

# Daily Current

# Affairs



जनसत्ता



The Indian EXPRESS

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4  
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1  
**PIB, PRS & Other newspaper**



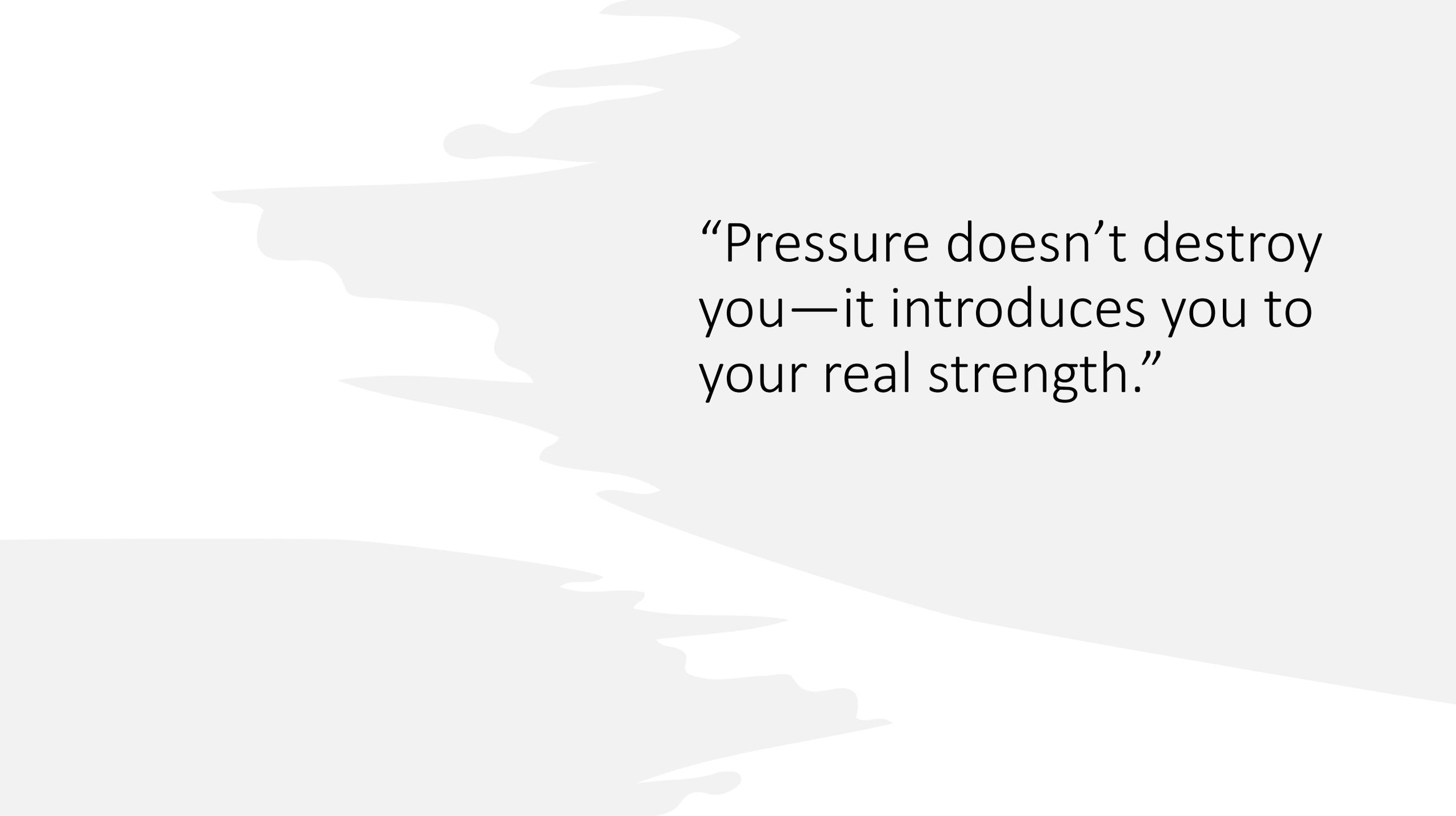
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**The Indian Express**



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**Financial Express**



“Pressure doesn’t destroy you—it introduces you to your real strength.”



**FUTURE OF HOLLYWOOD**  
**Eleven Oscars and a takeover**  
Warner Bros. dominated the Awards, but Paramount's looming acquisition of the studio signals a big change  
MAGAZINE PAGE 2



**Why do electric vehicle batteries catch fire?**  
PAGE 5



**Blockade on Cuba: asphyxiating an island nation**  
PROFILE PAGE 7



**Yashwanth Manay was maiden National Ullas**  
SPORT PAGE 14

**INSIDE**  
**'Ukraine launches over 280 drones at Russia'**  
Ukraine launched over 280 drones at Russia, one of Kyiv's biggest campaigns since the start of the war, Russia's state news agency reported, citing the Defense Ministry. Around 100 drones were shot down in the southern Russian region. In government, Vadim Golovinskiy, posted on Telegram. PAGE 10

**State cannot place 'arbitrary ceiling,' says SC**  
The Supreme Court has said that the state cannot impose "arbitrary" caps on the ability to conduct business with special needs from jobs when they are necessary to perform official responsibilities. PAGE 1

**BJD suspends 6 MLAs for defying party's whip**  
The BJP on Saturday placed six of its MLAs under suspension for going against the party line in the Karnataka election. The PM of BJD decided to suspend the MLAs for their involvement in anti-party activities. PAGE 2

# Trump mulls ending war; U.S. eases curbs on Iran oil

U.S. President sees securing the Strait of Hormuz as the responsibility of other nations, he adds. U.S. is very close to meeting its objectives, however, Tehran claims to have attacked 2 American bases



Big fire raged at a port facility in the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil route, after an attack by Iran on Saturday.

**Washington**  
U.S. President Donald Trump said on Saturday that he is considering "ending" the war in Ukraine, and that the United States is very close to meeting its objectives. He also said that the United States is considering easing its oil embargo on Iran, a move that would allow Tehran to resume exports to the United States and other nations. Trump said that the United States is "very close" to meeting its objectives in Ukraine, and that he is considering "ending" the war. He also said that the United States is considering easing its oil embargo on Iran, a move that would allow Tehran to resume exports to the United States and other nations. Trump said that the United States is "very close" to meeting its objectives in Ukraine, and that he is considering "ending" the war. He also said that the United States is considering easing its oil embargo on Iran, a move that would allow Tehran to resume exports to the United States and other nations.

# PM Modi speaks with Iran's Pezeshkian on freedom of navigation, regional stability

Iran's Prime Minister Mohammad Pezeshkian and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke on Saturday about the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil route, and regional stability.



**Centre increases commercial LPG allocation to 50%**  
The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has permitted to increase the commercial LPG allocation to 50% of the total production. This will help in meeting the demand for LPG in the country, as per the previous and the latest allocation. PAGE 1

**Did govt. take any major diplomatic initiative?**  
The Ministry of External Affairs said that the government has not taken any major diplomatic initiative in the Middle East region. However, the government is closely monitoring the situation and will take appropriate steps to maintain regional stability. PAGE 1

# Don't remove any genuine voter from poll rolls, parliamentary panel tells EC

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Panchayats has asked the Election Commission to ensure that no genuine voter is excluded from the voter lists in upcoming elections. The committee also urged the EC to ensure that no genuine voter is removed from the rolls.

**Parliamentary Standing Committee on Panchayats**  
The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Panchayats has asked the Election Commission to ensure that no genuine voter is excluded from the voter lists in upcoming elections. The committee also urged the EC to ensure that no genuine voter is removed from the rolls. The committee said that the Election Commission should ensure that the voter lists are accurate and that no genuine voter is excluded from the rolls. It also urged the EC to ensure that the voter lists are updated and that the voter lists are accurate.

# Land encroachers out, Nilgiri tahrns in

Once a hub of encroachers, Chokkammudi hills are now a thriving habitat for Nilgiri tahrns and Neelakurinchi. The government has taken steps to remove encroachers and protect the habitat.

**The Nilgiri tahrns**  
The Nilgiri tahrns are a species of wild goat found in the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu. They are a vulnerable species and their population has been declining due to habitat loss and poaching. The government has taken steps to protect the tahrns and their habitat. The Chokkammudi hills are now a thriving habitat for Nilgiri tahrns and Neelakurinchi. The government has taken steps to remove encroachers and protect the habitat.

