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“Nature does not collapse in a day; it is slowly erased by permissions granted in silence.”



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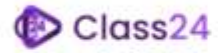
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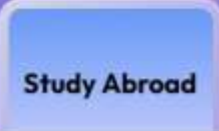
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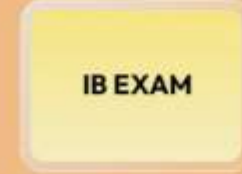


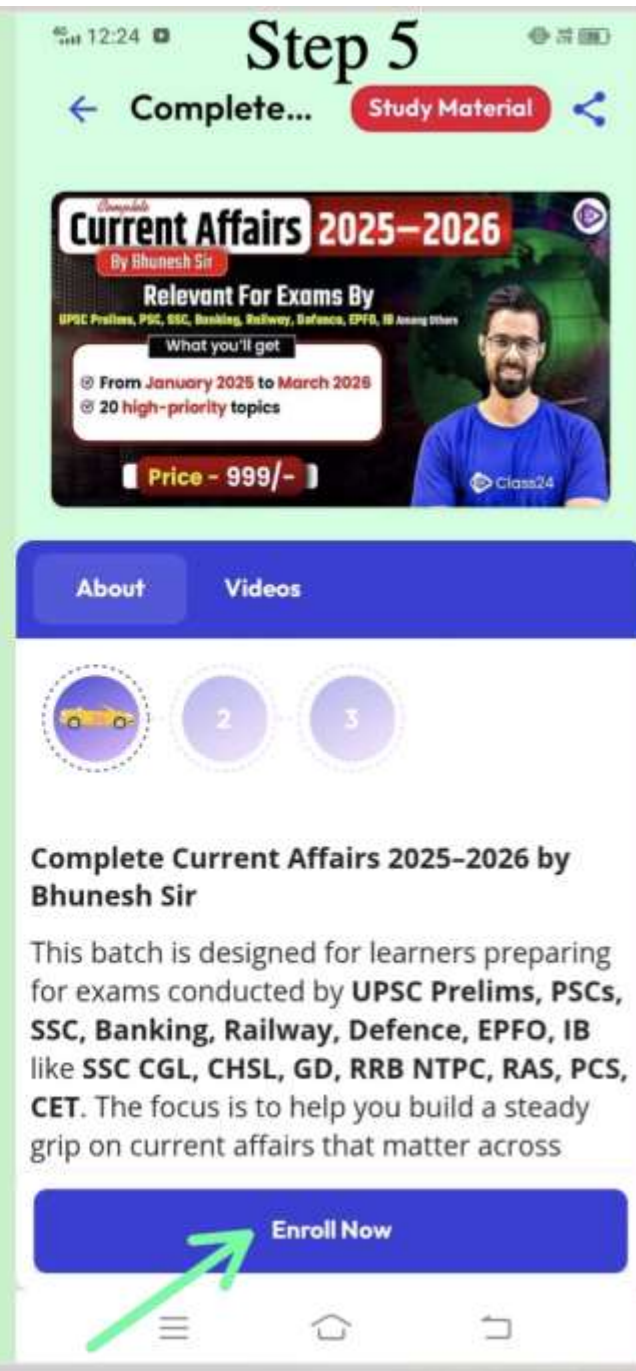
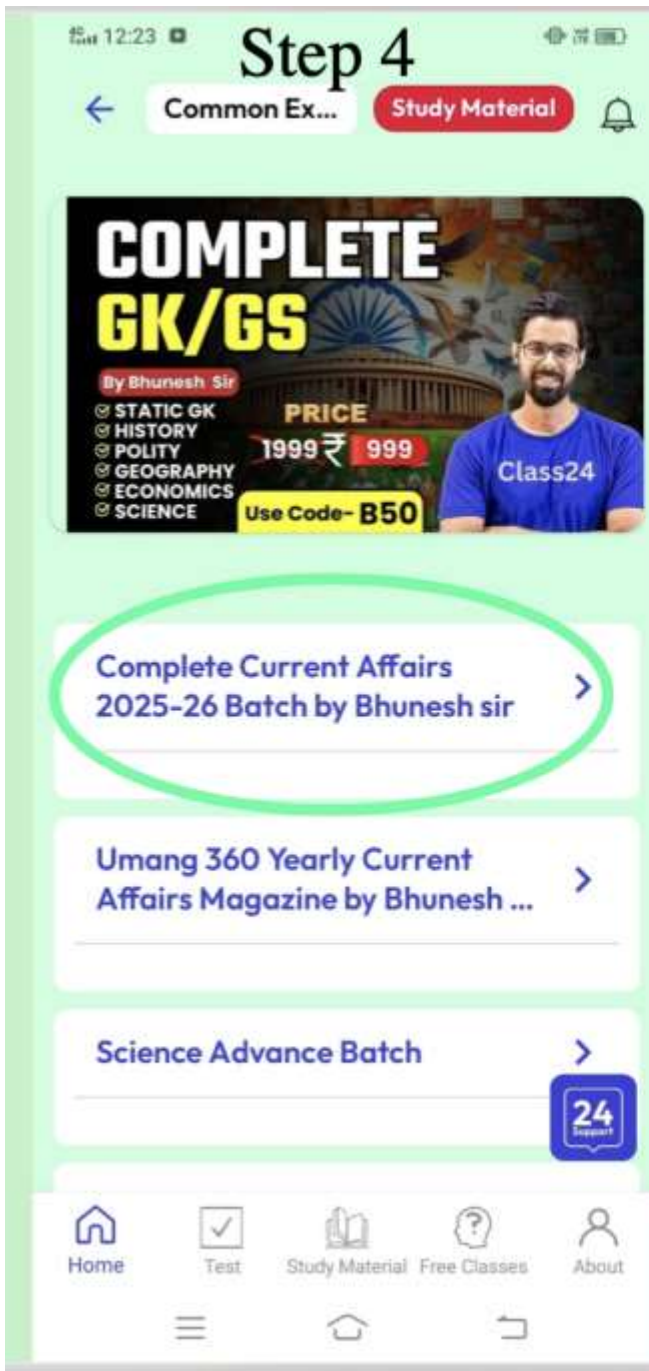
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INSIDE

Myanmar junta
says Suo Kyi is
'in good health'

Myanmar's junta said on Tuesday that detained former leader Aung San Suu Kyi is "in good health," a day after her son told Reuters she had received little information about the 69-year-old's state and fears she could die without him knowing. ■ PAGE 14

'Muslim' localities
better mapped in
SIR, says study

ROKETS Assembly segments with a higher percentage of Muslim population have a lower share of unengaged voters in the 5th of electoral rolls in West Bengal, a study by Kolkata-based SARAN Institute has found. ■ PAGE 8

Economist backs
simultaneous
polls, flags issues

NEW DELHI: Holding simultaneous polls at the State and Union levels will be a "positive step" from an economic standpoint, said Harvard economist Gita Gopinath. Yet, she cautioned that it will require careful planning. ■ PAGE 6

Pilot bodies flag
'corruption' in
DGA, Ministry

NEW DELHI: Pilot bodies have alleged deep-rooted corruption in the DGA and the Ministry of Civil Aviation before the parliamentary panel that met to discuss the operational meltdown at Indira since early December. ■ PAGE 6

U.S. labels Venezuela's govt. a 'terrorist' regime,
orders blockade of sanctioned oil tanker traffic

Standby Index

U.S. President Donald Trump has ordered "a total and complete blockade" of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela, and labelled the government of President Nicolas Maduro "a foreign terrorist organization," sharply escalating his pressure campaign against the South American nation. In a social media post, Mr. Trump said the "illegitimate Maduro regime is using oil" from the country's foreign reserves, stolen from the U.S., "to finance themselves." "For the theft of our assets, and many other reasons, including terrorism, drug smuggling, and human trafficking, the Venezue-



The Trump administration's decision to target tankers is expected to increase economic pressure on Nicolas Maduro's regime, analysts say.

bean and Eastern Pacific waters on boats which it said were carrying drugs. The U.S. is also building up military presence around Venezuela, triggering speculation that it could start a new bombing campaign to aid the country. The U.S. says the Maduro regime is closely tied to a drug cartel, without providing any evidence. But the Trump administration's decision to target tankers is expected to increase economic pressure on Nicolas Maduro's regime, analysts say. Mr. Trump's announcement came days after the U.S. seized a tanker carrying Venezuelan crude off its coast, triggering its complete blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers going into, and out of, Venezuela. ■

Strength in stride



Carrying hope: A trial witness gives her son a piggyback ride atop a load of ration rice near Bhubaneswar on Wednesday. BY ANAND KUMAR

India reminds Bangladesh
of security pledges amid
march on Dhaka mission

Kalid Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Hours after a radical group in Dhaka announced a march to the Indian High Commission on Wednesday afternoon, to protest India's alleged interference in Bangladesh politics, the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi summoned the High Commissioner of Bangladesh Hase Hameed, and reminded him about his government's responsibility to ensure the security and safety of its mission and visa facilities in Bangladesh. "India completely rejects the false narrative sought to be created by extremist elements regarding certain recent events in Bangladesh. It is unfortunate that the interim government has neither conducted a thorough investigation nor shared the meaningful evidence with India regarding the incidents," the MEA said. The July 2019 Manohar, which called for the return of the interim government to power, was a reference to ousted Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who now lives in India. It also called for an end to the "unchecked conspiracy by India's proxy political party, media, and government officials".



Protesters marching to the Indian mission in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Wednesday evening.

Ensure safety The MEA's statement to the Bangladesh envoy came a day after both countries celebrated Vijay Diwas on December 16, commemorating the end of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. The U.S. blockade comments made by Bangladesh student leaders

went viral on social media. "We will not tolerate if terrorism is exported from India. Our enemies will not be safe if our security is harmed," said Mahfuj Alam, a student leader who is campaigning for the upcoming elections in Bangladesh. Mr. Alam was part of the interim government of Bangladesh until last week when he resigned from the post of student adviser as the schedule of the election was announced. In another inflammatory speech, Hameed Abdul Jab, leader of the National Citizens Party, described India as a hostile country threatening to "sever" northeastern India from the rest of the country. Such statements further heightened the tensions that had spiked with the attack on a right-wing student leader Shafiqur Rahman Haid on December 12. India has immediately issued a strong objection. "India has close and friendly relations with the people of Bangladesh rooted in the liberation struggle, the end of the 1971 through various developmental aid, people-to-people initiatives," the MEA said.

LS clears nuclear Bill allowing privatisation

The Lower House passed the SHANTI Bill despite demands from Opposition parties to refer it to a parliamentary panel; Congress protests the removal of clause holding equipment supplier responsible for failure, questions the Bill's timing and interest shown by a 'conglomerate house'; Centre defends the many controversial provisions

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025, despite demands by several Opposition parliamentarians for referring the legislation to a parliamentary panel.

The Bill, which aims to incentivise private sector participation, both Indian and foreign, into nuclear power production, now moves to the Rajya Sabha for discussion.

Congress MP Manish Tewari, who opened discussions on the Bill following introductory remarks by Science Minister Jitendra Singh, sought to know if it was a "coincidence" that a legislation enabling private sector participation in the nuclear sector coincided with interest expressed by

the "conglomerate house... Adani" in November to enter the nuclear sector.

Mr. Singh, amidst uproar in the House over the remark, retorted that the Bill had nothing to do with any specific company and such an aspersion "brought disrepute to the House".

Mr. Tewari also burrowed into what is perhaps the most significant element of the Bill: the removal of a clause in the existing Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 that allows the operator of a nuclear power plant to claim recourse from suppliers if their equipment was found to be responsible in case of an accident.

In 2008, the BJP had moved a no-confidence motion against the Manmohan Singh government for, among other things, the absence of such a clause. Subsequently, this was also a reason for the

Core changes

The SHANTI Bill repeals existing legislation on nuclear activity and opens up private participation in civil nuclear sector

- The Bill enables private companies to run nuclear power plants and bring foreign investment into the sector
- It limits operator liability to the capacity of the plants
- It places the responsibility of managing nuclear plants on the 'operator' of the facility
- Govt. to stay in control of nuclear waste management



lack of foreign participation in India's nuclear sector, despite the U.S.-India nuclear deal that granted India a waiver from Nuclear Suppliers Group sanction as it opened foreign companies to potentially unlimited liability.

Privatising the nuclear power sector – that currently makes up 1.5% of India's installed power capacity and 3% of the electricity produced – has

been on the government's agenda in recent years to boost clean energy production, improve grid stability and move towards its 2070 net-zero (zero net-carbon emissions) targets. This includes scaling up installed nuclear power to 100 GW up from the current 8.8 GW by 2047 and a ₹20,000-crore mission announced in the Budget this year to develop 'small modular reactors' and a

slew of customised 220 MW Pressurised Heavy Water reactors (Bharat Small Modular Reactors). "I now see that there is no reference to suppliers... god forbid if there is an accident... shouldn't a foreign supplier be liable?" Mr. Tewari questioned.

Mr. Singh acknowledged that the BJP had voiced opposition in the past and said that the existence of the clause "had caused reservations in collaborators" but the scenario today was different from 2010. "Times have changed... technology has changed. We are now into small modular reactors, which didn't exist as a technology at that time. There will now be reactors – following the just announced Nuclear Mission – that will give power in dense areas. The risk of catastrophe has now changed. This Bill is coming in because the scenario

has changed," he said.

Opposition's criticism

Aditya Yadav of the Samajwadi Party accused the government of bringing in the Bill by "sacrificing the old laws... that kept public interest first" because the government faced with a "dollar that has crossed ₹90" and "unable to attract foreign investment" was "desperately trying to throw a red carpet to American companies" under pressure from the "prevailing Trump tariffs".

Supriya Sule, the MP from the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) asked how it was possible to cap the liability of plant operators at ₹3,000 crore. "How can you put a cap on that... how have you calculated this magic number?" she asked.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor reiterated this point. "The clean-up costs of the Fukushima disaster

have already exceeded \$182 billion dollars. Chernobyl's (disaster) impact at \$700 billion dollars... however, the total liability as per this Bill is capped at ₹3,000 crore (or about \$400 million). This hasn't changed in 15 years, doesn't account for inflation and the experience we have had so far," he said.

