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The Hindu



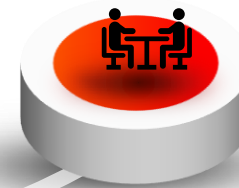
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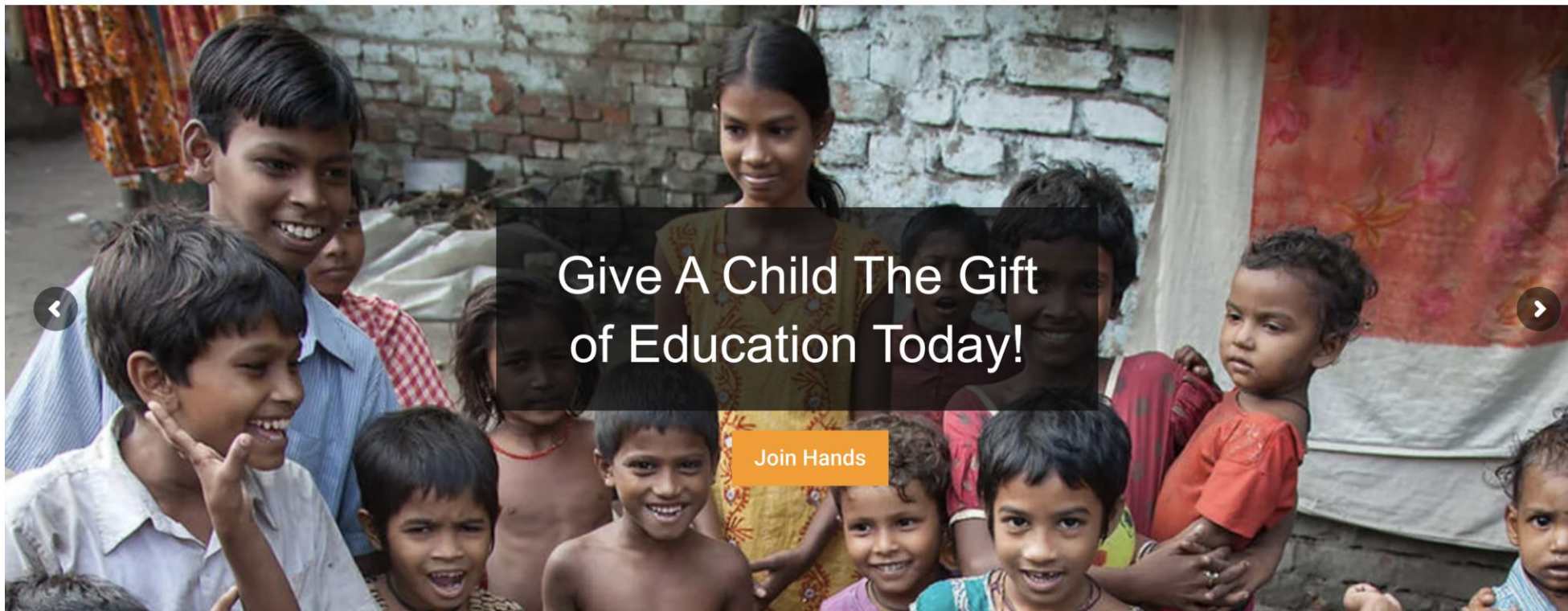
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5,534
Volunteers



671
Contributors



1,231
Kids



24
States



Health is not valued
till sickness comes.

Thomas Fuller

“ quote fancy

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Restore forest or officials may go to jail
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CAPTAIN RETURNS
Rajat Patidar joins RCB training session
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Put Pak. nuclear arsenal under watch: India

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh cites concerns over the 'irresponsible' conduct of Pakistan

He questions the security of nuclear arsenal and calls for its supervision by the global watchdog

He underscores India's resolve to fight terrorism and lauds armed forces for Operation Sindoor

Poorvada Ashia
SRINAGAR

In his first visit to Jammu and Kashmir following the launch of Operation Sindoor, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday questioned the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and called for its supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), citing concerns over what he described as "irresponsible" conduct by the neighbouring country. Addressing soldiers at the Badami Bagh Cantonment in Srinagar on Thursday, Mr. Singh said, "We will never yield to nuclear blackmail. Pakistan's reckless nuclear threats have not deterred terrorism. I ask the global community — are nuclear weapons safe in the hands of such an irresponsible and rogue nation? These

weapons must come under IAEA supervision."

The Minister reaffirmed India's evolving stance on national security and counter-terrorism, crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi with redefining the country's policy framework. "Any attack on Indian soil is no longer viewed as an isolated act of violence — it is treated as an act of war," he said. Mr. Singh described Operation Sindoor as the "largest and most decisive action against terrorism in Indian history." Referring to the Pahalgam terror attack, he added that the offensive was not only about retribution but also about asserting India's commitment to proactive defence. "Terrorists targeted Indians based on their 'dharma'; we targeted them based on their 'karma'. It was our dharma to eliminate them," he said.



High morale: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh meets troops at Badami Bagh Cantonment in Srinagar on Thursday. PTI

He asserted that the operation had sent an "unmistakable" message to terrorist outfits and their handlers across the border. "Our forces have demonstrated precise targeting capabilities, and the task of counting casualties

is now left to the enemy," he said.

Indigenous capability
Highlighting the government's push for indigenous defence capability, the Minister noted that modern arms, missile systems, drones, and communica-

Probe nuclear 'black market' in India: Pak.

Agence France-Presse
ISLAMABAD

Responding to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's remarks on his arsenal, Pakistan on Thursday called for an investigation into a nuclear "black market" in India. "The International Atomic Energy Agency should be

worried about the repeated illicit trafficking incidents involving radioactive material in India," Pakistan's Foreign Ministry claimed in a statement, adding that the incidents "suggest the existence of a black market for sensitive, dual-use materials inside India".

logue with Pakistan, he said, "Talks and terrorism cannot be in hand. If there are to be talks, they will focus solely on terrorism and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir." He also referred to Pakistan's previous commitments, including one

made over two decades ago during the tenure of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, promising to stop exporting terror. "Pakistan has deceived us consistently. It must dismantle terrorist infrastructure and ensure its territory is not used against India," he said. In his address, Mr. Singh extended appreciation to the people of this region, who have withstood the scourge of terror with fortitude," he said. Accompanying the Defence Minister during the visit were J&K Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, and other senior officials.

RELATED REPORTS
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3 terrorists killed in Pulwama, say police

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Three terrorists were killed in a joint operation of the security forces in south Kashmir's Pulwama on Thursday, the police said. "Security forces received information regarding movement of terrorists in that area (Nader, Tral, Awantipora). A cordon was laid. It led to an encounter between the forces and hold-up terrorists," V.K. Bish, Inspector-General of Police, Kashmir, said. According to the Army, the slain terrorists have been identified as Asif Ahmed Sheikh, Amir Naif Wani, and Yawar Ahmed Thane. AK-series rifles, 12 magazines, and various other war-like stores have been recovered, it said. Mr. Bish said the operation was "part of an all-out effort to decimate that terror ecosystem".

INSIDE



Appeals in Waqf cases to be heard on May 20: SC

NEW DELHI
A Supreme Court Bench of Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih on Thursday decided to devote an entire day on May 20 to hear arguments for and against an interim order to stay the provisions of the Waqf Act. "We will not take up any other matters on May 20," the Chief Justice said. » PAGE 4

10 'extremists' gunned down in Manipur

GUWAHATI
The Assam Rifles gunned down 10 armed extremists in Manipur's Chandel district on Thursday. Officials said it was one of the biggest operations in recent years. 110 cadres were neutralised and a sizeable quantity of arms, ammunition have been recovered," the Eastern Command posted on X. » PAGE 4

Jaishankar calls Taliban's Acting Foreign Minister

NEW DELHI
Marking the first Minister-level outreach, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday held a telephone conversation with the Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. The Indo-Pak administration and India have been intensifying dialogue since the outfit came to power in Kabul on August 16, 2021. » PAGE 6

Heat and dust

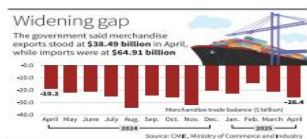


A blanket of dust hangs in the sky over Karyavva Path in New Delhi on Thursday, as a mirage forms on a hot afternoon. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Trade deficit grows to \$8.65 billion in April as merchandise imports rise

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India's total trade deficit, counting both merchandise and services, widened to \$8.65 billion in April, compared with \$5.77 billion in April last year, according to the data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry released on Thursday. While briefing the media, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal also mentioned that India's total exports, including merchandise and services, stood at \$824.9 billion in 2024-25, the highest-ever, up 6% from 2023-24. Merchandise exports



grew 9% to \$38.49 billion in April 2025, while the imports of goods grew at a significantly faster 19.1% to \$64.91 billion, as compared to the same month of last year. The merchandise trade deficit, there-

(34.43%), fruits and vegetables (30.72%), and marine products (17.88%) marked a growth in April 2025. The services sector, however, witnessed the opposite trend, with exports widening their lead over imports. Services exports for April, an estimation because the final data from the Reserve Bank of India arrives with a month's lag, grew 17% in April 2025 to \$35.31 billion. Services imports, on the other hand, grew just 4.6% to \$17.54 billion, taking the services trade surplus to \$17.77 billion.

RELIEF IN SERVICE
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T.N. CM slams Presidential Reference to top court on timeline to act on State Bills

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Strongly condemning a Presidential Reference to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution on the timeline imposed for Governors and the President to act on Bills, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday said it was a desperate attempt to weaken democratically elected State governments by placing them under the control of Governors serving as agents of the Centre.

President Droupadi Murmu, in a rare move, had sought the opinion of the Supreme Court through a Presidential Reference to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution, on whether the court can "impose" timelines and prescribe the manner of conduct of Governors and the President while dealing with State Bills sent to them for assent or reservation. Broadly, the Reference asked if judicial orders can dictate by what time and how the President and Governors should function under Articles 200 and 201 of the Constitution.