**IN BRIEF**



**HDFC Bank fires 3 senior staff for gaps in client onboarding**

Days after the resignation of HDFC Bank chairman Aditya Chakrabarty citing ethical concerns, the bank terminated the services of three employees for gaps in client onboarding at its Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) branch. Sources said the staff were fired over alleged mis-selling of Credit Suisse's additional tier-1 bonds. Following this, the Dubai Financial Services Authority barred the bank from onboarding new customers at DIFC branch. ■

**Govt. modifies Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs**

The Finance Ministry on Saturday said the Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGE-MSME) has been modified to support manufacturers and exporters, allowing a 5% upfront contribution in tranches after the fourth year. As per the revised scheme, the service sector has been included in the scheme, and the cost of equipment/technology has been reduced up to 60% of the project cost from the earlier 75%. The Finance Ministry said in a statement. ■

**India logs 1 FT coal output for second consecutive year**

India has achieved 1 billion tonne (BT) coal production for the second consecutive year amid heightened uncertainties in global energy markets due to the West Asia crisis. "With sustained and coordinated efforts across the coal sector and the invaluable contribution of all stakeholders, the country has successfully achieved the landmark of 1 billion tonne (BT) coal production on March 20 of the second year in a row," the Coal Ministry said in a statement. ■

**Grand animal show**



Vying for honours: Huarays alpaca are judged in a show ring at the British Alpaca Society National Show held in Bedford, central England. The British Alpaca Society National Show brings together 10 alpaca from all exhibitors from across the U.K. vying to be awarded the title of 'Supreme Champion' in either the fleece or full fleece categories. ■

**E-motorcycles likely to gain traction**

**The Hindu Bureau**

For several years now, the electric two-wheeler conversion stayed in the form of scooters as battery costs, range anxiety and charging infrastructure made high-performance motorcycles impractical. That, nevertheless, is now shifting. With almost all internal combustion engine (ICE) players including Bajaj Auto, Hero Motors, TVS and even Royal Enfield as well as some start-ups putting their mind, the segment is fast heading for electrification of motorcycles. India's two-wheeler market has long been an

**Drugmakers make a beeline to unveil generic Semaglutide**

Sun, Dr. Reddy's, Zedus, Torrent, Alekm, Glenmark, among generic drugmakers, eyeing a share of market estimated at \$1 billion over 2 years

**N. Ravikumar**

**TYRERABAD**

Sun Pharmaceutical, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Zedus Life Sciences, Torrent Pharma, Alekm Laboratories and Glenmark Pharmaceuticals on Saturday rolled out generic versions of Semaglutide on expiration of the patent on the active ingredient. The Israeli major Novartis's blockbuster diabetes and weight loss drug Wegovy and Ozempic in India.

They joined Natan Pharma and marketing partner Felix Laboratories, which on Friday announced their product would be available on the first day of the patent expiry. Drugmakers in India are eyeing a share of the \$1-billion market estimated to log \$1 billion over next two years.

**Pricing, the key**  
Pricing at a fraction of the parent's product is the key element for these firms as they roll out a generic belonging to the GLP-1 receptor agonists class of medication to treat type 2 diabetes and obesity.

A leadership team from Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, speaking on the launch of Semaglutide injection, Obvada, for Type 2 diabetes, said the product was available in 2 mg/ 4 mg



Weighty drug: Zedus Life Sciences unveiled semaglutide injection under various brands on DCO approval. (Ipx.co, submitted)

strengths with cost to the patient at \$1,200/month. CEO of branded markets (India and emerging markets) M.V. Ramesh said Dr. Reddy's was hopeful of securing drug Controller General of India (DCGI) approval for use for weight management within the next few months.

Announcing the launch of semaglutide injection under Novobest and Semamity brands, Sun Pharmaceutical said the product was priced significantly lower than the innovator brand.

Weekly therapy costs range from about \$300 to \$2,000 for Novobest for chronic weight management and \$750 to \$1,300 for Semamity indicated for treatment of type 2 diabetes.

Zedus Life Sciences unveiled injection under brand names Semaglyn, Madhava and Almore for diabetes and obesity with monthly treatment cost at about \$2,000. Glenmark unveiled Clipq (semaglutide) for diabetes with visits costing at \$250-\$400.

"Recent said it is launching oral and injectable formulations under Semblolic and Semalis brands at a starting price of \$3,000/month and wider economic uncertainty. "Given the current climate, customers and companies may be less willing to trade than before the conflict and could choose to defer trips."

The financial impact of the oil and energy crisis in India and Europe that hit Mr. Wilson said reverting to the monthly revision in the additional flights to North America under Usona brand collaboration with Dr. Reddy's.

**Fuel-cost hike can hit travel: AI CEO**

**Jagjit Chandra**

**NEW DELHI**

Air India CEO Campbell Wilson warned airline staff of a possible travel demand squeeze due to the rising cost of aviation turbine fuel and urged for "tighter than ever" cost in all non-essential spending.

He also cautioned, despite no rise in ticket prices, the airline may have to trim capacity. In his first remarks on the impact of the West Asia conflict on international travel on March 20 reviewed by *The Hindu*, Mr. Wilson noted Indian carriers had introduced fuel surcharges, starting at about \$400 for domestic travel and higher for international routes, offset against fuel costs. However, fare increases had a limit, he warned.

**Limit on pricing**  
"Not every customer is willing to pay higher airfares, so there is a limit to how high we can price because of demand elasticity," he wrote in the memo.

He also flagged the risk of soaring prices as a result of the conflict and could choose to defer trips. The financial impact of the oil and energy crisis in India and Europe that hit Mr. Wilson said reverting to the monthly revision in the additional flights to North America under Usona brand collaboration with Dr. Reddy's.



Campbell Wilson

to high fuel prices. Depending on how fuel costs, airfare and customer demand moves, we may also have to adjust," he said. United Airlines' Scott Kirby said the airline would be cutting some unprofitable flights over the next two quarters as it was preparing for oil prices to rise as high as \$175 a barrel and may above \$100 until the end of 2022. Scandinavian Airlines is also cutting 1000 flights in April.

Since the conflict began, AI cancelled about 2,500 flights to the region, the CEO wrote. It is operating only about 30% of flights to West Asia due to closure of airspace and safety issues. Long and ultra-long haul flights to Europe and North America are now re-routed along more longer paths. "Consuming more fuel and adding more weight to aircrafts will increase the conflict and could choose to defer trips."

The financial impact of the oil and energy crisis in India and Europe that hit Mr. Wilson said reverting to the monthly revision in the additional flights to North America under Usona brand collaboration with Dr. Reddy's.

**India's options boom, tale of caution**

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

**Ashokanandhan I.**

**MUMBAI**

Last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman raised the taxes on futures and options trading and the markets responded with a 2% drop. The move was intended to avert excessive speculation in the market.

An option is a contract that lets a trader bet on the price at which he/she can buy or sell a stock or index at a future date. The product helps protect investors and traders from market swings and can incur their losses, an activity called hedging.

It is, however, widely used by retail traders to speculate on stocks via the stock for immediate gains and stock hedging in large scale can distort the market. SEBI acknowledged the challenge in a study which found 500 persons trading in options lost money and came out with measures to curb excessive speculation in the market. It is, however, widely used by retail traders to speculate on stocks via the stock for immediate gains and stock hedging in large scale can distort the market.

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**'BP, diabetes cases surging among staff aged 20-35'**

**The Hindu Bureau**

**MUMBAI**

India's leading employee benefits platform, Payscale launched the Employee Health Status 2026 Handbook which highlights how metabolic health risks such as hypertension, pre-diabetes, and high cholesterol are appearing much earlier in employees' careers than previously expected.

As per the study 1 in 4 men aged 31 to 35 have abnormal HDL-C levels, signalling early risk of pre-diabetes. Employees aged 30 to 38 account for 65% of all cholesterol abnormalities.

Almost 85% of male employees under 35 show abnormal blood pressure and more than 60% deliveries happen via C-Section driving up cost.

Drawing on 77,000 insurance claims across 1,00,000 covered lives over five years, along with 12,000 preventive health screenings, the handbook shows how present-day work environments are shifting employee health trends and influencing corporate healthcare costs.

The handbook also identifies gaps in early diagnosis and preventive care. Approximately 1% of hospital admissions occur without a clear diagnosis at admission, often due to delayed care for symptoms such as fever, fatigue, or infections. Infections account for 9% of hospitalizations, with dengue, chikungunya and tetanus infections contributing to over 60% of infection-related claims.

**India's options boom, tale of caution**

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Share games: A man walks past a screen displaying the news and stock market updates at the BSE in Mumbai. REUTERS

traders, too, through suitability norms like a suit. Recently, while speaking at an event in Mumbai, the chief executive officer of National Stock Exchange (NSE) Ashish Chhabra said developing countries such as India can't let lower income class speculate and suggested minimum qualifying criteria to even participate in the derivatives market, echoing Mr. Damani's sentiments in 2006.

Prof. Varma is, however, unsure if such frameworks can help a listing market in the options market could happen even with those with the knowledge. "People ultimately learn and investment as a long-term goal is increasing in popularity. He further said gambling behaviour had always existed and it was the product that kept changing, he said.

Concentration of younger rather than older people in the instruments is a worrying grace as the former is restless, he continued. Other markets across the world have had such speculative incomes in the capital markets and they were dealt with through a combination of frameworks, conditions as well as strict surveillance.

It is impossible to curtail such behavioural risk and therefore, regulation has shifted from changing behaviour to containing its consequences, said Jeyashankar. "It is impossible to curtail such behavioural risk and therefore, regulation has shifted from changing behaviour to containing its consequences, said Jeyashankar.

Markets have evolved, and so have the investors, but Mr. Damani's fears of widespread speculation during the period of liberalisation remains a challenge to regulators.

# Govt. modifies Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs

The Finance Ministry on Saturday said the Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGS-MSME) has been modified to support manufacturers and exporters, allowing a 5% upfront contribution in tranches after the fourth year. As per the revised scheme, the services sector has been included in the scheme, and the cost of equipment/machinery has been reduced up to 60% of the project cost from the earlier 75%, the Finance Ministry said in a statement. PTI

## 1. Government modifies Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs

- The **Finance Ministry** has modified the **Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGS-MSME)**.
- The aim is to **support manufacturers and exporters**.
- It is a **credit guarantee mechanism**, reducing risk for lenders and improving credit flow to MSMEs.

## 2. Key modification – upfront contribution flexibility

- MSMEs earlier had stricter upfront contribution requirements.
- Now:
  - **5% upfront contribution allowed**
  - Payment can be made **in tranches after the 4th year**
- This improves **cash flow and working capital flexibility** for MSMEs.

