

Daily Current Affairs



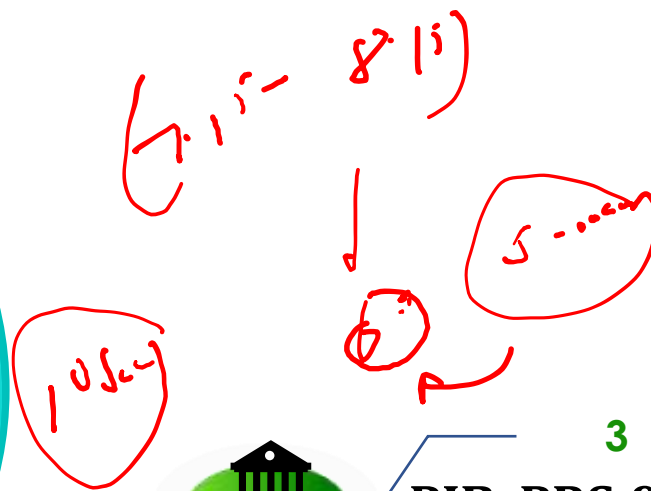
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The Hindu



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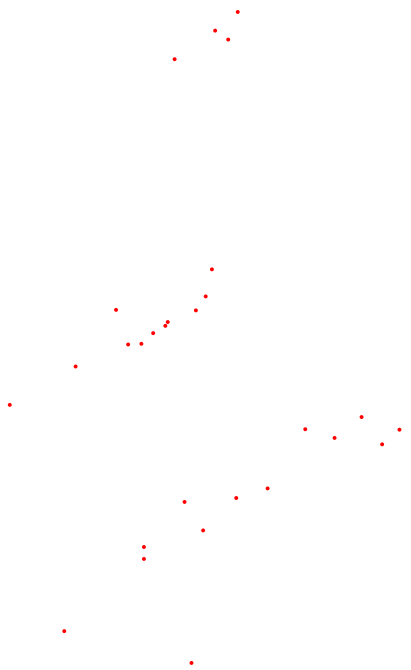


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“If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.”

— Toni Morrison

BREXITING'S BLACK BOX
AAIB still undecided
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Will delaying the
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India begins a new era
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INSIDE



Leaders of India, Pak, ended the conflict: Trump

NEW YORK
Two "very smart" leaders of India and Pakistan decided to end last month's conflict that could have turned into nuclear war, U.S. President Donald Trump said. • PAGE 5

Centre asked to halt A.P.'s water diversion project

HYDERABAD
Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Minister H. Umamakeswari sought Union Jal Shakti Ministry's intervention in stalling Andhra Pradesh's Godavari-Bhavikarla project, which is detrimental to the interests of Telangana State. • PAGE 7

Woman killed in apparent revenge attack in Manipur

DISHWATI
A Kuki woman was killed in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Thursday, a day after suspected extremists fired at and injured a Meitei farmer in the adjoining Bishnupur district. However, there were no official statements on the incident. • PAGE 8

Rajni to attend SCO Defence meet in China

NEW DELHI
In his first such visit since Operation Sindoor, Defence Minister Rajni Singh will travel to China to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Defence Ministers' meet from June 25 to 27. He Pakistan counterpart will also attend the meet. • PAGE 8

Khamenei cannot be allowed to exist: Israel

At least 40 injured as Iranian strikes leave Israel's Soroka Hospital in flames; no deaths were reported

Iran's Supreme Leader "personally" gave the order to attack hospitals, says Israel Defence Minister

Iranians fired a missile with multiple warheads, which is a new challenge for air defence systems

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Associated Press
JERUSALEM/DURAI

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "can no longer be allowed to exist", Israel's Defence Minister Naftali Bennett said after an Iranian missile strike hit a hospital on Thursday, sparking tensions in the week-old war between the regional foes. Israeli military said on Thursday morning that it had carried out dozens of new raids on Iranian targets overnight, including the partially built Arak nuclear reactor and a uranium enrichment facility in Natanz.

"Khamenei openly declares that he wants Israel destroyed — he personally gives the order to fire on hospitals," Mr. Bennett told reporters. "He consid-

ers the destruction of the state of Israel to be a goal. Such a man can no longer be allowed to exist."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Iran would "pay a heavy price" for the hospital strike.

The Soroka Hospital in the southern Israeli city of Beersheba was left in flames by a bombardment that Iran said targeted a military and intelligence base.

Iran used a missile with multiple warheads which can pose a challenge for air defence systems, according to an Israeli military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations.

U.S. involvement
The developments came as U.S. President Donald Trump dangled the pros-



Trading blows: Israeli firefighters at the Soroka Hospital, which was struck by Iran on Thursday. AP

pect of his country's involvement in the war. Mr. Trump said on Thursday that he will decide whether to attack Iran within the next two weeks due to a "substantial" chance of ne-

gotiations. "Based on the fact that there's a substantial chance of negotiations that may or may not take place with Iran in the near future, I will make my decision whether or not to go

within the next two weeks," Mr. Trump said in a statement. However, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, who read out the President's statement,

110 evacuated students arrive in New Delhi

NEW DELHI
Students evacuated from Iran under Operation Binfa arrived in New Delhi in the early hours of Thursday after spending six days in the conflict-hit country and nearly 62 hours of travelling. A total of 110 students from Urmia University in Iran had crossed over to Armenia on Tuesday, before being flown to New Delhi by the Indian government. • PAGE 4

would not give details of what had led Mr. Trump to believe that negotiations that may or may not take place with Iran were possible. The Israeli military said the Arak site in central Iran had been hit "in prevent

the reactor from being restored and used for nuclear weapons development".

Israel launched air strikes against its arch enemy last week, triggering a conflict that has left more than 200 people dead on both sides.

There was a "near total national internet blackout" in Iran on Wednesday, a London-based watchdog said, with Iran's news agency confirming tighter internet restrictions after initial curbs imposed last week.

Hospital director Shlomi Godfar said 40 people were injured at the Soroka, where an evacuated surgical building was hit leaving smoke billowing. "Several wards were completely demolished," he said.

RELATED REPORTS
• PAGE 16, 18

Voter resolve



Amid rain, people wait to exercise their franchise in the Assembly bypoll in Nilambur, Kerala, on Thursday. SANKAR MOHAMMED (APRIL 18)

Dayanidhi Maran sends legal notice to Kalanithi

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

DMK Member of Parliament Dayanidhi Maran has sent a legal notice to his brother Kalanithi Maran, Chairman, Sun TV Network, his wife and six others, raising a dispute in share transactions that happened in 2003.

The notice said that from the inception of Sun TV Network Ltd till September 15, 2003, Mr. Kalanithi had served solely as an employee of the group and did not hold any shares. On September 15, 2003, Mr. Kalanithi allotted 60% of the shares to himself and became a majority shareholder with controlling interest.

FULL REPORT
• PAGE 3

Officials blamed for 'slipshod' handling of judge cash case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

An in-house inquiry committee constituted by the Chief Justice of India has concluded that cash was found in the gutted storeroom on the official residential premises of the High Court judge Justice Vachewar Varma, and police and fire authorities were "slipshod" in not lodging an FIR or preparing a seizure memo recording exactly what they came across at the scene of the fire on March 14.

The report of the three-judge committee of May 3, which had been confidentially forwarded to the President and the Prime Minister by then-Chief Justice of India Sanjay Khanna, was shared in the public domain by the legal website *The Legalist* on Wednesday.

The committee in its report said that the "higher police officials" had sought to explain their inaction by pointing to reasons such as "ineffectiveness of the law" and the absence of Justice Varma at his residence at the time of incident. The report said the judge and his family members were in "covert or active control" of access into the storeroom.

The report had been confidentially forwarded to the President Dr. Ram Nath Kovind and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi by former Chief Justice of India Sanjay Khanna, days before he retired on May 13, after Justice Varma refused to voluntarily resign from office.



Justice Vachewar Varma

he introduced in Parliament during the Monsoon session scheduled in July. The report of the committee, comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan, C.J. Sanjay Khanna, and Anil Kumar, noted that the currency notes "seen and found during the process of dousing of fire" were "highly suspicious items".

They could not have been placed in the storeroom without the tacit or active consent of Justice Varma or his family, the report submitted. The inquiry committee refused to accept the version of the judge that he was a target of a conspiracy. It said it would be "well-nigh impossible" to "plant" currency in a high security residential premises of a sitting judge.

The report asked why Justice Varma, if what happened to him was indeed a "conspiracy", accepted his transfer from Delhi Allahabad. The inquiry panel said "strong inferential evidence" established that the burnt currency was removed by Justice Varma's trusted staff from the storeroom during the early hours of March 14. The committee expressed its strong view that the "misconduct" of Justice Varma was "serious enough" to call for initiation of proceedings for his removal.

SC criticises curbs on Thug Life over 'hurt sentiments'

Kishanadas Ramesh
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday observed that an "unfettered" "liberty of hurt sentiments" has emerged as a serious threat to free speech and expression in cinema, literature, and theatre in India, fuelling mob violence and intimidation.

A Varanasi Bench of Justices Ljal Bhuyan and Manmohan made the observations while closing petitions against an "unfettered" "liberty of hurt sentiments" on the release of actor Kunal Khanna in the movie *Thug Life* in Karnataka, following an assurance from the Karnataka government that no restrictions would be imposed on the movie and that adequate protection

would be provided to cinema screening it.

"This liberty of hurt sentiments... there is no end to it. One or the other is hurt by whatever he sees or hears and then there is retaliation... Where are we heading?" Justice Bhuyan remarked. The top court underscored that it is the duty of the State to ensure that media and groups that engage in violence are held accountable.

'Bound to protect'
The controversy had stemmed from remarks made by Mr. Khanna regarding the Kannada language during promotional events for the film. The producers subsequently stopped... movies, theatre, nobody can recite a



Supreme orders actor Kunal Khanna during Thug Life movie press conference in Chennai. S. ANAND/ANIL

the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce. "Free speech in film cannot live in lurking fear of violence," Justice Bhuyan said. Echoing the concern, Justice Manmohan asked, "stopped... movies, theatre, nobody can recite a poem?" "We are bound to protect the theatre," the State's counsel submitted, adding, "authorities should not hesitate to initiate civil and criminal proceedings against any instances of threats or violence."

Senior advocate Satish Parasaran, appearing for

the producers, informed the Bench that he was satisfied with the "fair statement" made by the State to its affidavit and sought to withdraw the petition.

The State clarified that no formal ban had been imposed on the film. An intervenor affiliated to Kannada language groups, represented by senior advocate Anand Sanjay Nall, argued that Mr. Khanna's remarks were a "publicity gimmick" that hurt public sentiment.

"If the remark was a publicity gimmick, you fell into the trap?" Justice Bhuyan asked. Justice Manmohan added, "If you think it was a publicity gimmick, you the petitioners... no longer cannot take law into your own hands... It is open to

you to follow legal procedure, not illegal."

However, the court declined to issue further directions, noting that the petitioners no longer wished to pursue the matter.