Mr. Stalin dubbed the move as "an attempt to subvert the Constitutional position" settled by the top court in the Tamil Nadu government's case against the Governor and other precedents. "The President's move to seek clarity arose from an April 8 judgment of the Supreme Court in the case of J.P. Pandey and R. Mahadevan in a petition filed by the Tamil Nadu government challenging the Governor's decision to clear 10 bills, including the Tamil Nadu Bill and his subsequent action to reserve them for

Question of clarity

President Droupadi Murmu has sought clarity from the Supreme Court on the 'scope and contours' of Article 142.

Presidential Reference: Article 143 of the Constitution empowers the President to seek the Supreme Court on questions of law or fact, present or future, of public importance.

The President has raised 14 questions, which include:

- Can SC impose timelines and dictate the manner of exercise of powers by Governor when a Bill is sent for his assent. Is he bound by the assent and advice of the Council of Ministers?
- Can SC impose timelines and dictate the manner of exercise of powers by Governor when a Bill is sent for his assent. Is he bound by the assent and advice of the Council of Ministers?

consideration by the President.

The Reference asked whether, in the absence of any constitutionally prescribed time limit for Governors and President, time limits could be imposed and manner of exercise of powers be prescribed through judicial orders. "Can the Constitutional powers of the President/Governors be substituted by a judicial order exercising Article 142? Is how the President and Governors should function under Articles 200 and 201 of the Constitution?" it asked.

Indirectly questioning the validity of the "deemed" assent, the Reference has queried if a law made by a State Legislature could even be considered a law in force without the assent of the Governor. "Are decisions of the Governor and the President to judicial review under Articles 200 and 201, respectively, justiciable at a stage prior to even the Bill in question becoming

ing a law?" it asked. It said the "concept of deemed assent" of the President and the Governor, introduced in the judgment, was alien to the constitutional scheme. The Reference has also raised questions about a two-judge Bench of the court pronouncing judgments on "substantial questions of law", without referring it to a minimum five-judge Bench as prescribed under Article 145 (3) of the Constitution. The Reference further asked the court to clarify the constitutional options before a Governor when a Bill is presented to him under Article 200. It raised doubts as to whether the "constitutional discretion" of Governors and the President under Articles 200 and 201, respectively, was even justiciable. "Is Article 361 of the Constitution (immunity given to President and Governors from legal action while in office) an absolute bar to judicial review in relation to the assent of a Governor under Article 200?" the Presidential Reference sought.

Question of clarity

President Droupadi Murmu has sought clarity from the Supreme Court on the 'scope and contours' of Article 142

Presidential Reference:

Article 143 of the Constitution empowers the President to seek advice from the Supreme Court on questions of law or fact, present or future, of public importance

The President has raised 14 questions, which include:

- Can SC impose timelines and dictate the manner of exercise of powers by Governors and the President under Article 200, 201, respectively?

- Can deemed consent to Bills be given through a judicial order?

- What are constitutional options before a Governor when a Bill is sent for his assent. Is he bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers?



INBRIEF

Former Defence Secretary takes charge as UPSC head

Former Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar took charge as Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Thursday. He was administered the oath of secrecy by Lt. Gen. Raj Shukla (Retd.), the senior-most member of the Commission. Mr. Kumar belongs to the 1985 batch of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) of Kerala Cadre. During a career spanning 35 years, he has served in key positions in the Kerala Government as well as in the Centre. In his last assignment, he served as Secretary, Ministry of Defence.

Tushar Mehta to lead lawyers' team in Tahawwur Rana trial

The Centre has appointed a team of lawyers headed by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta for the trial against extradited Pakistani-Canadian terrorist Tahawwur Hussain Rana in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack case. In a notification, the MHA said the appointment has been made exercising the powers conferred under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. The NIA secured Rana's extradition from the U.S. after years of sustained efforts and arrested him on April 10 upon his arrival here. Rana is accused of being involved in the conspiracy behind the 2008 strikes orchestrated by Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba in which 166 people were killed and over 238 injured.

Centre to step up diplomatic outreach on Indo-Pak. clash

Govt. will form teams comprising leaders from across political lines, who will visit key capital cities across the world and interact with govt. and civil society groups to present India's case

Suhasini Halder
Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

The government is planning to send multi-party delegations for a diplomatic outreach to other countries to present India's point of view on the recent India-Pakistan conflict in the wake of the Pahalgam attack, in which 26 tourists were killed by unidentified terrorists.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) did not respond to requests for a comment on the plan and why the government would do so. The government said it was required. The government's move to mobilise all-party delegations and send similar initiatives by previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and National Democratic Alliance (NDA) governments aimed to make India's case abroad on crucial issues.

As per sources, the delegations will comprise prominent leaders and parliamentarians from across the political lines. It will also have former cabinet ministers, other specialists. The multiple groups will head off for different destinations across the world on May



Tricolour shivers BJP workers hold a "Tringa" march in support of 'Operation Sindoor', in Srinagar on Thursday. ANAND/ANSA

Singh, to lead the military briefings.

"The idea is to bring the focus back on the core issue of terrorism, which perhaps has not received the necessary attention from the world leaders," an Opposition Rajya Sabha member said.

The Indian government strongly refuted U.S. President Donald Trump's claim on his behind-the-scenes role in bringing the hostilities between India and Pakistan to a pause. Under Operation Sindoor, India conducted strikes on nine terror locations inside Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on May 7.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal at a press conference in the capital on May 13 said that the government did not deviate from its stated policy, that "any issues pertaining to the Pakistan Union Territory of J&K have to be addressed by India and Pakistan bilaterally".

Past governments too were reached out across the globe to assist them in presenting the country's view point and for better people-to-people outreach. In 1994, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao sent Leader of the Opposition Atal Bihari Vajpayee, former J&K Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, Salman Khurshid and other leaders to make India's case at the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) in Geneva, where a Pakistan-sponsored resolution that sought to censure India on human rights in J&K was defeated.

MP and former Human Resources Development Minister Kapil Sibal had appealed to the government last week to consider sending such delegations after Operation Sindoor. He had led a similar delegation to Africa in 2008.

Jaishankar speaks with Taliban's Acting Foreign Minister

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Marking the first Minister-level outreach to the Taliban administration in Afghanistan, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday held a telephone conversation with the Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. The conversation came days after the Taliban administration had agreed to officially recognise, condemn the deadly terror strike in Pahalgam of April 22 that left 26 innocents dead and dozens injured.

"Good conversation with Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi this evening. Deeply appreciate his condemnation of the Pahalgam terrorist attack," said Mr. Jaishankar in a message. Mr. Muttaqi had hosted senior Indian diplomat Anand Prakash in Kabul on April 27 against the backdrop of growing India-Pakistan hostilities following the attack in Pahalgam.

The Taliban administration has been intensifying ties since the outfit first came to power in Kabul on August 16, 2021, though India has not yet fully normalised relations with the outfit. India's official policy has fo-

Muttaqi condemns the terror strike in Pahalgam on April 22 that left 26 dead

cused on the wellbeing of the Afghan people and in that direction, the Government of India has allowed the Taliban to gradually take charge of the Afghan missions in Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad to cater to the consular requirements of Afghan students, visitors and businesspersons.

"No Taliban link" Rebutting reports in Pakistan media that attempted to link the Taliban with the developments in Kashmir, Mr. Jaishankar further said, "Welcomed his firm rejection of recent attempts to create distrust between India and Afghanistan through false and baseless reports."

Hafiz Zia Ahmed, director of public communication at the Taliban's "Ministry of Foreign Affairs", made a detailed post on X announcing that Mr. Muttaqi asked Mr. Jaishankar to help in securing more Indian visas for Afghan patients and visitors. He also urged the Government of India to help in freeing Afghan prisoners in Indian jails.

Gig workers' meeting demands minimum wages, social security

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A roundtable held here on Thursday on platform work in the country recommended minimum wages, social security and legal protections for gig and platform workers. The meeting, organised by a tripartite welfare board for gig workers in the States and at the Central level comprising representatives from employers, employees and governments.

The meeting, titled "Current developments, challenges and way forward", organised by a non-governmental organisation, Janpahal, and the Gig Workers Association decided to foster dialogue between stakeholders to identify the way forward in ensuring gig workers' rights within the context of existing policy develop-



Valuing concerns: At the roundtable held in Delhi on Thursday, gig workers highlighted the 'harsh realities' they face in the sector.

ments. Janpahal secretary Dharmendra Kumar said the outcome of the meeting would be sent to the policymakers so that a more equitable gig economy could be created in the country. Representatives from the Union and State governments and international organisations addressed the meeting.

society also looks at them with disrespect. Most of these workers are not yet organised, and there are only a few initiatives to organise them. Companies are thwarting any attempts to the workers to organise and unionise themselves. Any initiative for organising, protesting and raising demands is met with termination of work," a statement issued after the meeting said.

The meeting demanded a minimum wage/income in the rate cards for workers should be stopped," it demanded adding that surcharge collected from consumers should be properly shared with the workers. It also urged the Centre to declare a social security policy for online platform workers.

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is gearing up for its 101st launch with the PSLV-C61 or EOS-09 mission to be launched at 5:59 a.m. on Sunday from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The ISRO on Thursday said the PSLV was moved from the Payload Integration Facility to the Mobile Service Tower at the spaceport in Sriharikota for further integration.

EOS-09 is an earth observation satellite which is expected to boost India's surveillance capabilities in all-weather conditions. The satellite is equipped with a C-band Synthetic Aperture Radar enabling capturing of high-resolution images of earth's surface under all-weather con-



Collaboration on: Participants at a meet of the ISRO and JAXA in Bengaluru on May 13 and 14 for the Chandrayaan-5 mission. ISRO

ditions round the clock.

Chandrayaan-5 meet The ISRO and the JAXA, the space agency of Japan, jointly conducted the third face-to-face Technical Interface Meeting (TIM-3), for the Chandrayaan-5/Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission at ISRO Headquarters in Bengaluru on May 13 and 14. The meeting was attended by senior officials, pro-

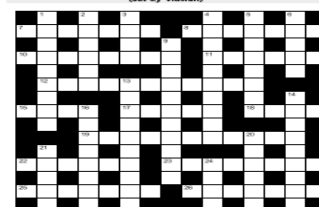
ject executives, and technical team members from the ISRO, JAXA, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), Japan.