## 3. Inclusion of service sector

- Earlier the scheme was focused mainly on manufacturing.
- Now:
  - **Service sector has been included**
- This widens coverage to:
  - IT services
  - logistics
  - tourism
  - professional services

#### 4. Reduction in machinery cost limit

- Earlier:
  - Equipment/machinery cost allowed up to **75% of project cost**
- Now:
  - Reduced to **60% of project cost**
- This encourages:
  - Better capital structure
  - More equity participation
  - Lower debt burden

#### 5. Economic objective of the reform

- Improve **credit accessibility** for MSMEs
- Boost:
  - manufacturing growth
  - exports
  - employment generation
- Strengthen MSMEs as backbone of Indian economy

## **1. MSME importance in India**

- **Contributes around:**
  - **30% to GDP**
  - **45% to exports**
- **Provides employment to 11+ crore people**

## **2. What is Credit Guarantee Scheme**

- **Government provides guarantee to banks/NBFCs.**
- **If MSME defaults:**
  - **Government shares risk**
- **This encourages:**
  - **banks to lend without collateral**

## **3. Related schemes**

- **CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises)**
- **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)**
- **PMEGP (Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme)**

Consider the following statements:

1. The Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs is aimed at improving credit flow to MSMEs.
2. The revised scheme excludes the service sector.
3. The upfront contribution of 5% can now be paid in tranches after the fourth year.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

# India logs 1 BT coal output for second consecutive year

India has achieved 1 billion tonne (BT) coal production for the second consecutive year amid heightened uncertainties in global energy markets due to the West Asia crisis. “With sustained and coordinated efforts across the coal sector and the invaluable contribution of all stakeholders, the country has successfully achieved the landmark of 1 billion tonne (BT) coal production on March 20 or the second year in a row,” the Coal Ministry said in a statement. PTI

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## 1. India achieves 1 Billion Tonne (BT) coal production for second consecutive year

- India has crossed **1 billion tonne (BT) coal production** for the **second consecutive year**.
- The milestone was achieved on **March 20**.
- It reflects **consistent growth in domestic coal output**.

## 2. Context: Global energy uncertainty

- The achievement comes amid **global energy market uncertainties** due to **West Asia crisis**.
- Disruptions in oil & gas supply chains have increased the importance of **domestic energy security**.

## 3. Role of coal in India's energy mix

- Coal remains the **backbone of India's energy sector**.
- It contributes to:
  - ~70% of electricity generation
- Key users:
  - Thermal power plants
  - Steel industry
  - Cement industry

## 4. Government efforts behind the achievement

- Coordinated efforts by:
  - Ministry of Coal
  - Public sector companies (e.g., Coal India Ltd)
  - Private sector participation
- Policy measures:
  - Commercial coal mining reforms (2020 onwards)
  - Faster environmental clearances
  - Infrastructure improvement (rail connectivity, evacuation)

## 5. Economic significance

- Reduces **import dependence on coal**
- Saves **foreign exchange**
- Supports:
  - industrial growth
  - power sector stability
  - employment generation



## 6. Strategic importance

- Enhances **energy security**
- Helps India manage:
  - global supply shocks
  - geopolitical risks
- Important for a developing economy with rising energy demand

## 7. Environmental concern

- Coal is a **major source of carbon emissions**
- India faces a **policy dilemma**:
  - Energy security vs Climate commitments
- India's commitments:
  - Net Zero by 2070
  - Expansion of renewable energy

## **1. India in global coal scenario**

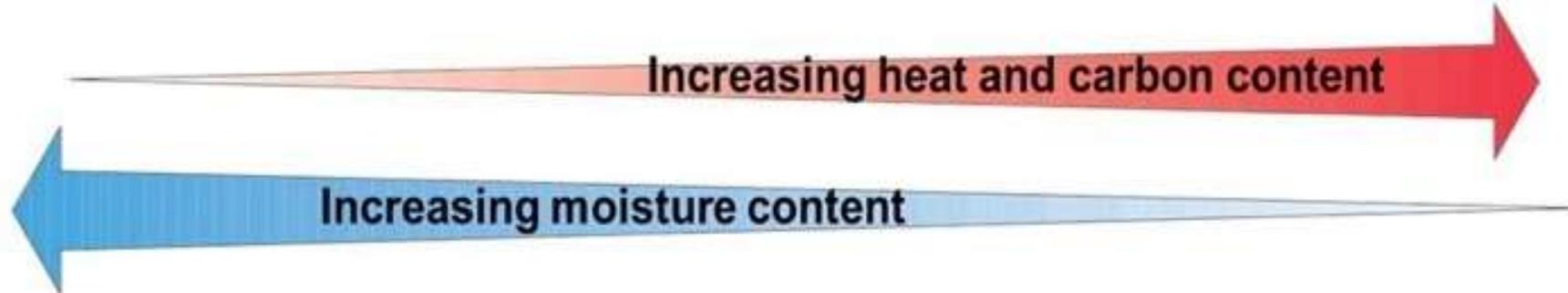
- India is the **2nd largest coal producer** after China
- Also among the **largest consumers of coal**

## **2. Major coal producing states**

- Jharkhand (largest reserves)
- Odisha
- Chhattisgarh
- West Bengal
- Madhya Pradesh

## **3. Types of coal in India**

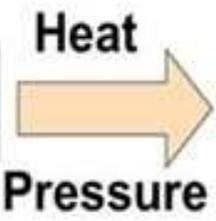
- Anthracite (J&K)
- Bituminous (major share – Jharkhand, Odisha)
- Lignite (Tamil Nadu – Neyveli)



**Peat**  
(not a coal)



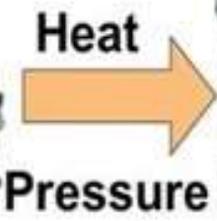
Partially decayed plant matter in swamps and bogs; low heat content



**Lignite**  
(brown coal)



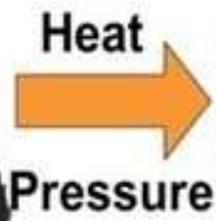
Low heat content; low sulfur content; limited supplies in most areas



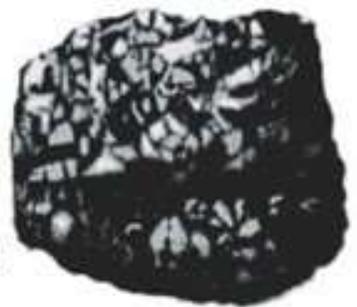
**Bituminous**  
(soft coal)



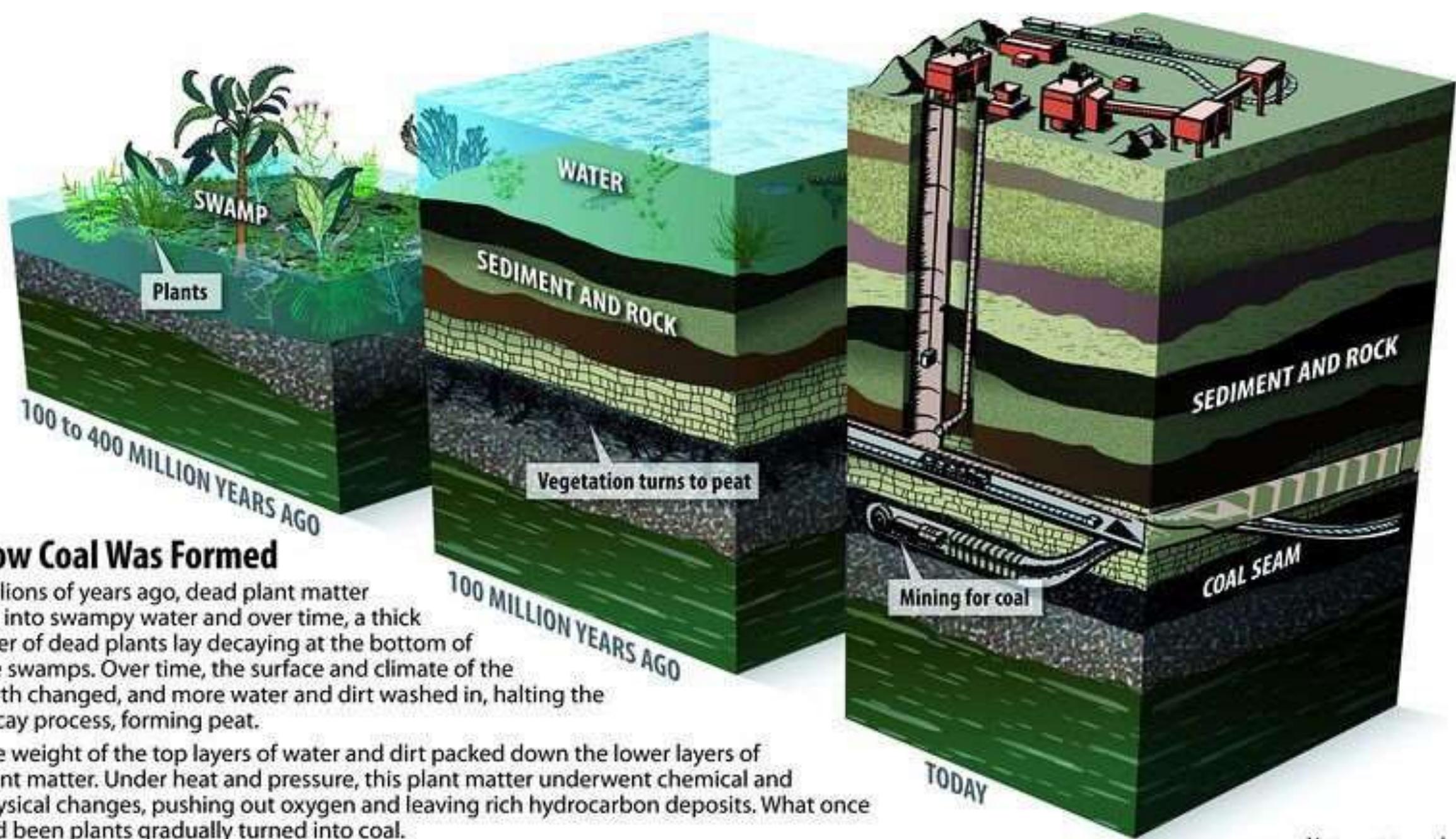
Extensively used as a fuel because of its high heat content and large supplies; normally has a high sulfur content



**Anthracite**  
(hard coal)



Highly desirable fuel because of its high heat content and low sulfur content; supplies are limited in most areas



## How Coal Was Formed

Millions of years ago, dead plant matter fell into swampy water and over time, a thick layer of dead plants lay decaying at the bottom of the swamps. Over time, the surface and climate of the Earth changed, and more water and dirt washed in, halting the decay process, forming peat.

