.

The Maharashtra FDA recently identified several cosmetic products containing mercury levels far above the permissible limit and warned consumers against their use.

## Why is Mercury Added?

### Mechanism

Melanin is the pigment responsible for skin colour and also helps protect the skin from ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Mercury salts:

- Inhibit enzymes involved in melanin production.
- Reduce pigmentation.
- Make the skin appear lighter within **10–15 days**.

This rapid effect makes mercury attractive to illegal manufacturers despite its severe health risks.

## Permissible Limit

| Parameter                              | Details                                              |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Permissible Mercury Limit in Cosmetics | <b>1 part per million (1 ppm)</b>                    |
| Mercury Found in Seized Samples        | <b>18–20 times higher than the permissible limit</b> |

# How Does Mercury Affect the Body?

Mercury is absorbed through the skin and gradually accumulates in various organs.

## Organs Affected

- Kidneys
  - Brain
  - Nervous system
  - Skin
  - Eyes
  - Ears
- 

## Kidney Damage

Mercury accumulates in kidney tissues and damages the filtering units (nephrons).

### Effects

- Protein leakage in urine
- Reduced kidney function
- Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)
- Kidney failure
- Dialysis in severe cases

### Timeline

- **Very high mercury exposure:** Kidney damage may begin within **10–12 days**.
  - **Lower but repeated exposure:** Damage may develop gradually over months or years.
-

## Brain and Nervous System Effects

Mercury is a potent **neurotoxin**.

### Symptoms

- Tremors
- Memory loss
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Poor concentration
- Hearing impairment
- Vision problems (severe cases)

---

## Skin Damage

Ironically, creams marketed to improve appearance may first damage the skin.

### Effects

- Persistent rashes
- Acne
- Skin discoloration
- Abnormal pigmentation
- Increased skin sensitivity
- Thinning of the skin
- Greater vulnerability to injury

## What About Lead?

Unlike mercury, **lead has no skin-lightening function**. Its presence usually results from:

- Contaminated raw materials
- Poor manufacturing practices
- Illegal production

Lead can damage:

- Brain
- Nervous system
- Kidneys
- Blood-forming organs (causing anaemia)
- Reproductive system

**There is no known safe level of lead exposure.**

---

## Combined Exposure: Mercury + Lead

Exposure to both heavy metals increases health risks, including:

- Greater kidney damage
- Severe neurological disorders
- Blood disorders
- Developmental and reproductive effects

# What Should Consumers Do?

## Before Buying Cosmetics

- Purchase only from authorised sellers.
- Check for:
  - Manufacturer details
  - Manufacturing and expiry dates
  - Batch number
  - Complete ingredient list
- Avoid products making unrealistic "instant fairness" claims.
- Consult a dermatologist for persistent pigmentation problems.

---

## Safer Alternatives

Doctors recommend:

- Daily sunscreen use (SPF 30 or higher, broad-spectrum)
- Proper diagnosis of pigmentation disorders
- Evidence-based dermatological treatments
- Focus on **healthy skin rather than lighter skin**

# Mercury Poisoning (Minamata Disease)

One of the best-known examples of mercury toxicity is **Minamata Disease**, first identified in **Japan** in the 1950s after industrial mercury contamination of seafood.

## Symptoms

- Numbness
- Loss of coordination
- Muscle weakness
- Vision and hearing impairment
- Birth defects in severe prenatal exposure

This incident led to stronger global controls on mercury use.

---

## The Minamata Convention on Mercury

| Particular | Details                                                                                    |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adopted    | 2013                                                                                       |
| In Force   | 2017                                                                                       |
| Objective  | Protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic mercury emissions and releases |
| India      | Party to the Convention                                                                    |



## Authority

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)

State Food and Drug Administrations (FDAs)

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)



## Role

National regulation of drugs and cosmetics

Enforcement, inspections, sampling and prosecution

Governs manufacture and sale of cosmetics and medicines

Standards for cosmetic quality and safety



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# Word of the day

## **Tacit:**

implied by or inferred from actions or statements

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**Synonyms:** implied, hinted

---

**Usage:** *There was a tacit agreement that he would pay off the loan.*

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**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/tacit

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**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /ˈtæ.s.ɪt/

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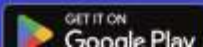


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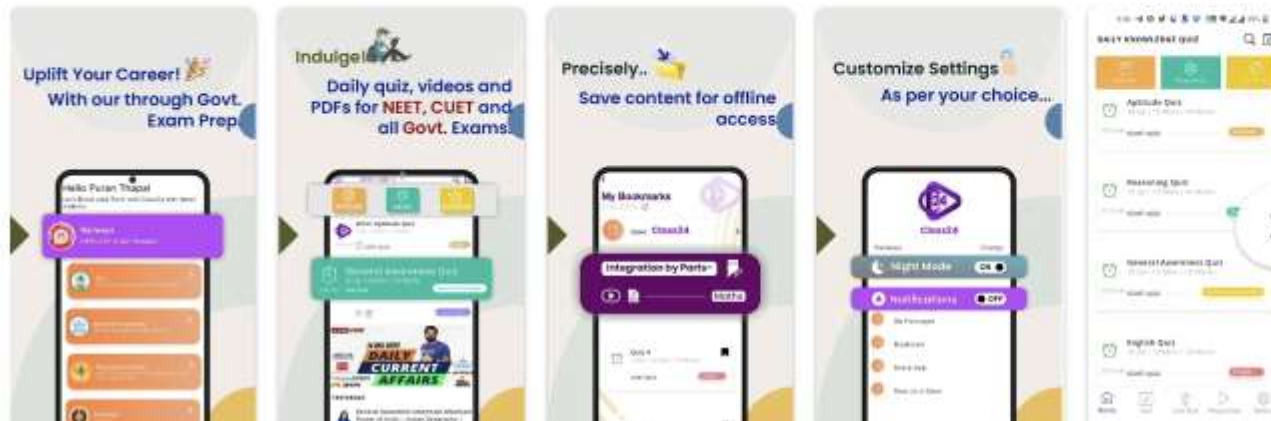
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