Following the legacy of Chandrayaan-1, Chandrayaan-2 (orbiter-based lunar exploration), Chandrayaan-3 (lander-rover based in-situ exploration) and the forthcoming Chandrayaan-4 (India's first lunar sample return mission), the Chandrayaan-5/

LUPEX mission will be the fifth mission in the Chandrayaan series of lunar missions, in collaboration with JAXA, to study the lunar volatile materials, including lunar water, in the vicinity of a Permanently Shadowed Region in the lunar south pole," ISRO said.

The mission will be launched by JAXA onboard its H3-24L launch vehicle, carrying the ISRO-made lunar lander, which will carry the MHI, Japan-made rover. ISRO, apart from developing the lunar lander, is also responsible for developing a few scientific instruments for the mission. The scientific instruments for this mission would be contributed by ISRO, JAXA, ESA and NASA, all therapeutically connected with the exploration and in-situ analysis of the volatiles reserved in the lunar polar region.

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- Across
- 7 Timeless quotes about one American giant found in the woods (7)
 - 8 Fat black bumpkin (7)
 - 9 Get real upset about ordinary, true character (5,3)
 - 11 Profusion about Pope's heehee (8)
 - 12 As if it has no variety for someone interested in haute couture (1,1)

- Down
- 1 Go slow inside city (4)
 - 17 Mixing pain and love softly (15)
 - 18 Certainly hard to follow most of class (4)
 - 19 Called in are soldiers! Time for understanding! (11)
 - 22 Take off day to teach (not American, not English) (6)
 - 23 No, no! Certainly not! Time Spirit's almost all gone permanently! (8)
 - 25 Sea creature, bold and fiercely alive, gobbles up heart of diver (7)
 - 26 Wasting years in sarcasm, out of bounds wise men from time of Sargams or Kiezhadi (4,3)
 - 27 Judge's playful, grabs lady's sides, stingy creature! (9)
 - 28 A threat can be assured (6)
 - 29 Sounds like correct practice (4)
 - 30 Oldest boom in form of a precious mineral (10)
 - 31 Release notice (8)
 - 32 Mostly notice odd part of blood (5)
 - 33 An unfit peon becoming a writer! (4,3)
 - 34 Critical: Cry not - Work hard at home ignoring one's heart! (10)
 - 35 Mostly oriental sense of pride, passing over good chocolate candy (5,2)
 - 36 Prophetic visual about Gummies (8)
 - 37 Some term in English for fur (6)
 - 38 Foreigner involves in crime to get established (3,2)
 - 39 Get container for audience (4)

SUDOKU

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6	4	8	1	2	3	7	9	5

FAITH

Idol made by Bhogar

Pazhani hill is known by different names - Sivagiri, Sakthigiri and Idumban Malai. Arunagirinatha has sung 96 Tiruppugazh verses in praise of Pazhani Murugan. Because many siddhars lived in Pazhani, it is also called Siddhan Vazhavu, said T. Rajaratnam in a discourse. Using nine medicinal herbs, the siddhar Bhogar made the idol of Murugan that we worship today. The herbs he used were - lingam, veeram, peoram, talagam, manosila, gauri vellai, pashanam, gandhakam, kudirippal pashanam and rasa senaram. There is a symbolism behind the use of nine herbs. The number nine is significant here. Hindu philosophy talks of navadhara (nine holes), for the exit of waste and bodily fluids - two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, anus and genitalia. The body is the house in which the atma resides. This house has nine exit points, and this house is cleaned of all doshas by Pazhani Murugan. The Murugan idol made of nine herbs symbolises this. A substance known as moovpu or karma has been used in the forehead, chest and below the hip.

Abhisheka for Murugan is done with oil, gooseberry extract, milk, curd, ghee, turmeric, sugarcane juice, honey, panchamirtham (made with the pulp of fruits), sandal paste, rose water, tender coconut water, tapana kalasa water (water to which cardamom, cloves, edible camphor etc are added). These abhishekas help preserve the image made by Bhogar with navapashanam. Pamban Swamikal was a great devotee of Pazhani Murugan. He wrote 120 verses, in which he referred to Pazhani Murugan as Dan-dayudhapani. However, Pamban Swamikal did not visit Pazhani even once.

ISRO set to launch earth observation satellite using PSLV rocket on Sunday

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is all geared up for its 101st launch with the PSLV-C61 / EOS-09 mission to be launched at 5.59 a.m. on Sunday from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The ISRO on Thursday said the PSLV was moved from the Payload Integration Facility to the Mobile Service Tower at the spaceport in Sriharikota for further integration.

EOS-09 is an earth observation satellite which is expected to boost India's surveillance capabilities in all-weather conditions. The satellite is equipped with C-band synthetic aperture radar enabling capturing of high-resolution images of earth's surface under all-weather con-



Collaboration on: Participants at a meet of the ISRO and JAXA in Bengaluru on May 13 and 14 for the Chandrayaan-5 mission. ISRO

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Chandrayaan-5 meet

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1. Key Highlights:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch the PSLV-C61/EOS-09 mission at **5:59 a.m. on Sunday** from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre**, Sriharikota.
- The satellite to be launched is **EOS-09**, an **earth observation satellite** aimed at enhancing **India's surveillance capabilities** under **all-weather conditions**.

2. Technical Features of EOS-09:

- **Equipped with C-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR):**
 - Enables **high-resolution imaging** of Earth's surface, irrespective of weather conditions.
 - Enhances **surveillance along India's borders** and **coastlines**.
- **Applications:**
 - **Border surveillance:** Keeps a check on sensitive areas, particularly in the **north and northeastern regions**.
 - **Disaster management:** Assists in tracking **natural disasters** like floods and landslides.
 - **Environmental monitoring:** Tracks changes in **land cover** and **deforestation**.

3. Chandrayaan-5 Mission:

- **Collaborative Effort:**
 - Joint mission between **ISRO** and **JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency)**.
 - Conducted the **third face-to-face Technical Interface Meeting (TIM-3)** for **Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) Mission** on May 13 and 14 in Bengaluru.
- **Objective:**
 - To **study lunar volatile materials**, including **lunar water**, in a **Permanently Shadowed Region (PSR)** of the **lunar south pole**.
- **Launch Vehicle:**
 - **H3-24L Launch Vehicle:** Provided by **JAXA**.
 - **ISRO-made lunar lander** to carry the **MHI, Japan-made lunar rover**.

- **Historical Context:**
 - Builds on the **legacy of previous Chandrayaan missions:**
 - **Chandrayaan-1 (orbiter),**
 - **Chandrayaan-2 (orbiter-based lunar exploration),**
 - **Chandrayaan-3 (lander-rover based in-situ exploration).**
 - **LUPEX Mission:** Planned as a **joint exploration of lunar water and volatiles.**
-

4. Collaboration and Scientific Contributions:

- The mission also includes **scientific instruments developed by ISRO, JAXA, ESA, and NASA.**
- Instruments are designed to support **in-situ analysis of volatiles in the lunar polar region.**

RIL gets \$2.9 bn in India's biggest loan since 2023

FE BUREAU
Mumbai, May 15

RELIANCE INDUSTRIES (RIL) HAS secured a dual-currency loan worth \$2.9 billion, according to sources. It is the largest offshore loan raised by an Indian company in over a year.

The loan agreement was signed last week and will see participation of 55 banks, making it the largest bank group for a syndicated loan in Asia so far this year.

The loan is split into two parts: a \$2.4-billion tranche in US dollars and a second tranche in Japanese yen valued at 67.7 billion yen (\$462 million).

This transaction has pushed foreign currency loan volumes raised by Indian companies to around \$10.4 billion so far in 2025 — the quickest year-to-date pace in at least a decade, Bloomberg data showed.

While syndicated lending in the broader Asia-Pacific region (excluding Japan) has slumped to a two-decade low of \$29 billion in G3 currencies—US dollars, euros and yen—India has stood out.

The latest borrowing comes as the Mukesh Ambani-helmed company continues to ramp up investment across its diverse businesses. In his address at RIL's annual general meeting (AGM) in August 2024, Ambani had laid out an ambitious roadmap, stating the group aimed to break into the world's 30 most valuable companies, up from its current position in the top 50.

Ambani pointed to the group's increasing focus on deep technology and advanced manufacturing—which necessitated increased investments. He also outlined new plans for the company's 'new energy' division, projecting it to match the scale and profitability of Reliance's traditional oil-to-chem-

DUAL CURRENCY



■ The loan agreement was signed last week and will see participation of 55 banks



■ The loan is split into a **\$2.4 billion** tranche in US dollars and a second tranche in Japanese yen valued at **67.7 bn yen**

■ The transaction has pushed foreign currency loan volumes raised by Indian firm to around **\$10.4 bn** so far in 2025

■ Reliance Industries has repayments worth **\$2.9 bn**, including interest payments, due this year

icals (O2C) business within five to seven years.

The group also committed to major investments in biogas, plastics and polyester production. These include the establishment of 55 compressed biogas plants by 2025, a pilot project for an integrated energy plantation, and expanded capacity in polyvinyl chloride (PVC), chlorinated PVC (CPVC), and specialty polyester by 2026–27.

RIL has repayments worth about \$2.9 billion, including interest payments, due in 2025, Bloomberg data show.

1. Key Highlights:

- **Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL)** has secured a **dual-currency offshore loan** worth **\$2.9 billion**, the **largest offshore loan** raised by an Indian company in over a year.
 - The loan is split into two parts:
 - **\$2.4 billion** tranche in **US dollars**.
 - **67.7 billion yen (\$462 million)** tranche in **Japanese yen**.
-

2. Loan Details:

- The agreement was signed last week, involving **55 banks**, marking it the **largest bank group for a syndicated loan in Asia** for this year.
- The transaction has pushed **foreign currency loan volumes** raised by Indian companies in 2025 to around **\$10.4 billion**, the fastest year-to-date pace in a decade.