◆ 1. Triggering Events

- Iran launched a missile strike on **Soroka Hospital** in Beersheba, southern Israel.
 - Israel accuses Iran's Supreme Leader **Ayatollah Khamenei** of personally ordering attacks on hospitals.
 - Iran used a **missile with multiple warheads**, posing new challenges for Israel's air defense systems.
-

◆ 2. Israel's Response

- Israeli Defense Minister declared:

"Khamenei can no longer be allowed to exist"
- **Dozens of retaliatory Israeli airstrikes** hit Iranian nuclear and military targets:
 - **Arak nuclear reactor**
 - Uranium enrichment facility at **Natanz**



Topic	Fact
Operation Sindhu	Indian government evacuation from Iran (110 students)
Soroka Hospital	Israeli hospital hit by Iranian missile
Arak & Natanz	Iranian nuclear facilities targeted by Israel
Damascus	Remains neutral; Syria avoids direct involvement
Multiple Warheads	Used by Iran; complicates missile interception

India to help citizens who 'wish to leave' Israel via land border

Rafael Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Indian citizens who "wish to leave" Israel in the wake of its current conflict with Iran will be assisted in returning home through the land borders of Israel, the Union government said on Thursday. There are around 36,000 Indians working in Israel in various industries, agriculture projects, and academic institutions, according to sources.

The announcement came a day after Israeli ambassador Reuven Azar said that the Israeli government has been coordinating with the Embassy of India in Tel Aviv to evacuate those Indians who are willing to return to India as the Israeli air war intensifies.

In view of the recent developments between Israel and Iran, the Government of India has decided to evacuate from Israel those Indian nationals who wish to leave. Their travel from Israel to India will be facilitated through the land borders and thereafter by air to India, the Ministry of External Affairs said, in a

statement bringing Indians in Israel under Operation Sindhu that was launched on June 18 to evacuate nearly ten thousand Indian citizens from Iran.

"All Indian nationals are requested to register themselves with the Embassy of India in Tel Aviv at http://www.indianembassy-telaviv.gov.in/indian_national_reg. In case of any queries, they may contact the 24/7 Control Room established at Embassy of India, Tel Aviv, telephone numbers: +972 84-762079; +972 84-9276392, email: control.telaviv@mea.gov.in," said the MEA statement.

No way out by air

Since the escalation of conflict with Iran, Israel has suspended operations in its airports, including the Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv. It has also flown aircraft belonging to the national carrier El Al to various destinations in Western nations for safekeeping. In such circumstances, it was decided that Indians should be evacuated from Israel through its land borders, and fly out from a neighbouring country.

110 students from war-torn Iran land in New Delhi, via Armenia

Families heave a sigh of relief as the students from Urmia University reach Delhi after days of uncertainty brought on by Israel-Iran conflict; they say Indian Embassy reached out and helped them; officials make arrangements for onward journey

Alaha Irusta
NEW DELHI

Welcoming Indian flags, the 110 students evacuated under Operation Sindhu from Iran landed in New Delhi on Thursday. Indian Embassy reached out and helped them; officials make arrangements for onward journey

In view of the continuing conflict between Israel and Iran, the Indian government evacuated the students from the Urmia University in Iran, got them to cross over to Yerevan, Armenia on Tuesday, and then flew them to New Delhi. Students said they reached Delhi after nearly 52 hours of travelling. At least 94 of the students were from Jamnū and Kashmir, and the rest were from Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Amused wait

At the Indira Gandhi airport in New Delhi, families of students from the northern States queued up to



Safe arrival: Students evacuated under Operation Sindhu from Iran land in New Delhi on Thursday. Indian Embassy reached out and helped them; officials make arrangements for onward journey

welcome their children, while officials from the southern states and that of J&K waited to escort them to their home town. Naseeb Ahmed, the father of a second-year MBBS student at the Urmia University, told The Hindu that until he hugs his son, his heart will continue to be divided with their families. "I know he is in a coming back but having lived with

him, said that while the part of Iran where the lived did not see air strikes, the thought of living in a war zone was debilitating. "We did not know when our place of stay would be attacked, and the fear was palpable for the past four days and now we have been asked to board buses for evacuating us from there," said Mr. Naseeb.

As Arman, a resident of Sahapur, was all smiles when he saw his family at the airport. "The Indian Embassy helped us a lot and reassured us but when you see missiles and towns being bombarded by the Israelis, everything seems uncertain," he says. He hugged his family members.

J&K students upset

Meanwhile, the students from Jamnū and Kashmir who had hoped to get flight tickets for their onward journey, expressed joy at being back in India and being united with their families. Naseeb, a resident of Mum-

bai, said that while the part of Iran where the lived did not see air strikes, the thought of living in a war zone was debilitating. "We did not know when our place of stay would be attacked, and the fear was palpable for the past four days and now we have been asked to board buses for evacuating us from there," said Mr. Naseeb.

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Canada says Khalistani extremists continue to fund violence in India

Subashini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Canada doubled down on allegations of a link between the "separatist" movement and the Nijjar killing, while acknowledging for the first time in a report released on Wednesday, that Canada-based Khalistani extremists continue to plan and fund violence in India.

The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS), which named India, along with China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia as the "main perpetrators of foreign interference and espionage against Canada," released the report online a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney at the G-7 Summit outreach in Kananaskis and agreed to restore High Commissioners and a number of dialogue



Police officers watch Sikh protesters participate in a rally as world leaders gather for the G-7 Summit in Calgary, Canada. (Globe Photos)

mechanisms. It was tabled by the CSIS in the Canadian Parliament last week. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) declined to comment on the report, which indicates that while Canada is taking note of India's concerns over Khalistani extremists, in the past, it maintains its allegations over the Nijjar killing and other accusations of foreign interference, including transnational repression (TRR), which New Delhi has repeatedly denied.

The report added Canada-based Khalistani extremist groups for the first time to its section on politically motivated violent extremism (PMVE), indicating that the CSIS is taking India's complaints about violence from these groups more seriously than before, which has been a source of New Delhi's long-held grievance against Ottawa.

However, it said that while "some" of Khalistani separatist supporters took part in legitimate protests and other activities, "only a small group of individuals are considered Khalistani extremists because they continue to use Canada as a base for the promotion, fundraising or planning of violence primarily in India."

The report said Canada "must remain vigilant about continued foreign interference conducted by the Government of India." It said Pakistan had attempted to interfere in Canadian politics, by helping "pro-Pakistan" candidates over those seen as "pro-India" and also carried out TRR activities to suppress Pakistani dissidents and critics in the country.

Indian, Israeli officials hold talks on West Asian conflict

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh on Thursday held a telephonic conversation with the Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Defence, Major General Amir Baran, and they discussed updates on the current situation in West Asia.

On June 18, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had issued a statement expressing deep concerns at the recent developments between Iran and Israel. "We are closely monitoring the evolving situation. In the wake of both sides to avoid any escalatory steps, existing channels of dialogue and diplomacy should be utilised to work towards de-escalation," it said.

The MEA said "India enjoys close and friendly relations with both the countries and stands ready to extend all possible support. Our Mission in both the countries will be working with the Indian community. All Indian nationals in the region are advised to exercise caution."

Sudden break



Traffic halt: A truck stuck on a bridge over the Ravi river after a portion of the structure collapsed in heavy rain at Targa, blocking the Ravi-Satlej road in Rishi district of Jharkhand on Thursday. (PTI)

BCI hits back at SILF over foreign law firm rules

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bar Council of India (BCI) on Thursday pushed back against criticism from the Society of Indian Law Firms (SILF), the apex body representing law firms in India, regarding its recent decision to allow foreign lawyers and law firms to operate in India in a limited capacity.

Responding to SILF's public statements, the BCI said the regulatory authority for the legal profession "stated that the group does not represent most Indian law firms, particularly smaller and newer ones."

"(SILF) functions primarily as a closed, self-dominated by a few large, well-established firms. Its stance and actions do not reflect the concerns or aspirations of more than 90% of India's smaller or emerging law firms," BCI said.

ASI to organise global meet on decoding Indus Valley script

Reemana Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will host a three-day international conference from August 20 to 22 at Gujarat's Noida to discuss deciphering the Indus Valley script.

Invitations to the international conference on "Decipherment of the Indus script: current status and the way forward", to be held at the Pt. Deenabhai Upadhyay Institute of Archaeology, Greater Noida, have been sent out to experts working on the Harappan civilisation and culture both in India and abroad.

The Indus script, comprising over 400 pictorial symbols, remains undeciphered due to the lack of bilingual texts and the brevity of inscriptions. The script consists of over 400 pictorial signs, leading some researchers to classify it as "logo-syllabic."

Kuki woman killed, Meitei farmer injured in Manipur

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A Kuki woman was killed in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Thursday, hours after a gunshot injured a Meitei farmer.

In a statement issued late evening, the Manipul police said Ningthoujam Biren Singh, a cultivator from the Bishupur district's Phubala Awang Mang Leikha, was shot in the left arm by an unknown armed miscreant around 3 p.m. while working in his paddy field.

He was taken to the District Hospital, from where he was referred to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal, about 30 km away. His condition is reported to be stable.

In response, the security forces launched a search operation in and around the Langchingmuri, Heichang, and the western areas of Phubala village. During the course of the operation, security forces

Local villagers slammed govt. for failing to protect farmers near volatile ethnic buffer zone

came under fire from unknown armed miscreants and the forces retaliated accordingly," the police said.

"During the crossfire, a woman from Langchingmuri village was killed and a farmer was injured with a bullet injury," the police said.

The police said the Kuki Women's Organisation for Human Rights (KWHR) reported the incident to them.

The police said cases had been registered in connection with the incidents, and an investigation was under way. "Combined security forces are continuing search operations in the area," it said.

'Disability-related questions must be framed differently'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Part population counts, including the last Census in 2011, have historically underestimated people with disabilities, according to rights activists and experts who have written to the Office of the Registrar General of India, seeking a "shift in approach" to framing disability-related questions in the upcoming Census.

In the past, "stigmatized" questions with negative connotations, posed by enumerators with minimal training, without considering accessibility concerns, have all contributed to low response rates, they said, claiming that the 2011 Census had counted "only 2.2% of the country's disabled population." They sought time to make suggestions for better methodologies for the Census.

In a letter to the OGI

and the Secretaries of the Home and Statistics Ministries, disability rights organisation Nipman Foundation and policy think tank The Quantum Hub noted that extrapolations from the World Health Organization's estimates suggested that India had at least 200 million, or 20 crore, people with disabilities - almost 10 times what was counted in last Census.

Nipman Foundation founder Nipman Maheshwari said that questions that asked whether one was mentally or physically disabled, "only providing space for a 'yes/no' answer, resulted in low disclosure. He added that the process must be made accessible through the use of Indian Sign Language, Braille, and screen-reader friendly documents, further sought time to make suggestions for better methodologies for the Census.

In a letter to the OGI

ASI to organise global meet on decoding Indus Valley script

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

NEW DELHI

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will host a three-day international conference from August 20 to 22 in Greater Noida to discuss deciphering the Indus Valley script.

Invitations to the international conclave on “Decipherment of the Indus script: current status and the way forward”, to be held at the Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Institute of Archaeology, Greater Noida, have been sent out to experts working on the Harappan civilisation and culture both in India and abroad.

