

Daily Current Affairs





6
The Hindu



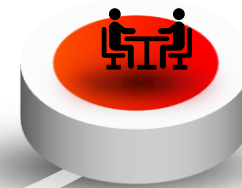
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“Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike.”

— J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

SPORT » PAGE 13

tionals may apply for on-line visa". The categories of visas that have been list-

INBRIEF

Assam's Nagshankar becomes model for turtle conservation

Nagshankar in Assam's Bishwanath district has been designated a model temple for turtle conservation, Padma Hazarika, MLA, acknowledged the temple on behalf of the local communities at an event on World Turtle Day on Friday. "Nagshankar's role in promoting conservation of turtles at the grassroots level makes it a model temple in this regard," he said. The event was organised by the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, Assam State Zoo, Nagshankar Temple Committee, DFT/NR Biotech Hub Chaldighat College, and conservation groups Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation India, Aaranyak, and Help Earth.

Bengal government bans 137 substandard medicines

The West Bengal Department of Health and Family Welfare on Saturday issued a notification to ban 137 medicines that did not meet the drug quality standard. It has also issued a notification to retailers and wholesalers for quality check. This comes as the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) found over 196 inferior drugs across India. The State government has been cracking down on the usage of fake and lower-grade medicines; multiple raids across drug godowns have led to the discovery of huge amounts of substandard medicines. In February, fake medicines worth around ₹7 lakh were seized from a godown in Howrah.

Gujarat man held for sharing sensitive info with Pak. spy

The Gujarat Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) has arrested a contractual health worker posted in the border district of Kutch for allegedly sharing sensitive information about military establishments with a Pakistani spy, officials said on Saturday. Accused Sahdevsinh Gohil, 28, was hauled by a Pakistani agent, who identified herself as Adil Bhabarwal, to share information about under-construction as well as existing establishments of the Border Security Force and Indian Navy in the area, said the ATS in a release. Since June 2023, he had reportedly shared photos and videos with the spy for money. His phone has been sent for a forensic analysis.

Akhilesh questions U.P. govt. over DGP appointment

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday criticised the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh for its failure to appoint a permanent Director-General of Police (DGP) in the State. If the government couldn't give a permanent DGP, what permanent framework for law and order would it give to the State, he asked. "In the BJP rule, police stations are being raided, police itself are filing FIRs against police and also accusing each other of kidnapping. Now the children of U.P. play 'police-police' instead of 'thief-police'," he said in a post on X. Since May 2022, the State has appointed many acting DGPs with Devendra Singh Chauhan given the charge for 11 months.

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Lancet report validates India's stigma study for sickle cell disease, terms it a robust tool

ICMR-SCD Stigma Scale for India is the first in India and fourth globally; scales capture information on several aspects of stigma such as familial and reproductive, social disclosure, illness burden, interpersonal, and healthcare interaction challenges; to be available to researchers immediately

Hindu Shalan Perampadan

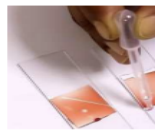
NEW DELHI

India accounts for the second-highest prevalence of sickle cell disease (SCD) globally, following sub-Saharan Africa. However, not much research has been done, and no stigma measurement tool was available to India before the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recently developed India's first ICMR-SCD Stigma Scale for India (ISSSI).

The three scales available globally were unsuitable due to India's diversity. India's stigma scale was developed following global standards, and a recently published study has validated the ISSSI-P (parent scale) and ISSSI-Cg (caregiver scale) (ISSSI-Cg,

according to an article published in the *Lancet* regional health South-East Asia) this month. ISSSI is the first in India and the fourth globally. People with SCD often suffer from severe pain episodes, chronic fatigue, swelling, infections, and potential organ damage, significantly impacting their quality of life.

"This study explicitly developed and validated the ISSSI. The finalized scales capture multidimensional aspects of stigma, including familial and reproductive, social disclosure, illness burden, interpersonal, and healthcare interaction challenges. The findings underscore the scale's psychometric robustness and utility in clinical and research settings,"



The three stigma scales available globally for the disease were unsuitable due to India's diversity. GETTY IMAGES

said the article.

It added that the methodological rigour employed in the scale development makes it a robust tool for understanding SCD-related stigma among Indian SCD patients and their caregivers in clinical and research contexts.

"The ISSSI will be available to the mission and researchers immediately," said the article.