Mr. Singh said that ₹3,000 crore was only the maximum liability of the plant operator, and if higher amounts were required, it would come in from a nuclear insurance pool as well as additionally, source funds from the newly proposed Nuclear Liability Fund (pooled through tariffs). "The reason for a 'graded operator liability' was because it was necessary to encourage companies to invest in developing small reactors," he said.

RS CLEARS INSURANCE BILL
» PAGE 5

1. What is the SHANTI Bill, 2025?

The SHANTI Bill 2025 stands for Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill.

SHANTI बिल 2025 का पूरा नाम सस्टेनेबल हार्नेसिंग एंड एडवांसमेंट ऑफ न्यूक्लियर एनर्जी फॉर ट्रांसफॉर्मिंग इंडिया बिल है।

It was passed by the Lok Sabha to reform India's civil nuclear energy framework.

लोकसभा द्वारा भारत के सिविल न्यूक्लियर ऊर्जा ढांचे में सुधार के लिए इसे पारित किया गया।

The Bill replaces outdated provisions of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.

यह एटॉमिक एनर्जी एक्ट 1962 और न्यूक्लियर डैमेज सिविल लाइबिलिटी एक्ट 2010 की पुरानी व्यवस्थाओं को बदलता है।

2. Objectives of the Bill

The main objective is to expand nuclear power capacity to meet India's long-term energy needs.

मुख्य उद्देश्य भारत की दीर्घकालिक ऊर्जा आवश्यकताओं के लिए परमाणु ऊर्जा क्षमता का विस्तार करना है।

It aims to support clean energy transition and help achieve net-zero emission targets.

यह स्वच्छ ऊर्जा संक्रमण को समर्थन देता है और नेट-जीरो उत्सर्जन लक्ष्य प्राप्त करने में मदद करता है।

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3. Key Provisions of SHANTI Bill

(a) Private Sector Participation

The Bill allows private Indian companies to build, own, and operate nuclear power plants under government licensing.

बिल निजी भारतीय कंपनियों को सरकारी लाइसेंस के तहत परमाणु बिजली संयंत्र बनाने, संचालित करने और स्वामित्व की अनुमति देता है।

Foreign investment is allowed through joint ventures with Indian entities.

विदेशी निवेश भारतीय संस्थाओं के साथ संयुक्त उद्यम के माध्यम से अनुमत है।

(b) Liability Framework Reform

The Bill removes supplier liability in case of nuclear accidents.

बिल परमाणु दुर्घटना की स्थिति में आपूर्तिकर्ता की देयता को समाप्त करता है।

Liability is capped on plant operators based on reactor capacity.

संयंत्र संचालकों की देयता को रिएक्टर क्षमता के आधार पर सीमित किया गया है।

(c) Government Control Retained

The government retains exclusive control over nuclear fuel, radioactive waste, and security-sensitive operations.

सरकार परमाणु ईंधन, रेडियोधर्मी अपशिष्ट और सुरक्षा-संवेदनशील गतिविधियों पर नियंत्रण बनाए रखती है।

Strategic decision-making remains with the central government.

रणनीतिक निर्णय-निर्माण केंद्र सरकार के पास ही रहेगा।

(d) Strengthening Regulation

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board is given statutory status.

एटॉमिक एनर्जी रेगुलेटरी बोर्ड को वैधानिक दर्जा प्रदान किया गया है।

This strengthens nuclear safety, oversight, and accountability mechanisms.

इससे परमाणु सुरक्षा, निगरानी और जवाबदेही व्यवस्था मजबूत होती है।

4. Significance of the Bill

This is the first major opening of India's nuclear power sector to private participation.

यह भारत के परमाणु ऊर्जा क्षेत्र में निजी भागीदारी की पहली बड़ी पहल है।

It is expected to boost investment, technology transfer, and reactor construction speed.

इससे निवेश, तकनीकी हस्तांतरण और रिएक्टर निर्माण की गति बढ़ने की उम्मीद है।

The Bill supports India's target of achieving around 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047.

यह 2047 तक लगभग 100 गीगावाट परमाणु क्षमता के लक्ष्य को समर्थन देता है।

5. Criticism and Concerns

Opposition parties argue that removing supplier liability may reduce accountability in case of accidents.

विपक्षी दलों का कहना है कि आपूर्तिकर्ता की देयता हटाने से दुर्घटना की स्थिति में जवाबदेही कम हो सकती है।

Concerns are raised regarding public safety and transparency.

जन-सुरक्षा और पारदर्शिता को लेकर चिंताएँ व्यक्त की गई हैं।

With reference to the SHANTI Bill, 2025, consider the following statements:

SHANTI बिल 2025 के संदर्भ में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. It allows private companies to operate nuclear power plants.

यह निजी कंपनियों को परमाणु बिजली संयंत्र संचालित करने की अनुमति देता है।

2. It removes supplier liability in nuclear accidents.

यह परमाणु दुर्घटनाओं में आपूर्तिकर्ता की देयता को समाप्त करता है।

3. It transfers control of nuclear fuel management to private operators.

यह परमाणु ईंधन प्रबंधन का नियंत्रण निजी संचालकों को देता है।

Which of the statements given above are correct?

उपरोक्त में से कौन-से कथन सही हैं?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

U.S. labels Venezuela's govt. a 'terrorist' regime, orders blockade of sanctioned oil tanker traffic

Stanly Johny

U.S. President Donald Trump has ordered "a total and complete blockade" of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela, and labelled the government of President Nicolas Maduro "a foreign terrorist organisation", sharply escalating his pressure campaign against the South American nation.

In a social media post, Mr. Trump said the "the illegitimate Maduro regime is using oil" from the fields stolen from the U.S., "to finance themselves".

"For the theft of our assets, and many other reasons, including terrorism, drug smuggling, and human trafficking, the Vene-



The Trump administration's decision to target tankers is expected to increase economic pressure on Nicolas Maduro's regime. REUTERS

zuelan regime has been designated a foreign terrorist organization," wrote Mr. Trump. "Therefore, today, I am ordering a total and complete blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers going into, and out of, Venezuela."

Mr. Trump's announcement came days after the U.S. seized a tanker carrying Venezuelan crude off its coast, tightening its stranglehold over the Maduro regime. The U.S. has already carried out dozens of air strikes in the Carib-

bean and Eastern Pacific waters on boats which it said were carrying drugs. The U.S. is also building up military presence around Venezuela, triggering speculations that it could start a new bombing campaign inside the country.

The U.S. says the Maduro regime is closely tied to a drug cartel, without providing any evidence.

Oil blockade 'irrational'

When the U.S. seized the tanker, Mr. Maduro showed defiance and accused Washington of naval piracy. "We have to be like warriors, with one eye peeled and the other as well," he said.

On Wednesday, in response to the blockade, the

Venezuelan government said in a statement: "The President of the United States is trying in an absolutely irrational manner to impose a supposed military naval blockade on Venezuela to steal the riches of our homeland. Venezuela will never go back to being a colony of the empire, nor any other foreign power."

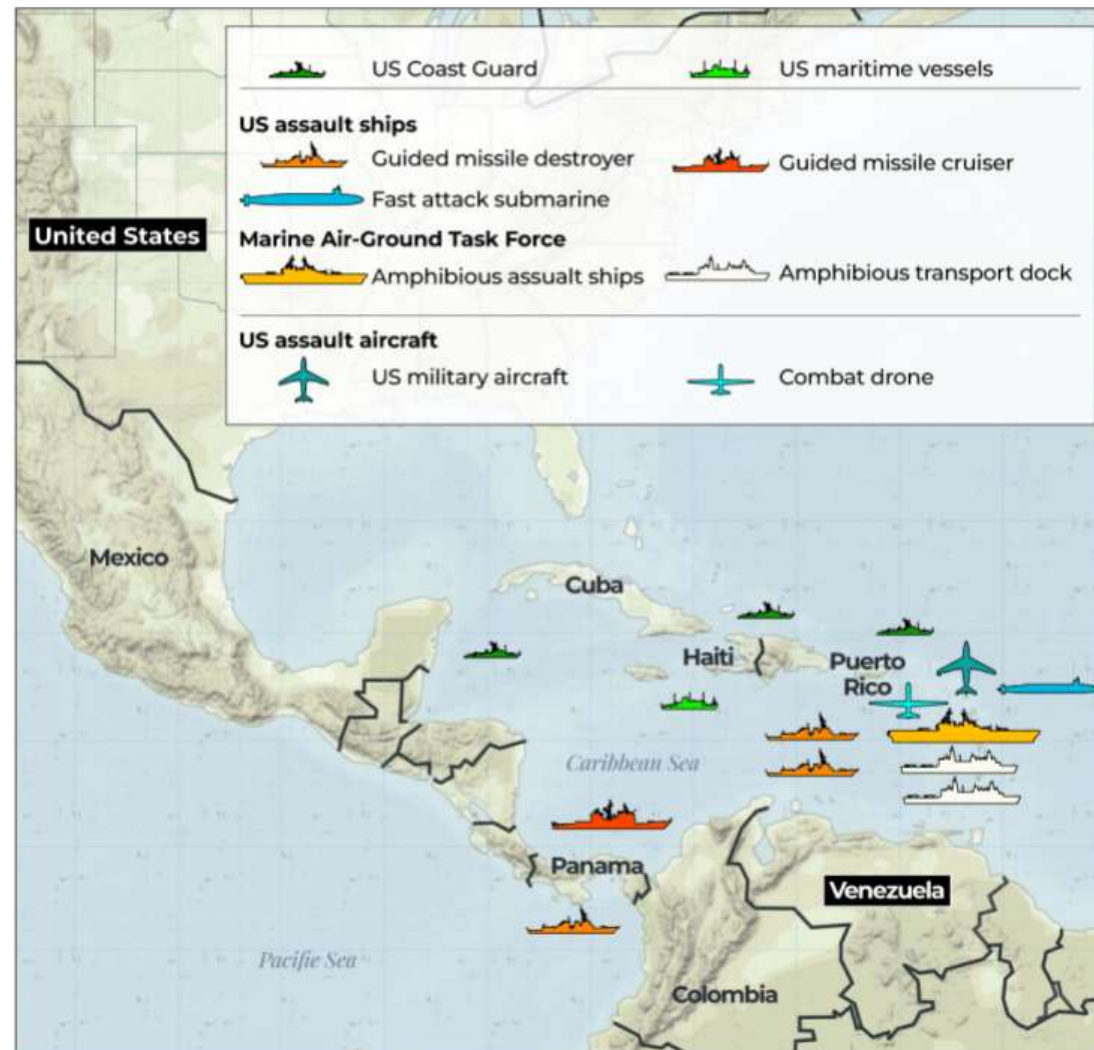
But the Trump administration's decision to target the tankers is expected to enhance the economic pressure on the already embattled regime of Mr. Maduro. Crude sales represent more than 90% of Venezuela's export income. The U.S. blockade could further squeeze the government's finances.

Where is Venezuela and Why did President Trump Talk about "Military Option"?



United States Navy ships in the Caribbean

The United States has deployed several naval warships carrying more than 4,500 sailors and marines to the southern Caribbean amid tensions with Venezuela over drug cartel operations.



Positions as of August 31, 2025

1. What is the News?

The United States has labelled the Venezuelan government under President Nicolás Maduro as a terrorist regime.

संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका ने राष्ट्रपति निकोलस मादुरो के नेतृत्व वाली वेनेजुएला सरकार को आतंकवादी शासन घोषित किया है।

The U.S. has ordered a total blockade of sanctioned oil tanker traffic entering and leaving Venezuela. अमेरिका ने वेनेजुएला में प्रवेश और निकास करने वाले प्रतिबंधित तेल टैंकरों की पूर्ण नाकेबंदी का आदेश दिया है।

2. Key Actions Taken by the United States

The U.S. ordered a complete naval and economic blockade of sanctioned oil tankers. अमेरिका ने प्रतिबंधित तेल टैंकरों पर पूर्ण नौसैनिक और आर्थिक नाकेबंदी लागू की है।

The decision escalates economic and diplomatic pressure on the Maduro regime. यह निर्णय मादुरो शासन पर आर्थिक और कूटनीतिक दबाव को और बढ़ाता है।

The U.S. claims Venezuelan oil revenues are used to finance illegal activities. अमेरिका का दावा है कि वेनेजुएला का तेल राजस्व अवैध गतिविधियों के वित्तपोषण में उपयोग हो रहा है।

3. U.S. Justification

The U.S. accuses the Maduro government of links with drug trafficking and organized crime.

अमेरिका मादुरो सरकार पर मादक पदार्थ तस्करी और संगठित अपराध से जुड़े होने का आरोप लगाता है।

It alleges misuse of oil exports to fund terrorism, smuggling, and human trafficking.

तेल निर्यात का उपयोग आतंकवाद, तस्करी और मानव तस्करी के लिए किए जाने का आरोप लगाया गया है।

4. Venezuela's Response

The Venezuelan government has rejected the terrorist label as illegitimate.

वेनेजुएला सरकार ने आतंकवादी घोषित किए जाने को अवैध बताया है।

It accused the U.S. of economic aggression and naval piracy.

वेनेजुएला ने अमेरिका पर आर्थिक आक्रमण और नौसैनिक लूट का आरोप लगाया है।

The government stated it will not accept foreign domination.

सरकार ने कहा है कि वह किसी भी विदेशी प्रभुत्व को स्वीकार नहीं करेगी।

5. Economic Impact

Oil exports account for more than 90 percent of Venezuela's export earnings.

तेल निर्यात वेनेजुएला की कुल निर्यात आय का 90 प्रतिशत से अधिक हिस्सा है।

The blockade is expected to further squeeze Venezuela's economy.

नाकेबंदी से वेनेजुएला की अर्थव्यवस्था पर और दबाव पड़ने की संभावना है।

It may worsen inflation, shortages, and humanitarian conditions.

इससे मुद्रास्फीति, वस्तुओं की कमी और मानवीय संकट बढ़ सकता है।

6. Strategic and Geopolitical Significance

The move represents an escalation in U.S.–Latin America tensions.

यह कदम अमेरिका और लैटिन अमेरिकी देशों के बीच तनाव को बढ़ाता है।

It raises concerns about the use of unilateral sanctions and blockades.