Sources in the ASI told *The Hindu* that the seminar would take place mainly through presentations, both offline and online. Thematic sessions shall be designed based on the current stage of research in this field. Discussions shall

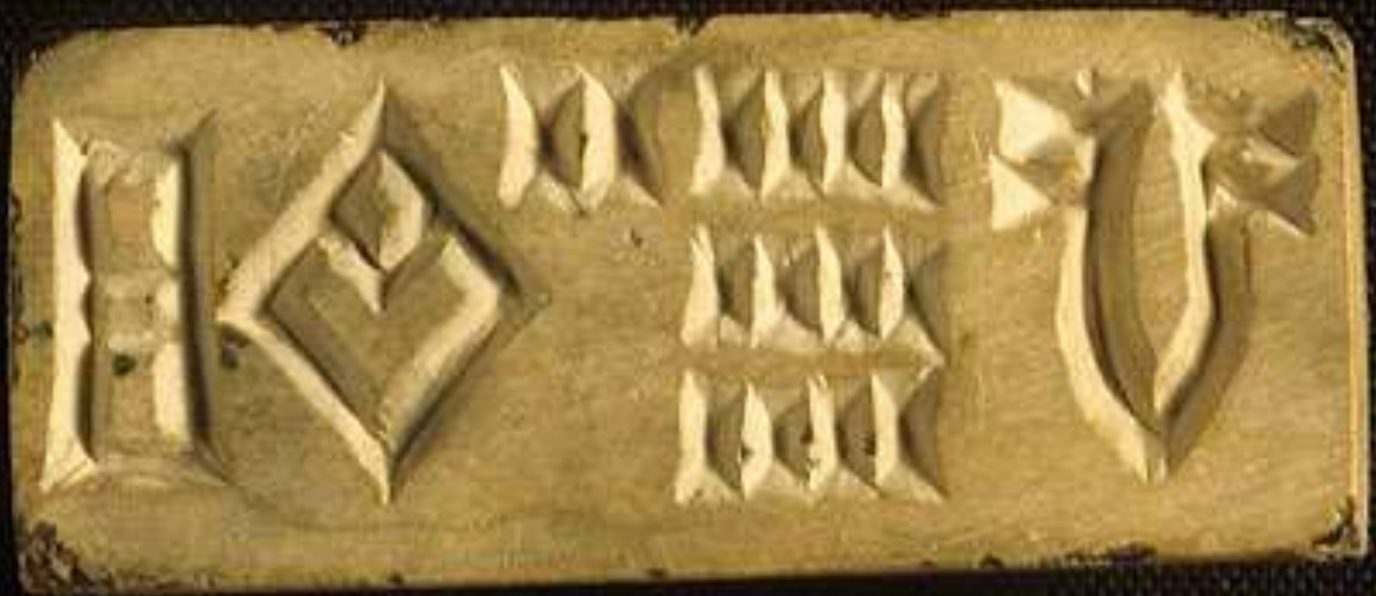


Seals with the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

follow presentations at the end of each session.

“The proceedings of the seminar is anticipated to highlight the scope and quantum of current and future research in the field,” a senior ASI functionary said.

The Indus script, comprising over 400 pictorial symbols, remains undeciphered due to the lack of bilingual texts and the brevity of inscriptions. The script consists of over 400 pictorial signs, leading some researchers to classify it as “logo-syllabic”.












Feature	Details
Name	Indus Script (Harappan Script)
Period	c. 2600 BCE – 1900 BCE
Location Found	Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Dholavira, Lothal, Kalibangan, etc.
Number of Symbols	Around 400–600 distinct signs
Type of Script	Pictographic (some consider it logographic or logo-syllabic)
Writing Direction	Right to Left (mostly), some bidirectional examples found
Medium Used	Steatite seals, pottery, copper tablets, tools, terracotta, etc.
Decipherment Status	Undeciphered till date
Repetition of Signs	Very few signs repeated – suggests non-phonetic or limited phonetics

Script Length	Short inscriptions (4–5 symbols on average)
Associated Objects	Seals (used possibly for trade or identification), amulets, pottery
Notable Discoveries	Dholavira signboard with large script – earliest known signboard
Scholars' Attempts	Iravatham Mahadevan, Asko Parpola, Gregory Possehl, etc. attempted decoding
Relation to Other Scripts	No confirmed link with later Indian scripts like Brahmi
Possible Language	Hypothesized as Dravidian , Munda , or unknown substratum language
Significance	Reflects early urban literacy, administration, trade, and symbolic thought

- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** is organizing a **three-day international conference** to discuss decoding the **Indus Valley script**.
 - The seminar is titled:
 *"Decipherment of the Indus Script: Current Status and the Way Forward"*
 Venue: Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Institute of Archaeology, Greater Noida
 Dates: August 20–22, 2025
-

◆ 2. Purpose of the Seminar

- To invite **international and Indian experts** on Harappan civilization.
- To present **latest research** and design thematic sessions based on:
 - Current decipherment efforts
 - Online + offline presentations
- Aims to highlight the **scope of future research**.

◆ 3. About the Indus Script

- Comprises **over 400 pictorial signs/symbols**.
- Still **undeciphered** because:
 - No **bilingual texts** (like Rosetta Stone)
 - Inscriptions are very **short and brief**
- Some scholars label it "**logo-syllabic**" (each symbol may represent a word/syllable).
- Found on seals, tablets, pottery, and copper plates.

Aspect	Detail
Civilization	Indus Valley Civilization (c. 2600–1900 BCE)
Sites with Script	Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Dholavira, Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhigarhi
Material	Steatite seals, copper tablets, pottery
Script Nature	Pictographic; undeciphered
Govt Body	Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of Syrians who have returned home since Assad's fall

2 In million. Over two million Syrians who had fled their homes during the country's war have returned since the ouster of Bashar al-Assad, according to the UN refugee agency. The Syrian civil war, which erupted in 2011 with Assad's repression of anti-government protests, displaced half of the population internally or abroad. Assad's ouster at the hands of Islamist forces sparked hopes of return.

The surge in Indian-owned businesses in the U.K.

23 In per cent. The number of Indian-owned companies operating in the U.K. has reached 1,187 this year, recording the steepest pace of annual growth. The combined revenues reported by Indian-owned companies in the U.K. increased to GBP 72.14 billion from GBP 48.05 billion in 2023, according to the annual 'India Meets Britain Tracker'.

Death toll from floods in the Eastern Cape region in South Africa

92 South Africa was under a declared state of national disaster on Thursday as the death toll from floods caused by severe rains in the Eastern Cape region rose to 92. Speaking at a public memorial service, Zolile Williams, a member of the executive council, said the people of the coastal province have not been the same since the disaster hit.

Number of persons in Gaza killed in Israeli fire on Thursday

72 Gaza's civil defence agency said that Israeli fire killed at least 72 people in the Palestinian territory, including 21 who had gathered near an aid distribution site. The Israeli army said it had fired "warning shots" at "suspects" approaching them in the Nafzarim area where the civil defence agency said 15 people were killed waiting for aid.

The amount of Indian money parked in Swiss banks in 2024

3.5 In billion Swiss francs. Indian money parked in Swiss banks more than tripled in 2024 on the back of a huge jump in funds held through local branches and other financial institutions, annual data released by Switzerland's central bank showed on Thursday.

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why India should address its propulsion gap

Is India overly reliant on imported engines? What happened to the HF-24 Marut, India's first indigenously designed fighter jet? Why has the Kaveri engine project not been able to come to fruition? How is India affected by foreign engine supply delays? Is only the Indian Air Force affected by such dependency?

EXPLAINER

Rahul Bhatt

There has been growing excitement in military and industrial circles over the fast-tracked indigenous fifth generation stealth Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). Touted as a multi-role fighter with super-cruise capability, internal weapons bays, advanced avionics, and diverter-less supersonic intakes enhancing stealth and reliability, the AMCA is being hailed as a milestone in Indian aerospace history. However, a close of historical realism is warranted particularly since India has a persistent propulsion gap, and is overly reliant on imported engines. Nearly seven decades of fighter development reveal cautionary lessons, starting with India's first indigenously designed fighter jet, the HF-24 Marut (Spirit of the Tempest).

What happened to the HF-24 Marut? Launched in the 1950s by Heinkel-Aeromechanics Limited (HAL) under famed German engineer Kurt Tank — designer of several WWII Luftwaffe fighters — the twin-engine, swept-wing Marut was, like the AMCA, an ambitious project of its time. Sleek and capable of transonic speeds, it embodied post-colonial India's drive for self-reliance and entered service amid high hopes in the late 1960s.

However, the Marut never reached its full potential, not because of design flaws, but entirely due to its underpowered British Bristol Siddeley Olympus 700 turbojets. Although Tank had envisioned a more powerful engine, it never materialised, leaving the Marut's performance underwhelming. And, while it performed reasonably well in ground-attack roles during the 1971 war on the western front, its performance limitations ultimately proved crippling. HAL produced only 147 of these high-maintenance, low-output fighters, which were eventually "number-plated" or retired by 1990.

Indian Air Force (IAF) veterans who flew the Marut consistently cited the lack of a powerful engine as its Achilles' heel — highlighting the enduring reality that high-end fighters live or die by propulsion technology. Engines, after all, are not mere technical parts but the core of sovereign aerospace capability, shaping a combat aircraft's power, range, and mission effectiveness.

Did India develop its own engine? Following the Marut's disappointing engine performance, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) assigned its Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE) laboratory in 1969 to develop the Kaveri GTK 35V5 afterburning turbofan for the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), which had been under design development since 1983.

Over the next 35 years, GTRE spent around ₹2032 crore, as of 2020, on the project, but without success. Despite producing nine full-scale prototypes and four core engines — logging over 5,000 hours of ground testing and 72 hours of flight trials on an Ilyushin IL-76 flying test bed in Russia — the Kaveri failed to meet the LCA's performance benchmarks. It struggled with thrust-to-weight ratio, reliability, and thermal management under sustained high-performance conditions. Though spinoff versions were proposed for tanks, ships, and locomotives, none have so far entered



Long-serve version of the HF-24 Marut aircraft of the IAF flying in formation over Rajpath, New Delhi. THE HINDU DATA TEAM

operational use. A revival attempt in 2016, in collaboration with French engine-maker Snecma (linked to offset obligations from the IAF's Rafale deal) also collapsed. A parallel proposal by its partner Safran to co-develop a new engine for the Tejas MkII and AMCA met a similar fate, reportedly rejected by the DRDO due to institutional pride.

Meanwhile, Kaveri's failure forced the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), responsible for the LCA's design, to adopt the U.S.-made General Electric F404-F402 afterburning turbofan engine (producing 79-80 kN of thrust) around 2004. Although barely adequate for restricting Tejas' payload and high-angle-of-attack capabilities — the engine was eventually approved by the IAF, which inducted two MkII squadrons from 2010 onwards, with one squadron operating without full operational clearance, nearly 14 years after the LCA programme's inception.

How is India affected by engine dependency? India's engine dependency issue resurfaced recently when GE delayed delivery of 90 F404 engines by 13 months for the upgraded LCA MkII — a highly manoeuvrable variant equipped with the Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, advanced electronic warfare suites, and mid-air refuelling capability. Under a \$776 million contract signed in 2021, engine deliveries were scheduled to begin by March 2024, but the first power pack arrived only in April 2025, as part of an initial batch of 12 expected by the end of the year. GE cited "unprecedented supply chain pressures," including disruptions from suppliers, as the cause for the delay, but for India it jeopardised the MkII's commissioning by deferring it further.

This triggered sharp criticism from Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh, who publicly rebuked HAL for chronic slippages in fighter deliveries amid a steep decline in IAF combat strength from a sanctioned 122 fighters to around 30 presently. Further reductions loom with two legacy MiG-21 "Bis" squadrons slated for decommission. "We need to be now ready to be future-ready," Mr. Singh said at the 63rd Aerial Business Summit in New Delhi on May 28. Citing HAL's halting history of missed deadlines, he bluntly

asserted that wars are won by equipping the military, not merely planning for the future.