Meanwhile, the study was conducted across six SCD-endemic districts in India - Aluri Seetharama Raju in Andhra Pradesh, Anaparthi in Madhya Pradesh, Chhoteupur in Gujarat, Kandhamal in Od-

isha, Mysuru in Karnataka, and Usalgani in Assam. These sites were selected to capture a wide range of socio-cultural and geographical contexts. Each district presents unique demographic and socio-economic characteristics, including variations in access to healthcare and awareness of SCD.

Sickle cell disease is caused by the inheritance of two mutated β -globin genes, one from each parent, leading to the production of abnormal haemoglobin, known as sickle haemoglobin. SCD is a significant public health problem in many regions, impacting populations in several countries. The development of the ISSSI represents a significant advancement in understanding SCD-related stigma.

derstanding and addressing the multifaceted impact of SCD, including stigma. India has now announced the national sickle cell anaemia elimination mission to eliminate SCD as a public health problem, implementing various SCD management interventions and assessing their impact in tribal communities, where the prevalence is considerably higher when compared with the general population.

In India, SCD represents a pressing public health concern, particularly with the prevalence of SCD, including stigma. India has now announced the national sickle cell anaemia elimination mission to eliminate SCD as a public health problem, implementing various SCD management interventions and assessing their impact in tribal communities, where the prevalence is considerably higher when compared with the general population.

SC sets aside life imprisonment in murder case on grounds of insanity

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has set aside the life imprisonment of a man in a case of murder on the ground that there is "reasonable doubt" that he committed the crime in a fit of insanity.

The court dismissed the Chhattisgarh Police's contention that a medical examination on the man found him normal.

However, a bench of Justices S. Oka, and Justice Chandrachud, was constituted five years after the murder, and thus "meaningless".

The trial court had sentenced Patra to life imprisonment for bludgeoning a man to death in 2018. The State High Court had confirmed the punishment.

The top court order said the onus of proving a defence of insanity lay on the accused. "The burden to prove insanity is on the accused. It is enough if a reasonable doubt is created about the nature of the act or that it is contrary to the nature of the offence, if the evidence placed before the court is not reliable. There is no doubt about the ingredients of the offence, including intent and knowledge. Right to defend himself is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution," the Bench quoted from past decisions.



The Supreme Court building in New Delhi.

In the current case, the top court found witness testimonies that Patra suffered from bouts of insanity. Under Section 84 of the Indian Penal Code, a person is exonerated on the ground of insanity if he is of unsound mind if he, at the time of doing the act, is incapable of knowing the nature of the act or that it is contrary to the law.

"The law lays down that no act done by a lunatic is an offence," the Bench said. "The law is not in a position to defend himself. Right to defend himself is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution," the Bench quoted from past decisions.

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Deadlines set to resolve Arunachal film institute issues

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

Deadlines have been set for various agencies to resolve the infrastructure and academic crises in the Film and Television Institute, Arunachal Pradesh (FTI-AP).

The first batch of students at the institute located in Jote went on an indefinite academic strike on May 15, barely two months after their two-year post-graduate diploma course started in March. They alleged administrative apathy and broken promises regarding basic amenities and academic necessities.

The FTI-AP is situated at Jote in Papum Pare district, 24 km from the State's capital, Itanagar. Its foundation was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi eight years ago.

Taking serious note of the grievances of the students, Papum Pare Deputy Commissioner Jiten Bommen met a meeting with all the stakeholders on Friday.

Hevesh Budhani, the Executive Engineer of the Central Public Works Department handling the project, said the classroom theatre building, a temporary laboratory, and the performance labs would be handed over to the FTI-AP management by May 31. He also said the

Nominations window is now open for businessline Changemaker Awards 2025

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

It is yet again the time to celebrate the unsung heroes amongst us, those who through their actions and ideas, have deeply influenced change in society, communities, mindsets or in physical spaces to make the world a better place to live in. The *businessline* Changemaker Awards 2025 is open for nominations till June 30.

If you know of people who have brought about change in your community or in society at large, please support them by nominating them for the *businessline* Changemaker Awards 2025. Individuals who have been change agents can also nominate themselves.

Six editions of the awards have been held since 2018, the year *The Hindu businessline* stepped into its 25th year of publishing. The 2021 edition was the last to be held due to the pandemic.