एकतरफा प्रतिबंधों और नाकेबंदी के उपयोग को लेकर चिंताएँ बढ़ती हैं।

The situation highlights the weaponization of trade and energy supply.

यह स्थिति व्यापार और ऊर्जा आपूर्ति के हथियारीकरण को दर्शाती है।

Aspect

Cocaine transit via Venezuela

Annual cocaine flow

US cocaine consumption

US seizures linked to Venezuela

US drug deaths (overall)

Cocaine overdose deaths (US)

US reward on Maduro (2020)

US reward on Diosdado Cabello

Venezuelan military accused

US sanctions imposed

Key Data / Numbers

~**25–30%** of Colombian cocaine passes through Venezuela

200–250 tonnes/year move via Venezuelan routes

~**90%** of cocaine in US originates from Colombia (via Venezuela & Central America)

Over **100 tonnes (2020–2024)** seized linked to Venezuelan routes

~**110,000 deaths/year** (all drugs, 2023–24)

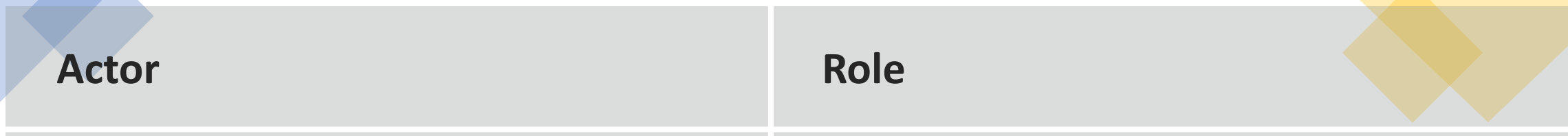
~**27,000 deaths/year**

\$15 million bounty announced


\$10 million bounty

Senior officials alleged to aid trafficking

2017, 2019, 2020, 2023 (expanded)



Actor	Role
Colombian cartels	Cocaine production
Mexican cartels (Sinaloa, CJNG)	Distribution to US
Venezuelan officials (alleged)	Transit protection & logistics
“Cartel of the Suns”	Alleged network within Venezuelan military
FARC dissidents	Border trafficking support



Issue	Explanation
Narco-state allegations	US accuses Venezuela of state-backed drug trafficking
Political hostility	Maduro govt vs US-backed opposition
Weak border control	Colombia–Venezuela border (~2,200 km) porous
Corruption	Military & political protection alleged
US sanctions impact	Reduced cooperation, increased smuggling
Regional instability	Drugs → crime → migration

With reference to economic sanctions and blockades, consider the following statements:

आर्थिक प्रतिबंध और नाकेबंदी के संदर्भ में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. Oil-dependent economies are more vulnerable to sanctions.

तेल-निर्भर अर्थव्यवस्थाएँ प्रतिबंधों के प्रति अधिक संवेदनशील होती हैं।

2. Naval blockades are a form of economic coercion.

नौसैनिक नाकेबंदी आर्थिक दबाव का एक रूप है।

3. Sanctions always require approval of the United Nations Security Council.

प्रतिबंधों के लिए हमेशा संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद की स्वीकृति आवश्यक होती है।

Which of the statements given above are correct?

उपरोक्त में से कौन-से कथन सही हैं?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

IN BRIEF



ICG Ship Sathak makes first port call at Iran's Chabahar

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Ship Sathak, an offshore patrol vessel, entered the Chabahar port in Iran on December 15 for a four-day visit. December 16, according to the Defence Ministry, the port call, marking the first-ever visit of an Indian Coast Guard ship to Chabahar, underscored India's growing maritime engagement in the region and its ability to support secure supply lines to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The visit is aligned with India's GACAR and MAHASAGAR vision of fostering secure and inclusive maritime engagements. ICG Ship Sathak will engage in a range of professional and community-oriented activities.

SC asks MCD to suspend toll booths at Delhi's entry points

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to consider temporary suspension of the operation of its new toll booths till the air quality index (AQI) improves in the National Capital Region (NCR). A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant asked the municipal body to take a decision in a week. In a separate direction, the court modified its August 12 order lifting restrictions on end-of-file vehicles from plying the capital's roads. The court directed that no coercive steps would be taken against the owners of BS IV and newer models of diesel and diesel vehicles over 15 and 10 years old, respectively.

SC transfers suo motu case on R.C. Kar rape to Calcutta HC

The Supreme Court has transferred the suo motu case registered after the brutal rape of a trainee doctor at R.C. Kar Medical College and Hospital in West Bengal to the Calcutta High Court for further monitoring and directions. A Bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Sanjay Chandra Sharma requested the Chief Justice of the High Court to constitute an appropriate District Bench to hear the petition. The Bench directed the Supreme Court Registry to provide a copy of the CBI status report to the father of the victim. The top court declined senior Advocate Karuna Nundy's application for the parents of the victim plea to transfer the case to the Delhi High Court.

Indian Army leaves for Desert Cyclone-II military exercise

An Indian Army contingent has departed for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to participate in the second edition of the India-UAE Joint Military Exercise DESERT CYCLONE-II, scheduled to be held at Abu Dhabi from December 16 to 30. According to the Defence Ministry, the Indian contingent comprised 45 personnel, primarily drawn from a battalion of the Mechanised Infantry Regiment. The UAE Land Forces will be represented by a contingent of similar strength from the 83 Mechanised Infantry Battalion. Aim of the exercise is to enhance interoperability and further strengthen defence cooperation between the Indian Army and the UAE Land Forces.

NMC to add prescription writing in MBBS syllabus

Cross-Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has instructed all medical colleges to set up sub-committees for monitoring prescription practices and also include in the curriculum the importance of writing legible and clear prescriptions.

In a communication sent on December 15 to the Secretaries and Principal Secretaries of the Health departments of all States and Union Territories and Directors and deans of all medical institutions under it, the NMC said the directive was based on the orders of the Punjab and Haryana High Courts issued on August 27. The court directed the NMC to mandate training on clear and legible prescriptions writing in medical curricula across the country.

The subcommittee shall develop a structural plan for systematic appraisal of prescriptions. It shall ensure compliance with applicable regulations and guidelines. It will review and analyse prescription patterns, identify deviations, and recommend corrective measures for improving adherence.

Convicted Minister in Maharashtra loses all portfolios, to appeal

Sessions court upholds his two-year sentence in 1995 housing scam case; Ajit Pawar given charge of Sports, Youth Welfare, Minorities, and Aukaf

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

It is a day when a Maharashtra Minister has lost all his portfolios. The court upheld the conviction of Maharashtra Minister and NCP leader Manojrao Kokate, Maharashtra Governor Acharya Deshpande accepted Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis' recommendation to take away all the portfolios from him.

The portfolios that he held — Sports and Youth Welfare, Minorities Development and Aukaf — have been allocated to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

Mr. Kokate has moved the Bombay High Court challenging his conviction and two-year jail term in a 30-year-old cheating and forgery case linked to a housing scheme. Mr. Kokate is currently appointed to Lilaavati Hospital in Mumbai as he has taken ill, his advocate told. On Tuesday, Additional Sessions Judge P.M. Badar of the Nashik District and Sessions Court confirmed Mr. Kokate's conviction under Section 420 (cheating), 468 (forgery), 469 (forgery for cheating) and 471 (using forged documents) read with Section 34 IPC, while acquitting him of charges under Sections 407 and 491 IPC. The court directed the Magistrate to take steps for execution of the jail term from January and May, according to officials.

On Tuesday, the court after he failed to appear in court.

Mr. Kokate and his brother Vijay were convicted for allegedly misappropriating their income to obtain flats under the EW3 quota in Nashik.



Manojrao Minister Manojrao Kokate has been convicted in a cheating and forgery case linked to a housing scheme. (H. N. N. N.)

ment) read with Section 34 IPC, while acquitting him of charges under Sections 407 and 491 IPC. The court directed the Magistrate to take steps for execution of the jail term from January and May, according to officials.

On Tuesday, the court after he failed to appear in court.

Mr. Kokate and his brother Vijay were convicted for allegedly misappropriating their income to obtain flats under the EW3 quota in Nashik.

M.P. govt. forms panel to investigate HIV infection case

Medical Staff
BHOJPA

The Madhya Pradesh government has formed a committee to investigate the case of a child getting infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), allegedly from contaminated blood transfusions at the Satna district hospital and other facilities in the State.

As per an order issued by Tarun Khatu, Commissioner, Public Health and Medical Education Department, on Tuesday, the six-member panel has been asked to submit a detailed report within seven days. The committee will be headed by Dr. Satya Anand, Regional Director of the department's Rewa Division.

The six children, aged between January and May, according to officials, have been identified to light only on Tuesday.

Deputy Chief Minister Balraj Singh, who also holds the Health portfolio, said the children are being treated at the Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre under the guidance

The children tested positive between January and May, but the case came to light only on Tuesday

of Central government agencies and that a State-level committee has been formed to probe the matter and trace the donors.

The children suffering from thalassaemia are given blood transfusion three times in a month. It's not necessary that the blood is given from one particular centre. It is being told that they (some children) had also visited Jabalpur so it could have happened there or at some private centres," Mr. Shukla said, speaking to the media.

Earlier, Satna Collector Sanjay Kumar S. said an internal investigation at the hospital level has also been launched into the matter.

Dr. Manoj Shukla, the chief medical and health officer in-charge and civil surgeon of the district hospital, said he has issued a show cause notice to the nodal officer of the National AIDS Control Organisation as the matter was not brought to his attention.

'Modern, traditional medicine will be integrated in phases'

Hindu Shalini Perampalan
NEW DELHI

India has been gradually moving towards a more integrated and collaborative approach between modern and traditional systems of medicine, rather than forcing a sudden or complete merger, according to AYUSH Secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotucha.

The top official from the Union Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy, known as AYUSH, was speaking exclusively to The Hindu about the World Health Organization's (WHO's) second global summit on traditional medicine, jointly organised with the Government of India.

The summit started on Wednesday, bringing together practitioners from more than 100 countries.



Vaidya Rajesh Kotucha

Discussing the integration of therapies, the Secretary said that the emphasis would be on a rational approach, where each system contributes according to its strengths.

The summit is an opportunity to engage constructively with the global community on strengthening integration of traditional and modern medicine. A key focus will be on sharing India's experience in institutional frameworks for education and service delivery across various systems," he said.

Pilot bodies complain to House panel on 'corruption' in DGCA and Ministry

Sobhana K. Nair
JAIPUR, UDAIPUR

Pilot bodies have alleged deep-rooted corruption in the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Ministry of Civil Aviation before the parliamentary panel that met to discuss the operational meltdown at Indigo since early December, which led to the cancellation of over 5,000 flights affecting at least 12.5 lakh passengers.

The department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Civil Aviation, chaired by Sanjay K. Bha, called a meeting to review the impact of revised rest and duty norms for pilots that triggered the large-scale flight cancellations because of gaps in planning.

Officials of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, DGCA, senior executives of Indigo, as well as Chief Operations Officer Indigo Prakash, and senior Vice President (Flight Operations), Ashish Mitra, and various pilot associations such as Airlines Pilots Association India (APIA), Indian Pilots Guild (IPG) and Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP)

The meeting lasted nearly three hours.

During the meeting, it is learnt that APIA's presi-



The panel met to discuss the recent operational meltdown at Indigo, that led to large-scale flight cancellations.

dent Captain Sam Thomas said there was "corruption every level" in the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the DGCA following which members of the panel asked them to furnish proof.

Regulatory scrutiny

Members have been raised on how the regulatory granted Indigo permission to deploy 10% more flights in the winter schedule and whether it assessed the airline's preparedness for implementing the new duty norms.

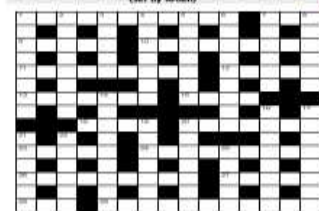
The pilot bodies also discussed the existing conditions under which pilots have to perform their flying duties and how airlines have been misinterpreting rules in their own favour, sources said.

Indico reiterated that the large flight cancellations were due to a "combination of factors", which it has explained in its statements as minor technical glitches, winter schedule changes, adverse weather, and aviation system congestion as well as implementation of new rest and duty norms for pilots.

The DGCA was asked whether it had consulted all stakeholders before implementing the norms, to which it answered in the affirmative and added that airlines were also granted selective exemptions on the norms that came into effect on November 1 to make it easier for them to proceed with their implementation.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation informed the panel members that an enquiry was being conducted into Indigo's operational collapse and a four-member committee was appointed to identify the underlying causes.

The parliamentary panel will be meeting again on the matter once the Aviation Ministry's inquiry is concluded.

THE CROSSWORD 14668
(Set by Arund)

Across

1. Reverse possible action leading to clash (11)
7. Woman starts speaking of action (8)
9. Be long for a gold-plated cube (8)
14. Move to permit one in ten, perhaps (11)
15. Psychological baggage of one point, like accepting separate routes (8)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at <https://crossword.thehindu.com>

12. Senseless when an illusion is reached partly (8)
13. A pinch to remove salt partly (7)
14. Here and there - again they all end in parallel (8)
15. Cray over knock-out (10)
16. Indian army during regular patrols hides weapons (12)
17. Subject revised within a month (8)
18. Hero's trip, wearing old top (8)
19. Changed mind to take part in club game (8)
20. Small part of move in New York (5)
21. House from last depressing loss (8)
22. Free to recall name - police department retains head (11)
23. Indian politician repeatedly picks up Chinese grass (8, 4)
24. Refuse to have one ground as they go over people's heads (8)
25. French writer had no power to force people off their slumber (8)
26. One on either side - almost no to raise a plant (7)
27. Self confession of an old-fashioned person (7)
28. Move into overhead stores, but quality (8)
29. Healer is a fake one (8)
30. Disappear after accompanying the Queen (8)
31. Nothing good about slight intention - it's a precarious situation (8, 4)
32. It comes to grip with tragic ending of the poor and destitute (8)
33. Favourite food and to begin with (8, 4)
34. It's highly inflammable - sleep one with hard hat, perhaps (7)
35. As one as fantastic run through (7)
36. Can swing both ways in bar - stop it (8)
37. Agree music is uplifting - come along (10)
38. Best opening line inside bar (8)

SUDOKU

	3	5		2	4
2		4		3	1
1					
	9	5		7	
8				1	
7		6	9		
	2	3	1		6
7	4			2	8

Solution to previous puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	9	4	8	5	1	2	3	6
9	2	6	3	7	4	8	5	1
5	1	3	2	6	9	4	7	8
8	3	7	5	2	1	9	6	4
6	4	1	9	3	7	5	2	8
2	5	8	1	4	6	3	9	7
3	7	2	6	8	5	1	4	9
4	6	5	7	3	8	9	1	2
1	8	9	4	2	3	6	7	5

FAITH

Maha Periyava's grace

When He manifested as Vamana, one among the 10 avatars, God appeared small. However, with His Vismavrooth, He measured the entire world with one foot, the celestial world with his second foot. This is the crux of the saying, "Small deity, big reach (Hindi)".