Simultaneously, HAL's negotiations with GE to locally manufacture the more powerful GE F414 engine (80-90 kN thrust) — intended for the LCA Mk2 and initially the AMCA Mk1 — too has hit a roadblock. The deal, announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2023 U.S. visit, has reportedly been stalled by GE's demand for an additional \$800 million over the original \$1.4 billion agreement.

More critically, GE appears unwilling to share core engine technologies like single-crystal turbine blades, thermal barrier coatings, and advanced cooling systems, all of which are vital for boosting engine durability and thrust. HAL continues to demand full technology transfer, but industry insiders point out they must proprietary know-how, developed at great expense, is rarely shared by global engine makers. Talks, however, are still ongoing.

Both the LCA Mk2, which is under development, and the initial AMCA Mk1 models are expected to rely on the F414 as a "stopgap" powerplant, pending finalisation of the deal. The ADA is also scouting for a 140 kN-class engine for the Tejas Mk2, potentially via a joint venture. Interim discussions with France's Safran and the U.K.'s Rolls Royce have so far yielded no concrete outcome.

And, while these possibilities may serve as a short-term workaround, it reflects the same external engine dependency that has crippled the Marut. Consequently, a cross-section of IAF veterans and aerospace experts warned that unless India developed an indigenous engine to power future AMCA fighters, the programme risks being held hostage once again to geopolitical whims.

How much is India dependent on external engines? India's external propulsion sourcing extends well beyond aerial platforms, affecting the Army and Navy as well, both of which are exclusively reliant on imported power packs or foreign engines assembled and built domestically under licence. The Army's Arjun Main Battle Tank, for example, is powered by the German MTU MB838 Ka-501 diesel engine (paired with RDSB KE-303 transmissions), while the recently trailed Zorawar Light Tank uses the U.S.-origin L6000p

THE GIST

Launched in the 1950s by Heinkel-Aeromechanics Limited (HAL) under famed German engineer Kurt Tank — designer of several WWII Luftwaffe fighters — the twin-engine, swept-wing Marut was, like the AMCA, an ambitious project of its time.

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Commiss Advanced Combat Engine. The Navy too depends wholly on foreign propulsion systems — Russian, Ukrainian, French, German, and U.S. engines — that power all its indigenously designed and built fighters, destroyers, auxiliary vessels, troop carriers, corvettes, and fast attack craft. India's all-round engine development across aerospace, land, and naval platforms is critical to ensure strategic autonomy and enhance military capability.

How important is autonomous engine development? Aircraft engine development is vital for India to achieve aerospace autonomy and strategic self-reliance. Disruptions in engine supply delay production like that of the LCA MkII, hamper upgrades, and restrict exports as that would necessitate third-party approvals. The U.S., France, and China are able to assert dominance in global aerospace markets as they have harnessed indigenous propulsion.

However, for India, mastering advanced jet engine technology is not merely a prestige project but is crucial to sustaining military readiness, ensuring credible deterrence, and insulating its defence industry from global shocks and global political vagaries. Without this core capability, India's broader ambitions in aviation and defence remain perpetually compromised.

A broad spectrum of defence experts and IAF veterans contend that India's failure to develop advanced jet engines transcends technical hurdles and are fundamentally a political challenge. India's defence funding remains fragmented, largely focused on short-term projects, rather than being driven by a long-term, strategic vision.

If India is genuinely committed to closing this glaring capability gap, mere dogmatic statements like "Atmanirbhar Bharat" will not suffice. Achieving true autonomy in engine technology demands comprehensive structural reforms, unwavering political will, and the creation of an innovation ecosystem which will seamlessly integrate private sector participation, academic research, and defence R&D institutions into a cohesive and competitive framework. *Rahul Bhatt is a veteran journalist based in New Delhi and writes columns on defence, military, defence and security matters.*

The amount of Indian money parked in Swiss banks in 2024

3.5

In billion Swiss francs
(nearly ₹37,600 crore).

Indian money parked in

Swiss banks more than tripled in 2024 on the back of a huge jump in funds held through local branches and other financial institutions, annual data released by Switzerland's central bank showed on Thursday. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

Top Countries by Swiss Bank Deposits (Latest Data)

Rank	Country	Holdings
1	United Kingdom	~CHF 222 billion indiatoday.in +4
2	United States	~CHF 89 billion
3	Russian Nationals / Entities	Between CHF 150–200 billion
Others	Germany, France, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Singapore, Guernsey, UAE – all feature in the top 10	

- **Total foreign client assets** in Swiss banks stood at CHF 977 billion in 2024 (slight drop from CHF 983 billion in 2023) [indiatoday.in +11](#)
- Deposits from private U.S. clients have surged recently, driven by interest in diversification amid regulatory changes [ft.com +1](#)

- Indian holdings reached **CHF 3.54 billion** (~₹37,600 crore) in 2024—highest since 2021
[m.economictimes.com](#) +4
 - That ranks India **48th** worldwide, up from 67th in 2023 [indiatoday.in](#) +2
 - About 90% of these deposits stem from **institutional channels**, not individual accounts
[m.economictimes.com](#) +1
-

✓ Key Takeaways

- The **UK** maintains the largest share of private (non-Swiss) wealth in Swiss banks.
- The **US** holds the second largest.
- **Russian nationals/entities** have massive sums too—estimated CHF 150–200 billion.
- **India's share**, while growing, is still minor in the grand scheme.

Swiss Banks vs Indian Banks – Comparative Table

Aspect	Swiss Banks	Indian Banks
Banking Secrecy	Historically very strict (Banking Secrecy Act, 1934); now relaxed due to FATF, OECD, etc.	Operate under RBI regulations ; no secrecy laws; transparent reporting
Clientele	High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNIs), global corporates, offshore clients	Domestic retail, corporate, MSMEs, and government accounts
Currency	Primarily Swiss Franc (CHF), also USD, EUR, GBP	Primarily Indian Rupee (INR)
Interest on Deposits	Very low or negative interest (especially in CHF accounts)	Moderate to high interest on savings & fixed deposits
Minimum Deposit Requirement	Very high (can be \$100,000 or more)	Can be as low as ₹1,000 or even zero-balance

Stability	Extremely stable and risk-averse banking system	Stable, but impacted by NPA crisis , banking scams in past
Investment Services	Advanced wealth management, offshore accounts, tax planning	Available but less sophisticated; improving via fintech & reforms
Account Opening	Stringent KYC; often requires reference or large net worth	Aadhaar-based KYC; relatively easier for citizens
Use in Tax Avoidance	Historically used for tax evasion, black money parking	Subject to RBI, SEBI, and IT Dept regulations
Regulatory Body	Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA)	Reserve Bank of India (RBI), SEBI for investment aspects
Participation in Global Norms	Signatory to OECD, FATF, CRS , etc.	Signatory to CRS, FATCA, DTAA , and other transparency norms
Digital Services	High-end, secure, tailored for HNIs	Widespread digital banking revolution (UPI, mobile banking, etc.)
Access to Foreigners	Yes, for global clients, often offshore	Restricted for non-residents unless via NRO/NRE/FCNR accounts

● 1. Massive Foreign Asset Declaration

- Taxpayers declared ₹29,208 crore in foreign assets and ₹1,089.88 crore in foreign income after data matching.
 - Triggered by the Income Tax Department's audit comparing **filed ITRs** with **data from foreign governments**.
-

● 2. Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI)

- India has an **AEOI agreement** with multiple countries, including **Switzerland**.
- First such exchange began in **2019**, and continues regularly.

● 3. Audit and Identification by CBDT

- **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** compared ITRs with foreign financial data.
 - Covered all jurisdictions, especially Switzerland.
 - **SMS and email alerts** were sent to non-reporting taxpayers.
-

● 4. Taxpayer Action & Outcomes

- **24,678 taxpayers** reviewed their returns.
- **5,483 taxpayers** filed **belated returns** for AY 2024–25.
- Many admitted to unreported foreign holdings and income.

● 5. Black Money Allegations Addressed

- Finance Ministry responded to social media claims of **black money ballooning in Swiss banks**.
 - Clarified that the reported increase involves various **types of deposits**, not just illicit funds.
-

● 6. Legal Action Under Consideration

- **Non-responsive taxpayers** may face legal action under existing provisions of the Income Tax Act.

Q. With reference to Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI), consider the following statements:

- AEOI is a global standard under which countries automatically exchange information on financial accounts.
- India's AEOI agreement with Switzerland began in 2014.
- The AEOI initiative is monitored globally by the OECD.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

Will consider diplomacy if 'aggression' stops: Iran

Tehran backs continuation of talks if the aggressor is held accountable for its crimes, Iran Foreign Minister says after meeting his European counterparts in Geneva; Israel and Iran continue strikes

Reuters

JERUSALEM/DUBAI
WASHINGTON

Tehran is ready to "consider diplomacy" again only once Israel's "aggression is stopped", Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said following talks in Geneva with his European counterparts on Iran's nuclear programme on Friday.

"Iran is ready to consider diplomacy once again and once the aggression is stopped and the aggressor is held accountable for the crimes committed...We support the continuation of discussion with Britain, France, Germany and the European Union and express our readiness to meet again in the near future," Mr. Araghchi told presspersons following the talks in Geneva.

European powers on Friday urged Iran to continue diplomacy with the U.S. to find a solution in the stand-off over its nuclear programme as Israel keeps up its bombardment of the Islamic Republic.

At least 19 people were injured in the northern Israeli port city of Haifa as Iran fired a fresh barrage of missiles on Friday afternoon, authorities said.

Iran gives a nod

"The good result today is that we leave the room with the impression that the Iranian side is ready to further discuss all the important questions," said German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl in a statement alongside his



On the boil: Iranians gather for an anti-Israel rally next to a replica of the Dome of the Rock mosque in Tehran on Friday. AFP

British, French and EU counterparts after talks with Mr. Araghchi. "It is of great importance that the United States takes part in these negotiations and the solution," he added.

The statement read by all four top diplomats in their native languages after the talks expressed hope for further progress but did not make any mention of a breakthrough in the talks in Geneva.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said it carried out a fresh wave of attacks on Iran on Friday, targeting missile launchers in the southwest of the country.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said: "We are keen to continue ongoing discussions and negotiations with Iran, and we urge Iran to continue their talks with the United States." He added: "This is

a perilous moment, and it is hugely important that we don't see regional escalation of this conflict."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said there "can be no definitive solution through military means to the Iran nuclear problem. Military operations can delay it but they cannot eliminate it".

After Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not rule out killing supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mr. Barrot also warned: "It is illusory and dangerous to want to impose a regime change from the outside. It is up to the people to decide their own destiny."

"We invited the Iranian Minister to consider negotiations with all sides, including the United States, without awaiting the cessation of strikes, which we al-

so hope for," he said.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said for her part: "Today the regional escalation benefits no-one. We must keep the discussions open."

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency said earlier that the Iranian delegation "emphasised that Iran has not left the negotiating table".

Israel began its campaign on Friday last week, saying the operation was aimed at halting Tehran from obtaining an atomic bomb, an ambition Iran denies having.

Iranian strikes launched in response have also caused damage in Israel.

(With inputs from AP)

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'STILL NOT TOO LATE'

» PAGE 6

● 1. Iran's Stance on Diplomacy

- Iran is open to diplomacy only **if Israel halts its aggression**.
- Iranian Foreign Minister **Abbas Araghchi** emphasized that diplomacy depends on **holding aggressors accountable** for recent violence.