3. Economic Context:

- **Syndicated Lending Trends:**
 - Syndicated lending in the **Asia-Pacific region** (excluding Japan) has dropped to a **two-decade low of \$29 billion** in **G3 currencies** (US dollars, euros, yen).
 - Despite the overall slump, **India stands out** with RIL's significant borrowing.
- **Foreign Currency Loans in 2025:**
 - Indian companies raised **\$10.4 billion** in foreign currency loans, indicating the **quickest year-to-date pace** in a decade.

4. Strategic Investments:

- **Expansion Plans:**
 - At RIL's annual general meeting (AGM) in **August 2024**, Mukesh Ambani laid out an **ambitious roadmap** aiming to make RIL one of the **top 30 most valuable companies globally** from its current position in the **top 50**.
- **Key Investment Areas:**
 - **New Energy Division:**
 - Focus on **advanced manufacturing** and **green energy**.
 - Plans to expand the **oil-to-chemicals (O2C)** business within **5 to 7 years**.
 - **Biogas and Plastics:**
 - **55 compressed biogas plants** by 2025.
 - Integrated **energy plant projects**.
 - Expansion in **PVC, CPVC, and specialty polyester** production by **2026-27**.

Putin 'afraid'
Nevertheless, the fact the meeting took place at all was a sign of movement. Putin declined to travel to Turkey for the meeting, which he had proposed, sending a second-level delegation instead. Zelensky said Putin was "afraid" of meeting, and criticised Russia for not taking the talks "seriously".

Both Moscow and Washington have talked up the need for a meeting between Putin and US President Donald Trump on the conflict.

Trump has said "nothing's going to happen" on the conflict until he meets Putin face-to-face.

Russia, Ukraine will swap prisoners but fail to agree on truce at talks in Türkiye

Agence France-Presse
ISTANBUL

Russia and Ukraine agreed a large-scale prisoner exchange, said they would trade ideas on a possible ceasefire and discussed a potential meeting between Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Vladimir Putin in their first direct talks in over three years on Friday.

But coming out of the highly anticipated talks in Istanbul, which lasted just over 90 minutes, there were few signs of more significant progress toward ending the three-year war.

Kyiv was seeking an “unconditional ceasefire” to pause a conflict that has destroyed large swathes of Ukraine and displaced millions of people.

Moscow has consistently rebuffed those calls, and the only concrete agreement appeared to be a deal to exchange 1,000 prisoners each.

‘Satisfied with results’

The two sides also said they would “present their vision of a possible future ceasefire”, said Russia’s top negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky. Russia also took note of Ukraine’s request for a meeting of Presidents Putin and Zelenskyy, he said. “Overall, we are satisfied with the results and



Common ground: Russian, Ukrainian and Türkiye officials at the talks in Istanbul on Friday. AFP

ready to continue contacts,” Mr. Medinsky added.

Ukraine’s top negotiator, Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, confirmed the prisoner swap in a separate statement and also said a ceasefire and a possible presidential meeting had been discussed.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, who presided over the talks, said the sides had “agreed in principle to meet again” and would present ceasefire ideas “in writing”.

Mr. Fidan sat at the head of a table - with Russian and Ukrainian delegations facing each other, footage from the room showed.

But progress on more fundamental issues appeared minimal.

During the talks, a Ukrainian source told AFP

that Russia was making “unacceptable” territorial demands in a bid to derail negotiations.

Putin ‘afraid’

Nevertheless, the fact the meeting took place at all was a sign of movement. Putin declined to travel to Turkey for the meeting, which he had proposed, sending a second-level delegation instead. Zelenskyy said Putin was “afraid” of meeting, and criticised Russia for not taking the talks “seriously”.

Both Moscow and Washington have talked up the need for a meeting between Putin and US President Donald Trump on the conflict.

Trump has said “nothing’s going to happen” on the conflict until he meets Putin face-to-face.

1. Key Highlights:

- **Russia and Ukraine** agreed to a **large-scale prisoner exchange** during talks in **Istanbul**, but failed to reach a **ceasefire agreement**.
 - The discussions marked the **first direct talks in over three years** between representatives from both sides.
 - The **only concrete outcome** was an agreement to **exchange 1,000 prisoners each**.
-

2. Details of the Talks:

- The talks lasted over **90 minutes** and were held in Istanbul, mediated by **Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan**.
- Russia and Ukraine **expressed satisfaction** with the progress made, though **no ceasefire agreement** was finalized.
- The **Ukrainian side** demanded an "**unconditional ceasefire**", but **Moscow refused**.
- The meeting also involved discussions on a **potential meeting between Presidents Putin and Zelenskyy**.

3. Statements and Reactions:

- **Russia's Stance:**
 - Russian top negotiator **Vladimir Medinsky** stated that they would **present their vision** for a **possible future ceasefire**.
 - Russia termed **Ukraine's demands** as "**unacceptable**", which they believe are intended to **derail the talks**.
- **Ukraine's Stance:**
 - **Ukraine's Defence Minister Rustem Umerov** confirmed the **prisoner swap** and indicated that **ceasefire proposals** were discussed.
 - **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy** criticized **Putin** for not attending the talks, calling it a sign of "**fear**" and a lack of seriousness.

CJI praises Justice Bela Trivedi for being firm, fearless, and dedicated

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai on Friday lauded Justice Bela M. Trivedi for her meteoric rise from the subordinate judiciary to become the 11th woman judge appointed to the Supreme Court.

Justice Trivedi is retiring on June 9, but Friday marked her last working day. Chief Justice Gavai and Justice A.G. Masih accompanied Justice Trivedi on the Ceremonial Bench held in honour of the retiring judge.

The Chief Justice said he found Justice Trivedi firm, fearless, and dedicated as a judge. Justice Trivedi, who was elevated to the top court on August 31, 2021, was hailed by members of the Bar, Attorney-General R. Venkataramani, and Sol-



Justice Bela M. Trivedi

itor-General Tushar Mehta.

The Chief Justice, however, deplored the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) for deciding to not hold the traditional official farewell ceremony for Justice Trivedi.

“There are different types of judges. There are some who give relief. There are others who do not give relief. Judges are ultimately human beings. Everybody has different

views... But I must openly deprecate the stand taken by the association (SCBA)... Such a stand ought not to have been taken by the association,” Chief Justice Gavai said.

The Chief Justice, however, expressed his appreciation to senior advocate Kapil Sibal, president of SCBA, and senior advocate Rachna Shirvastava, vice-president of SCBA, for attending the Ceremonial Bench despite the resolution of the Bar body.

Justice Masih said he was sorry that the traditional SCBA farewell ceremony was not being held.

In her speech, Justice Trivedi reflected on the plurality in the Bench and Bar of the Supreme Court. “Ultimately, what matters most is institutional integrity, which sustains national integrity,” she said.

1. Key Highlights:

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) **B.R. Gavai** praised **Justice Bela M. Trivedi** for her **firmness, fearlessness, and dedication** as a Supreme Court judge.
 - **Justice Trivedi** is the **11th woman judge** appointed to the **Supreme Court** and will retire on **June 9**.
 - Her **last working day** was marked on **Friday**, where CJI Gavai and **Justice A.G. Masih** accompanied her on the **Ceremonial Bench**.
-

2. Achievements and Career:

- Justice Trivedi was **appointed to the Supreme Court** on **August 31, 2021**.
 - She rose from the **subordinate judiciary** to the **apex court**, symbolizing a **meteoric rise** in her career.
 - CJI Gavai appreciated her **tenacity and commitment** to upholding justice, describing her as "**firm, fearless, and dedicated**."
-

3. Controversy Over Farewell:

- CJI Gavai criticized the **Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA)** for **not holding the traditional farewell ceremony** for Justice Trivedi.
 - He openly expressed that **such a decision by SCBA was inappropriate**.
 - However, CJI acknowledged the **presence of senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Rachna Shrivastava** at the Ceremonial Bench despite the SCBA's resolution.
-

4. Justice Trivedi's Reflections:

- In her **farewell speech**, Justice Trivedi emphasized the **plurality of the Bench and Bar** in the Supreme Court.
- She stated that "**institutional integrity**" is more important than **individual perspectives**, emphasizing that **judges are human beings** with **different views**.
- Justice Trivedi expressed that **institutional integrity** is essential to maintain **national integrity**.



Palestinians, including children, competing to get donated food in Khan Younis in Gaza Strip on Friday. AP

More stars join protest letter over Gaza 'genocide'

Agence France-Presse
CANNES

Hollywood heavyweights Joaquin Phoenix, Pedro Pascal, Riz Ahmed and Guillermo del Toro have added their names to a letter condemning the film industry's silence on what it called "genocide" in Gaza, the organisers confirmed on Friday.

The petition, signed by more than 370 actors and filmmakers, also denounced Israel's killing of Fatima Hassouna, the young Gaza photjournalist featured in the documentary *Put Your Soul in Your Hand and Walk*, which premiered at the Cannes film festival on Thursday.

The organisers of the letter said the French actor Juliette Binoche, who is chairing the jury at Cannes, also added her name to the letter, along with Rooney Mara, U.S. indie director Jim Jarmusch and *Lupin* star Omar Sy.

Binoche initially seemed to pull back from supporting it as the festival opened on Tuesday, instead delivering a tribute to Hassouna, who was killed with 10 members of her family the day after she learned the film would be shown at Cannes. "She should have been here tonight with us," an emotional Binoche said at the opening ceremony.

The growing protest comes after several days of mounting bloodshed in the besieged Palestinian territory, with 120 people killed on Thursday and 50 reported dead since midnight.

Schindler's List star Ralph Fiennes as well as Richard Gere, Mark Ruffalo, Guy Pearce, Susan Sarandon, Javier Bardem, and directors David Cronenberg, Pedro Almodovar, Alfonso Cuaron, Mike Leigh said they were "ashamed" of their industry's failure to speak out about Israel's siege of Gaza in the original letter.