Kanchi Maha Periyava was diminutive in size. He was short and thin and did not possess a commanding visage. Kanchi Maha Periyava, hailed as a god by Kalyani, appeared on earth to help mankind. Born under the Anusha star on May 20, 1894, as Swaminathan in Viluppuram district in Tamil Nadu, he became the 6th Pontiff of the Kanchi Karmakoti Peetam at 15 years and conferred the name of Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Swamikal. Living a 100 years, he brought glory to the Kanchi Math and exemplified Satyana Dharma, said P. Swaminathan.

Maha Periyava set an example by walking the path of Dharma. He undertook panyaktra extensively, across the country, to spread the message of Ishakti as a way to reach God. Moved by the plight of the indigent, he did everything in his power to help them. There have been many occasions when the rich and the influential had to wait for a week for his appointment, while ordinary, poor people were given immediate attention. He would listen to their troubles, pray for them, offer them his blessings and send them away with peace. Devotees across the world celebrate his birth star, Anurath, with Anurath puja. The saint attained samadhi in 1994, but his devotees continue to pray to him at his resting place in Kanchipuram, seeking his divine power to resolve their everyday problems and guide them towards God.

Indian Army leaves for Desert Cyclone-II military exercise

An Indian Army contingent has departed for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to participate in the second edition of the India-UAE Joint Military Exercise DESERT CYCLONE-II, scheduled to be held at Abu Dhabi from December 18 to 30.

According to the Defence Ministry, the Indian contingent comprised 45 personnel, primarily drawn from a battalion of the Mechanised Infantry Regiment. The UAE Land Forces will be represented by a contingent of similar strength from the 53 Mechanised Infantry Battalion. Aim of the exercise is to enhance interoperability and further strengthen defence cooperation between the Indian Army and the UAE Land Forces.

1. What is the News?

The Indian Army contingent has departed for the United Arab Emirates to participate in Exercise Desert Cyclone-II.

भारतीय सेना का दल संयुक्त अरब अमीरात में डेजर्ट साइक्लोन-II सैन्य अभ्यास में भाग लेने के लिए रवाना हुआ है।

This is the second edition of the India-UAE Joint Military Exercise.

यह भारत-यूएई संयुक्त सैन्य अभ्यास का दूसरा संस्करण है।

2. Location and Duration

The exercise is being held at Abu Dhabi.

यह अभ्यास अबू धाबी में आयोजित किया जा रहा है।

The exercise is scheduled from December 18 to December 30.

अभ्यास 18 दिसंबर से 30 दिसंबर तक आयोजित होगा।

4. Aim of the Exercise

The primary aim is to enhance interoperability between the Indian Army and the UAE Land Forces.

मुख्य उद्देश्य भारतीय सेना और यूएई थल सेना के बीच अंतर-संचालन क्षमता को बढ़ाना है।

The exercise seeks to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation.

यह अभ्यास द्विपक्षीय रक्षा सहयोग को और मजबूत करने का प्रयास करता है।

5. Strategic Significance

Joint military exercises improve coordination, trust, and operational readiness.

संयुक्त सैन्य अभ्यास समन्वय, विश्वास और परिचालन तत्परता को बढ़ाते हैं।

The exercise reflects the growing strategic partnership between India and the UAE.

यह अभ्यास भारत और यूएई के बीच बढ़ती रणनीतिक साझेदारी को दर्शाता है।

Mechanised warfare training is important for desert and semi-desert operations.

रेगिस्तानी और अर्ध-रेगिस्तानी क्षेत्रों में मैकेनाइज़्ड युद्ध प्रशिक्षण महत्वपूर्ण होता है।

With reference to Exercise Desert Cyclone-II, consider the following statements:

डेजर्ट साइक्लोन-II अभ्यास के संदर्भ में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. It is a joint military exercise between India and the United Arab Emirates.

यह भारत और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात के बीच संयुक्त सैन्य अभ्यास है।

2. The exercise focuses on enhancing interoperability between the land forces of both countries.

अभ्यास दोनों देशों की थल सेनाओं के बीच अंतर-संचालन क्षमता बढ़ाने पर केंद्रित है।

3. It is conducted exclusively as a naval exercise.

यह केवल नौसैनिक अभ्यास के रूप में आयोजित किया जाता है।

Which of the statements given above are correct?

उपरोक्त में से कौन-से कथन सही हैं?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of government schools with zero students

5,149 of the 10.13 lakh government schools across India, 5,149 have no students at all. And more than 70% of these schools requiring zero enrolment in the 2024-25 academic year are in Telangana and West Bengal, according to government data. **IN**

Number of Afghan refugee camps shut down by Pakistan

42 The Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan said it has shut down as many as 42 camps that had housed Afghan refugees for over 40 years. Millions of Afghan refugees crossed into Pakistan after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. **IN**

Number of National Highway projects behind schedule

574 As many as 574 under construction National Highway (NH) projects worth ₹5.60 lakh crore have exceeded their completion schedule. Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said 123 NH projects with total cost of about ₹1 lakh crore have been awarded. **IN**

EU members who voted to delay the deforestation law

405 The European parliament approved an EU deal to delay its anti-deforestation law by a year, until December 2026, clearing the path for a legislative hurdle before the delay can pass into law. The decision was voted to approve the delay, with 405 lawmakers in favour, 195 **IN**

Number of posts currently vacant in the Delhi Police

9,248 Over 10% of the posts in the Delhi Police are currently vacant, with the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) rank recording the highest proportion of vacancies at over 30%. **IN**

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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How is the Aravalli range to be protected?

How do the Aravalli hills and ranges prevent the desertification of the Indo-Gangetic plains? What were the recommendations of the Central Empowered Committee? Why was it necessary to arrive at a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills? Has the Supreme Court completely banned mining in the ranges?

EXPLAINER

Joseph Kanhu

The story so far:

The Supreme Court (SC), in an order last month, settled on a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges, and passed the grant of fresh mining leases inside its areas spanning Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

What is the range's significance?

Apart from being nearly two billion years old and India's oldest mountain range, they serve as an important ecological barrier to prevent the desertification of the Indo-Gangetic plains. They help arrest the eastward spread of the Thar Desert into Haryana, Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh, and play a major role in stabilising climate, supporting biodiversity, and recharging groundwater. Stretching from Delhi to Gujarat across 650 km, the mountain support water recharge systems and are the source of important rivers such as the Chambal, Sabarnai, and Luni. It is richly endowed with sandstone, limestone, marble, granite, and minerals such as lead, zinc, copper, gold, and tungsten. While historically mined for these resources, it has in the past four decades been excessively quarried for stone and sand. This has contributed to deteriorating air quality as well as plummeting groundwater recharge. A proportion of the mining has also been illegal. The Court noted that India is bound by international commitments, under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, to protect vulnerable ecosystems such as the Aravalli range.

Was action taken against mining?

The Environment Ministry, since the early 1990s, has laid down rules restricting mining to only sanctioned projects but these have been flagrantly violated. In 2009, the SC stepped in and imposed a



Deserted landscapes: A sunrise against the Aravalli mountain ranges in Ajmer, Rajasthan, in 2022. **AP**

blanket ban on mining in the Faridabad, Gurgaon, and Meerut districts of Haryana. In May 2024, the SC prohibited granting of fresh mining leases and renewals in the range and directed its Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to undertake a detailed examination, leading to a set of recommendations submitted in March 2024. The CEC proposed a comprehensive approach that included a complete scientific mapping of the Aravalli range across all states, a macro-level environmental impact assessment of mining activities, and strict prohibition of mining in ecologically sensitive areas such as protected habitats, water bodies, tiger corridors, key aquifer recharge zones and areas within the National Capital Region. It urged stringent regulation of stone-crushing units. It also recommended that no new mining leases or renewals be permitted until proper mapping and impact assessments were

completed. These recommendations were taken up by the Court in its order of November 2025. Further, in June, 2025, the Centre started an Aravalli 'Green Wall' project. The plan is to expand green cover in the five-km buffer area around the Aravallis in 29 districts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. The government said this initiative will play a crucial role in restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

Why a uniform definition?

The Court found that States were using inconsistent criteria to identify Aravalli formations. There have also been differing definitions, including by expert groups such as the Forest Survey of India (FSI) on what makes up 'Aravalli Hills and Ranges'. In 2010, the FSI had said hills with '0-100m', '0-50m' and '0-100m' buffer zones, 600m later hill distance or valley width—300m and (iv) the area enclosed

by above defined hills from all sides," would make up Aravalli hill and ranges. To resolve this, it constituted a committee comprising representatives from the Environment Ministry, the FSI, State Forest Departments, the Geological Survey of India and the CEC. This committee was tasked with creating a scientifically grounded, nationwide definition of the Aravallis. The committee submitted its findings in October 2025. The SC committee finally ruled that only hills above 100 metres would make the cut. The amicus curiae, K. Parasuram, objected that this was too narrow a definition and potentially opened all the hills below 100 metres for mining, compromising "...their continuity and integrity." However, the Additional Solicitor General, Ashwarya Bhatt, countered that the definition on slopes, foothill buffers etc., as proposed by the FSI would, on the contrary, exclude large areas from the Aravalli Hills and Ranges. The committee recommendations of 100m was far more inclusive.

What are the SC's other directions?

The Court directed the preparation of a detailed Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) covering the entire Aravalli range. The plan must demarcate areas where mining must be absolutely prohibited, identify zones where limited and highly regulated mining may be permitted, map sensitive habitats and wildlife corridors, evaluate cumulative ecological impacts, determine ecological carrying capacity, and articulate restoration and rehabilitation measures.

Why was there no ban on mining?

The Court explained that past experiences show total bans often lead to the rise of illegal mining syndicates, violent sand mafias and unregulated extraction. The Court therefore opted for a calibrated approach: existing legal mining continues under tight regulation, new mining is paused until a scientifically driven plan is prepared, and permanently sensitive areas remain off limits.

THE GIST

➤ The Environment Ministry, since the early 1990s, has laid down rules restricting mining to only sanctioned projects but these have been flagrantly violated.

➤ In June, 2025, the Centre started an Aravalli 'Green Wall' project. The plan is to expand green cover in the five km buffer area around the Aravallis in 29 districts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. The government said this initiative will play a crucial role in restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

➤ The Court explained that past experiences show total bans often lead to the rise of illegal mining syndicates, violent sand mafias and unregulated extraction.

Why have Thailand-Cambodia border clashes flared up again?

Why is the border between the two countries contested? How did the U.S. broker a ceasefire?

R. Preetha

The story so far:

In December 8, Thailand launched airstrikes into Cambodia after clashes erupted along their disputed border, with both sides accusing each other of breaching the U.S.-brokered ceasefire in October. On December 12, after calls with both leaders, President Trump stated that Thailand and Cambodia had agreed to "cease all shooting". However, Thailand has vowed to continue military actions until threats are neutralised.

What happened early this year?

In May 2025, tensions between the two countries escalated when a Cambodian soldier was killed in a skirmish, leading to troop buildup and displaced civilians. It witnessed five days of intense fighting involving artillery, rockets, and Thai

airstrikes that killed at least 48 people and displaced over 3,00,000. A ceasefire was brokered through U.S. pressure and Malaysian mediation, ending the tensions. The truce was formalised in October with an agreement signed in Kuala Lumpur. However, in November, Thailand suspended its implementation after a landslide injured a soldier. It accused Cambodia of planting new mines.

On December 7 and 8, clashes escalated to Thai airstrikes targeting Cambodian military sites, including alleged rocket attacks. As of now, casualties include over 15 Thai soldiers and dozens on the Cambodian side, along with mass civilian evacuations.

What is the border dispute about?

The core issue is sovereignty over un-demarcated sections of the 817 km long border, inherited from colonial-era treaties concluded in 1904 and 1907 between France (which ruled Cambodia)

and Siam (present-day Thailand) respectively. These agreements planned for the boundary to follow the Dangrek Mountain watershed, but the French-drawn maps placed key ancient Khmer temples, particularly Preah Vihear, on the Cambodian side. The 19th century Hindu temple Preah Vihear has been central to the dispute with both countries claiming historical ownership. In 1962, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Preah Vihear belonged to Cambodia, although the ruling was never fully implemented. Later, in 2013, the ICJ clarification affirmed Cambodian sovereignty over most of the area.

Nationalist sentiments in both countries complicate the bilateral issue, with temples reflecting historical Khmer glory for Cambodia and territorial loss or inheritance from colonial-era treaties. Between 2008-2011, deadly clashes occurred after Cambodia tried to list Preah Vihear as a

UNESCO World Heritage site.

How have mediation efforts fared?

Since the major clashes in 2008-11, several mediation efforts involving the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ICJ, and external actors, aimed at resolving the dispute, have failed. In 2011, ASEAN, under Indonesia's chairmanship, played a key role. It proposed deploying Indonesian observers to monitor a ceasefire and support troop withdrawals. From a demilitarised zone ordered by the ICJ that year, but Thailand resisted any third-party involvement. In 2024, recent fighting led to fresh mediation efforts. President Trump held calls with leaders in Bangkok and Phnom Penh, his threat to halt US exports to the U.S., their biggest market, led to an unconditional ceasefire.

What is the way forward?

A recent report of Justice (R) ruled that built on measures attempted under the border agreement, including verifiable troop withdrawals, joint de-mining, and direct military communication. At the bilateral level, sustained engagement through joint commissions is necessary for border demarcation. Thailand's preference for bilateral talks must be reconciled with Cambodia's openness to integrity for Thailand. Between

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THE GIST

➤ On December 8, Thailand launched airstrikes into Cambodia after clashes erupted along their disputed border, with both sides accusing each other of breaching the U.S.-brokered ceasefire in October.