● 2. Geneva Talks on Iran's Nuclear Programme

- Held with **EU-3 (France, Germany, UK)** + European Union officials.
- Talks focused on **reviving nuclear diplomacy**.
- Iran confirmed its readiness to engage again, **conditionally**.

● 3. European Powers' Position

- Urged Iran to continue diplomacy with the **United States**.
- A **joint statement** in four languages expressed **hope**, but no major breakthrough was announced.

● 4. Israel's Latest Military Action


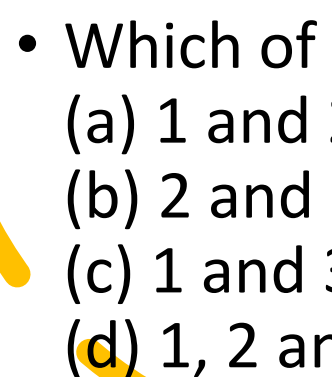
- Israeli military launched new air raids on Iranian targets in Syria and Lebanon.
- Focused on missile launchers and claimed retaliation against aggression.

● 5. Iran's Retaliation

- Iran fired missiles targeting **Haifa** in northern Israel.
- Ongoing **missile barrages and drone strikes** from both sides.

● 6. Casualties

- At least **19 people injured** in Haifa due to Iranian strikes.
- Israeli strikes also caused **regional damage** in Syria and Iran.

- 
- **Q. With reference to the ongoing Iran–Israel conflict, consider the following statements:**
 - Iran has categorically left all nuclear diplomacy negotiations.
 - The EU-3 refers to France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.
 - The Iranian Foreign Minister recently met his counterparts in Geneva.
 - Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
- 

ST. PETERSBURG

Russia has shared peace proposals with Israel and Iran, says Putin



REUTERS

Russian President Vladimir Putin said he has secured Israel's pledge to safeguard Moscow's personnel at Iran's Russia-built nuclear power plant and that he has reached an understanding to try to end the week-old war. He also warned Ukraine that it could lose more territory if it keeps rejecting Russia's conditions for peace. AP

LONDON

Pro-Palestinian activists break into U.K. air base and vandalise planes



REUTERS

Pro-Palestinian activists broke into the U.K.'s largest air force base in southeast England and vandalised two planes in an act condemned by Prime Minister Keir Starmer as "disgraceful" on Friday. The campaign group Palestine Action posted a video claiming to show its activist breaking into the Royal Air Force base in Oxtedshire. AP

ISTANBUL

Armenia PM Pashinyan to meet Erdogan on 'historic' Türkiye visit



AP

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan arrived in Istanbul on Friday for a rare visit he arch foe Turkey, in what Yerevan has described as a "historic" step toward regional peace. Armenia and Turkey have never established formal diplomatic ties, and their shared border has been closed since the 1990s. AP

SAN FRANCISCO

U.S. court allows Trump control of National Guard in Los Angeles



REUTERS

A U.S. appeals court ruled President Donald Trump could continue control of National Guard troops in Los Angeles, over the objections of California Governor Gavin Newsom. Mr. Trump had ordered the National Guard troops and Marines into Los Angeles this month in response to protests over federal immigration sweeps. AP

IAEA warns of nuclear disaster if Israel attacks Iran's Bushehr plant

Countries of the region have reached out directly to me to express their concerns, says Rafael Grossi, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency; he also warned against striking the lines that supply power to Bushehr

Agence France-Presse
New York

West Asia risks a nuclear catastrophe if Israel strikes Iran's southern nuclear plant of Bushehr, the head of the U.N. atomic watchdog warned on Friday.

Rafael Grossi, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said the U.N. security Council that he has not yet detected radiation readings from Israel's week-long military campaign against Iran, including attacks on nuclear sites.

But he said that a strike on Bushehr — West Asia's first civilian nuclear reac-



Grossi estimates IAEA says an attack on Bushehr would be dangerous as it contains thousands of kilograms of nuclear material. AP

tor, which so far appears to have been spared — would spell the most serious consequences as it contains thousands of kilograms of nuclear material.

"Countries of the region

clear power plant, a direct hit would result in a very high release of radioactivity," Mr. Grossi said.

Dire consequences
Mr. Grossi warned of equally dire consequences even if Israel strikes the lines that supply electricity to Bushehr, saying such disabling of power could trigger a meltdown.

In a worst case scenario, evacuations and orders to take shelter would need to be issued for areas within several hundred kilometres of Bushehr, which would include population centres in Gulf Arab monarchies, a major artery of the global economy.

The population would

also need to take iodine and may see restrictions in food supply, Mr. Grossi said.

Construction on Bushehr began in the 1970s as the pro-Western, albeit sought to develop civilian nuclear power.

German scientists initially worked on the plant but since the 1990s the Islamic republic has worked with Russia to develop and maintain Bushehr.

Mr. Grossi appealed for a diplomatic solution and repeated his willingness to travel to negotiate a deal.

"We are way below emergency standards in terms of drinking water for people in Gaza," he added.

Israeli troops kill 60, half of them near Gaza aid centres

Agence France-Presse
Reuters
GAZA CITY/UNRWA

Gaza's civil defence agency said 31 Palestinian aid workers were among at least 60 people killed on Friday by Israeli forces, the latest in a string of deadly incidents near aid distribution sites.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bussal said five persons were killed while waiting for aid in the southern Gaza Strip and 26 others near a central area known as the Netzarim corridor, an Israeli-controlled strip of land that bisects the Palestinian territory.

Man-made drought
Meanwhile, the United Nations' children agency said on Friday that Gaza is facing a man-made drought as its water systems collapse.



A girl cries at the morgue of Al-Ja'fari hospital in Hebron after the killing of a Palestinian. AP

"Children will begin to die of thirst... Just 40% of drinking water production facilities remain functional," UNICEF spokesperson James Elder told reporters in Geneva.

"We are way below emergency standards in terms of drinking water for people in Gaza," he added.

UNICEF also reported a

30% increase in children aged six months to 5 years admitted for treatment of malnutrition from April to May in Gaza, and half a million people going hungry.

It said the U.S.-backed aid distribution system run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) was "making a desperate situation worse."

Taiwan detects 50 Chinese jets after U.K. vessel crosses Strait

Agence France-Presse
Taipei

Taiwan detected 50 Chinese military aircraft around the island, the Defence Ministry said on Friday, days after a British naval vessel sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

China insists democratic, self-ruled Taiwan is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to bring the island under its control.

Beijing has ramped up the deployment of fighter jets and naval vessels around Taiwan in recent years to press its claim of sovereignty, which Taipei rejects.

Taiwan also accuses China of using espionage, cyberattacks and disinformation to weaken its defences.

Along with the 80 aircraft, six Chinese naval vessels were also detected in the 24 hours to 6:00 a.m. (03:30 IST Friday), the Defence Ministry said.

It said in a separate statement that spotted them at 24 Chinese aircraft including fighters and drones were spotted since 08:00 a.m. on Friday.

Among them, it counted the median line of the Taiwan Strait in conducting Taiwan joint training with Chinese naval vessels, the ministry said, adding it "monitored the situation and responded accordingly".

The latest incursion came after British Royal Navy patrol vessel HMS Dryad sailed through the Taiwan Strait on June 18, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said Thursday.

The United States and other countries view the 180-km Taiwan Strait as in-

Six Chinese naval vessels, as well as fighters and drones, were also spotted, says Taipei

international waters that should be open to all vessels.

Meanwhile, China condemned Britain on Friday for sending the ship through the Taiwan Strait, saying the move had "undermined peace and stability" in the sensitive waterway.

China accused London of "publicly hyping up" the move, Beijing organised troops to track and warn (the ship) throughout the entire journey, and effectively dealt with it," Liu Runbo, a spokesman for the People's Liberation Army Navy's Eastern Theatre Command, said. He said British statements on the transit had "distorted legal principles and confused the public".

"Its actions deliberately distorted the situation and undermined peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," Mr. Liu said.

The last time a British Navy ship transited the Taiwan Strait was in 2021, when the HMS Richmond, a frigate deployed with Britain's aircraft carrier strike group, sailed through from Japan to Vietnam. China strongly condemned Britain at the time and also deployed its military to follow the vessel.

In April, Taiwan detected 76 Chinese aircraft and in naval vessels, when Beijing conducted live fire exercises that included simulated strikes aimed at the island's key ports and outlying sites.

Beating the heat



Boys jump into a river to cool down during a hot summer day in Rabat in Morocco on Friday. 2024 was Morocco's hottest year on record, the country's meteorological agency said. Several cities broke daily heat records such as Marrakech which recorded 47.6°C. AP

Bangladesh, Pakistan and China conduct trilateral foreign official-level discussion

Kallot Bhattacharjee
New Delhi

Bangladesh, Pakistan and China held an inaugural trilateral foreign official-level discussion, this week in Kunming, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan has announced. The trilateral consultation was led by Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, Bangladesh's Acting Foreign Secretary Khaled Alam Siddique and Pakistani Foreign Secretary Pakistan Inam Ahmed Siddiqui.

Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Anam Baloch, who participated in the first Foreign Office Consultation with Bangladesh in one-



Latest overseas (left to right) Khaled Alam Siddique, Sun Weidong and Inam Ahmed Siddique, at Kunming meeting.

and-a-half decades on April 17, 2025, participated in Thursday's virtual discussion via video link, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

In her remarks, Foreign Secretary Anam Baloch commended the Chinese side for convening the inaugural meeting of the trilateral mechanism. Adding, the common aspiration of the three sides for people-con-

tric development, the Foreign Secretary expressed Pakistan's desire for a deeper engagement between China and South Asian countries," said a press note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan announcing the Bangladesh, China, Pakistan Trilateral Mechanism.

It is the first such meeting between the three neighbours of India — China, Pakistan and Bangladesh — since Chief Adviser to the Interim Government of Bangladesh Mohammed Yunus visited China during March 26-29 and also since India carried out Operation Sindoor in May when India and Pakistan clashed.

New Zealand PM meets Xi after cutting aid to Cook Islands

Associated Press
Agence France-Presse
Wellington/Wellington

The Prime Minister of New Zealand stressed the mutual benefits of trade with China in a meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Friday, while acknowledging their disagreements on geopolitical issues.

Christopher Luxon, on his first visit to China since becoming Prime Minister in late 2023, flew to Beijing after two days of meetings with officials and business leaders in Shanghai, China's commercial center.

He wants to maintain healthy trade ties despite differences over regional and global security issues and China's growing divide with the United States. China is an important market for New Zealand food, dairy and other exports.

Mr. Xi told Mr. Luxon that the two countries should seek common ground while setting aside their differences, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said. He called for deepening trade and investment cooperation and exploring cooperation in areas such as climate.

Mr. Luxon ruled the necessity of reducing tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, according to a news release from his office. He also brought up the importance of reducing tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, according to a news release from his office.

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Christopher Luxon

Zealand's exports of goods and services. "Our trade and economic links are complementary and contribute to prosperity in both countries," Mr. Luxon was quoted as saying in the news release.

New Zealand had announced this week a limited easing of visa requirements for Chinese visitors, His exchange with Mr. Xi came one day after revelations that New Zealand had suspended millions of dollars in aid to the Cook Islands over concerns about the latter's deepening ties with China.

Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown on Friday condemned "patronising" neighbour New Zealand.

"The relationship between the Cook Islands and New Zealand is defined by partnership, not paternalism," Mr. Brown said in a speech to parliament.