Five categories Nominations can be made in five categories of awards - Changemaker: Social Transformation; Changemaker: Environmental Transformation; Changemaker: Young Changemaker and Iconic

Nominations window is now open for businessline Changemaker Awards 2025



Changemaker. One flagship award goes to the Changemaker of the Year who is deemed to be a person or an organisation that has ushered in far-reaching change in a thriving ecosystem or in society at large, please support them by nominating them for the *businessline* Changemaker Awards 2025. Individuals who have been change agents can also nominate themselves.

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visionary innovator who transformed communication, mobile payments, energy, and entrepreneurship in India, pioneering impactful solutions and fostering a thriving ecosystem at the IIT Madras Research Park that has empowered scores of entrepreneurs.

The awards for 2024 were given away by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Defining the award, Raghuvaran Srinivasan, Editor, *businessline*, said, "The Changemaker Awards exemplify the fact that we are always looking for change in a positive manner either in business or society. These awards can be a great inspiration and recognition for those whose work has positively impacted communities and society."

Scan the QR code or use the link for more details: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/awards/2025>



QR code for Changemaker Awards 2025.

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QR code for Changemaker Awards 2025.

Govt. ratifies EPF interest rate at 8.25% for 2024-25

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

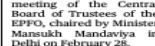
The government has ratified the rate of interest on employees' provident fund (EPF) at 8.25% for the financial year 2024-25, enabling the retirement fund body EPFO to deposit the annual interest accumulation in the post-retirement funds of over seven crore subscribers.

The EPFO on February 28 decided to retain the interest rate of 8.25% on EPF deposits for 2024-25, equal to the rate provided in the preceding fiscal. The approved rate of interest for 2024-25 was sent for concurrence of the Ministry of Finance.

The Ministry of Finance has given concurrence to an 8.25% rate of interest on the EPF for the 2024-25 fiscal year, and the Labour Ministry sent a communication regarding this to the EPFO on Thursday (May 22, 2025). Labour Ministry official said.

Now, the interest amount as per the rate ratified for 2024-25 will be credited into the accounts of over seven crore subscribers of EPFO.

The decision on interest rate was made at the 237th meeting of the Central Board of Trustees of the EPFO, chaired by Minister Mansukh Mandaviya in Delhi on February 28.



EPFO logo.

Lancet report validates India's stigma study for sickle cell disease, terms it a 'robust tool'

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The development of the ISSSI represents a significant advancement in un-

derstanding and addressing the multifaceted impact of SCD, including stigma. India has now announced the national sickle cell anaemia elimination mission to eliminate SCD as a public health problem, implementing various SCD management interventions and assessing their impact is inevitable.

In India, SCD represents a pressing public health concern, particularly within tribal communities, where the prevalence is considerably higher when compared with the general population. Limited healthcare access, socioeconomic challenges, widespread misconceptions, and inadequate knowledge about the disease compound the burden of SCD in India.

What are Sickle Cell Disorders?

- A group of disorders that cause red blood cells to become misshapen and break down.
- The cells die early, leaving a short age of healthy red blood cells and can block blood flow causing pain.



Types:

Sickle Cell Anaemia

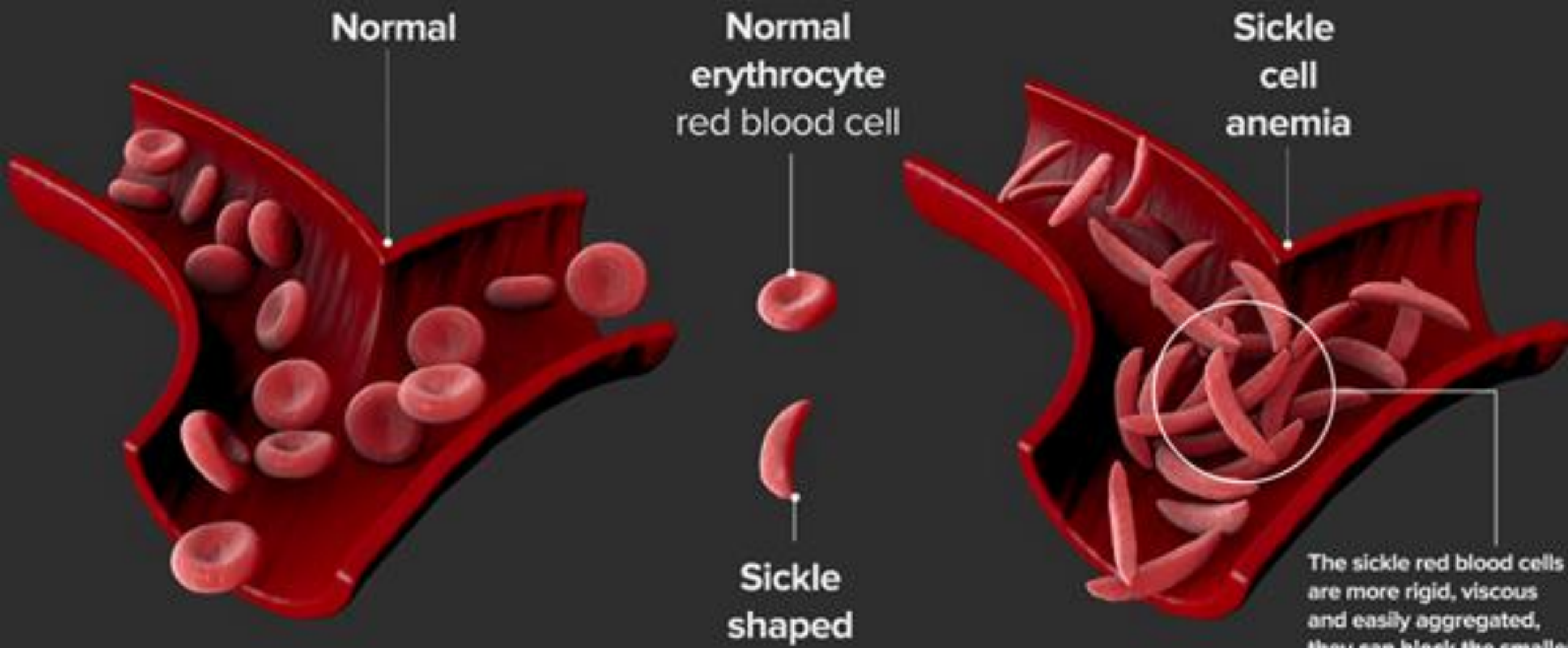
Dysfunctional red cells due to abnormal haemoglobin

Sickle Cell Crisis

Blockage of blood vessels causing severe pain or organ damage



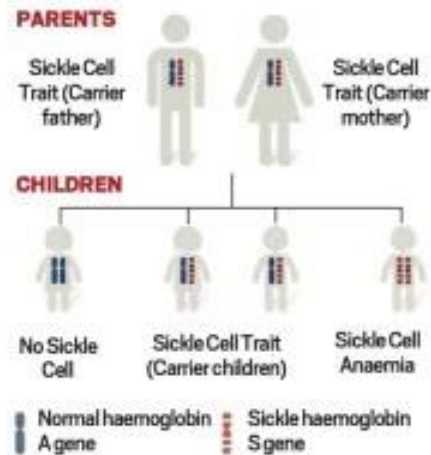
SICKLE CELL ANEMIA



GLOBAL BURDEN OF SICKLE CELL DISEASE



INHERITANCE OF SICKLE CELL



ABOVE, each parent has one normal haemoglobin A gene and one haemoglobin S gene. This means each of their children has:

25% CHANCE of inheriting two normal A genes. This child will not have either sickle cell trait or sickle cell disease

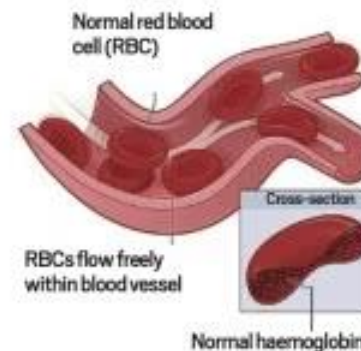
50% CHANCE of inheriting one normal A gene and one S gene. This child will have sickle cell trait, and be a carrier

25% CHANCE of inheriting two S genes. This child will have sickle cell disease

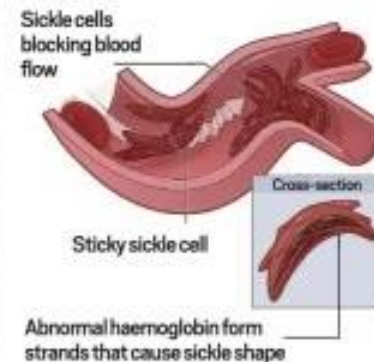
EACH TIME the couple has a child, chances of the child having sickle cell disease remain same