➤ The 13th century Hindu temple Preah Vihear has been central to the dispute, with both countries claiming historical ownership.

➤ At the border level, de-escalation should build on measures attempted under the October agreement, including verifiable troop withdrawals, joint de-mining, and direct military communication.

How is the Aravalli range to be protected?

How do the Aravalli hills and ranges prevent the desertification of the Indo-Gangetic plain? What were the recommendations of the Central Empowered Committee? Why was it necessary to arrive at a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills? Has the Supreme Court completely banned mining in the ranges?

EXPLAINER

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

The Supreme Court (SC), in an order last month, settled on a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges, and paused the grant of fresh mining leases inside its areas spanning Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

What is the range's significance?

Apart from being nearly two billion years old and India's oldest mountain range, they serve as an important ecological barrier to prevent the desertification of the Indo-Gangetic plains. They help arrest the eastward spread of the Thar Desert into Haryana, Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh, and play a major role in stabilising climate, supporting biodiversity, and recharging groundwater. Stretching from Delhi to Gujarat across 650 km, the mountains support water-recharge systems and are the source of important rivers such as the Chambal, Sabarmati, and Luni. It is richly endowed with sandstone, limestone, marble, granite, and minerals such as lead, zinc, copper, gold, and tungsten. While historically mined for these resources, it has in the past four decades been excessively quarried for stone and sand. This has contributed to deteriorating air quality as well as plummeting groundwater recharge. A proportion of the mining has also been illegal. The Court noted that India is bound by international commitments, under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, to protect vulnerable ecosystems such as the Aravalli range.

Was action taken against mining?

The Environment Ministry, since the early 1990s, has laid down rules restricting mining to only sanctioned projects but these have been flagrantly violated. In 2009, the SC stepped in and imposed a



Threatened landscapes: A sunrise against the Aravalli mountain ranges in Ajmer, Rajasthan, in 2022. AP

blanket ban on mining in the Faridabad, Gurugram, and Mewat districts of Haryana. In May 2024, the SC prohibited granting of fresh mining leases and renewals in the range and directed its Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to undertake a detailed examination, leading to a set of recommendations submitted in March 2024. The CEC proposed a comprehensive approach that included a complete scientific mapping of the Aravalli range across all States; a macro-level environmental impact assessment of mining activities; and strict prohibition of mining in ecologically sensitive areas such as protected habitats, water bodies, tiger corridors, key aquifer recharge zones and areas within the National Capital Region. It urged stringent regulation of stone-crushing units. It also recommended that no new mining leases or renewals be permitted until proper mapping and impact assessments were

completed. These recommendations were taken up by the Court in its order of November 2025. Further, in June, 2025, the Centre started an Aravalli 'Green Wall' project. The plan is to expand green cover in the five-km buffer area around the Aravallis in 29 districts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. The government said this initiative will play a crucial role in restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

Why a uniform definition?

The Court found that States were using inconsistent criteria to identify Aravalli formations. There have also been differing definitions, including by expert groups such as the Forest Survey of India (FSI) on what makes up 'Aravalli Hills and Ranges.' In 2010, the FSI had said hills with "(i) slope >3°, (ii) foothill buffer - 100m, (iii) inter hill distance or valley width- 500m and (iv) the area enclosed

by above defined hills from all sides," would make up Aravalli hill and ranges. To resolve this, it constituted a committee comprising representatives from the Environment Ministry, the FSI, State Forest Departments, the Geological Survey of India and the CEC. This committee was tasked with creating a scientifically grounded, nationwide definition of the Aravallis. The committee submitted its findings in October 2025. The SC committee finally ruled that only hills above 100 metres would make the cut. The amicus curae, K. Parameswar, objected that this was too narrow a definition and potentially opened all the hills below 100 metres for mining, compromising "...their continuity and integrity." However, the Additional Solicitor General, Aishwarya Bhati countered that the definition on slopes, foothill buffers etc. as proposed by the FSI would, on the contrary, exclude large areas from the Aravalli Hills and Ranges. The committee recommendations of 100m was far more inclusive.

What are the SC's other directions?

The Court directed the preparation of a detailed Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) covering the entire Aravalli range. The plan must demarcate areas where mining must be absolutely prohibited, identify zones where limited and highly regulated mining may be permitted, map sensitive habitats and wildlife corridors, evaluate cumulative ecological impacts, determine ecological carrying capacity, and articulate restoration and rehabilitation measures.

Why was there no ban on mining?

The Court explained that past experiences show total bans often lead to the rise of illegal mining syndicates, violent sand mafias and unregulated extraction. The Court therefore opted for a calibrated approach: existing legal mining continues under tight regulation, new mining is paused until a scientifically driven plan is prepared, and permanently sensitive areas remain off-limits.

THE GIST

▼ The Environment Ministry, since the early 1990s, has laid down rules restricting mining to only sanctioned projects but these have been flagrantly violated.

▼ In June, 2025, the Centre started an Aravalli 'Green Wall' project. The plan is to expand green cover in the five-km buffer area around the Aravallis in 29 districts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. The government said this initiative will play a crucial role in restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

▼ The Court explained that past experiences show total bans often lead to the rise of illegal mining syndicates, violent sand mafias and unregulated extraction.

Stretches ~720 km across **Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi.**

Guru Shikhar (1,722 m) on **Mount Abu** is the highest peak.

Source of important rivers, including the **Chambal**.

Formed by **orogenic (plate convergence)** processes.

Evidence of mining activity since at least the **5th century BCE.**

Among the **oldest fold mountains** in the world, now form **residual mountains.**



ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

- Acts as a barrier against the **eastward spread** of the Thar Desert.
- Boasts **22 wildlife sanctuaries, four tiger reserves** & bird parks. 
- Redirect **monsoon clouds eastwards** during monsoon, supporting sub-Himalayan rivers & northern plains.
- Supports groundwater recharge & filters air pollution (NCR). 
- **Blocks dry winds** from **Afghanistan & Pakistan.** 
- Habitat for over 300 plant species, 120 bird species & animals.

ARAVALLI GREEN WALL PROJECT

Introduced at COP16 of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification held in Riyadh & launched in 2019.



NODAL MINISTRY

Ministry of
Environment, Forest
and Climate Change.

Inspired by
**Africa's
Green Wall.**

OBJECTIVES



Green barrier against dust & pollution.



Combat desertification & halt
Thar Desert's eastward spread.



Restore biodiversity & boost
groundwater recharge.

Covers **29 districts**
across **Haryana,**
Rajasthan, Gujarat,
and **Delhi.**

KEY FEATURES



Plantation of native species on degraded land.



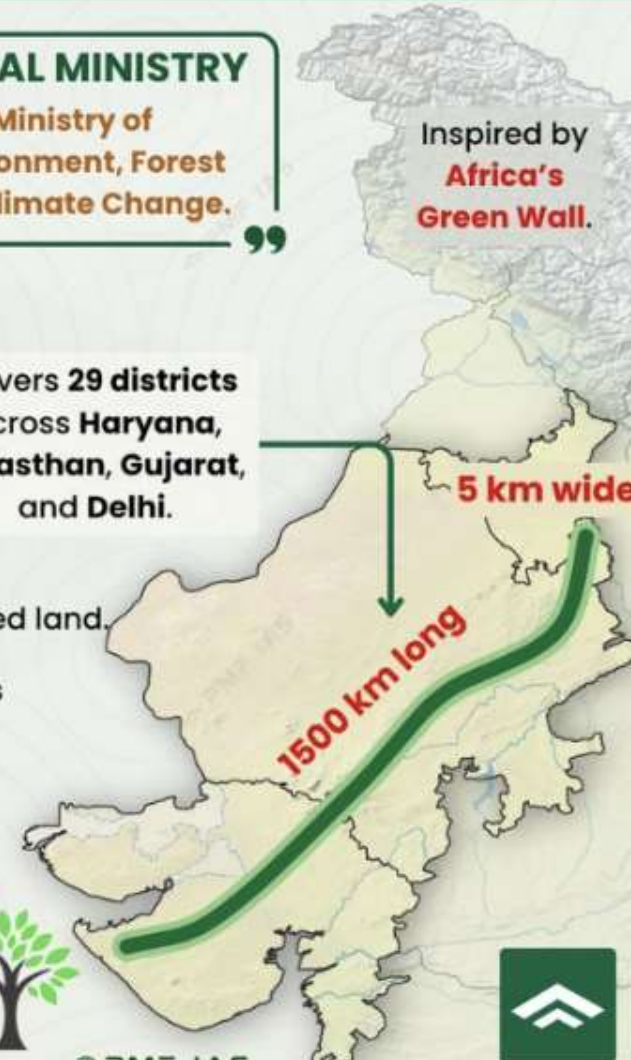
Establishment of around 1,000 nurseries
to support ongoing afforestation.



Removal of invasive species & water
body restoration.

IMPLEMENTATION

Centrally coordinated, multi-stakeholder
execution (NGOs, private sector, communities).



What is Great Green Wall of Africa (GGW)?

- **About:**

- GGW is a project launched **by African union** to restore the continent's degraded landscapes and transform millions of lives in the **Sahel**.
- The project plans **8km wide band** of trees **stretching 8,000km** across Africa.

- **Objectives:**

- It aims to **restore 100 million hectares** of currently degraded land.
- Also, the project envisages to **sequester 250 million tons of carbon** and create **10 million green jobs by 2030**.

- **Participating countries:**

- Eleven countries in the Sahel-Sahara region—**Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Senegal** have joined to combat land degradation and restore native plant life to the landscape.



THE GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE



Satellite imagery: Reto Stöckli, NASA Earth Observatory

1. What is the Issue?

The Supreme Court has settled a uniform definition of the Aravalli hills and ranges.

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने अरावली पहाड़ियों और श्रेणियों की एक समान परिभाषा तय की है।

The Court paused the grant of fresh mining leases in Aravalli areas across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

अदालत ने दिल्ली, हरियाणा, राजस्थान और गुजरात के अरावली क्षेत्रों में नए खनन पट्टों पर रोक लगाई है।

2. Why are the Aravallis Important?

The Aravalli range is nearly two billion years old and among the world's oldest mountain systems.

अरावली पर्वत श्रृंखला लगभग दो अरब वर्ष पुरानी और विश्व की सबसे पुरानी पर्वत प्रणालियों में से एक है।

They act as an ecological barrier preventing desertification of the Indo-Gangetic plains.

ये इंडो-गंगा के मैदानों में मरुस्थलीकरण को रोकने वाली पारिस्थितिक बाधा का कार्य करती हैं।

The range helps block the eastward expansion of the Thar Desert.

यह थार मरुस्थल के पूर्व की ओर फैलाव को रोकती है।

3. Ecological and Hydrological Role

The Aravallis help stabilise climate and support biodiversity.

अरावली जलवायु को स्थिर करने और जैव विविधता को समर्थन देने में मदद करती है।

They play a critical role in groundwater recharge across north-western India.

ये उत्तर-पश्चिम भारत में भूजल पुनर्भरण में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती हैं।

Major rivers like Chambal, Sabarmati and Luni originate from the Aravalli system.

चंबल, साबरमती और लूणी जैसी प्रमुख नदियाँ अरावली से निकलती हैं।

4. Mining and Environmental Damage

The region is rich in minerals like limestone, marble, granite, copper, zinc and gold.

यह क्षेत्र चूना पत्थर, संगमरमर, ग्रेनाइट, तांबा, जस्ता और सोने जैसे खनिजों से समृद्ध है।

Decades of excessive mining have degraded forests, groundwater and air quality.

दशकों के अत्यधिक खनन से वन, भूजल और वायु गुणवत्ता को गंभीर नुकसान पहुँचा है।

A significant portion of mining activities has been illegal.

खनन गतिविधियों का बड़ा हिस्सा अवैध रहा है।

5. Past Legal and Policy Actions

Since the early 1990s, mining in the Aravallis has been subject to restrictions.

1990 के दशक की शुरुआत से अरावली में खनन पर प्रतिबंध लगाए गए हैं।

In 2009, the Supreme Court imposed a ban on mining in parts of Haryana.

2009 में सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने हरियाणा के कुछ हिस्सों में खनन पर प्रतिबंध लगाया था।

Mining bans were imposed in districts such as Faridabad, Gurugram and Mewat.

फरीदाबाद, गुरुग्राम और मेवात जैसे जिलों में खनन पर रोक लगाई गई थी।

6. Central Empowered Committee Recommendations

The Central Empowered Committee was tasked with examining mining in the Aravalli range.

केंद्रीय सशक्त समिति को अरावली में खनन की जांच का कार्य सौंपा गया था।

It recommended a scientific, nationwide mapping of the Aravalli range.

समिति ने अरावली की वैज्ञानिक और देशव्यापी मैपिंग की सिफारिश की।

It proposed banning mining in ecologically sensitive areas, wildlife corridors and recharge zones.

इसने पारिस्थितिक रूप से संवेदनशील क्षेत्रों, वन्यजीव गलियारों और रिचार्ज ज़ोन में खनन पर प्रतिबंध की सिफारिश की।

7. Uniform Definition of Aravalli

States were using inconsistent criteria to identify Aravalli formations.

राज्य अरावली संरचनाओं की पहचान के लिए अलग-अलग मानदंड अपना रहे थे।

A uniform definition was necessary to prevent legal loopholes.

कानूनी खामियों को रोकने के लिए एक समान परिभाषा आवश्यक थी।

The definition considers elevation, slope, continuity and geological integrity.

परिभाषा में ऊँचाई, ढलान, निरंतरता और भूवैज्ञानिक अखंडता को शामिल किया गया।

8. Supreme Court's Directions

The Court directed preparation of a detailed Management Plan for Sustainable Aravalli.

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने अरावली के सतत प्रबंधन के लिए विस्तृत प्रबंधन योजना तैयार करने का निर्देश दिया।

The plan must demarcate no-mining zones and highly regulated mining areas.

योजना में पूर्ण प्रतिबंधित खनन क्षेत्र और कड़े नियमन वाले क्षेत्र चिह्नित किए जाएंगे।

It must identify sensitive habitats, wildlife corridors and ecological carrying capacity.