"Decisions to unilaterally pause core sector support reflect a patronising approach inconsistent with modern partnership," Mr. Brown defended his nation's ties with China, saying they did not "compromise" its independence, adding that no military or defence arrangements had been made.

China accounts for more than 20% of New Zealand's exports.

IAEA warns of nuclear disaster if Israel attacks Iran's Bushehr plant

Countries of the region have reached out directly to me to express their concerns, says Rafael Grossi, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency; he also warned against striking the lines that supply power to Bushehr

Agence France-Presse
NEW YORK

West Asia risks a nuclear catastrophe if Israel strikes Iran's southern nuclear plant of Bushehr, the head of the UN atomic watchdog warned on Friday.

Rafael Grossi, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told the UN Security Council that he has not yet detected radiation resulting from Israel's week-long military campaign against Iran, including attacks on nuclear sites.

But he said that a strike on Bushehr – West Asia's first civilian nuclear reac-



Grave effects: IAEA says an attack on Bushehr would be dangerous as it contains thousands of kilograms of nuclear material. AFP

tor, which so far appears to have been spared – would spell the most serious consequences as it contains thousands of kilograms of nuclear material.

“Countries of the region

have reached out directly to me over the past few hours to express their concerns, and I want to make it absolutely and completely clear – in case of an attack on the Bushehr nu-

clear power plant, a direct hit would result in a very high release of radioactivity,” Mr. Grossi said.

Dire consequences

Mr. Grossi warned of equally dire consequences even if Israel strikes the lines that supply electricity to Bushehr, saying such disabling of power could trigger a meltdown.

In a worst case scenario, evacuations and orders to take shelter would need to be issued for areas within several hundred kilometres of Bushehr, which would include population centres in Gulf Arab monarchies, a major artery of the global economy.

The population would

also need to take iodine and may see restrictions in food supply, Mr. Grossi said.

Construction on Bushehr began in the 1970s as the pro-Western shah sought to develop civilian nuclear power.

German scientists initially worked on the plant but since the 1990s the Islamic republic has worked with Russia to develop and maintain Bushehr.

Mr. Grossi appealed for a diplomatic solution and repeated his willingness to travel to negotiate a deal.

“The IAEA can guarantee through a watertight inspection system that nuclear weapons will not be developed in Iran,” he said.

What happened?	IAEA Chief Rafael Grossi warned of catastrophic consequences if Israel strikes Iran's Bushehr nuclear plant , amid ongoing military tensions.
Why is it serious?	Bushehr is Iran's first civilian nuclear plant , containing thousands of kilograms of nuclear material . A direct hit could lead to radiation leaks and meltdown .
Dire warning	Even attacks on power supply lines to the plant could disrupt reactor cooling and trigger a meltdown.

Geopolitical Risks

Gulf Arab states have **raised concerns**; radiation could spread to **heavily populated areas**, disrupt **food supply**, and **global energy trade**.

Construction History


Started in 1970s by Shah's regime; re-developed with **Russian assistance** in the 1990s.

IAEA's Stand

Urged diplomatic resolution. Grossi emphasized **nuclear safeguards** and said **IAEA inspections** can prevent weaponization.

- **IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency):**
 - UN body promoting **peaceful use of nuclear energy**.
 - Monitors **non-proliferation treaties (NPT)**.
 - Iran is a signatory; Bushehr under safeguards.
- **Bushehr Nuclear Plant:**
 - Operational since 2011.
 - Used for **civilian power generation**, not weaponization.
 - Potential **nuclear catastrophe** if attacked.

🔥 Major Nuclear Plant Disasters (Chronologically)

Disaster	Country	Year	Cause	Impact	
Kyshtym Disaster	Soviet Union 🇷🇺 (now Russia)	1957	Explosion at plutonium processing plant	~200 direct + later cancer deaths	~10,000 evacuated, 23,000 sq. km contaminated
Three Mile Island	United States 🇺🇸	1979	Reactor core partial meltdown	0 direct deaths	~2 million exposed to low radiation
Chernobyl Disaster	Soviet Union 🇺🇦 (now Ukraine)	1986	Reactor explosion due to design flaw & operator error	~31 immediate; 4,000+ from cancer (UN estimate)	Over 3 lakh (300,000+) evacuated, ~7 million affected
Tokaimura Accident	Japan 🇯🇵	1999	Criticality accident in fuel processing	2 direct deaths	~600 people exposed to radiation
Fukushima Daiichi	Japan 🇯🇵	2011	Earthquake-triggered tsunami disabled cooling systems	0 direct; ~2,000 indirect (evacuation stress)	Over 1.6 lakh evacuated, long-term contamination
Mayak Plutonium Plant	Russia 🇷🇺	1957	Improper nuclear waste storage	Same as Kyshtym	Same as Kyshtym
Windscale Fire	United Kingdom 🇬🇧	1957	Fire in graphite core reactor	No immediate deaths; later cancer deaths (100–200 est.)	Thousands potentially exposed

International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) Summary

Level	Description	Examples
7	Major accident	Chernobyl (1986), Fukushima (2011)
6	Serious accident	Kyshtym disaster (1957)
5	Accident with wider consequences	Three Mile Island (1979), Windscale (1957)
4	Accident with local consequences	Tokaimura (1999)

Mnemonic to Remember:

"Know The Crucial Tragedies For Mains Writing"

- **Kyshtym** – USSR
- **Three Mile Island** – USA
- **Chernobyl** – USSR
- **Tokaimura** – Japan
- **Fukushima** – Japan
- **Mayak** – Russia
- **Windscale** – UK

- **Q. With reference to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), consider the following:**
- It is an agency of the United Nations.
- It ensures nuclear weapons are not developed by inspecting civilian nuclear plants.
- Its headquarters is in Vienna, Austria.
- Which of the above statements are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

Assisted dying set to become law in England & Wales

Historic Bill narrowly clears UK House

SARAH YOUNG
& ANDREW MACASKILL
LONDON, JUNE 20

BRITAIN'S PARLIAMENT voted on Friday in favour of a bill to legalise assisted dying, paving the way for the country's biggest social change in a generation.

The legislation passed by a vote of 314-291, clearing its biggest parliamentary hurdle.

The "Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life)" law would give mentally competent, terminally ill adults in England and Wales with six months or less left to live the right to choose to end their lives with medical help.

The bill now proceeds to Britain's upper chamber, the House of Lords, where it will undergo months of scrutiny. While there could be further amendments, the unelected Lords will be reluctant to block legislation that has been passed by elected members of the House of Commons.

The vote puts Britain on course to follow Australia, Canada and other countries, as well as some U.S. states, in permitting assisted dying.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government was neutral on the legislation, meaning politicians voted according to their conscience



People in London celebrate the passage of the Bill. Reuters

rather than along party lines. Starmer voted for the legislation.

Supporters of the bill say it will provide dignity and compassion to people suffering, but opponents worry that vulnerable people could be coerced into ending their lives.

Hundreds of people had gathered outside parliament to hear news of the vote.

When the result was read out, those in favour of the legislation hugged, clapped and cheered. They shouted "victory", "we won" and waved their placards. Those opposed to it stood in silence.

Opinion polls show that a majority of Britons back assisted dying. Friday's vote followed hours of emotional debate and references to personal stories in the chamber and followed a vote in November that approved the legislation in principle. **REUTERS**

- **Assisted Dying vs. Euthanasia:**
 - *Assisted dying* = patient self-administers medication prescribed by a doctor.
 - *Euthanasia* = a third party (doctor) actively ends the patient's life.
- **Ethical Principles Involved:**
 - **Autonomy** – Right to self-determination
 - **Beneficence** – Act in patient's best interest
 - **Non-maleficence** – Avoid harm
 - **Dignity** – Right to die with dignity



Aspect	Assisted Dying	Euthanasia
Definition	When a patient self-administers life-ending medication prescribed by a doctor.	When a doctor or third party actively ends a patient's life to relieve suffering.
Consent	Patient must voluntarily request the medication and take it themselves.	Patient may consent (voluntary) or may not (non-voluntary/involuntary).
Method	Doctor provides the means, patient takes the final action.	Doctor or medical staff directly administers lethal medication.
Example Countries (Legal)	USA (Oregon, California), Canada (MAiD), Switzerland	Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Colombia

Types	Only one type: voluntary and self-administered .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voluntary (with consent) - Non-voluntary (unconscious patient) - Involuntary (against will – unethical/illegal)
Legal Status in India	✗ Not legal	✓ Passive euthanasia allowed (Supreme Court, 2018 – <i>Common Cause vs. Union of India</i>)
Religious/Moral Debate	Less controversial (patient in control)	More controversial (involves third-party action)
Ethical Principle Involved	Autonomy, dignity, right to die	Mercy killing, compassion vs sanctity of life
Key Difference	Patient ends own life	Another person ends the patient's life

What happened?	The UK House of Commons passed a historic bill legalizing assisted dying for mentally competent, terminally ill adults with less than 6 months to live.
Vote outcome	Narrowly passed with 314 in favour and 291 against .
Next steps	The bill now goes to the House of Lords for further scrutiny and possible amendments.
Scope	Applies to England & Wales . Excludes Scotland and Northern Ireland for now.
Name of the Bill	"Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life)" Law

Name of the Bill	"Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life)" Law
Supporters' view	The law ensures dignity and compassion in dying, reducing unnecessary suffering.
Critics' concerns	Fears that vulnerable people could be coerced into ending their lives.
Political stance	PM Keir Starmer's Labour government was neutral ; vote was by individual conscience.
Global context	UK follows countries like Australia, Canada , and some U.S. states in legalizing assisted dying.

- **Q. With reference to ‘Assisted Dying’, consider the following statements:**
- It allows mentally competent patients to choose death under medical supervision.
- It has been legalized in some U.S. states, Australia, and Canada.
- The UK Prime Minister has full authority to pass such laws.
- Which of the above are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

MP CM's unfeasible wish: counting snakes, rearing king cobras

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

A KING cobra brought to Bhopal's Van Vihar zoo from Karnataka's Mangaluru zoo in exchange for a tiger died on June 18.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav is keen on "reintroducing" king cobras in Madhya Pradesh as an antidote to spiralling snakebite deaths. He also wants snakes in the state counted in order to assess numbers of the venomous ones.

However, there is no existing protocol for counting snakes in the wild. And irrespective of the merits of the claim that king cobras once inhabited the hot, dry forests of Madhya Pradesh, the selection of the source — Karnataka — did not take into account new research that shows all king cobras are not the same.

The king's empire

The king cobra, the world's longest venomous snake, can grow to 15 feet in length. It prefers humid, dark forests with thick un-

dergrowth, cool swamps, and bamboo patches across diverse habitats — from highland evergreen and semi-evergreen forests to estuarine mangroves with high rainfall.

In India, the king cobra's range includes the Western Ghats, the Terai belt, Northeast India, the mangrove coastlines of West Bengal and Odisha, Andaman and Nicobar, and parts of the Eastern Ghats.

Since 2014, king cobras have been reported in Korba, eastern Chhattisgarh — hundreds of kilometres from Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh or Berhampur in Orissa,

the established range of the species. This has raised hopes of finding king cobras in the adjoining forests of Satpura and Sanjay Dubri tiger reserve in MP.

That said, there is no reliable historical record of the presence of the king cobra in the dry deciduous forests of central India.

"We don't have enough perennial sources of water or even extended tracts of dense vegetation to provide cool niches in the summer. There could be occasional edge populations but that does not put MP in the king cobra's range," a former senior MP forest official said.