'Tipping' point



Defying gravity: Sri Wahyuni, also known by her nickname Ayu, grabs tips from spectators as she rides a motorcycle around the 'wall of death', locally known as 'tong setan' or satan's barrel, at a fairground in Medan in North Sumatra, Indonesia recently. AP

50 years since first woman scaled Everest, a thousandth ascent is on the way

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

On May 16, 1975, Japan's Junko Tabei became the first woman to climb to the top of Mount Everest. Half a century later, the world's highest mountain is set to record its thousandth ascent by a woman.

Scaling the 8,849-metre-high peak has mainly been a male achievement. By May 2025 women had reached the top 962 times, while men had got there 11,255 times, according to an analysis of figures from the Himalayan Database.

Won't be limited

When Ms. Tabei reached the peak of Everest in 1975, 38 men had preceded her.

With her all-woman team, she had struggled to find sponsors for her expedition, often being told that they would be better off looking after their children. "All men limit our likes and I do not want to be limited," Ms. Tabei wrote in her notebook upon her return.

Eleven days later, a Tibetan woman, Phantog, reached the peak from the opposite side. She believed she had got there first, only learning that she had been pipped at the post by Ms. Tabei after she completed her descent.

In her notebook, Ms. Tabei laid out her next objectives: climb K2, the world's second highest peak, and return to work for a scientific journal.

Few woman sherpas

Since then, she has been climbed by 870 different women of 85 different nationalities, some having succeeded several times.



Japan's Junko Tabei (left), the first woman to climb Mount Everest, and Nepalese Lhakpa Sherpa, who has climbed it 10 times.



After Nepal climbers, the United States, India and China have sent the most men to the summit — and sent 39% of the women.

The sherpas, the Nepali guides who accompany their clients up Everest, are almost all men. Everest's home Nepal accounts for half of the ascents by men, but only 9% of those by women: 90 ascents by 66 different women.

Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, who climbed in 2012, is

The Taliban authorities have launched projects ranging from recycling water to building hundreds of small dams across the country, but larger interventions remain hampered by financing and technical capacity.

'Decreasing day by day'

They remain unrecognised by any country since they ousted the Western-backed government and imposed their severe interpretation of Islamic law, with restrictions on women being a

major sticking point.

They have repeatedly called for non-governmental groups to reboot stalled projects on water and climate change, as Afghanistan faces "some of the harshest effects" in the region, according to the United Nations.

The water and energy ministry wants to divert water from the Panjshir river to the capital, but needs \$300 million to \$400 million. A dam project near Kabul would ease pressures but was delayed after

the Taliban takeover.

For now, Kabul's primary drinking water source is groundwater, as much as 80% of which is contaminated, according to a May report by Mercy Corps.

It is tapped by more than 1,000,000 unregulated wells across the city that are regularly deepened or run dry, the NGO said.

Groundwater can be recharged, but more is drawn each year than is replenished in Kabul, with an estimated annual 76-million-cubic-metre (20-



Dry capital: Afghans fill canisters with water from a tanker in Kabul. Private suppliers charge twice as much as the state-owned utility. AP

billion-gallon) deficit, experts say. "It's a very serious problem... Water is decreasing day by day in the city," said Shafullah Zaidi, who heads central Kabul operations for the state-owned water company UWASS.

Water systems designed decades ago serve just 20% of the city's population, which has exploded to around six million over the past 20 years, said Mr. Zaidi.

'Use less water'

At one of Kabul's 15 pumping stations, maintenance manager Mohammad Ihsan said the seven-year-old well is already producing less water. Two others nearby sit dry.

"The places with shallower water levels are dried out now," said 53-year-old Ehsan, who has worked in water management for two decades, as he stood over an old well.

It once produced water from a depth of 70 m, but a newer well had to be bored more than twice as deep to reach groundwater.

Bibi Jan and many other Kabulis are forced to lug water in heavy jugs from wells or buy it from tankers.

These suppliers charge at least twice as much as the state-owned utility, with potable water even more pricier in a country where 85% of the population lives on less than a dollar a day.

Palm oil supplants cash as school fees in DR Congo's rebel-held Goma

Agence France-Presse
GOMA

Cash has become so scarce in Goma, the eastern Congolese city seized by anti-government fighters in January, that some parents are now paying school fees in cans of palm oil.

After the city fell to the M23 group, authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo stopped supplying cash to banks in M23-controlled areas.

Banks have since closed, and parents are all but empty and residents of Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, are forced to fend for themselves for their everyday purchases.

"The priority at the moment is to have something to eat," said Richard Mvuki, a teacher at the Majengo



No takers: Money changers set rates that are out of reach for many people in DR Congo, one of the world's poorest countries. AP

school, as he lifted a can of oil by a parent. "We're just getting by, this situation is untenable," he said.

Goods as fees

Parents "show up at school offering food and the school asks them to present a sample", Augustin Vangitsiwi, an official at

the Majengo school, said. The school then "looks for which teachers are interested" in the goods. "A price is set that corresponds to the market price, then the equivalent currency is entered into the school's accounts before a receipt is issued," Mr. Vangitsiwi said.

It is an interim solution, but one that could drag on.

Talks between the DRC and Rwanda, who have committed to work towards a draft peace agreement, have yet to have any impact on the daily lives of the Congolese living in M23-controlled areas.

Money changers set rates that are out of reach for many people in one of the world's poorest countries, prompting the M23 to announce a fixed rate in order to limit exactions.

The M23 has set up a financial authority while waiting for the banks to re-open and has called on people to put their savings into it. So far it has not been successful and experts believe the authority should be limited to centralising the sums paid to the armed group.

route that that allowed by her permit. Ms. Bradley decided not to claim her achievement at the Nepali tourism ministry, but it was recognised years later.

When women and men are taken together, only 229 ascents, or less than 1%, succeeded without oxygen. Ms. Bradley and only nine other women are on the list. "This is a different ball game from climbing with supplemental oxygen. Maybe women are a little bit more aware of that," Germany's first climbing director of the Himalayan Database which tracks expeditions to the top of Everest, said.

The cost of the ascent varies from \$45,000 to \$200,000.

50 years since first woman scaled Everest, a thousandth ascent is on the way

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

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Scaling the 8,849 metre-high peak has mainly been a male achievement. By May 2025 women had reached the top 962 times, while men had got there 11,955 times, according to an analysis of figures from the Himalayan Database.

Won't 'be limited'

When Ms. Tabei reached the peak of Everest in 1975, 38 men had preceded her.

With her all-woman team, she had struggled to find sponsors for her expedition, often being told that they would be better off looking after their children. "All men limit our likes and I do not want to be limited," Ms. Tabei wrote in her notebook upon her return.

Eleven days later, a Tibetan woman, Phantog, reached the peak from the opposite side. She believed she had got there first, only learning that she had been pipped at the post by Ms. Tabei after she completed her descent.

In her notebook, Ms. Tabei laid out her next objectives: climb K2, the world's second highest peak, and return to work for a scientific journal.



Japan's Junko Tabei (left), the first woman to climb Mount Everest, and Nepalese Lhakpa Sherpa, who has claimed the female record for the number of ascents: by May she had done 10. AFP

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After Nepali climbers, the United States, India and China have sent the most men to the summit – and sent 39% of the women.

The sherpas, the Nepali guides who accompany their clients up Everest, are

almost all men. Everest's home Nepal accounts for half of the ascents by men, but only 9% of those by women: 90 ascents by 66 different women.

Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, who climbed in 2012, is

currently the only woman to be a certified Nepali guide who received an international diploma in 2018. "This is a challenging field, even more so if you are a girl. There were people who said this is not a girl's job, that I won't get work," she said.

Before her, Pasang Lhamu in 1993 became the first Nepali woman to reach the top of Everest. During her descent she remained back with a colleague who was suffering from altitude sickness and both died of exhaustion. She became a national heroine and the trek from base camp at Everest today starts with an arch paying tribute to her.

Her successor Lhakpa

Sherpa, the second Nepali woman to reach the summit in 2000, has since claimed the female record for the number of ascents: by May she had done 10.

No oxygen

Thirteen years after Junko Tabei, New Zealand's Lydia Bradey became in 1988 the first woman to reach the summit without an oxygen bottle, a respiratory aid which compensates for the effects of altitude. As she made the ascent on her own, the other members of her expedition returned to the Nepali capital of Kathmandu, where they publicly cast doubt on her success.

Facing being thrown out for having taken another

route than that allowed by her permit, Ms. Bradey decided not to claim her achievement at the Nepali tourism ministry, but it was recognised years later.

When women and men are taken together, only 229 ascents, or less than 1%, succeeded without oxygen. Ms. Bradey and only nine other women are on the list. "This is a different ball game from climbing with supplemental oxygen. Maybe women are a little bit more aware of that," Germany's Billi Bierling, the director of the Himalayan Database which tracks expeditions to the top of Everest, said.

The cost of the ascent varies from \$45,000 to \$200,000.

1. Historical Context:

- On May 16, 1975, Japan's **Junko Tabei** became the **first woman** to climb **Mount Everest**.
 - The peak of **8,849 meters** (world's highest mountain) had predominantly seen **male climbers**.
 - By **May 2025**, women have reached the summit **962 times**, while men have reached it **11,955 times**.
 - The data comes from the **Himalayan Database**.
-

2. Key Facts and Milestones:

Junko Tabei's Achievement:

- Faced resistance from sponsors who suggested she should be taking care of children.
- Documented her thoughts in a notebook, expressing her resolve to "**not be limited**" by societal expectations.
- Planned to scale **K2**, the second-highest peak, and return for a **scientific journal**.

3. Women in Mountaineering:

Challenges Faced:

- Since **1975**, **870 different women from 85 nationalities** have climbed Everest.
- However, women account for **only 9% of total ascents** (90 ascents by 66 different women from Nepal).
- **Dawa Yangzum Sherpa** became the only **certified Nepali woman guide** in **2018**.
- Stigma around **women as climbers** was prevalent, with society doubting their abilities.