इसमें संवेदनशील आवास, वन्यजीव गलियारे और पारिस्थितिक वहन क्षमता की पहचान शामिल होगी।



- Forest belt likely to run roughly **from Porbandar to Panipat**, covering entire Aravali range and beyond
- 'Green wall' will act as barrier for dust from west and check eastward march of Thar desert
- It will check desertification by **restoring degraded land through massive afforestation**

9. Aravalli Green Wall Initiative

The government launched the Aravalli Green Wall project in June 2025.

सरकार ने जून 2025 में अरावली ग्रीन वॉल परियोजना शुरू की।

The initiative aims to expand green cover along a five-kilometre buffer zone.

इस पहल का उद्देश्य पाँच किलोमीटर के बफर क्षेत्र में हरित आवरण बढ़ाना है।

It targets restoration of around 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

इसका लक्ष्य 2030 तक लगभग 2.6 करोड़ हेक्टेयर क्षतिग्रस्त भूमि का पुनर्स्थापन है।

10. Why No Complete Ban on Mining?

The Court observed that total bans often increase illegal mining and mafias.

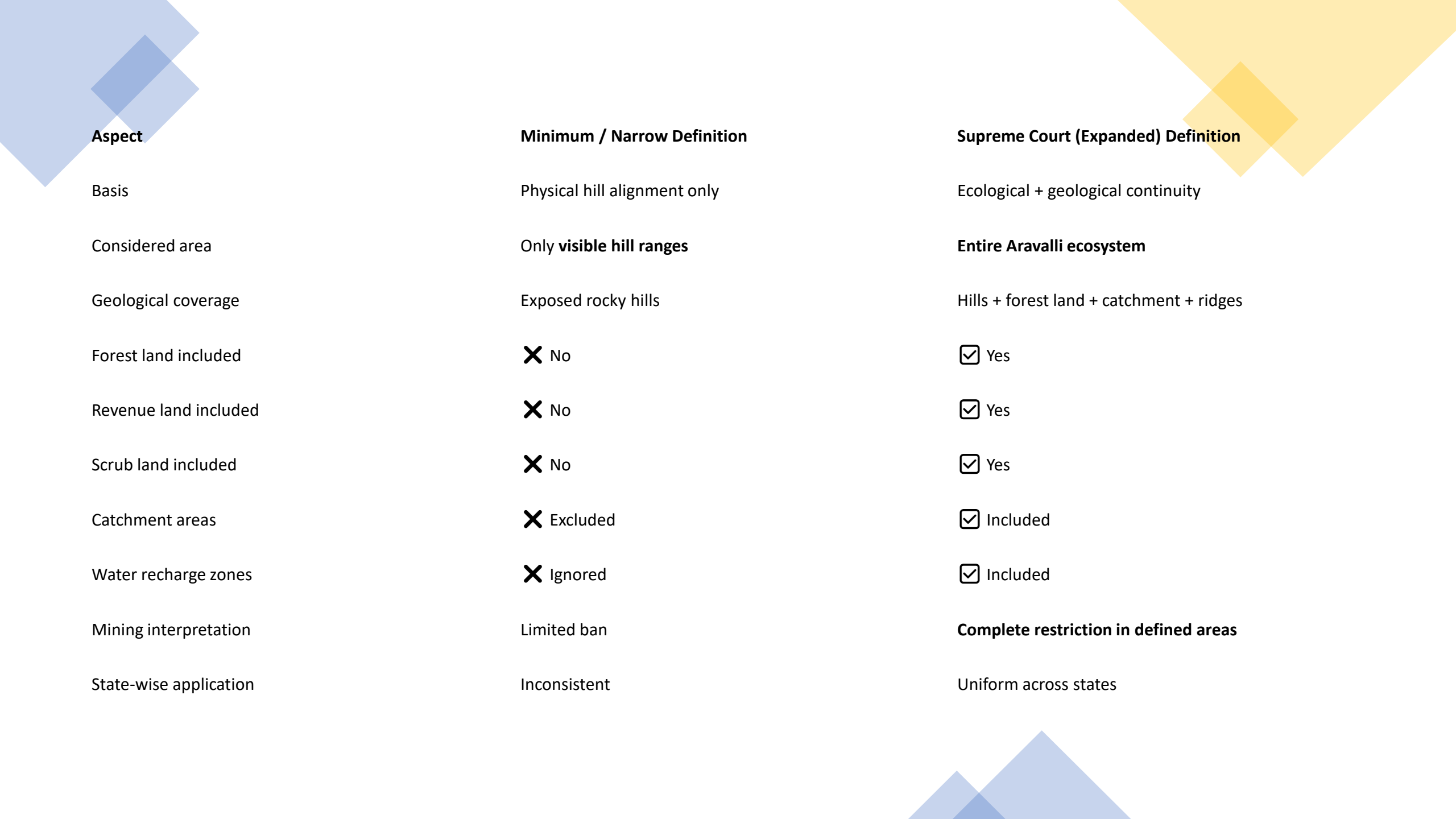
अदालत ने कहा कि पूर्ण प्रतिबंध से अक्सर अवैध खनन और माफिया बढ़ते हैं।

A calibrated approach was adopted allowing regulated legal mining.

नियंत्रित कानूनी खनन की अनुमति देते हुए संतुलित दृष्टिकोण अपनाया गया।

Ecologically sensitive areas are to remain permanently off-limits.

पारिस्थितिक रूप से संवेदनशील क्षेत्रों को स्थायी रूप से प्रतिबंधित रखा जाएगा।



Aspect

Minimum / Narrow Definition

Supreme Court (Expanded) Definition

Basis

Physical hill alignment only

Ecological + geological continuity

Considered area

Only **visible hill ranges**

Entire Aravalli ecosystem

Geological coverage

Exposed rocky hills

Hills + forest land + catchment + ridges

Forest land included

✗ No

☒ Yes

Revenue land included

✗ No

☒ Yes

Scrub land included

✗ No

☒ Yes

Catchment areas

✗ Excluded

☒ Included

Water recharge zones

✗ Ignored

☒ Included

Mining interpretation

Limited ban

Complete restriction in defined areas

State-wise application

Inconsistent

Uniform across states

Category	Details
What is the 100-metre rule?	Supreme Court approved a new definition that a landform must have at least 100 metres elevation above local relief to be legally recognised as part of the Aravalli Hills. (www.ndtv.com)
Scope of the rule	Applies to landforms in Aravalli districts across north-west India. (www.ndtv.com)
What happens to land below 100m?	Landforms below 100m elevation may not be treated as Aravalli Hills and could be open to mining / development . (www.ndtv.com)
Supreme Court directives	Centre ordered to do detailed scientific mapping and prepare a “ sustainable mining plan ”; no new mining leases until mapping is complete. (www.ndtv.com)
Historical context	SC has intervened since 1990s to curb unregulated mining, tighten monitoring and rehabilitate mined areas. (www.ndtv.com)
Data on hills meeting criteria	Internal Forest Survey of India assessment suggests only 1,048 of 12,081 mapped hills (~8.7%) meet the 100-m benchmark — meaning ~90% might lose protection . (www.ndtv.com)
Major concerns raised	Experts warn reducing legal footprint risks: habitat loss, groundwater decline, wildlife corridor fragmentation, desertification and poorer air quality especially around NCR. (www.ndtv.com)
Political response	Congress leaders criticised the change, calling for immediate review due to environmental & public health concerns. (www.ndtv.com)
Why it matters	Aravallis act as a green ecological shield , aiding climate regulation, water recharge, and dust/pollution control. (www.ndtv.com)

With reference to the Aravalli range, consider the following statements:

अरावली पर्वत श्रृंखला के संदर्भ में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. The Aravalli range acts as a natural barrier against desertification.

अरावली पर्वत श्रृंखला मरुस्थलीकरण के विरुद्ध प्राकृतिक अवरोध का कार्य करती है।

2. All forms of mining have been completely banned in the Aravalli region.

अरावली क्षेत्र में सभी प्रकार के खनन पर पूर्ण प्रतिबंध लगाया गया है।

3. The Aravalli Green Wall project aims to restore degraded land.

अरावली ग्रीन वॉल परियोजना का उद्देश्य क्षतिग्रस्त भूमि का पुनर्स्थापन है।

Which of the statements given above are correct?

उपरोक्त में से कौन-से कथन सही हैं?

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3



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India signs pact with Oman for duty-free exports; will also allow labour mobility



Economic cooperation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq oversee the signing of the bilateral trade agreement in Muscat on Thursday. *PHO*

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India and Oman signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) on Thursday, under which Oman will provide India duty-free access to 98.08% of its tariff lines, covering 99.38% of India's exports to Oman.

India, on the other hand, has offered liberalised tariffs on 77.79% of its total tariff lines, covering 94.81% of what India imports from Oman. Apart from tariff removal on merchandise exports, the deal also includes several concessions that are expected to benefit India's service sector, including in terms of mobility of workers.

The deal was signed in Muscat by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed Al Youssef in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

'Renewed faith'

India exported merchandise worth \$4.06 billion to Oman in 2024-25, which made up 0.93% of India's total exports that financial year. It imported goods worth \$6.5 billion from

Oman, comprising 0.99% of India's total imports.

"The CEPA will infuse the India-Oman partnership in the 21st Century with renewed faith and energy," Mr. Modi said earlier in the day while speaking at the India-Oman Business Forum. "This is a blueprint for our future. It will give our trade new vigour and new trust for investments and will open the doors of new opportunities in every sector."

This is the first bilateral agreement that Oman has signed with any country since it signed a deal with the U.S. in 2006. It is also the second deal India has signed with a country in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the first being with the United Arab Emirates in February 2022.

Mr. Goyal had also pointed out that a trade deal with Oman also served as a gateway for India to the GCC region, eastern Europe, central Asia, and Africa.

Mr. Modi added that the CEPA would create new opportunities for growth, employment and innovation for the youth of both countries.

According to the government's press release, labour-intensive sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, foot-

wear, sports goods, plastics, furniture, agricultural products, engineering products, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and automobiles will receive full tariff elimination.

India has kept sensitive products such as agricultural goods, including dairy, tea, coffee, rubber, and tobacco products, gold and silver bullion, jewellery, and other labour-intensive products such as footwear, sports goods, and the scrap of many base metals out of the deal.

Mobility of workers

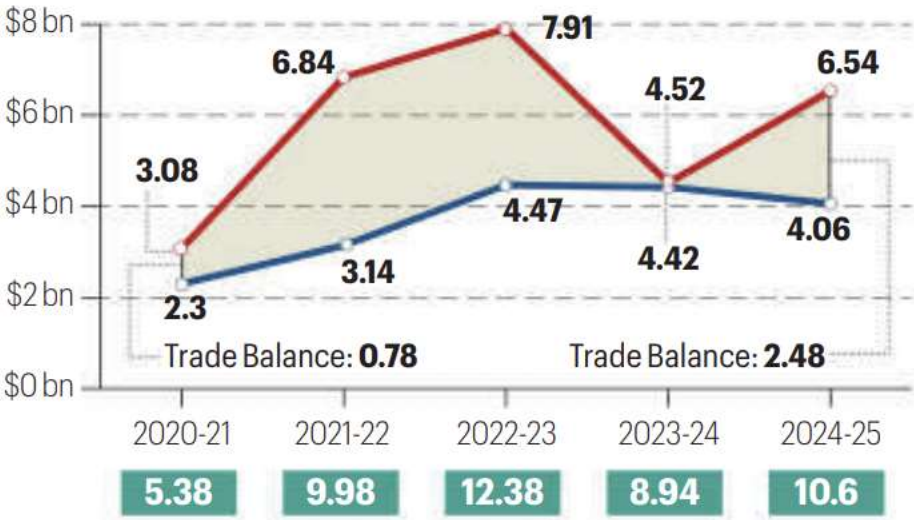
According to the release, a major highlight of the CEPA is the enhanced mobility framework for Indian professionals.

"For the first time, Oman has offered wide-ranging commitments under Mode 4, including a notable increase in the quota for Intra-Corporate Transferees from 20% to 50%, together with a longer permitted duration of stay for Contractual Service Suppliers – extended from the existing 90 days to two years, with the possibility of a further two-year extension," it said.

The agreement also provides for more liberal entry and stay conditions for skilled professionals in key sectors, the release added.

• INDIA-OMAN TRADE

■ Exports (\$ bn) ■ Imports (\$ bn) ■ Total trade (\$ bn)



Top items exported & imported (2024-25)

EXPORTS (in \$ mn)	
Mineral Fuel	1,571.72
Inorganic chemicals	379.91
Machinery & parts	231.81
Aircraft & parts	174.72

IMPORTS (in \$ mn)	
Bituminous Substances	2,940.06
Fertilisers	1,069.35
Rare earth metals	407.75
Organic chemicals	608.74

SOURCE: COMMERCE & INDUSTRY MINISTRY

1. What is the News?

India and Oman have signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

भारत और ओमान ने व्यापक आर्थिक साझेदारी समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर किए हैं।

The agreement provides duty-free exports and facilitates labour mobility.

यह समझौता शुल्क-मुक्त निर्यात और श्रम गतिशीलता को सुगम बनाता है।

2. Key Trade Provisions

Oman will provide India duty-free access on 98.08 percent of its tariff lines.

ओमान भारत को अपने 98.08 प्रतिशत टैरिफ लाइनों पर शुल्क-मुक्त पहुंच देगा।

This covers about 99.38 percent of India's exports to Oman.

यह ओमान को भारत के लगभग 99.38 प्रतिशत निर्यात को कवर करता है।

India has offered tariff liberalisation on 77.79 percent of its tariff lines.

भारत ने अपनी 77.79 प्रतिशत टैरिफ लाइनों पर शुल्क उदारीकरण की पेशकश की है।

This covers about 94.81 percent of India's imports from Oman.

यह ओमान से भारत के लगभग 94.81 प्रतिशत आयात को कवर करता है।

3. Sectoral Coverage

Indian products such as engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, textiles, plastics and automobiles will get full tariff elimination.