The king cobra can grow up to 15 feet in length. Photo courtesy: Vivek Sharma

Different dynasties

Until recently, king cobras were considered one species, *Ophiophagus hannah*. However, in 2021, a study led by wildlife biologist Gowri Shankar used genetic and morphometric (shape and size) data for "a species delimitation analysis", which identified four geographically separate lineages.

These are an endemic Western Ghats lineage; a widespread Asian mainland lineage distributed from northern and eastern India to China and Thailand; and two other lineages distributed in the Malay Peninsula, the Greater Sunda Islands, and the Philippines.

Subsequently, the small endemic population of king cobras in the Western Ghats — Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, and adjacent areas of Maharashtra — was distinguished as a separate species (*Ophiophagus kaalinga*), different from the king cobras found in the rest of India.

Therefore, a king cobra brought from Karnataka to MP would be of a hill-dwelling species unused to central India's dry, bare, and hot forests. Also, any plan to source king cobras endemic to the Western Ghats to raise a wild population in central India would be a recipe for eventual hybridisation, which experts have warned against.

Problem with mixing

A study published in the *European Journal of Taxonomy* last year underlined that the king cobra species endemic to the Western Ghats is "restricted to relatively small areas and

highly threatened habitats", and "understanding the systematics of the genus" is important to identify captive stocks for conservation.

"Any captive breeding and reintroduction efforts must ensure that species are not allowed to hybridise, and that only the appropriate local species is released in any reintroduction programme," the study said.

This is worrying because the collective population of king cobras, viewed as one species until recently, evoked a false sense of security and was placed under the "vulnerable" category by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the global authority on the status of species. But as a separate Western Ghats species, the *Ophiophagus kaalinga* is likely to be highly endangered.

"If at all MP had to source king cobras, they could have adhered to the taxonomic updates and made attempts to bring snakes from the Northeast. Anyway, no state has surplus king cobras to support such an experiment," Vivek Sharma, a Jabalpur-based herpetologist and founder of the *Snakehub* app, said.

Chief Minister's plan

"When a king cobra slithers, other snakes

flee, and the king cobra hunts them... Since the king cobra has vanished, districts like Dindori, where I was minister-in-charge, have seen up to 200 snakebite deaths annually," CM Yadav told foresters earlier this year.

The CM wants to assess the populations of venomous snakes before unleashing king cobras on them. However, king cobras, the only snake species that builds nests for its eggs, do not breed well in captivity. In the best case scenario, "it may take decades to reasonably populate" a sizable part of MP, a senior scientist at the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) said.

"King cobras tend to stay away from human habitations. So their impact on reducing venomous snakes in human-dominated areas can be felt only when king cobra populations reach a certain level," the scientist said.

Experts are also perplexed about the call for a snake census. "It is not possible to count snakes with any accuracy in the wild. There is no protocol for a snake census anywhere in the world because nobody ever considered it feasible or even necessary from a conservation standpoint," Jose Louies, CEO, Wildlife Trust of India, and founder, *indiasnakes.org*, said.


Common Cobra (*Naja naja*)



King Cobra
(*Ophiophagus hannah*)



Region / State	Highlights
Western Ghats (Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra)	<p>High snake–biodiversity zone; Karnataka’s Agumbe is dubbed the "Cobra Capital" due to frequent <i>Naja naja</i> sightings</p> <div>a-z-animals.com +10worldatlas.com +1timesofindia.indiatimes.com</div>
Uttarakhand	Over 30 snake species documented, including cobras
West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu	Among India’s top states for snakebite incidents; cobra bites are a key contributor
Northeast India (Meghalaya, Nagaland)	Rich snake diversity; cobras present among >65 species in Nagaland
Odisha & Tamil Nadu	High snakebite clusters, implying significant cobra–human conflict zones



Aspect	Details
What happened?	CM Mohan Yadav plans to reintroduce king cobras in Madhya Pradesh to combat increasing snakebite deaths and also count snakes in the wild.
Trigger	A king cobra was brought to Van Vihar Zoo , Bhopal from Karnataka's Mangaluru Zoo on June 18.
Objective	Reduce snakebite deaths and repopulate king cobras in MP's forests.
Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No established protocol for counting wild snakes.- Genetic differences exist between king cobras of Western Ghats and other regions.- The chosen source (Karnataka) is ecologically different from MP's environment.

Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No established protocol for counting wild snakes.- Genetic differences exist between king cobras of Western Ghats and other regions.- The chosen source (Karnataka) is ecologically different from MP's environment.
Habitat preference	King cobras need humid, evergreen forests with perennial water sources — unlike the dry, deciduous forests of central India.
Scientific findings	2021 study (Gowri Shankar) found king cobras have 4 distinct geographic lineages ; Western Ghats king cobras are a separate species (<i>Ophiophagus kalinga</i>).
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hybridisation risk if different lineages are mixed- Poor breeding success in captivity- Could take decades to establish a wild population
Experts say	The plan is ecologically unviable and not supported by evidence . No known method exists to accurately count snakes in the wild.

- **King Cobra (Ophiophagus hannah)** is the **longest venomous snake** (up to 15 ft).
- Needs **dense forests, humidity, and water bodies** – not available in most of MP.
- **Species Delimitation Study (2021)** found:
 - 4 genetic lineages
 - Western Ghats cobra (Ophiophagus kalinga) is **distinct and endangered**



• **Q. With reference to the King Cobra, consider the following statements:**

- It is the only snake species that builds nests for its eggs.
- It is endemic to India and found only in the Western Ghats.
- It prefers humid, dense forests with perennial water sources.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3



India's Energy Transition Index Ranking in 2025



India's position in the global Energy Transition Index has shifted to 71st in 2025.



This ranking was released by the World Economic Forum, which assesses the energy transition performance of 118 countries. Despite a drop from 63rd last year, alongside China, has shown improvements in energy access and transition readiness

Sweden leads the Energy Transition Index, followed by Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland. Other notable rankings include China at 12th and the United States at 17th.

Pakistan ranks 101st, while Congo holds the last position.

The top five economies play important role in shaping global energy transitions due to their substantial share of global GDP, population, and emissions.



India's Progress in Energy Transition



India has made considerable advancements in energy equity. Increased access to energy and clean fuels has been a priority.




The country has also improved energy regulations and invested in renewable technologies.



These efforts have been essential in enhancing energy security and equity.



• **Key Factors Influencing Ranking**

- The World Economic Forum marks several factors influencing India's ranking. Improvements in grid reliability and energy access in rural areas are vital.
 - Reducing reliance on imported energy is also crucial for enhancing energy security. Continued investments in infrastructure and renewable energy are necessary for further progress.
- 



Common boards


The Ministry of Education recommended that seven states of India adopt a common board for classes 10 and 12.

This suggestion follows an analysis by the School Education Department. The analysis revealed that these states accounted for 66 per cent of student failures in the previous academic year.

The seven states identified are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Manipur, Odisha, Telangana, and West Bengal.





• **Current State of School Boards in India**

- India has 66 school examination boards. This includes three national-level boards and 63 state-level boards.
 - Among these, the top 33 boards cater to 97 per cent of students. The remaining 33 boards serve only 3 per cent.
 - The disparity in board performance is . The recommendation for a common board aims to improve academic outcomes.
- 

An aerial photograph of the Strait of Hormuz, showing the dark blue, choppy waters of the Persian Gulf meeting the lighter blue, more turbulent waters of the Arabian Sea. The strait is a narrow passage between the two bodies of water. The text "Strait of Hormuz" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

Strait of Hormuz

- 
- Two oil tankers, Adalynn and Front Eagle, caught fire following a collision near the Strait of Hormuz, triggering concern over energy security and trade stability.
- 



Bordering Nations: Iran, UAE and Musandam (Oman)

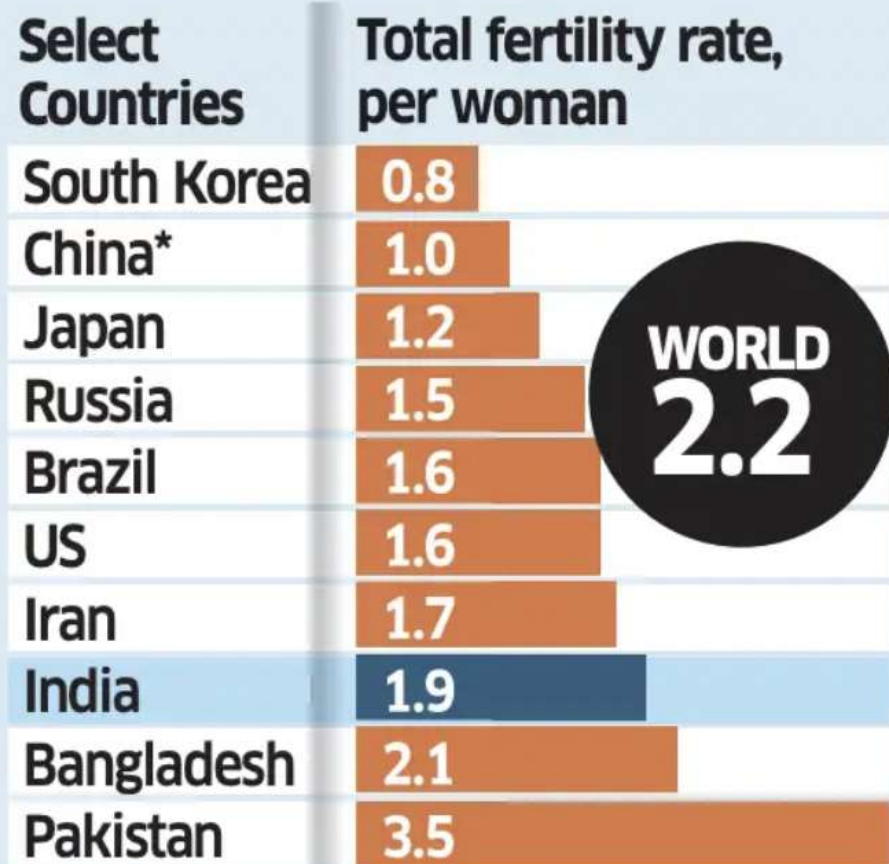
Connected water bodies: Persian Gulf (west) and Gulf of Oman (east)

Geographical Features:

- **Geographical Width:** Varies from 33 km to 95 km, with 3 km-wide shipping lanes in each direction and buffer zones.
- **Length:** Approximately 167 kilometres long.
- **Islands Present:** Includes Qishm, Hormuz, and Hengam islands which are of military and navigational significance.

- **Importance of the Strait of Hormuz: Global Energy Lifeline:**
 - Handles **~20% of global oil trade**, or 20 million barrels/day.
 - Facilitates **~30% of global LNG trade**, largely from Qatar.
- **Strategic Chokepoint:** Vulnerable to **military blockades**, cyberattacks, and navigational accidents.
- **Relevance to India:**
 - 85% of India's crude oil and ~50% LNG is imported via this route.
 - Qatar alone supplies 80% of India's LNG needs.