The weight of the top layers of water and dirt packed down the lower layers of plant matter. Under heat and pressure, this plant matter underwent chemical and physical changes, pushing out oxygen and leaving rich hydrocarbon deposits. What once had been plants gradually turned into coal.

Coal can be found deep underground (as shown in this graphic), or it can be found near the surface.

Note: not to scale

Consider the following statements:

1. India has achieved 1 billion tonne coal production for two consecutive years.
2. Coal contributes to less than 30% of India's electricity generation.
3. India is the largest coal producer in the world.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3



# Will completely close Strait of Hormuz : Iran

Trump threatened to 'obliterate' Iran's power plants if it did not reopen the Strait in 48 hours

Tehran says critical infrastructure in West Asia could be 'irreversibly destroyed' if it is attacked

Iran said it would strike power plants in Israel, nations hosting U.S. and firms with U.S. interests

Reuters  
Agence France-Presse  
WASHINGTON/TEHRAN

The Iranian military on Sunday threatened to completely shut down the strategic Strait of Hormuz and attack U.S. infrastructure, including energy facilities in the Gulf, if U.S. President Donald Trump acts on threats to target the country's power plants.

Mr. Trump on Saturday threatened to "obliterate" Iran's power plants if Tehran did not fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz in 48 hours, suggesting a significant escalation barely a day after he talked about "winding down" the war, now in its fourth week.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the U.S. may need to "escalate" its attacks against Iran to be able to wind down the war. Asked if Mr. Trump was winding down or escalat-



**Assessing damage:** People inspecting the site of an Iranian missile strike in Dimona, Israel on Sunday. AFP

ing the war, he said: "They're not mutually exclusive. Sometimes you have to escalate to de-escalate."

The strait has been effectively closed since the start of the war, sparked by U.S.-Israeli bombardment of Iran. The conflict has since spread across West Asia, with Iran responding with attacks on Israel and

U.S. interests in the region.

"If the U.S.'s threats regarding Iran's power plants are carried out... the strait will be completely closed, and it will not be reopened until our destroyed power plants are rebuilt," military's operational command Khatam Al-Anbiya said.

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Gha-

## Modi chairs meeting to review impact of conflict

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

As tensions continue to mount in West Asia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to review the

situation and suggest mitigating measures.

A government statement said that the conflict's impact over the short, long and medium term were assessed.

FULL REPORT ON  
» PAGE 4

libaf wrote on X that critical infrastructure in West Asia could be "irreversibly destroyed" should Iranian power plants be attacked.

The military command said it would also strike Israel's "power plants, energy, and information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure", along with power plants in regional countries hosting

U.S. bases and companies with U.S. shareholders.

The Islamic Republic's power grid is deeply intertwined with its energy sector. Striking major plants could trigger blackouts, crippling everything from pumps and refineries to export terminals and military command centres.

While some Gulf desert states such as Saudi Ara-

bia, Oman and the UAE have access to more than one sea to draw water from for desalination, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait are crowded along the shoreline of the Gulf with no other coastline.

Earlier in the day, Iranian media reports quoted Iran's representative to the U.N. maritime agency as saying that the Strait of Hormuz remains open to all shipping except vessels linked to "Iran's enemies".

Ali Mousavi's comments came from an interview published on Friday by the Chinese news agency *Xinhua*, much before Mr. Trump's ultimatum. Meanwhile, Iran's Parliament is mulling imposing tolls on shipping through the strait, with Speaker Ghaleb saying maritime traffic would "not return to its pre-war status".

Traffic through the vital strait has been brought to a near-standstill since the

start of the war, that has so far killed over 2,000 people. A relatively small number of vessels have been able to transit it – around 5% of its pre-war volume, according to analytics firm Kpler. Iranian forces have attacked multiple vessels, saying they failed to heed "warnings" against transiting the waterway.

In recent days, Iran has allowed some vessels, while warning it would block ships from countries it says have joined the "aggression" against it.

Meanwhile, the exiled son of Iran's last shah Reza Pahlavi called on Mr. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to refrain from targeting Iran's civilian infrastructure, because it "belongs to the Iranian people and to the future of a free Iran."

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## 1. Iran threatens to close the Strait of Hormuz completely

- Iran has warned it may **completely shut down the Strait of Hormuz**.
- This is in response to escalating tensions with the United States and Israel.
- It also threatened to **attack U.S. infrastructure in West Asia**, including energy facilities.

## 2. U.S. warning and escalation risk

- Former U.S. President **Donald Trump** warned of **“obliterating” Iran’s power plants**.
- He gave a **48-hour ultimatum** to reopen the Strait.
- This indicates a **sharp escalation in conflict dynamics**.

## 3. Strategic importance of Strait of Hormuz

- It is one of the **world’s most critical oil chokepoints**.
- Around:
  - **20% of global oil trade** passes through it
- Connects:
  - Persian Gulf → Arabian Sea → Global markets
- Key countries dependent:
  - Saudi Arabia
  - UAE
  - Kuwait
  - Iraq
  - Qatar

#### 4. Impact on global energy markets

- Any closure can:
  - disrupt oil supply
  - increase crude oil prices
  - trigger global inflation
- Even partial disruption has already reduced shipping traffic significantly.

#### 5. Military and geopolitical escalation

- Iran has:
  - attacked vessels
  - warned ships against transit
- It may also target:
  - Israel's power plants
  - U.S. bases
  - infrastructure in Gulf countries
- This can lead to **regional war-like situation**.

#### 6. India's response

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** chaired a **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)** meeting.
- The aim was to:
  - assess short-term, medium-term, long-term impact
  - plan mitigation strategies

## 'Positive' talks with Kuki-Zo Council, says Manipur CM

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

Manipur Chief Minister Numbam Kheanchand Singh on Sunday said that his meeting with leaders of the Kuki-Zo Council in Guwahati on Saturday was a step toward restoring trust between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities.

He told journalists in Imphal that the two communities need to be "forgive and forget" to help restore normalcy in the state.

"The engagement with the Kuki-Zo Council was a positive beginning towards bridging the trust deficit and bringing lasting peace to Manipur", he said, mentioning that displaced people were still unable to return to their native villages.

Mr. Singh noted that fear continues to affect the movement of people, particularly along National Highway 2, linking Imphal and Kohima, the capital of Nagaland. "How long can the central forces keep guarding people? We cannot move forward until we forget and forgive what has happened", he said.

He said the Centre had assured that Manipur's territorial integrity will not be compromised.

## Modi assesses impact of West Asia conflict on India

Cabinet Committee on Security discusses diversifying sources of imports, including fertilizers, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and petrochemicals; PM directs 'whole-of-government approach'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

A tensions continue to escalate in West Asia, increasing energy and commodity supply routes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to review the situation and suggest mitigating measures.

A government statement said the meeting assessed the ongoing conflict's short-, long-, and medium-term impacts.

Furthermore, the committee also discussed essential measures, both immediate and long-term, to West Asia will have significant impact on India was assessed, and counter-measures, both immediate and long-term, were discussed," the statement said.

Mr. Modi directed that a Group of Ministers (GoM) and a group of secretaries be formed to work exclusively on a "whole-of-government approach" to the crisis.

The Prime Minister urged sectoral groups to work in coordination with all stakeholders.

Alternate sources The CCS discussed diversifying sources of major imports, including fertilizers, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and petrochemicals. Fertilizers assume signifi-



Facing stacks: Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security in New Delhi on Sunday. (PHOTO: PTI)

cance ahead of the coming kharif season, and in view of the disruptions in natural gas imports after Tehran's missile attacks devastated several oil sectors in Qatar, which is among the biggest importers of LNG globally.

The measures taken in the last few weeks to maintain adequate stocks of fertilizers will ensure timely availability and food security. Alternate sources of

fertilizers were also discussed to ensure continued availability in the future," the statement read.

The Cabinet committee also discussed the "adequate" supply of oil stocks at all power plants.

The carbon commodity becomes essential with power demand expected to peak in summers and the potential constraints of natural gas supplies due to the ongoing conflict.

## Auction of 19 blocks of critical minerals set to begin today

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The government will launch the seventh tranche of critical and strategic minerals on Monday, placing 19 blocks on sale over several days.

The development assumes significance as the government aims to bolster India's self-reliance in clean energy, advanced technologies, fertilizers, and strategic sectors amid global supply chain disruptions.

So far, the government has conducted six rounds of auctions, with 46 critical and strategic mineral blocks already sold.

According to this announcement, the seventh tranche will offer 19 blocks across several States under mining lease and compensation contracts.

The Ministry of Mines said it is a statement.

The global transition to clean energy and strategic minerals are important for the country's economic growth.

The Ministry said that it would organize the National District Mineral Foundation Summit 2020 on Monday and Tuesday here.



Critical minerals are crucial for India's economic development and mineral security.

rate earth elements, tungsten, vanadium, strontium, and other rare metals.

"Their limited availability and geographical concentration pose challenges to the supply chains worldwide."