Notable Climbers:

- **Pasang Lhamu** (1993): First **Nepali woman to summit Everest**, tragically died during descent.
 - **Lhakpa Sherpa** (2000): Reached the summit and went on to set the **female record of 10 ascents** by May 2025.
 - **Lydia Bradey** (1988): First woman to **summit without oxygen**, facing doubts about her achievement.
-

4. Unique Challenges of Climbing Everest:

Oxygen Dependency:

- Only **229 ascents (less than 1%)** have been made without supplemental oxygen.
- Among these, **only 10 women** have managed this feat.
- The **cost of the ascent** ranges from **\$45,000 to \$200,000**.

Geographical and Economic Factors:

- **Nepal** accounts for **half of the male ascents** but only a **small fraction of female climbs**.
- **Sherpas**, essential climbing guides, mostly belong to **Nepal**.
- Countries with most male climbers include **Nepal, USA, India, and China**, making up **39% of women climbers** as well.

RESPECT

Kohli should be incredibly proud of his Test career, says Bobat



Virat's just business as usual, as he always is. There's enough of the public and the nation's attention on him, he doesn't want any more of that. He should be incredibly proud of what he's done as a Test player. At RCB, we are all incredibly proud — RCB director of cricket Me Bobat on Virat Kohli.

ON AND OFF

It's been a patchy season for Knight Riders, reckons Pandey



Manish Pandey said that the lack of a winning streak has hurt KKR. "Last time, we won a lot of games. This time we were winning one and losing one. Our batting has been fine and we have been bowling well. But it has been a little patchy. Hopefully, we have a similar strong core next year and can win games like last year."

BIG BLOW

Starc to miss remainder of IPL; Stubbs returns for Capitals



Delhi Capitals confirmed that Mitchell Starc, in pic, will play no further part in IPL 2025. In Starc's absence, DC will hope that left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman fills the void in the remaining three league games. While Tristan Stubbs joined DC for its training session on Friday, Fa'du Plessis' participation remains doubtful.

PRIORITIES

Johnson urges overseas players to skip remainder of IPL



Former Australian pacer Mitchell Johnson said it was not wise for overseas players to return for the remainder of the IPL, and urged them to prioritise safety over pay cheques. "While Cricket Australia has empowered players to make their own decisions, the weight of those choices can be heavy," Johnson said.

IPL aims for a resurrection post a short interruption

The first match sees a rejuvenated RCB take on KKR; Gujarat Titans seems primed for a top-two finish, while Punjab Kings wouldn't want to squander a maiden title

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

The Indian Premier League is not new to disruptions. Over its 17-year history, two General Election cycles and two waves of the Covid-19 pandemic have thrown schedules asunder, compelled a manic rearranging of the timetables and even forced the event out of the country, lock, stock, and barrel.

Tightly wound calendar in a tightly wound international cricket calendar, where one series literally bleeds into the other, these disturbances can feel like the snapping of a guitar string, rendering a musical chord incomplete and the instrument practically useless.

But IPL is also famous for its 'bouncebackability', returning with increased might after every such upheaval. On Saturday, when it resumes after a week's suspension owing to cross-border tensions between India and Pakistan, the hope is for another glimpse of the resurrection king.

The Royal Challengers Bengaluru — Kolkata Knight Riders clash at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here marks the beginning of the home stretch of this year's competition — 13 league-stage contests and four playoff matches, including the final on June 3.



Key personnel: Kohli, post his Test retirement, will want to ensure that he takes RCB past the finish line this time around in the IPL. K. MURALI KUMAR

Points table

	W	L	T	NR	PTS	NRR
Gujarat Titans	11	8	3	0	10	0.793
Royal Challengers Bengaluru	11	8	3	0	10	0.482
Punjab Kings	11	7	3	1	15	0.376
Mumbai Indians	12	7	3	0	14	1.358
Delhi Capitals	11	6	4	1	13	0.362
Kolkata Knight Riders	12	5	6	1	11	0.193
Lucknow Super Giants	11	5	6	0	10	-0.469
Sunrisers Hyderabad (E)	11	3	7	1	7	-1.192
Rajasthan Royals (E)	12	3	9	0	6	-0.718
Chennai Super Kings (E)	12	3	9	0	6	-1.092

And franchises will wish that the bodies haven't gone too cold, and it doesn't take much for the athletes to spring back to

life. "It was an unusual few days," said Me Bobat, RCB's director of cricket, on Friday. "First and foremost, it's good that the

conflict has come to an end. And for many of our lads, it was a well-earned rest. They enjoyed getting home, seeing family, even if it was for just a couple of days. Actually, we were saying that the boys have come in with a lot of energy."

For RCB, if this energy can translate into a solid performance, it can mean the sealing of a playoff berth with two games to spare. A win for KKR, on the other hand, can keep it afloat. Table-topper Gujarat Titans seems primed for a top-two finish, while third-placed Punjab Kings wouldn't want to squander the opportunity to make a dash for a maiden title.

Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals, in all probability, will fight for the fourth spot while Lucknow Super Giants, like KKR, is on the brink of crashing out. The already eliminated Sunrisers Hyderabad, Rajasthan Royals and Chennai Super Kings would want to use the remaining fixtures to generate some amount of tailwind to propel their campaigns next year.

"A break like this could help," said KKR's Manish Pandey. "I am pretty sure guys would have gone home, seen videos and tried to work on things that they didn't have the opportunity to do. The only thing I am hoping for is to win the last two games and end on a high."

RCB targets a playoff spot, KKR hopes to stay afloat

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Playoffs qualification beckons Royal Challengers Bengaluru while elimination stares Kolkata Knight Riders in the face as the two sides meet in an Indian Premier League fixture at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Saturday.

A win for RCB would send the defending champion to guarantee a top-four berth and clear the course for it to stake claim for a top-two spot. For KKR, a defeat will send the outfit crashing out. The home side will certainly fancy its chances, for it has all overseas personnel except injured pacer Josh Hazlewood — back after the week-long break, and has also seen skipper Rajat Patidar make significant progress after suffering a hand injury in the game against Chennai Super Kings on May 3.

RCB has won four matches on the trot, the last of which was the



R. BHASKAR, K. MURALI KUMAR

last of which was the nerve-wracking two-run win over CSK. Though it came nearly a fortnight ago, it is the kind of victory that shows a team's championship mettle. Another boost comes with the news that all-rounder Romario Shephard, hero in that win over CSK, will be available for



R. BHASKAR, K. MURALI KUMAR

the full tournament despite injury to June 3 running being named in the West Indies squad that will meet Ireland and England for six combined ODIs starting May 21.

For KKR, its overseas contingent, with the exception of Rohit Sharma, and Moeen Ali, has arrived but there is a back-breaker at hand. And not only does it have to win its remaining two matches, it needs favourable results elsewhere.

Neeraj breaches the 90m mark but finishes second behind Weber

Press Trust of India
DOHA

Neeraj Chopra finally breached the elusive 90m frontier with a 90.23m throw but the trailblazing Indian had to settle for a second place behind Germany's Julian Weber in a dramatic men's javelin contest in the Doha leg of the Diamond League Meeting series here on Friday.

The 27-year-old double Olympic medalist Indian bested his spear to 90.23m in his third attempt to join a list of javelin throwers, led by his current coach Jan Zelezny of Czechia, who has recorded 90m-plus efforts. He became the third Asian and 25th overall to achieve the feat.

However, Weber turned the tables and took the top



Finally! Neeraj's third effort helped him cross the elusive 90m barrier. AP

spot with his sixth and final throw that measured 91.06m. Two-time world champion and Paris Olympics silver medalist Anderson Peters of Grenada was third with a 84.65m.

"I am very happy to have breached the 90m mark but it's a bitter-sweet experience," said Neeraj. "My coach Jan Zelezny says today is the day where I can throw 90m. The wind helped as the weather was

little warm and that helps. I told Julian that we can throw 90m. I am happy for him (Julian)."

The other Indian in the race, Kishore Jena finished eighth with a below-par throw of 78.60m.

Praggnanandhaa wins Superbet Classic Romania

Press Trust of India
BUCHAREST

Indian Grandmaster R. Praggnanandhaa emerged champion in the Superbet Chess Classic Romania, the opening event of the Grand Chess Tour, here on Friday after winning the tie-break against French players Alireza Firouzja and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

Praggnanandhaa edged out Vachier-Lagrave in the final tie-break game to take the top prize.

Earlier, he played out a draw with Levon Aronian of the United States to finish in a three-way tie for first place with Firouzja



Winfall! Praggnanandhaa after receiving his big prize from FIDE's Michael Khodarkovsky. FLICKR/GRAND CHESS TOUR

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Abhimanyu Easwaran will lead the India-A squad for the two tour games against England Lions starting on May 20 and the intra-squad match against the senior team ahead of the country's five-match Test series against England next month.

Shubman Gill, one of the contenders for the Test captaincy following Rohit Sharma's retirement, and his Gujarat Titans teammate B. Sai Sudharsan will be available from the second match.

The selectors have included Karun Nair following a stellar domestic season.

India-A squad: Abhimanyu Easwaran (Capt.), Yashvardh Jaiswal, Karun Nair, Dhruv Jurel (Vice-Capt & WK), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Shubulul Thakur, Ishan Kishan (WK), Manav Subbar, Tanush Kotian, Mukesh Kumar, Akshay Deep, Harshit Rana, Anshul Kamboj, Khaleel Ahmed, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sarfaraz Khan, Tulsi Dandekar, Harsh Dube.

The schedule: May 20-June 2 vs England Lions (Gattingerji), June 6 vs England Lions (Northampton), June 13-16: India-A vs India (Buckenham).

CHESS

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ITALIAN OPEN

Press Trust of India
ROME

Carlo Alcaraz advanced to his first Italian Open final with a 6-3, 7-6(4) victory over Lorenzo Musetti on Friday.

It's the third final in three-day-open events this season for Alcaraz, who won the Monte Carlo Masters and finished runner-up in the Barcelona Open before withdrawing from the Madrid Open because of injury.

A four-time Grand Slam champion, Alcaraz is preparing to defend his title at



On course: Alcaraz had the measure of Musetti in straight sets. GETTY IMAGES

the French Open, which starts on May 25.