INDIA'S TOTAL FERTILITY RATE HAS FALLEN BELOW THE REPLACEMENT RATE



DESPITE THE SLOWING BIRTH RATE, INDIA'S YOUTH POPULATION REMAINS SIGNIFICANT

68% of India's population is of working age (15-64), 26% population in 10-24y age group, share of 65y+ at 7%

POPULATION AGED... IN %					
Select Countries	0-14	10-19	10-24	15-64	65+
India	24	17	26	68	7
China*	15	12	18	70	15
Brazil	19	14	21	69	11
Russia	17	12	17	65	18
Japan	11	9	14	59	30
Iran	22	15	21	69	9
South Korea	10	9	14	69	20
World	24	16	24	65	10

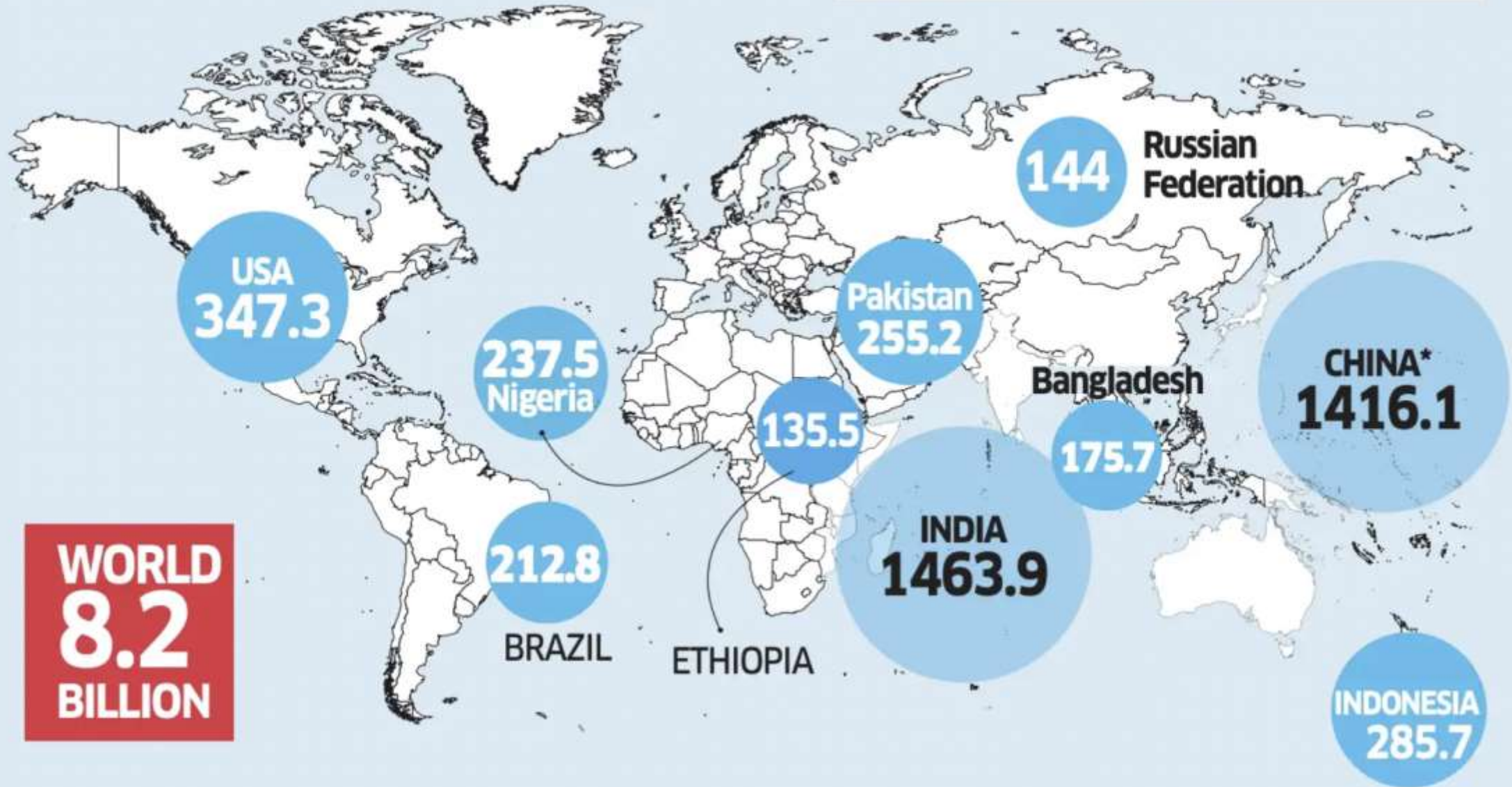
*ex HK, Macao, Taiwan

Source: UNFPA, Agency reports




TOP 10 COUNTRIES POPULATION (IN MILLIONS)

INDIA MOST POPULOUS, WITH
1.46 BILLION PEOPLE IN 2025





Drone Warfare and India

- 
- According to Fortune Business Insights, the **global military drone market was valued at \$14.14 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach \$47.16 billion by 2032**, reflecting the rapid militarisation of drone technology.
- 

Evolution of Drone Warfare

While unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) date back to World War II, their strategic utility surged post-1991 Gulf War.

In a watershed moment in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan's drones overwhelmed Armenian defences. Since then, drones have redefined warfare: from Houthi strikes on Saudi oil sites and Hamas's use in Gaza.

Recently, in **Ukraine's bold Operation Spider's Web** in 2025, over 100 First-person view (FPV) drones hit deep into Russia, damaging 40+ aircraft and causing \$7 billion in losses.

In retaliation, Russia launched the world's biggest drone attack till date, with **almost 500 drones hitting Ukraine** overnight.

A FEW NOTABLE SWARM DRONE SYSTEMS



IRAN

System: Shahed-136 (swarms)

Type: Loitering munition

Swarm Size: 10–50

Range: 2,000 km

Features: GPS-guided, low radar signature, low-cost



RUSSIA

System: Lancet & Shahed

Type: Loitering + fixed-wing

Swarm Size: 5–20

Range: 40–300 km

Features: Used in layered attacks with multiple decoys



USA

System: LOCUST

Type: Micro UAV swarm

Swarm Size: 50–100

Range: 30–60 km

Features: AI coordination, launched from tubes



CHINA

System: Drone Swarm (Airborne)

Type: Micro drones

Swarm Size: 100–200+

Range: 10–30 km

Features: Released from drones (see picture) or trucks, AI-powered

COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST DRONE SWARMS

KINETIC

System/Technology:

Phalanx CIWS, C-RAM

Description: Anti-aircraft guns with radar-guided targeting (used on land/sea).

ELECTRONIC WARFARE

System/Technology:

Jammers, GPS spoofers

Description: Disrupt drone communication and navigation systems. Widely used in Ukraine.

DIRECTED ENERGY

System/Technology:

High-Energy Lasers (HEL), microwave weapons

Description: Rapid-target engagement, low cost-per-shot. Israel's Iron Beam and American THOR in testing/deployment.

DRONE-ON-DRONE

System/Technology:

Interceptor drones

Description: Drones designed to chase and disable other drones. For example, US-made Foretlem DroneHunter.

WHY SWARM DRONES MATTER

Asymmetry: They let low-tech actors hit high-value targets.

Low cost: They are cheap while being expensive to deter.

Saturation: They overwhelm even sophisticated defence systems.

Autonomy: Reduced reliance on GPS or real-time human control.

India's Counter-Drone Infrastructure:

Since 2020, India has ramped up its counter-drone infrastructure, deploying a layered defence that blends indigenous technology, EW, and air defence systems. Key systems include:

- **Akashteer Air Defence Control System** : Developed by Bharat Electronics Ltd, it integrates with the Indian Air Force's integrated command network for real-time tracking.
- **Bhargavastra** : Solar Defence and Aerospace Ltd's weapon system fires 64 micro-rockets in salvos to eliminate drone swarms.
- **DRDO's Anti-Drone System**: It offers 360-degree radar coverage, with both jamming (soft kill) and laser (hard kill) capabilities. Drones can be detected up to 4 km away, and neutralised within a 1 km radius.
- **Indrajaal**: An AI-powered grid from a Hyderabad startup that combines jammers, spoofers, and intelligence to protect areas up to 4,000 sq km. Already deployed at naval sites in Gujarat and Karnataka.

Barak Magen

The Israeli Navy achieved a major defense milestone by successfully intercepting eight Iranian UAVs using the **'Barak Magen'** aerial defense system.

Barak Magen

The Barak Magen system is the naval variant of the **Barak MX family** developed by **Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI)**

ISRAEL UNVEILS 'BARAK MAGEN' IN COMBAT AGAINST IRAN



What is Barak Magen?



- Barak Magen means 'lightning shield' in Hebrew.
- It is one of the most advanced aerial defence systems in the world.
- It is designed to counter a wide spectrum of threats, including drones and cruise missiles

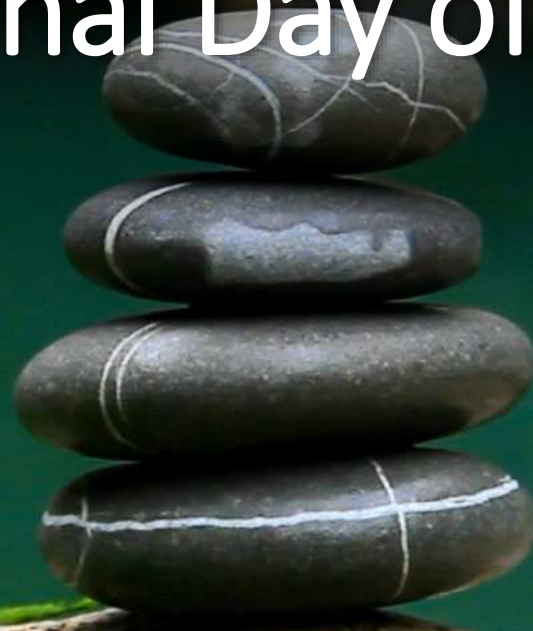


Barak Magen complements Israel's existing systems (**Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow, plus future laser Iron Beam**), adding a powerful naval tier to national defense.



It is engineered to provide full-spectrum protection against a variety of modern airborne threats including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), cruise missiles, shore-to-sea projectiles and even certain classes of ballistic munitions

11th International Day of Yoga



- The 11th International Day of Yoga (IDY) will be observed on June 21, 2025, with the theme “Yoga for One Earth, One Health”; global participation has grown from 9 crore in 2018 to 24.53 crore in 2024.
- **What it is?**
 - An annual **global observance** promoting yoga as a **holistic health practice** for mind-body balance, harmony with nature, and sustainable well-being.
- **Celebrated Since:** Officially recognised by UNGA resolution 69/131 on Dec 11, 2014.
- First celebrated globally on June 21, 2015.
- **Theme (2025):** “Yoga for One Earth, One Health” — emphasising the link between personal well-being and planetary health, aligned with India’s G20 One Earth vision.

Class24 के साथ,
सफलता आपके हाथ....

03 DAYS
DEMO
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FOUNDATION
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Pre. + Mains CGL • CHSL • CPO • MTS

25 June, 2025
@ 08:00 AM

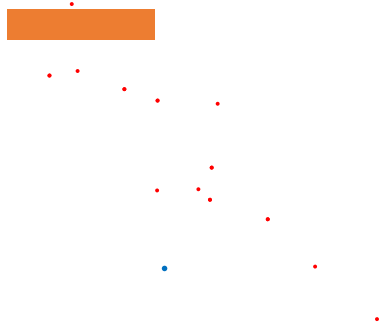


CLASS24
SSC



201, Basant Vihar Colony, Tonk Road, Gopalpura Mode, **Jaipur** (Raj.)

Helpline Number ☎ 9257021070, 9257021071, 72, 73



Thank you
guys.