"Union Minister of Coal and Mines C. K. Jagan Reddy, along with the Minister of State for Coal and Mines Satish Chandra Dubey, will launch the 7th tranche of critical and strategic mineral blocks on March 23," the Ministry said.

In a separate statement, the Ministry said that it would organize the National District Mineral Foundation Summit 2020 on Monday and Tuesday here.

## States, U.Ts told to furnish updated details on prisons, including overcrowding

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed all the States and Union Territories to furnish updated details relating to jails, including the sanctioned capacity of each prison and steps taken to check overcrowding, by May 18.

A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mishra asked the States and Union Territories to provide details about the number of women prisoners within their jurisdictions and the facilities available to them, including the measures taken to ensure education and overall welfare of children living with the female inmates.

The Bench noted that senior advocate Gaurav Agrawal, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in a suo motu matter concerning inhuman conditions in jails, has drawn its attention to the fact that the statistics placed on re-

cord by the States and Union Territories pertain to 2019.

The Bench said that, having regard to the nature of issues involved and the necessity of an informed judiciary exercising the availability of updated contemporary data was imperative for the effective consideration of the proceedings.

"Accordingly, we deem it appropriate to direct all the States and Union Territories to place on record updated and comprehensive statistics relating to all persons situated within their respective jurisdictions," the Bench said in its order passed on Tuesday.

It said the data shall include jail-wise capacity of each prison, total number of prisoners, percentage of overcrowding in each jail, steps proposed to address overcrowding, details of women's jails, facilities provided to women prisoners and children accompanying them. Debat-

ing, educational, sanctioned strength of prison staff, existing vacancies, steps taken to fill them, along with all ancillary aspects relating to prison administration.

The Bench directed the States and Union Territories to furnish complete particulars indicating the sanctioned capacity of each prison and the total number of prisoners lodged as on March 1, 2020, along with jail-wise details reflecting the extent of occupancy.

It said the States and Union Territories would the comprehensive affidavits, duly sworn by the home secretary, providing the complete details by May 18. It said the top court registry would forward copies of the affidavits received from the States and Union Territories to the amicus, who would prepare a comprehensive note detailing the statistics and information provided by them.

## Justice Bhuyan flags reticence shown by courts to grant bail

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, on Sunday said there was reticence shown by the judiciary who continue to suffer from the "more loyal than the king syndrome", while pointing to the reluctance shown by courts to grant bail, leading to prolonged incarceration for undertrials.

"The judiciary must remain judiciary. Judiciary can neither be an eternal critic nor a cheerleader. It is the sentinel on the quiet side (alter), Justice Bhuyan said at the First Supreme Court Bar Association National Conference 2020 on Sunday in Bengaluru.

He said the data shall include jail-wise capacity of each prison, total number of prisoners, percentage of overcrowding in each jail, steps proposed to address overcrowding, details of women's jails, facilities provided to women prisoners and children accompanying them. Debat-

come up to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has to constitute Special Investigation Teams to probe the same issues. Justice Bhuyan pointed out.

He said the judiciary was older party responsible for prolonged incarcerations without bail.

"I am not sure, many within the judiciary continue to suffer from the 'more loyal than the king' syndrome. As a result, people continue to be in jail for months and sometimes together," the apex court judge said.

The judge spoke of the "overuse" of draconian laws, including the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

"For criminal matters, such as public demonstrations, agitations, even by students, sometimes even for putting up memes and social media posts, Files (First Information Report) are registered, and investigations go on. Matters should not be criminalised...," he said.

## Need to take innovations from every corner of India to global stage: Minister

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday said the government will launch the seventh tranche of critical and strategic minerals on Monday, placing 19 blocks on sale over several days.

The development assumes significance as the government aims to bolster India's self-reliance in clean energy, advanced technologies, fertilizers, and strategic sectors amid global supply chain disruptions.

So far, the government has conducted six rounds of auctions, with 46 critical and strategic mineral blocks already sold.

According to this announcement, the seventh tranche will offer 19 blocks across several States under mining lease and compensation contracts. The Ministry of Mines said it is a statement.

The global transition to clean energy and strategic minerals are important for the country's economic growth. The Ministry said that it would organize the National District Mineral Foundation Summit 2020 on Monday and Tuesday here.



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inspects the exhibition of start-ups and innovators at the Bharat Innovates Fair. (PHOTO: ANI)

gy, climate & sustainability, semiconductors, space & defence, health care, medicine, advanced computing, biotechnology, industry & smart cities and Industry 4.0. The Minister also took a tour of the exhibition displaying "cutting-edge, research-driven solutions" at several stalls and at the IT pavilion.

During the roundtable, he said the "brainstorming session" was to be "centred on advancing deep-tech innovation, strengthening industry-academic partnerships,"

and reinforcing the startup ecosystem". He underscored the need for sustained investment in emerging ventures to enable scale, encourage innovation, and support research-led entrepreneurship," an Education Ministry statement said. On the pre-summit event, Mr. Pradhan said it was "showcasing cutting-edge technologies while fostering meaningful collaboration, unlocking investment opportunities and building enduring global partnerships."

## Tyagi joins Rashtriya Lok Dal in New Delhi after leaving JD(U)

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Former Janata Dal (United) leader K.C. Tyagi on Sunday formally joined the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) in the residence of party chief Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary in New Delhi.

Mr. Tyagi, a long-time member of the JD(U), did not participate in the party's membership renewal drive, signalling his exit from the JD(U) on March 17.

He had clarified at that time that he held no animosity regarding the JD(U) or Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who had once decided the Raza Sabha, making it clear that he



K.C. Tyagi with RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary in Delhi.

would not be remaining CM in the State in future.

Mr. Tyagi also addressed a media conference regarding his parliamentary ambitions, which he said he would like to do as a member of the Raza Sabha. "There is not a single iota of me trying for a Raza Sabha ticket in 2024," which Kumar called me and offered me a ticket," he said.

## India watches closely as Gor visits Sri Lanka, Maldives

NEWS ANALYSIS

Subhasini Halder  
NEW DELHI

United States Ambassador to India Sergio Gor's visit to Sri Lanka - his first visit in the region in his role as U.S. Special Envoy for South Asia - is a "quiet strategic signal," said analysts, as it comes amid the war in West Asia, and U.S. action in the Indian Ocean.

While the Narendra Modi government has made no comment about the visit, Mr. Gor met National Security Secretary Adil Zahir before embarking on the six-day (March 19-24) regional tour to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and the government is understood to be watching its out-

come up to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has to constitute Special Investigation Teams to probe the same issues. Justice Bhuyan pointed out.

He said the judiciary was older party responsible for prolonged incarcerations without bail.

"I am not sure, many within the judiciary continue to suffer from the 'more loyal than the king' syndrome. As a result, people continue to be in jail for months and sometimes together," the apex court judge said.

The judge spoke of the "overuse" of draconian laws, including the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

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# Auction of 19 blocks of critical minerals set to begin today

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

The government will launch the seventh tranche of auctions for critical and strategic minerals on Monday, placing 19 blocks on sale across several States.

The development assumes significance as the government aims to bolster India's self-reliance in clean energy, advanced technologies, fertilizers, and strategic sectors amid global supply chain disruptions.

So far, the government has conducted six rounds of auctions, with 46 critical and strategic mineral blocks already sold.

"Building on this momentum, the seventh tranche will offer 19 blocks across several States under mining lease and composite licence," the Union Ministry of Mines said in a statement.

Critical minerals are important for the country's economic development and mineral security.

The global transition towards clean energy and advanced technologies has significantly increased the demand for minerals, including lithium, graphite,



Critical minerals are crucial for India's economic development and mineral security.

rare earth elements, tungsten, vanadium, titanium, and other rare metals.

Their limited availability and geographical concentration pose challenges to resilient supply chains worldwide.

"Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy, along with the Minister of State for Coal and Mines Satish Chandra Dubey, will launch the 7th tranche of auction of critical and strategic mineral blocks on March 23," the Ministry said.

In a separate statement, the Ministry said that it would organise the National District Mineral Foundation Summit 2026 on Monday and Tuesday here.

## 1. Government to begin auction of 19 critical mineral blocks today

- The Government of India is starting the **7th tranche of auction of 19 critical and strategic mineral blocks**.
- These blocks are spread across several states.
- They are being offered under **mining lease** and **composite licence** categories.

## 2. This is part of India's long-term mineral security strategy

- The move is important because India wants to reduce dependence on foreign countries for critical minerals.
- These minerals are essential for:
  - clean energy technologies
  - electric vehicles
  - batteries
  - semiconductors
  - defence production
  - fertilizers
  - advanced manufacturing

### 3. India has already completed six rounds earlier

- Before this 7th tranche, the government had already completed **six rounds of auctions**.
- In those earlier rounds, **46 critical and strategic mineral blocks** had already been sold.
- This shows a gradual policy push towards domestic resource security.

### 4. Why critical minerals matter

- Critical minerals are minerals that are:
  - economically very important
  - vulnerable to supply disruption
- Examples include:
  - lithium
  - graphite
  - rare earth elements
  - tungsten
  - vanadium
  - titanium
- These minerals are necessary for modern industry and strategic sectors.

## **5. Global demand for these minerals is rising rapidly**

- The global transition towards green energy and advanced technologies has sharply increased demand.
- Solar panels, wind turbines, EV batteries, electronics and defence equipment all require such minerals.
- Because of this, critical minerals are now at the centre of global economic competition.

## **6. Supply of these minerals is geographically concentrated**

- Many critical minerals are available only in a few countries or regions.
- This creates risks for global supply chains.
- Any geopolitical tension, export restriction or conflict can affect availability and prices worldwide.