On a windy day at the Foro Italico, Alcaraz said it wasn't about playing "brilliant," but rather "smart

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On a windy day at the Foro Italico, Alcaraz said it wasn't about playing "brilliant," but rather "smart

tennis" was required. Meanwhile, on Thursday, Coco Gauff overcame China's Zheng Qinwen 7-6(3), 4-6, 7-6(4) to advance to the women's final.

Neeraj breaches the 90m mark but finishes second behind Weber

ATHLETICS

Press Trust of India

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Scholar Rambhadracharya and lyricist Gulzar honoured with Jnanpith Award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, May 16

PRESIDENT DROUPADI MURMU on Friday gave away the 58th Jnanpith Award to renowned poet-lyricist Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya for year 2023.

Sampooran Singh Kalra, popularly known as Gulzar, is celebrated for his works in Hindi cinema and considered one of the finest Urdu poets of this era. The poet-lyricist was not able to attend the ceremony due to 'health-related issues'.

Rambhadracharya, 75, the founder and head of Tulsi Peeth in Chitrakoot, is a renowned Hindu spiritual leader, educator and writer of more than 240 books and texts, including four epics.

The Sanskrit scholar was given a citation plaque, a cash prize and a bronze replica of Vagdevi Saraswati.

Speaking at the award ceremony, the President commended Rambhadracharya's "multi-faceted contributions" to Sanskrit literature and society. "Rambhadracharya ji has set inspiring examples of excellence. You are endowed with many talents and your con-



(Left) Rambhadracharya is a Hindu spiritual leader, educator, sanskrit scholar and writer of over 240 books; and Gulzar is celebrated for his works in Hindi cinema

PTI

tributions are multi-faceted. Despite being physically challenged, you have rendered extraordinary service to literature and society with your insight, or rather divine sight. You are an impromptu poet."

"The Sanskrit literature written by you is both plentiful and excellent. You are an extraordinary worshipper of the divine language Sanskrit. You have a special place among the best interpreters of Indian traditions," Murmu said.

She credited him for his

interpretation of Panini's "Ash-tadhyayi" as well as commentaries on "Brahmasutra", "Bhagavad Gita" and major Upanishads. The President also congratulated 90-year-old Gulzar and wished for his full recovery.

"I send him my best wishes that he soon becomes fully healthy and active and continues to contribute to art, literature, society and the country."

"Gulzar sahab has kept alive his devotion towards literary creation for decades. It can be said that Gulzar sahab is a

writer who has established tenderness amidst harshness. People active in these fields should take inspiration and learning from his art and literary pursuits," she said.

According to the citation, Rambhadracharya "absorbed, read, and sang the great teachings that many find difficult to grasp, read, or articulate".

"At the age of five, he started delving into the Bhagavad Gita and at the age of seven, he began studying the Ramacharitmanas under the guidance of revered teachers. His comprehensive understanding of language and proficiency in all examinations in Sanskrit earned him top and gold medals in university studies. This led many scholars and teachers to recognise his profound intellect and creative potential," it read.

An author of verses, poems, letters, prose, metrical compositions, Sanskrit literary works, Rambhadracharya has received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2005 and Padma Vibhushan in 2015, among other honours.

The citation for Gulzar commended him for his "outstanding contribution to Indian literature and the world of Urdu writing".

- **President Droupadi Murmu** presented the **58th Jnanpith Award** to:
 - **Gulzar**: Renowned poet-lyricist known for his work in **Hindi cinema**.
 - **Jagadguru Rambhadracharya**: Sanskrit scholar and spiritual leader.
- The award ceremony took place on **May 16**.
- Gulzar, due to **health issues**, could not attend the ceremony.

Gulzar:

- **Full Name:** Sampooran Singh Kalra
- **Profession:** Poet, lyricist, and filmmaker
- **Achievements:**
 - Considered one of the finest **Urdu poets** of his era.
 - Known for his lyrical contribution to **Hindi cinema**.
 - Honored for his "**outstanding contribution to Indian literature and the world of Urdu writing**".

Jagadguru Rambhadracharya:

- **Age:** 75 years
- **Role:** Hindu spiritual leader, educator, and Sanskrit scholar
- **Literary Contribution:**
 - Authored more than **240 books**, including **four epics**.
 - Contributions in **Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Panini's Ashtadhyayi, and Brahmasutra**.
 - Known for **in-depth knowledge of Sanskrit literature**.
- **Recognition:**
 - Described as a **multi-faceted scholar** despite being **physically challenged**.
 - Called an "**extraordinary worshipper of the divine language Sanskrit**".
 - Honored for "**extraordinary service to literature and society**".

In US, baby healed with world's first personalised gene-editing treatment

Gina Kolata

Something was very wrong with Kyle and Nicole Muldoon's baby. The doctors speculated. Maybe it was meningitis? Maybe sepsis?

They got an answer when KJ was only a week old. He had a rare genetic disorder, CPS1 deficiency, that affects just 1 in 1.3 million babies. If he survived, he would have severe mental and developmental delays and would eventually need a liver transplant. But half of all babies with the disorder die in the first week of life.

Doctors at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia offered the Muldoons comfort care for their baby, a chance to forgo aggressive treatments in the face of a grim prognosis. "We loved him, and we didn't want him to be suffering," Muldoon said. But she and her husband decided to give KJ a chance.

Instead, KJ has made medical history. The baby, now 9 1/2 months old, became the first patient of any age to have a custom gene-editing treatment, according to his doctors. He received an infusion made just for him and designed to fix his precise mutation.

The investigators who led the effort to save KJ were presenting their work Thursday at the annual meeting of the American Society of Gene &



KJ Muldoon was born with a rare genetic disorder, CPS1 deficiency, that affects just one in 1.3m babies

Cell Therapy and were also publishing it in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The implications of the treatment go far beyond treating KJ, said Dr Peter Marks, who was the FDA official overseeing gene-therapy regulation until he recently resigned. More than 30 million people in the US have one of more than 7,000 rare genetic diseases. Most are so rare that no company is willing to spend years developing a gene therapy that so few people would need. But KJ's treatment offers a new path for companies to develop personalised treatments without going through years of expensive development and testing.

Illnesses like KJ's are the result of a single mutation — an incorrect DNA letter among the 3 billion in the human genome. Correcting it requires pinpoint targeting in an approach

called base editing.

To accomplish that feat, the treatment is wrapped in fatty lipid molecules to protect it from degradation in the blood on its way to the liver, where the edit will be made. Inside the lipids are instructions that command the cells to produce an enzyme that edits the gene. They also carry a molecular GPS — CRISPR — which was altered to crawl along a person's DNA until it finds the exact DNA letter that needs to be changed.

While KJ's treatment was customised so CRISPR found just his mutation, the same sort of method could be adapted and used over and over again to fix mutations in other places on a person's DNA. Only the CRISPR instructions leading the editor to the spot on the DNA with the mutation would need to be changed. Treatments would be cheaper, "by an order of magnitude at least," Marks said. The method, said Marks, who wrote an editorial accompanying the research paper, "is, to me, one of the most potentially transformational technologies out there." It eventually could also be used for more common genetic disorders like sickle cell disease, cystic fibrosis, Huntington's disease and muscular dystrophy. And, he said, it "could really transform healthcare." NYT

1. Key Highlights:

- **Historic Medical Achievement:**
 - A baby named **KJ Muldoon** becomes the **first patient** to receive a **custom gene-editing treatment**.
 - The treatment cured **CPS1 deficiency**, a rare **genetic disorder** affecting **1 in 1.3 million babies**.
 - The disorder can lead to **severe mental and developmental delays** and may require a **liver transplant**.
-

2. What is CPS1 Deficiency?

- A **genetic disorder** that severely impacts the liver, causing **ammonia build-up**.
- **Life-threatening:**
 - Half of the affected babies die within the **first week** of life.
- Symptoms:
 - Severe **mental and developmental delays**.
 - High risk of needing a **liver transplant**.

3. Gene-Editing Breakthrough:

- **Treatment Method:**
 - **Base Editing:** A precise form of **gene therapy** to correct **single-letter DNA errors**.
- **Technology Used:**
 - **CRISPR Molecular GPS:** Guides to the **exact DNA letter** needing correction.
 - **Lipid Molecules:** Used to deliver the **gene-editing enzyme** to the liver.
- **Process:**
 - The treatment is delivered via **lipid-wrapped molecules** that **protect the DNA-editing enzyme** during transit through the bloodstream.
 - The enzyme makes a precise correction in the **DNA sequence** within the **liver cells**.

4. Medical Impact:

- **FDA Insight:**
 - Dr. Peter Marks, former **FDA official**, oversaw gene therapy regulations.
 - Marks highlights the **transformational potential** of base editing.
- **Advantages:**
 - **Personalized Medicine:** Offers a tailored treatment for rare genetic disorders.
 - **Broader Applications:** Can be adapted for other **genetic conditions** like **sickle cell disease**, **cystic fibrosis**, and **muscular dystrophy**.
 - **Cost Efficiency:** A single, targeted therapy rather than **years of testing**.
- **Revolution in Rare Disease Treatment:**
 - Avoids the **lengthy approval process** of traditional gene therapy.
 - Could pave the way for **quick, personalized treatments** for **over 7,000 rare genetic disorders**.

At nearly 5.4L, India ranks third in trademark filings

Rupali.Mukherjee
@timesofindia.com

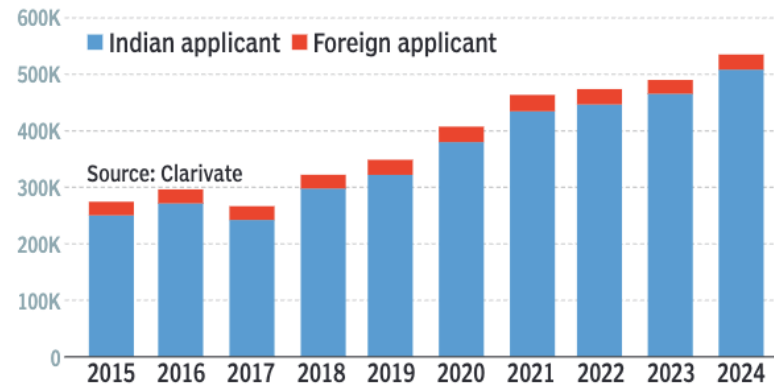
New Delhi: Reflecting strong business confidence, India ranked third globally in trademark filings, with nearly 5.4 lakh new applications in 2024, narrowing the gap with the US, the second-biggest filer with a little under 5.7 lakh applications.