इंजीनियरिंग वस्तुएँ, दवाइयाँ, वस्त्र, प्लास्टिक और ऑटोमोबाइल जैसे भारतीय उत्पादों पर पूर्ण शुल्क समाप्ति होगी।

Labour-intensive sectors like gems and jewellery, leather, footwear and sports goods are expected to benefit.

रत्न-आभूषण, चमड़ा, जूते और खेल सामग्री जैसे श्रम-प्रधान क्षेत्रों को लाभ मिलने की संभावना है।

Sensitive products such as dairy, agricultural goods, tobacco and precious metals are excluded.

डेयरी, कृषि उत्पाद, तंबाकू और कीमती धातुओं जैसे संवेदनशील उत्पादों को समझौते से बाहर रखा गया है।

4. Mobility of Workers

The agreement enhances mobility opportunities for Indian professionals.

यह समझौता भारतीय पेशेवरों के लिए गतिशीलता के अवसर बढ़ाता है।

Oman has offered expanded commitments under Mode-4 services.

ओमान ने मोड-4 सेवाओं के तहत विस्तारित प्रतिबद्धताएँ दी हैं।

The quota for intra-corporate transferees has been increased from 20 percent to 50 percent.

इंट्रा-कॉर्पोरेट ट्रांसफरीज़ के लिए कोटा 20 प्रतिशत से बढ़ाकर 50 प्रतिशत किया गया है।

Contractual service suppliers will get longer stay permits.

कॉन्ट्रैक्चुअल सेवा प्रदाताओं को लंबे समय के लिए रहने की अनुमति मिलेगी।

5. Strategic and Economic Significance

This is India's first bilateral trade agreement with Oman.

यह भारत का ओमान के साथ पहला द्विपक्षीय व्यापार समझौता है।

It is India's second trade agreement with a Gulf Cooperation Council country.

यह खाड़ी सहयोग परिषद के किसी देश के साथ भारत का दूसरा व्यापार समझौता है।

Oman serves as a gateway for Indian trade to the Gulf, Europe, Central Asia and Africa.

ओमान भारत के लिए खाड़ी, यूरोप, मध्य एशिया और अफ्रीका तक व्यापार का प्रवेश द्वार है।

6. Trade Snapshot

India exported goods worth over 4 billion dollars to Oman in the last financial year.

पिछले वित्त वर्ष में भारत ने ओमान को 4 अरब डॉलर से अधिक का निर्यात किया।

Imports from Oman were valued at around 6.5 billion dollars.

ओमान से भारत का आयात लगभग 6.5 अरब डॉलर का रहा।

Oman accounts for less than 1 percent of India's total trade.

ओमान भारत के कुल व्यापार में 1 प्रतिशत से भी कम हिस्सेदारी रखता है।

With reference to the India–Oman CEPA, consider the following statements:

भारत-ओमान CEPA के संदर्भ में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. It provides duty-free access to most Indian exports to Oman.

यह ओमान में अधिकांश भारतीय निर्यात को शुल्क-मुक्त पहुंच देता है।

2. It includes provisions to facilitate movement of Indian professionals.

इसमें भारतीय पेशेवरों की आवाजाही को सुगम बनाने के प्रावधान शामिल हैं।

3. It eliminates tariffs on all agricultural products traded between India and Oman.

यह भारत और ओमान के बीच सभी कृषि उत्पादों पर शुल्क समाप्त करता है।

Which of the statements given above are correct?

उपरोक्त में से कौन-से कथन सही हैं?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Operation Sindoor highlighted India's air power edge: Rajnath

Defence Minister calls the Indian Air Force a technologically advanced, operationally agile, strategically confident force safeguarding national interests amid evolving global order; he says govt. committed to strengthening security apparatus

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said that India's high-impact, short-duration operational capability was clearly demonstrated during Operation Sindoor, underscoring the growing strength of Indian air power in modern warfare.

Addressing the Air Force Commanders' Conclave in New Delhi, he described the Indian Air Force (IAF) as a technologically advanced, operationally agile, strategically confident and future-oriented force safeguarding national interests amid a rapidly evolving global order.

The Defence Minister praised the courage, speed and precision with which the IAF destroyed terror camps during Operation Sindoor, while also effectively handling Pakistan's "irresponsible reaction" following the strikes. Highlighting the trust of the people in the armed forces, particularly in India's air defence capability, he said



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chopra, Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh and other dignitaries at the IAF Commanders' Conclave in New Delhi on Thursday.

the calm response of citizens during the attempted attacks on Indian installations reflected strong confidence in operational preparedness.

Lessons from conflict: Mr. Singh urged the Commanders to draw lessons from Operation Sindoor, stressing on the need to thoroughly understand the offensive and defensive

capabilities of adversaries. Reflecting on the changing nature of warfare, Mr. Singh said recent conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas conflict, the Balakot air strikes and Operation Sindoor had established air power as a decisive force.

He emphasised that air power was not merely a tactical asset but a strategic instrument, characterised

by speed, surprise and shock, enabling the leadership to deliver clear strategic messages while avoiding military means without national objectives.

Commending the performance of air defence systems and other equipment used during Operation Sindoor, the Defence Minister reiterated the government's commitment to further strengthening

the country's security apparatus.

He noted that 21st Century warfare was increasingly driven by technology and adaptability, with cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, satellite-based surveillance and space-enabled capabilities reshaping future conflicts.

Precision-guided weapons, real-time intelligence and data-driven decision-making, he said, had become essential for success.

Highlighting the need for closer defence partnership, he cited the example of tri-Services synergy.

Sculptor Ram Sutar, who made Statue of Unity, passes away

Pooja Tatar of India
MUMBAI

Ram V. Sutar, the legendary sculptor whose creations, including the Statue of Unity, defined the country's public art landscape. He was instrumental in giving Indian memorial sculpture global recognition.

Sutar passed away on Wednesday night at the age of 100.

Among his vast body of work are statues of Mahatma Gandhi at the Gandhinagar complex, and Dr B.R. Ambedkar. Also known as the "statue man", he commanded immense respect for his unparalleled mastery over bronze and stone.

He was born on February 19, 1925, in Gondur village, Maharashtra's Dhule district.

He attained global prominence as the chief sculptor



Ram Sutar

tor of the Statue of Unity, the 182-metre statue of Bharat Ratna Mahatma Gandhi at Gandhinagar complex, and Dr B.R. Ambedkar. Also known as the "statue man", he commanded immense respect for his unparalleled mastery over bronze and stone.

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'India faces its greatest strategic challenge in Bangladesh since 1971'

Kaifol Bhattacharyya
NEW DELHI

The developments in Bangladesh pose the "greatest strategic challenge to India since the Liberation War of 1971, a parliamentary panel has said in its report. The report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, chaired by Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor, has covered the turbulent India-Bangladesh relation of the past two years and said that Bangladesh is witnessing a "shift" and that New Delhi could end up losing the "strategic space" in the region without necessary recalibration.

"India faces its greatest strategic challenge in Bangladesh since the Liberation War of 1971. The challenges in 1971 were existential, humanitarian crisis, and the birth of a new nation. Today, the threat is subtler but prob-



Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka on Thursday.

bly graver, more serious; a generational discontinuity, a shift of political order, and a potential strategic realignment away from India," the report said, quoting an expert who deplored the situation on June 27, 2025.

"The collapse of the Awami League dominance, the surge of youth-led nationalism, the rise of Islamism, and intensifying Chinese and Pakistani influence marked a turning

point," said the report, adding, "If India fails to recalibrate at this moment, it risks losing strategic space in the region."

Giving a detailed account of interactions held between the Committee and officials of the Ministry of External Affairs since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 10, 2024, the report said India has taken the right decision in providing shelter

to ousted Prime Minister Hasina but pointed out that New Delhi needs to ensure that Ms. Hasina does not carry out political activities aimed at her country from Indian soil.

Giving refuge to Ms. Hasina has been a major issue between India and Bangladesh since the fall of the Awami League government, and the matter has come up repeatedly in bilateral talks.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Mir told the panel that India is issuing statements using "personal communication devices" which has access to "and India has not provided her with a political platform to undertake political activity from Indian territory".

Three Maoists killed in operation in Chhattisgarh

The Hindu Bureau
RAIPUR

At least three Maoists, including a woman, were killed in an anti-Naxal operation conducted in Chhattisgarh on Thursday, police said.

Bukina Superintendent of Police Kiran Kumar said the three slain Maoists carried a cumulative reward of ₹12 lakh. The deceased, who have been identified as Bhojpur, a serving judge on Division Bench, and Sudha Baidi, who carried a reward of ₹1 lakh, were reported to authorities on Thursday.

The Chhattisgarh Police on Wednesday arrested eight more Maoists in a large-scale operation. The arrested individuals were reportedly suppressing information related to the suspected killing of a Class IX student by hostellers.

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The Hindu Bureau
RAIPUR

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Sculptor Ram Sutar, who made Statue of Unity, passes away

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI

Ram V. Sutar, the legendary sculptor whose creations, including the Statue of Unity, defined the country's public art landscape. He was instrumental in giving Indian memorial sculpture global recognition.

Sutar passed away on Wednesday night at the age of 100.

Among his vast body of work are statues of Mahatma Gandhi at the Parliament complex, and Dr B.R. Ambedkar. Also known as the "statue man", he commanded immense respect for his unparalleled mastery over bronze and stone.

He was born on February 19, 1925, in Gondur village of Maharashtra's Dhule district.

He attained global prominence as the chief sculp-



Ram Sutar

tor of the Statue of Unity, the 182-metre statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat's Kevadia. The project, which created the world's tallest statue, cemented his reputation as a master of monumental art.

For his contribution to art, Sutar received several prestigious honours, including the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, as well as the Maharashtra Bhushan, Maharashtra's highest civilian award.

Renowned sculptor Ram Sutar, creator of the Statue of Unity, has passed away at the age of 100.

स्टैच्यू ऑफ यूनिटी के निर्माता प्रसिद्ध मूर्तिकार राम सुतार का 100 वर्ष की आयु में निधन हो गया।

He was one of India's most influential public artists.

वे भारत के सबसे प्रभावशाली सार्वजनिक कलाकारों में से एक थे।

2. Early Life and Background

Ram Sutar was born on February 19, 1925, in Gondur village of Dhule district, Maharashtra.

राम सुतार का जन्म 19 फरवरी 1925 को महाराष्ट्र के धुले जिले के गोंदुर गांव में हुआ था।

He rose from a humble background to global artistic prominence.

वे साधारण पृष्ठभूमि से उठकर वैश्विक ख्याति प्राप्त करने वाले कलाकार बने।

3. Major Works

He was the chief sculptor of the Statue of Unity in Gujarat.

वे गुजरात स्थित स्टैच्यू ऑफ यूनिटी के मुख्य मूर्तिकार थे।

The Statue of Unity is the world's tallest statue at 182 metres and depicts Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

स्टैच्यू ऑफ यूनिटी 182 मीटर ऊँची विश्व की सबसे ऊँची प्रतिमा है और यह सरदार वल्लभभाई पटेल को दर्शाती है।

He also created statues of Mahatma Gandhi at the Parliament complex.

उन्होंने संसद परिसर में महात्मा गांधी की प्रतिमा का निर्माण किया।

He sculpted the iconic statue of Dr B R Ambedkar.

उन्होंने डॉ. बी. आर. अंबेडकर की प्रसिद्ध प्रतिमा भी बनाई।

4. Artistic Legacy

Ram Sutar was popularly known as the "Statue Man of India."

राम सुतार को लोकप्रिय रूप से "भारत के स्टैच्यू मैन" के नाम से जाना जाता था।

He mastered monumental sculpture using bronze and stone.

उन्होंने कांस्य और पत्थर से विशाल मूर्तिकला में अद्वितीय दक्षता हासिल की।

His works shaped India's public art and memorial culture.

उनकी कृतियों ने भारत की सार्वजनिक कला और स्मारक संस्कृति को आकार दिया।

Rajya Sabha passes Bill to allow private firms in nuclear sector

Amendments to SIYANTI Bill and proposal to send it to a panel, moved by Opposition MPs, defeated in a voice vote; Jairam Ramesh warns against relaxation of any liability norms while Jitendra Singh says there will be no compromise with safety

**The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI**

With the Rajya Sabha also clearing the Sustainable Harvesting and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SIYANTI) Bill on Thursday, the Union government said the Bill seeks to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and increase the capacity of India's atomic energy sector.

Senior Congress MP Jairam Ramesh, who initiated a debate, claimed that the Bill was brought with the intention of increasing the contribution of private companies in the nuclear sector. Mr. Ramesh warned the Centre against any relaxation in liability norms and cited the example of France, where all nuclear reactors are under government control.

The amendments to the Bill and the proposal to send the Bill to a Select Committee, moved by Opposition MPs, were defeated in a voice vote.



Union Minister Jitendra Singh speaking in the Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session of Parliament on Thursday.

Countering the Opposition charge, Minister of State for Power, Coal and Atomic Energy Jitendra Singh said that nuclear power is a reliable source of energy, unlike other renewable energy options. He said there will be no compromise with safety. Singh said that there has been no report of any radiation-related hazards to the public from any Indian reactor.

Mr. Ramesh said, "The Narendra Modi government has the habit of ig-

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**The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI**

A group of leading international economists and social scientists have called upon the government to reverse the imminent repeal of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), warning that dismantling the scheme will be a "historic error".

The signatories have written an open letter addressed to the Centre. They include Nobel laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz, Paulina R. Tcheneva, President, The Levy Economics Institute (U.S.), Thomas Palley, President, American School of Economics (France), Isabelle Ferreres, President, University of Lorraine (Belgium), Derrick Hamilton, Professor, School of Social Research (U.K.), Randall Wray, Senior Scholar, The Levy Economics Institute (U.S.), and James Galbraith, Professor, The University of Texas at Austin (U.S.).

However, the MGNREGA as "the world's most significant policy mea-

The Act reaffirms economic rights as a fundamental right, they say in an open letter to the Centre

measuring a demand-driven, legal right to employment", the academics said that it reaffirmed "economic dignity as a fundamental right". And there is empirical evidence to underscore its impact. "The early years of the Act coincided with unprecedented rural wage growth and attitudes confirmed the programme's positive effects on economic output and employment, dispelling myths of unproductivity."