## **7. Political and strategic significance**

- Critical minerals are no longer just an economic issue; they are also a strategic and geopolitical issue.
- Countries are trying to secure supply chains for future industries.
- For India, this is linked with:
  - Atmanirbhar Bharat
  - energy security
  - industrial growth
  - defence preparedness
  - strategic autonomy

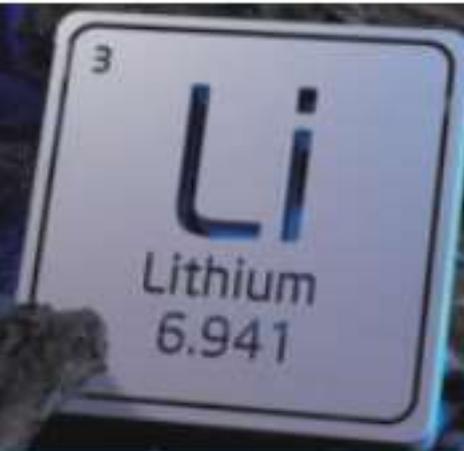
## 8. Economic importance for India

- Domestic mining can reduce import dependence.
- It can improve India's manufacturing competitiveness.
- It can help create:
  - jobs
  - infrastructure
  - regional industrial development
  - downstream industries such as refining and processing
- In the long term, it can support India's clean energy transition and reduce external vulnerability.

## 9. Historical background

- Traditionally, India's mining focus was on bulk minerals like coal, iron ore, bauxite and limestone.
- In recent years, focus has shifted towards **technology minerals** because the world economy is moving towards:
  - decarbonisation
  - digitisation
  - advanced manufacturing
- This marks a major shift in mining policy.

# HEAVY METAL



## Critical minerals for which India is 100% import-dependent

Mineral	Major application
<b>Lithium</b>	Rechargeable batteries, ceramics
<b>Cobalt</b>	Rechargeable batteries and superalloy
<b>Nickel</b>	Stainless steel, superalloys, rechargeable batteries
<b>Vanadium</b>	Alloying agent for iron and steel, batteries
<b>Niobium</b>	Steel and superalloys, construction, transportation
<b>Germanium</b>	Fiber optics and night vision applications
<b>Rhenium</b>	Superalloys, aerospace and machinery use
<b>Beryllium</b>	Alloying agent in aerospace and defense industries
<b>Tantalum</b>	Electronic components, mostly capacitors and in superalloys
<b>Strontium</b>	Aluminium pigments and fillers, glass, magnets

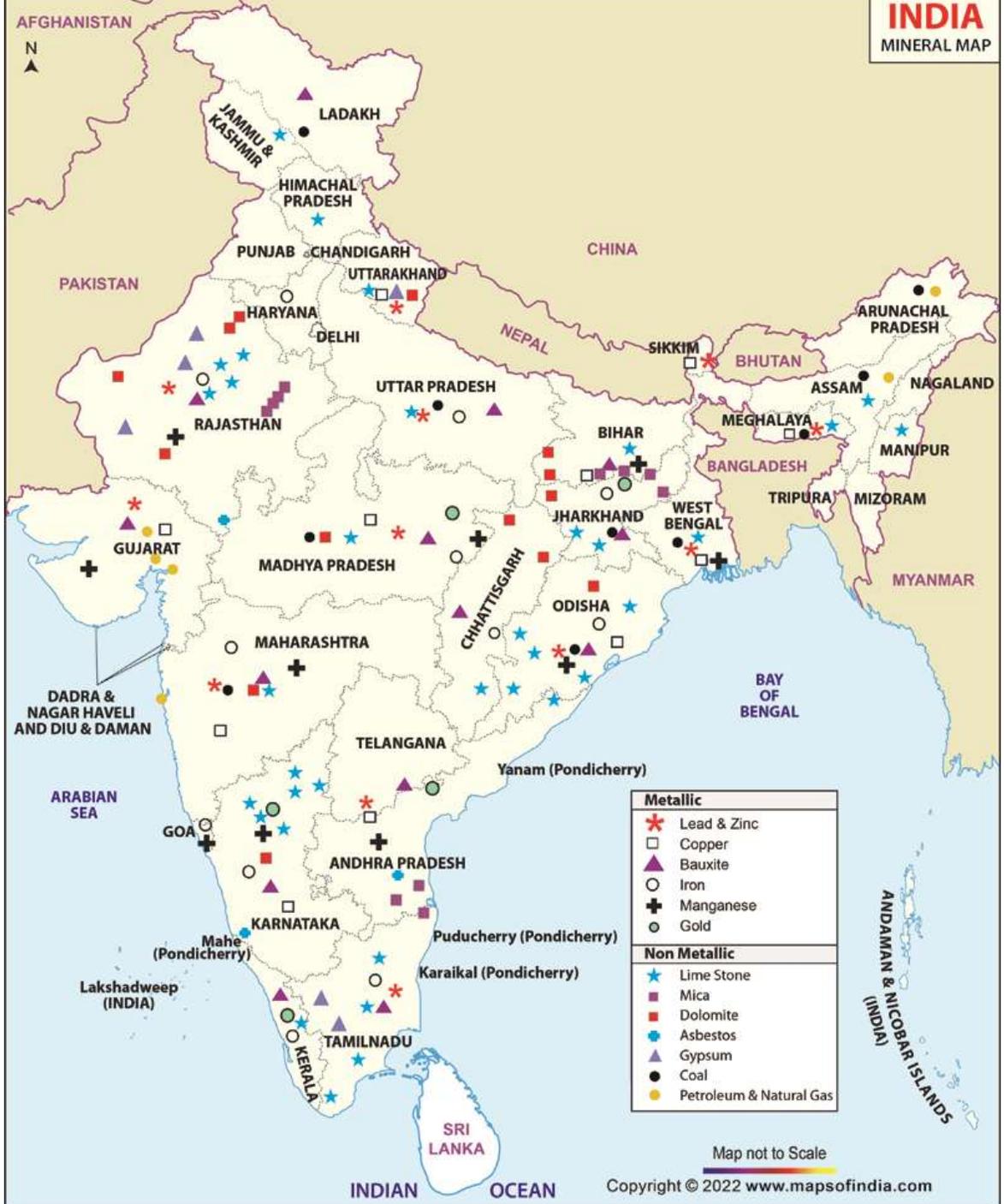
Source: A report on *Unlocking Australia-India Critical Minerals Partnership Potential* by Australian Trade and Investment Commission, July 2021/ *Critical Minerals of India* report

# DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAJOR AND MINOR MINERALS:

CRITERIA	MAJOR MINERALS	MINOR MINERALS
• Definition	• Minerals with high economic, strategic, and industrial significance.	• Minerals with lower economic value and localized use.
• Regulatory Authority	• Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), Ministry of Mines.	• State Governments. 
• Examples	• Iron ore, coal, bauxite, gold, barytes, feldspar, mica, quartz.	• Sand, gravel, marble, limestone, clay, granite.
• Governing Law	• Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act, 1957).	• MMDR Act, 1957, but regulated by State Governments.
• Lease Period	• Up to 50 years under Section 8A of the MMDR Act, 1957.	• Typically shorter lease durations, decided by State Governments.
• Revenue Collection	• Earnings go to State Governments but regulated by the Central Government.	• Revenue goes directly to State Governments.
• Strategic Importance	• Critical for energy, defense, aerospace, and industrial sectors	• Mainly used for construction and local industries.

# INDIA

MINERAL MAP



Map not to Scale

**Table: Critical Minerals & Major Source States in India**

S. No.	Critical Mineral	Major Source States in India
1	Lithium	Jammu & Kashmir (Reasi), Karnataka
2	Cobalt	Jharkhand, Odisha
3	Nickel	Odisha (Sukinda Valley)
4	Graphite	Jharkhand, Odisha, Tamil Nadu
5	Copper	Rajasthan (Khetri), Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh
6	Rare Earth Elements (REE)	Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh (coastal sands)
7	Vanadium	Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh
8	Titanium (Ilmenite/Rutile)	Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha
9	Tungsten	Rajasthan (Degana), Andhra Pradesh
10	Molybdenum	Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan

11	Niobium	Jharkhand
12	Tantalum	Bihar, Jharkhand
13	Zirconium	Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha
14	Hafnium	Associated with zircon (Kerala, TN)
15	Gallium	By-product of bauxite (Odisha, Chhattisgarh)
16	Germanium	By-product (coal deposits – Jharkhand)
17	Silicon (High purity)	Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh
18	Beryllium	Jharkhand, Rajasthan
19	Cadmium	By-product of zinc (Rajasthan)
20	Selenium	By-product (copper refining – Jharkhand)
21	Tellurium	By-product (copper ores)
22	Indium	Zinc ores (Rajasthan)

23	Tin	Chhattisgarh
24	Antimony	Rajasthan
25	Scandium	Rare earth deposits (coastal regions)
26	Platinum Group Metals (PGMs)	Odisha
27	Phosphorus (Rock Phosphate)	Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh
28	Potash	Rajasthan (subsurface deposits)
29	Fluorite	Gujarat, Rajasthan
30	Chromium (Chromite)	Odisha (largest reserves)

**Question:** Consider the following statements:

1. Critical minerals are important only for the jewellery industry.
2. India is starting the 7th tranche of auction for 19 critical and strategic mineral blocks.
3. Critical minerals are important for clean energy, advanced technology and strategic sectors.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Exam	Date	Question	Correct Answer
UPSC CSE Prelims 2025	25 May 2025	<p>Consider the following statements: 1. India has joined the Minerals Security Partnership as a member. 2. India is a resource-rich country in all the 30 critical minerals that it has identified. 3. The Parliament in 2023 amended the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 empowering the Central Government to exclusively auction mining lease and composite licence for certain critical minerals. Which of the statements given above are correct?</p>	1 and 3 only

# Modi sets new record with 8,931 days in public office

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday became the longest-serving head of a government in India, serving 8,931 days in office, first as the Chief Minister of Gujarat and now as the Prime Minister. He has surpassed former Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling's record of 8,930 days in office.