China maintained its lead with 68 lakh filings, despite a steady three-year decline in activity.

According to data shared with **TOI** by Clarivate, a global provider of transformative intelligence, India witnessed 9.3% growth. The strong growth suggests an increasing awareness about the importance of creating brands and the value of intellectual property among local Indian businesses. It also indicates strong local commercial confidence and investment as businesses and entrepreneurs seek to take advantage of increasing

CHINA TOPS WITH 68L, US 2ND WITH 5.7L

Indian trademark application filing volume by year from 2015 to 2024



opportunities and consumer demand for new products and services in the Indian market, Robert Reading, head of IP content strategy at Clarivate, told **TOI**.

Over the past decade, the USPTO averaged 5% annual growth in trademark filing volume, while the Indian Trademark Office saw average annual growth of 10%. So, even though trademark filing activity is growing in the US, it is expanding faster in India, and the gap between the two in terms of overall volume is likely to close in 2025 or 2026, he added.

Drug company Alkem Labs led local companies with 4,931 trademark registrations as of Jan 1, 2025, followed by ITC (4,923).

The growth in India has been driven by a strong domestic brand sector, which accounts for over 95% of trademark applications filed annually in India, the latest Trademark Filing Trends 2025 report said.

Operation Black Forest

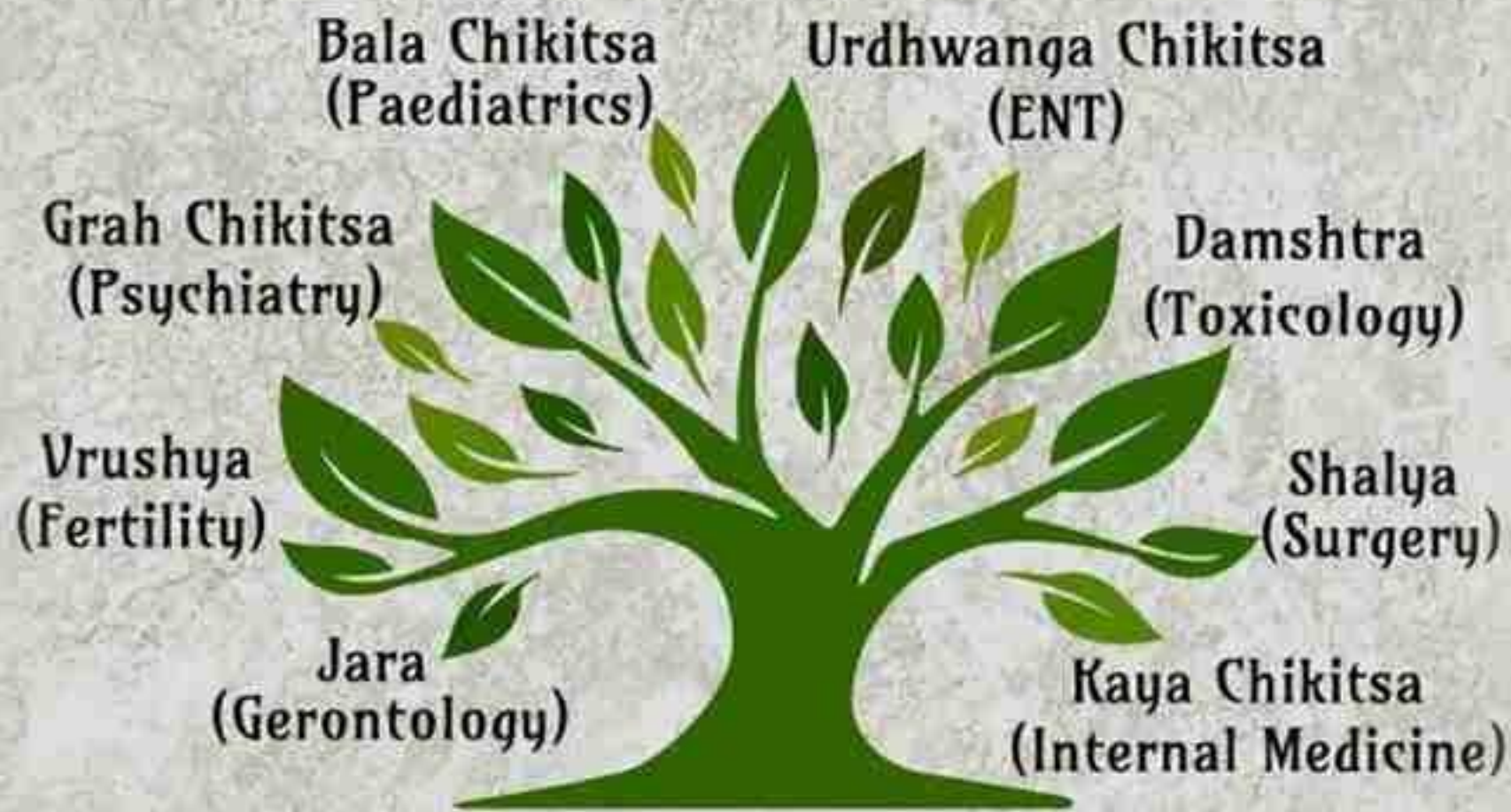
- In one of India's largest anti-Naxal operations, 31 Maoists were killed in Operation Black Forest, conducted in Kurraguttalu Hills on the Chhattisgarh–Telangana border.



- Location: Karregutta Hills lie on the border of Bhadradi Kothagudem district (Telangana) and Sukma district (Chhattisgarh).
- Topography: Spread over 25–50 km, the terrain includes steep hills, caves, waterfalls, and dense forests — ideal for guerrilla warfare and concealment.
- Elevation: Hills rise to nearly 5,000 feet, rendering them largely inaccessible even to locals.
- Local Names: Tribes refer to the hills as Black Hills or Carregutta.
- Tribal Presence: The region is inhabited by [Koya](#), Gond, and Chenchu tribes, many of whom have been caught in the crossfire during decades of insurgency.
- Other Active Maoist Zones: Abujmad (Chhattisgarh), Malkangiri (Odisha), Gadchiroli (Maharashtra) are other high-intensity Maoist strongholds.

Ayurveda Day

The Government of India has officially **declared 23rd September as Ayurveda Day** through a Gazette notification.



AYURVEDA
(8 branches of Ayurveda)

Word of the day

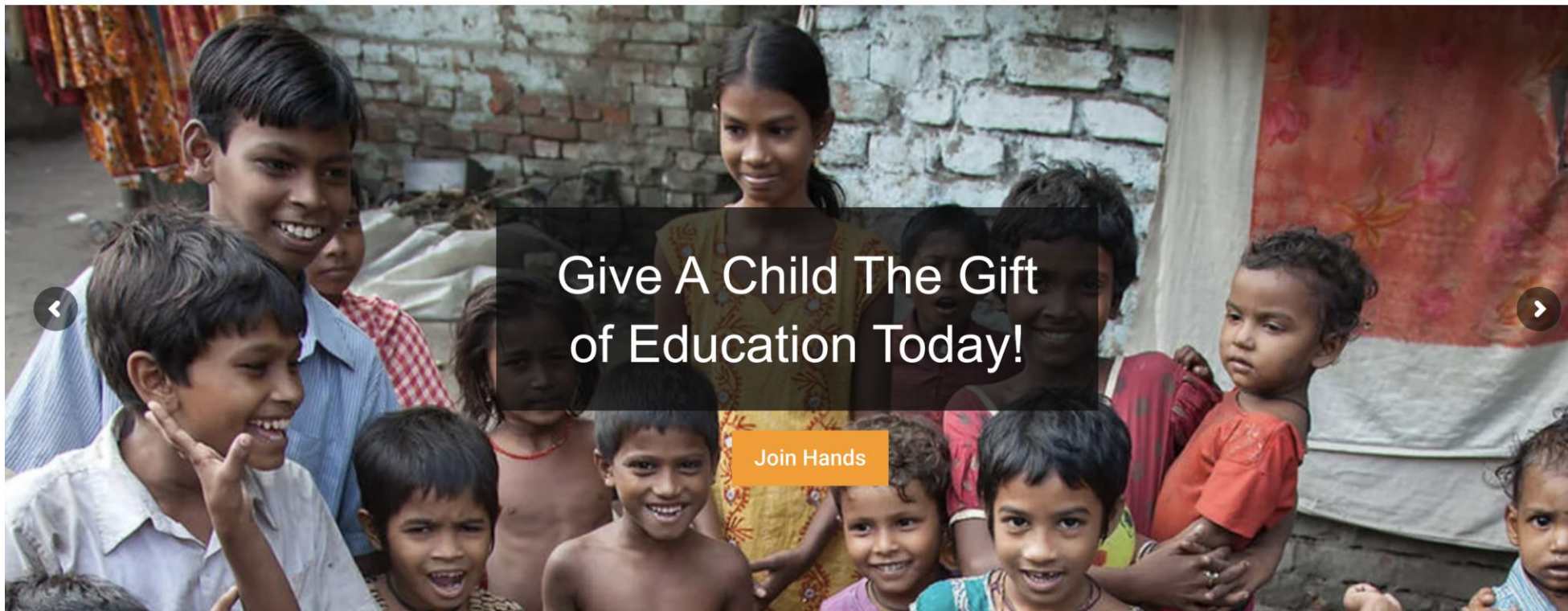
Decadent:

luxuriously self-indulgent; marked by excessive self-indulgence and moral decay

Usage: *I spent a decadent day at the spa.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/decadentpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈdɛkədənt/



5,534
Volunteers




671
Contributors



1,231
Kids



24
States



Thank you
guys.