The signatories said that "historic underfunding and payment delays" had long hampered the scheme. But with the Bill bringing in a shift to devolve the scheme to States and without commensurate fiscal support, it threatened to undermine the new funding pattern. The academics called for 100% of material costs, compared with 20% ear-

lier. "This creates a catastrophic Catch-22: States are legally liable to provide employment, while central financing is withdrawn," the letter warned, arguing that poorer States will be forced to curb project approvals, stifling work demands.

They flagged provisions allowing discretionary suspension of the scheme, citing the unexplained defunding of West Bengal over the past three years as an example of political misuse. Such measures, they said, render the employment guarantee "ineffectual". The MGNREGA design not only provides wages but also creates rural assets such as wells, roads, and ponds, stimulating local economies. "To dismantle it now would abandon a proven instrument for poverty alleviation, social justice, and environmental care," the scholars wrote, calling for assured Central funding, timely wage payments, and restoration of the Act's foundational guarantees.

(For full text of the letter visit: www.thehindu.com/news/national/india/article3848481.ece)

Parliament approves Bill to replace MGNREGA amid vociferous protests

**Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI**

Both Houses of Parliament passed the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Roster and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill replacing the 20-year-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), amid protests from the Opposition.

In the Lok Sabha, Opposition members stormed the well of the House, tore copies of the Bill, and raised slogans on Thursday. The Rajya Sabha, which began debating the Bill in the evening, passed it by a voice vote past midnight amid vociferous protests.

Opposition members later sat on dharna outside Samvidhan Sadan in Parliament complex against the Bill, criticising the "rushed approach" of the government. They said that the Upper House members got only 45 minutes to file their amendments.

Responding to the debate in the Lower House, Rural Development Minis-



Union Minister Jitendra Singh speaking in the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

ter Jitendra Singh Choudhan said the MGNREGA was riddled with "problems" and "corruption was rampant". He also accused State governments of "misusing funds". He said, "Funds were not allotted as expected. For the Act, 60% of the funds were to be spent on labour and 40% on material. But only 20% was spent on material and funds were siphoned off," he said.

Mr. Choudhan accused the Congress of "killing" Mahatma Gandhi's ideals for political gain. Comparing the implementation of the Act by the previous Un-

ited Progress Alliance regime with the Modi government's record, he claimed, "More money has been spent and better infrastructures created now". The new Bill, he said, was introduced after deliberations in order to ensure that ₹10-11 lakh crore is not spent merely on wages but on creating permanent assets.

"We have made provisions to improve employment. On the other hand, this vast amount will be used to build fully developed villages, which has been the goal of the Modi government," he said.

Copies torn
As Opposition members tore copies of the Bill, Mr. Choudhan retorted, "The Opposition is murdering the people's ideals. Just having your say and not listening to the views of others is not the way to go."

"Congress killed the ideals of Bapu, NDA ensured the flow through public houses built under PM Awas Yojana. He pointed out that 28 Central sponsored villages, which had been named after Rajiv Gandhi and 27 after Indira Gandhi,

Opposition slams govt. over lack of consultations before tabling Bill

**Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI**

The Opposition parties slammed the lack of consultations before introducing the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Roster and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, asking the government to table evidence of discussions held with State governments before increasing their financial liability.

They also invoked the example of the three farm laws, which they said had passed under similar circumstances and later withdrawn after a prolonged farmers' agitation. This Bill will also face the same fate, they said.

Congress MP Mukul Wadgaonkar said the Opposition's attack, Mr. Wadgaonkar said, was the closest approximation to the rights work as enshrined under Article 41 of the Indian Constitution. The new Bill, he said, was striking at the very soul of this Article.

AAP leader Sanjay Singh pointed out that the government had passed the three farm laws under the similar circumstances. "We warned you then, asking you not to pass those



Opposition leader Sanjay Singh speaking in the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

Winter Session. He asked, "Did you speak to the State governments before increasing their financial liability? And if it has been done, can the government table evidence of consultations with the States?"

BJP leader Manoj K. Jais said the MGNREGA was the closest approximation to the rights work as enshrined under Article 41 of the Indian Constitution. The new Bill, he said, was striking at the very soul of this Article.

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to 125 days, criticised the government for increasing the burden on State governments. If States are to bear 80% of the cost of the scheme as the new legislation lays down, he said, then States should also get 100% of taxes and other cess that the Centre collects.

S. Niranjan Reddy of the VSSB Congress said the new legislation suffers from over structuring and increased bureaucratic control. Bikas Ranjan Thakur of the CPD said the blackout period introduced in the legislation will rob the bargaining power of the rural poor, forcing them to work for minimum wages.

The legislation allows for pausing the scheme during peak agricultural periods. Congress leader Randeep Sarojwala called it a daylight murder of MGNREGA and said the new legislation allows discretion in the Centre. "The Centre need not allow but get for opposition-rules matter or they can enhance the budget close to the election," he said.

Manikrao Kokate steps down from Maharashtra Cabinet

**The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI**

A day after Maharashtra Minister Manikrao Kokate lost all his portfolios following an arrest over a sexual harassment case, he resigned from the cabinet. Kokate was arrested by the Nashik District and Sessions court, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis accepted his resignation and forwarded it to Governor Acharya Devvrat on Thursday.

He held the Ministries of Sports and Youth Affairs, Minority Affairs, and the portfolio. He has been given two years' rigorous imprisonment in a court case on forgery to obtain housing meant for Economically Weaker Sections. A non-bailable warrant

has been issued against Mr. Kokate and his brother, and the Bombay High Court has asked him to file a bail application for relief on Friday.

A team of 10 constables has left for Mumbai for Mr. Kokate's arrest, a senior police official said.

Latest police rules hold the supreme position and are above any individual. The Chief Minister for long-standing stance, this is the way it has been accepted and forwarded to the Chief Minister for further action. Mr. Kokate's party colleague and Union Minister for Chief A.P. Pawar announced,

Matter is sub judice: govt. on verification of poll affidavits

**The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI**

The government evaded a question on creating a mechanism to verify candidates' affidavits during elections.

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tion. He asked if the government proposed to reinstate those recommendations for a transparent affidavit verification system using technology and real-time data checks.

Charge's question
He questioned whether recommendations were held with the poll panel or not. He asked if so, the details thereof and by when the verification mechanism would be put in place.

Mr. Meghwal, in his written response, said the matter pertaining to the recommendations of candidates' affidavits was sub judice before the Allahabad High Court, Lucknow bench, in a Public In-

terest Litigation. A Division Bench of the court, in August, had observed that prima facie it appeared that the Election Commission was the statutory body that was responsible for making the asset verification reports. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who was asked to provide an affidavit with explanation on why the verification reports of candidates' affidavits, mandated to be made available by the Election Court in 2018, had not been published.

The Election Commission, in the past, has claimed that the same has to be done by the Income Tax department.

Javed Akhtar slams Nitish Kumar over hijab incident

**The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI**

Lyricist and poet Javed Akhtar on Thursday demanded an unconditional apology from Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for pulling down the hijab of a Muslim woman during a function in Patna.

While circulating appointment letters to newly appointed AYUSH doctors on Monday, Mr. Kumar pulled down the hijab of a Muslim woman. He was asked to provide an affidavit with explanation on why the verification reports of candidates' affidavits, mandated to be made available by the Election Court in 2018, had not been published.

Congress committee meeting to focus on MGNREGA overhaul

**The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI**

The Congress Working Committee, the party's highest decision-making body, will meet on December 27 to deliberate on the government's move to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with new legislation, sources said on Thursday.

The MGNREGA was a flagship scheme introduced by the United Progressive Alliance government in 2005. This would be the first meeting of the CWC following the debate the party faced in the Bihar Assem-

ly election. It also assumes significance as the party's strategy for the next general Assembly election in the first half of 2026 — in Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, and West Bengal — could be framed. The party is also looking to lift the anti-incumbency poison of the MGNREGA, and what constitutes a campaign around the issue.

This was not merely a case of rebranding MGNREGA but the "systematic erosion of the world's largest employment scheme", Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said, speaking about the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Roster and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill.

Rajya Sabha passes Bill to allow private firms in nuclear sector

Amendments to SHANTI Bill and proposal to send it to a panel, moved by Opposition MPs, defeated in a voice vote; Jairam Ramesh warns against relaxation of any liability norms while Jitendra Singh says there will be no compromise with safety

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

With the Rajya Sabha also clearing the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill on Thursday, the Union government said the Bill seeks to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and increase the capacity of India's atomic energy sector.

Senior Congress MP Jairam Ramesh, who initiated a debate, claimed that the Bill was brought with the intention of increasing the contribution of private companies in the nuclear sector. Mr. Ramesh warned the Centre against any relaxation in liability norms and cited the example of France, where all nuclear reactors are under government control.

The amendments to the Bill and the proposal to send the Bill to a Select Committee, moved by Opposition MPs, were defeated in a voice vote.



Big change: Union Minister Jitendra Singh speaking in the Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session of Parliament on Thursday. ANI

Countering the Opposition charges, Minister of State for Department of Atomic Energy Jitendra Singh said that nuclear power is a reliable source of energy, unlike other renewable energy options. He said there will be no compromise with safety. Mr. Singh said there has been no report of any radiation-related hazards to the public from any Indian reactors.

Mr. Ramesh said, "The Narendra Modi government has the habit of ig-

noring the milestones achieved by past governments." He said the BJP opposed the nuclear deal between India and America in 2008. "The BJP had then said that there is not much future in nuclear energy. It is because of the nuclear deal that happened in 2008 that now the BJP can think of such a Bill," he said.

"Our country has the capacity – we have installed plants of 220 megawatts and 540 megawatts. Utilise that capacity. Similarly, the

government had brought farm laws to benefit the private sector, which had to be withdrawn. This Bill should not be vendor-driven. We are self-reliant in the matter of nuclear power. So, promote indigenous technology," Mr. Ramesh said. He said the private sector will bring capital, not technology.

'Will shape sector'

Harsh Vardhan Shringla, MP, said the country stands at a decisive juncture in its energy journey and the SHANTI Bill will shape the civil nuclear sector for generations, ending fragmented governance and creating an investment-ready framework. "This is not privatisation; this is partnership with accountability," he said.

Trinamool Congress MP Sagarika Ghose said the Bill is fundamentally dangerous. "This Bill brings neither Shanti nor security... we are not debating whether India should pursue nuclear energy, India has always pursued nuclear

energy responsibly for decades..." she said.

DMK MP P. Wilson said the Bill was a "nuclear bomb which threatens the country's peace and security". "There is nothing peaceful, nothing sustainable, nothing transformative about this legislation. On the contrary, it is a reckless, dangerous and deeply flawed attempt to privatise one of the most sensitive and high-risk sectors of a nation – the nuclear energy sector," he said.

Unions oppose Bill

The legislation will dismantle India's carefully built nuclear safety and accountability framework and opens the most hazardous energy sector to large-scale private and foreign participation, the National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers, the platform of 10 central trade unions and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) said in a joint statement. It says it would oppose the "draconian" Bill.

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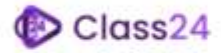
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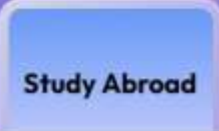
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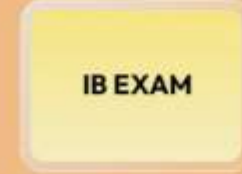


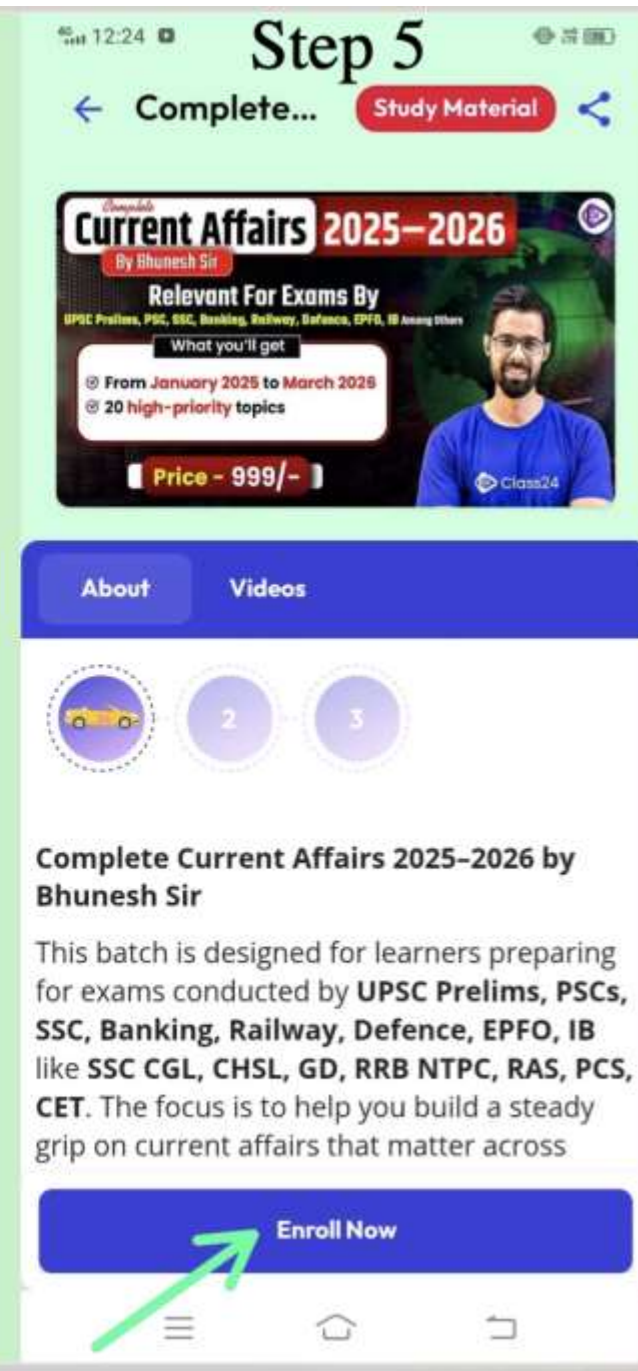
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Word of the day

Ostracise:

expel from a community or group; avoid speaking to or dealing with

Synonyms: ban, banish, blackball, cast out, shun

Usage: *Ever since I spoke up, my colleagues have ostracised me.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/ostracisepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /'ɒstrəsaɪz/



Thank you 😊