Cabinet colleagues congratulated Mr. Modi, with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh lauding his "pure devotion to the nation and its people" and Home Minister Amit Shah terming it a "milestone rooted in service, hard work and unwavering commitment".

"Modiji's decades of *seva* have shaped an era of their own. Whether it is giving the poor their rights, setting new landmarks in development or enhancing the nation's pride on global platforms, the Modi Era has transformed India unrecognisably," Mr. Shah said in a post on X.

Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said it "stands as a testament to enduring public trust and a lifelong mission devoted to Bharat's growth and progress".



**PM writes to Nitysh on Bihar Divas, hails State's rich culture**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday wrote to Chief Minister Nitysh Kumar on occasion of Bihar Divas, extending his heartfelt greetings to the people of the State. Mr. Modi, in his three-page letter, said that Bihar Divas is a day to celebrate Bihar's rich history, its potential, and traditions. "It is an opportunity to recall Bihar's invaluable contribution to India's robust identity. Since ancient times, the land of Bihar has enriched society through knowledge, spirituality, and moral values. The teachings imparted by Lord Buddha on this very soil remain an integral part of global consciousness today, continuing to guide humanity," he wrote in the letter.

**Woman killed in ropeway trolley crash in Chhattisgarh**

A 28-year-old woman was killed and at least 10 were injured when the cable of a ropeway trolley snapped and crashed at a temple compound in Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh on Sunday morning, said officials. The accident happened around 10 a.m. at the Khairi Mata temple, which is located on a hill in the Nagbahia tehsil. Mahasamund Collector Vinay Kumar Langoh said that the trolley's cable snapped as it was being pulled from the hilltop. As it crashed, passengers of another trolley that was ascending were also injured.

**Bill to amend Transgender Persons Act faces criticism**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders and activists on Sunday spoke against the Bill to amend the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which proposes to restrict the right to a self-perceived gender identity and introduces the requirement for a medical board to determine whether a person is transgender based on a new definition of "transgender person".

At a public hearing held at the Press Club of India, Rajya Sabha members from the BJP, Congress, and the CPI(M) spoke against the bill and said there was an attempt to coordinate a strategy to oppose it within Parliament. RJD MP Manoj Kumar Jha said the only real objection for such a "regressive" Bill was that "this government is drinking its regressive".

**TIICROSSWORD** 14748  
(set by Gitanjali)

- Across**
1. Think about Ross these days? (6)
  2. Place to drink soon if off limits (6)
  3. Couple in difficulty abandons daughter? (7)
  4. Part of legend to win a lie perhaps (7)
  5. Great to back? (3, 7)
  6. Dithello's greatest antagonist is basically twisted (4)

**Rice, wheat procurement is 'consistently' low: panel**

Standing Committee led by DMK MP asks Food Ministry to strengthen its procurement planning and coordination with States to minimise the gap between estimated and actual procurement

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Expressing concern that actual procurement of rice and wheat has consistently remained below estimates in recent years and below targets in States such as Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution, headed by DMK MP Kammothi, has asked the Union Food Ministry to strengthen its procurement planning and coordination with States to minimise the gap between estimated and actual procurement of both the food grains.

In a report on the mandate for grants of the Department of Food and Public Distribution, the panel noted that since 2022-23, the procurement of wheat and rice had been less than 30% of the total production. Moreover, actual procurement of wheat has been 76.7%, 71.8% and 87.2% of the estimate for



The panel flagged that procurement of rice and wheat has remained below target in Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab, and U.P. in the years 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 respectively.

Similarly, the actual procurement of rice has been less than target since 2022-23," the report revealed. During the kharif marketing season of 2024-25, the procurement of rice from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab was 25.60 lakh tonnes, 0.033 lakh tonnes, and 16.13 lakh tonnes against the target of 35 lakh tonnes, 5.29 lakh tonnes, and 124 lakh tonnes, respectively, the panel said. Similarly, during the procurement of wheat has been 76.7%, 71.8% and 87.2% of the estimate for

target in the States of Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh, it added. The panel asked the Union government to review the methodology used for estimating procurement requirements, enhance measures for monitoring of production and market arrivals, and work closely with State governments - particularly in States like Punjab, where the market surplus, minimum support price (MSP), prevailing market rates, demand-supply situation, and participation of private traders, etc. - the government informed.

Noting these factors, the panel asked the government to strengthen its procurement planning and coordination with the States to minimise the gap between estimated and actual procurement of wheat and rice. While noting the Department's submission that procurement levels are maintained below estimates in recent years and below targets in several States," the report said.

**House panel for fee rationalisation, greater inclusivity in Sainik Schools**

**Saurabh Trivedi**  
NEW DELHI

A parliamentary standing committee on defence asked the Defence Ministry to address the issue of high annual fees in Sainik Schools on a priority basis. The committee recommended creation of a dedicated fund to provide financial assistance or special concessions to students, particularly those from middle class and low-income families. The aim is to ensure that deserving candidates, once selected, are not forced to give up their admission due to unaffordable fee structure, and can pursue their application of studying in Sainik schools without financial constraints.

It has also recommended that the Ministry review the Sainik Schools Society Rules & Regulations, 1997 to intro-



Students of Sainik School, Guwahati take aim in a shooting range. In this file photo: ILLU/ANUSOUKA

duce wider access and future-ready education for cadets. While noting the existing reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, the committee emphasised the need to extend opportunities to students from economically weaker sections (irregularly known as "open" category) in Sainik Schools, calling for greater inclusivity, fee rationalisation and curriculum modernisation to en-

**Details sought on inquiry, prosecution wings of the Lokpal**

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

A parliamentary committee has sought details of what is being done to fully operationalise the inquiry and prosecution wings of the Lokpal, over a decade after a law governing it was enacted.

The law governing the anti-corruption ombudsman - The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act 2013 - came into force on January 1, 2014. However, it began functioning only on March 27, 2019, following the appointment of its chairperson and members. To discharge its statutory functions, Section 8 of the Act obligates the Lokpal to constitute an inquiry wing to be led by a director of inquiry for conducting a preliminary inquiry into corruption-related

The Lokpal Act also has a provision for the constitution of a prosecution wing headed by the director of prosecution for the prosecution of public servants.

**Process ongoing**  
In its latest report, the Department-related Public

**The panel noted that matters relating to prosecution are being handled through an order dated June 6, 2025.**

The committee, therefore, desires to be apprised of the present status of appointment of the director and the steps taken to operationalise the inquiry wing in its full statutory form, while ensuring coordination with existing investigative agencies. It said preliminary inquiry into corruption-related

The committee noted that, at present, matters relating to prosecution are being handled through the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which has its own prosecution mechanism.

and risks excluding merit-ratio candidates. In addition, the House committee called for specific updates to the curriculum to align with evolving defence and technology landscapes. It stressed the inclusion of subjects such as artificial intelligence, cyber and space warfare, drone systems, quantum technology and energy geopolitics to equip cadets with contemporary knowledge and skills.

The panel was informed that, with rising enrolment of girl cadets in Sainik schools, proactive steps are being taken to ensure safe, hygienic, and suitable residential facilities in every school. One athletic school has also been approved at Malabar, which will be started along with senior private trusts like Karni Chhannama Sainik School in Kuttur, where only the girl students will be trained.

**SUDOKU**

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆☆

**SOLUTION TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE**

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

**FAITH**  
Hanuman's noble mission

Sundera Kanda is so named because it narrates Hanuman's remarkable and noble mission to search for and recover Sita. Hanuman possessed unerring confidence that he would certainly succeed in locating Sita, particularly because Rama had chosen him for this sacred task and entrusted him with his ring, which was to be delivered to Sita as a symbol of recognition and assurance. Hanuman's confidence was further strengthened by Jambavan's encouragement. Sri Hanji explained that with renewed determination, Hanuman compared himself to Rama's arrow, which travels swiftly, strikes its intended target, and faithfully returns to its master. Hanuman resolved to cross the vast ocean with the same speed and precision to accomplish his task. Just as Rama's arrow bears the mark and authority of his master, Hanuman too carried the divine mark of Rama through his constant devotion and the sacred chanting of "Rama."

Hanuman possessed unwavering faith in the sacred ring given to him by Rama, which bore the divine name. With the blessings of Rama, Hanuman courageously crossed the vast ocean with remarkable ease. After sincerely praying to Sita, he soon found her in Ashokavana. Thereafter, Hanuman resolved to return to Rama as quickly as possible to deliver the joyful news of Sita's whereabouts, keeping Rama constantly in his thoughts.

Rama's act of giving the ring to Hanuman symbolises the profound concept of "Abhyaya Pradanam," which means granting protection and removing fear. In this episode, Sita said unto Hanuman with her bowed statement as a token to convey her message and "Naramagnai" to Rama.

# Rice, wheat procurement is 'consistently' low: panel

Standing Committee led by DMK MP asks Food Ministry to strengthen its procurement planning and coordination with States to minimise the gap between estimated and actual procurement

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**E**xpressing concern that actual procurement of rice and wheat has consistently remained below estimates in recent years and below targets in States such as Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution, headed by DMK MP Kanimozhi, has asked the Union Food Ministry to strengthen its procurement planning and coordination with States to minimise the gap between estimated and actual procurement of both the food grains.

In a report on the Demands for Grants of the Department of Food and Public Distribution, the panel noted that since 2022-23, the procurement of wheat and rice had been less than 30% of the total production.

"Moreover, actual procurement of wheat has been 76.71%, 71.35% and 87.29% of the estimate for



The panel flagged that procurement of rice and wheat has remained below target in Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab, and U.P. PTI

the years 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 respectively. Similarly, the actual procurement of rice has been less than target since 2022-23," the report revealed.

During the kharif marketing season of 2024-25, the procurement of rice from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Punjab was 25.60 lakh tonnes, 0.003 lakh tonnes, and 116.13 lakh tonnes against the target of 35 lakh tonnes, 5.29 lakh tonnes, and 124 lakh tonnes, respectively, the panel said.

Similarly, during the rabi marketing season of 2025-26, the procurement of wheat was less than the

target in the States of Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh, it added.

## Multiple factors at play

The government told the panel that any fluctuation in estimated production and actual production resulted in variation in procurement. "Procurement depends on multiple factors like production, market surplus, minimum support price (MSP), prevailing market rates, demand-supply situation, and participation of private traders, etc., the government informed.

Noting these factors, the panel asked the govern-

ment to strengthen its procurement planning and coordination with the States to minimise the gap between estimated and actual procurement of wheat and rice.

"While noting the Department's submission that procurement levels are influenced by multiple factors, the Committee is concerned that actual procurement has consistently remained below estimates in recent years and below targets in several States," the report said.

The panel asked the Union government to review the methodology used for estimating procurement requirements, enhance real-time monitoring of production and market arrivals, and work closely with State governments – particularly in States where procurement has significantly fallen short of targets – to ensure that procurement operations are more realistic, responsive and effective. It asked the government to apprise it of the corrective measures taken on the suggestions.

## 1. Parliamentary panel flags low procurement of rice and wheat

- A **Parliamentary Standing Committee** has raised concern that **actual procurement of rice and wheat is consistently below estimates**.
- This gap has been observed **over multiple years (since 2022-23)**.

## 2. States where procurement shortfall is prominent

- Significant gaps observed in:
  - Bihar
  - Gujarat
  - Punjab
  - Uttar Pradesh
- These are major agricultural states → makes the issue more serious.

### 3. Data highlights (important for exam)

- Procurement of rice and wheat has been:
  - **Less than 30% of total production (since 2022-23)**
- Wheat procurement:
  - ~76.71%, 71.35%, 87.29% of estimates (recent years)
- Rice procurement also **below targets since 2022-23**

### 4. Example from Kharif Marketing Season (2024-25)

- Procurement from key states:
  - Andhra Pradesh → ~25.60 lakh tonnes
  - Karnataka → extremely low (~0.003 lakh tonnes)
  - Punjab → ~116.13 lakh tonnes
- Against a target of **35 lakh tonnes in some cases → significant gap**

## 5. Reasons for low procurement

- Procurement depends on multiple factors:
  - production levels
  - market prices vs MSP
  - demand-supply conditions
  - private trader participation
  - logistics and infrastructure
- If market price  $>$  MSP  $\rightarrow$  farmers sell in open market instead of government

## 6. Committee recommendations

- Strengthen:
  - procurement planning
  - coordination with states
- Improve:
  - real-time monitoring of production and arrivals
  - estimation methodology
- Focus on:
  - states where procurement is consistently low



## 7. Broader implications

- Impacts:
    - food security
    - buffer stock management
    - Public Distribution System (PDS)
  - Lower procurement can:
    - reduce government stock
    - affect price stability
- 

## Extra Facts for UPSC

### 1. What is procurement

- Government buys crops (mainly rice & wheat) from farmers at **Minimum Support Price (MSP)**.

### 2. Agencies involved

- **Food Corporation of India (FCI)**
- State procurement agencies

### 3. Purpose of procurement

- Maintain **buffer stock**
- Ensure **food security**
- Support farmers with assured price

### 4. MSP system

- Announced by:
  - Government of India (based on CACP recommendations)
- Crops covered:
  - 23 crops (major focus on rice & wheat)

### 5. Buffer stock norms

- Fixed minimum stock levels to:
  - handle emergencies
  - stabilise prices

**Question:**

Consider the following statements:

1. Procurement of rice and wheat in India is done at Minimum Support Price (MSP).
2. Procurement depends only on production levels and not on market prices.
3. Food Corporation of India plays a major role in procurement.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

# Musk launches 'Terafab' project to make own AI chips

BLOOMBERG  
March 22

ELON MUSK SAID HIS Terafab project — a grand plan to eventually manufacture his own chips for robotics, artificial intelligence and space data centers — will be built in Austin and jointly run by Tesla and SpaceX.

Musk, the chief executive officer of both companies, said he will start off with an "advanced technology fab" in Austin that will have all of the equipment necessary to make chips of any kind, and test them. Musk, who has no background in semiconductor production and a history of over-

## BLUEPRINT

■ Project will be built in Austin and jointly run by Telsa, SpaceX

■ Will start with advanced tech fab that will have all necessary equipment to make chips of any kind: Musk



■ Some specific plans include producing chips that can support **100-200GW/** year of computing power on Earth

ELON MUSK, TESLA & SPACEX CEO

We either build the Terafab or we don't have the chips, and we need the chips, so we build the Terafab



promising on goals and timelines, had said before that the company will start with a smaller scale fab before moving to a bigger one.

Musk has said the semi-

conductor industry is moving too slow to keep up with the supply of chips he expects to need, even as the industry increases output.

"That rate is much less

than we'd like," Musk said. "We either build the Terafab or we don't have the chips, and we need the chips, so we build the Terafab."

Musk's project would call

for one day supporting a terawatt of computing power per year, the amount he expects the companies to eventually use as he ramps up his investments in AI and robotics.

Musk detailed some specific plans, including producing chips that can support 100 to 200 gigawatts a year of computing power on Earth, and chips that can support a terawatt in space, but gave no timelines for the facility or its output.

Musk has said previously that the facility would produce 2 nanometer chips. The project appears to be planned for an area near Tesla's existing

Austin headquarters and gigafactory, based on a photo shown during the presentation. Many executives have expressed anxiety about a shortage of chips — particularly memory chips — during the race to build computing power for AI. But it's rare to try building them. Bringing semiconductor facilities online typically takes tens of billions dollars and requires the purchase of complex machines from multiple providers. Factories can take years to become fully operational. Musk made the announcement in a downtown Austin venue to an audience that included Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

## 1. Elon Musk launches "Terafab" project

- Elon Musk has announced a new project called "**Terafab**".
- Objective:
  - To **manufacture in-house AI chips**
  - Reduce dependence on external chip suppliers

## 2. Collaboration and location

- The project will be jointly run by:
  - Tesla
  - SpaceX
- Location:
  - **Austin, Texas (USA)**

## 3. Key features of Terafab

- Will begin with an **advanced technology fabrication (fab) unit**
- Capability:
  - Manufacture **chips of any kind**
- Focus areas:
  - Artificial Intelligence
  - Robotics
  - Space computing systems

## 4. Production scale and ambition

- Planned chip capability:
  - Support **100–200 GW (gigawatt)** of computing power per year on Earth
- Also aims:
  - **Terawatt-scale computing for space applications**
- Indicates **massive scale AI infrastructure expansion**

## 5. Strategic motivation

- Global shortage of AI chips (especially memory chips)
- Increasing demand for:
  - AI training
  - Data centers
  - Robotics
- Musk wants:
  - **Vertical integration** (control entire supply chain)
  - Faster innovation and deployment

## 6. Semiconductor industry challenge

- Building fabs is:
  - Extremely expensive (billions of dollars)
  - Time-consuming (years to operationalize)
- Requires:
  - Advanced machinery
  - Global supply chain coordination

## 7. Technology details

- Musk hinted at:
  - **2-nanometer chip production**
- These are:
  - Next-generation chips
  - More powerful and energy efficient

## 8. Strategic implications

- Could:
  - Disrupt semiconductor industry
  - Reduce reliance on companies like:
    - NVIDIA
    - TSMC
- Strengthens:
  - U.S. domestic chip manufacturing push

## 1. What is a semiconductor fab

- A **fab (fabrication plant)** is a factory where semiconductor chips are manufactured.

## 2. Why AI chips are critical

- Used in:
  - Machine learning
  - Data centers
  - Autonomous vehicles
  - Robotics
- Key to:
  - Digital economy
  - Military AI systems

## 3. Global semiconductor geopolitics

- Dominated by:
  - USA (design)
  - Taiwan (manufacturing)
  - China (growing player)
- Chip supply is now a **strategic geopolitical issue**

## 4. Moore's Law & advanced nodes

- Smaller node (nm) → more powerful chips
- 2 nm chips represent cutting-edge technology

**Question:**

Consider the following statements:

1. The Terafab project aims to manufacture AI chips internally.
2. Semiconductor fabrication plants are inexpensive and quick to build.
3. Advanced chips like 2 nm are more efficient and powerful.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

---

# Word of the day

## **Swanky:**

imposingly fashionable and elegant

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**Synonyms:** classy, trendy

---

**Usage:** *They moved into a swanky new apartment.*

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**Pronunciation:** [newsth.live/swanky](http://newsth.live/swanky)

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**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /swæŋki/

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• Consider the following statements regarding Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC): — JPC के संबंध में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार कीजिए:

• It is a permanent committee of Parliament. — यह संसद की स्थायी समिति है।

• It includes members from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. — इसमें लोकसभा और राज्यसभा दोनों के सदस्य होते हैं।

• It can summon individuals and call for documents during investigation. — यह जांच के दौरान व्यक्तियों को बुला सकती है और दस्तावेज़ मांग सकती है।

• **Which of the statements given above are correct? — उपर्युक्त में से कौन-से कथन सही हैं?**

- A. 1 and 2 only — केवल 1 और 2
- B. 2 and 3 only — केवल 2 और 3
- C. 1 and 3 only — केवल 1 और 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3 — 1, 2 और 3



Thank you 😊