IMPACT ON RED BLOOD CELLS

Normal red blood cells



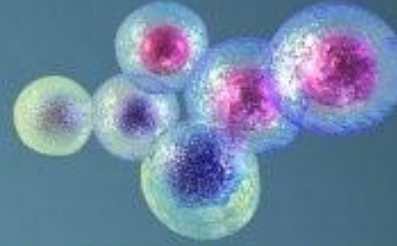
Abnormal, sickled, RBC (sickle cells)



US National Institutes of Health (NIH)

FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT SICKLE CELL DISEASE

A child is more likely to get sickle cell disease when **he or she receives two sickle cell genes, one from each parent**



The disease affects millions of people worldwide, but it is more common in the **African, Arabian and Indian origin**

A **bone marrow transplant** can cure sickle cell disease, but it comes with a lot of risk



A person with sickle cell disease can live a long and healthy life by following treatments prescribed by the doctor, getting **regular checkups and maintaining proper eating habits.**

1. Global Prevalence

- India has the **second-highest burden** of Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) globally (after Sub-Saharan Africa).

2. New Tool Developed

- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) created the **ICMR-SCD Stigma Scale for India (ISSSI)**.
- It is **India's first** and the **fourth globally**.
- Two forms developed:
 - **ISSSI-Pt** – for patients
 - **ISSSI-Cg** – for caregivers

3. Lancet's Validation

- Published in *The Lancet Regional Health – South East Asia*.
- Termed ISSSI as a **robust and validated tool**.
- Captures **six dimensions** of stigma:
 - Familial and reproductive
 - Social disclosure
 - Illness burden
 - Interpersonal challenges
 - Healthcare interaction challenges

Methodology and Deployment

4. Why Existing Tools Didn't Work

- Existing global tools didn't match India's **socio-cultural diversity**.
- India's ISSSI was created with **rigorous methodology** and global psychometric standards.

5. Deployment Regions

- Study was conducted in **six SCD-endemic districts**:
 - **Andhra Pradesh**: Alluri Seetharama Raju
 - **Madhya Pradesh**: Anuppur
 - **Gujarat**: Chhota Udepur
 - **Odisha**: Kandhamal
 - **Karnataka**: Mysuru
 - **Assam**: Udalguri

6. Purpose of Site Selection

- Districts were chosen for **diverse social, economic, and healthcare access contexts**.

SCD in India – Public Health Concern

7. Challenges Faced by SCD Patients

- Pain episodes, fatigue, swelling, infections, organ damage.
- Stigma compounds disease burden—especially in **tribal areas**.

8. Genetic Basis

- Caused by mutations in two **β-globin genes**, producing abnormal hemoglobin (sick hemoglobin).

9. Government Mission

- India has launched a **Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission**.
- Aims to **eliminate SCD as a public health problem** by:
 - Promoting awareness
 - Providing healthcare access
 - Monitoring and interventions

Consider decriminalising adolescent love: SC to govt

Centre To Set Up
Panel, Report
By July 25

AmitAnand.Choudhary
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: To ensure that adolescents don't get sent to jail under the stringent Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (Pocso) for being in romantic relationships, Supreme Court has directed the Centre to consider decriminalising such consensual relationships and frame a policy for sexual and reproductive health education in the country.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan issued notice to the Centre through the ministry of women and child development to form an expert committee to examine

FLAGS NUANCED APPROACH BY HCs

➤ SC says **adolescents in consensual relationships must be protected**, Pocso Act not meant to criminalise them

➤ Points out that several high courts, including Delhi and Madras, have taken a nuanced approach in such cases

➤ Calcutta HC has said

'penetration', defined as unilateral act by accused, doesn't hold in consensual intercourse by adolescents

➤ Delhi HC has said 'love is a fundamental human experience, and **adolescents have the right to form emotional connections'**

“ An adolescent boy and girl who are in the grips of their hormones and biological changes and whose decision-making ability is yet to fully develop, should essentially receive the support and guidance of their parents and society... These incidents should never be perceived from an adult's point of view...
—Madras HC in 2001

the issue and file a report before it by July 25. The court said it would pass further directions after getting the report.

The trigger for the court order was the legal battle of a woman from West Bengal to protect her husband who was sentenced to 20 years in jail under Pocso for having a relations-

hip with her when she was 14.

The court had appointed two senior women advocates — Madhavi Divan and Liz Mathew — to assist it on the sensitive issue and they suggested that adolescents in consensual relationships needed to be protected. While Pocso Act served an essential purpo-

se in protecting minors from sexual exploitation, its rigid application in cases of adolescent relationships could lead to outcomes that may not align with the best interests of the prosecutrix and her dependants, they suggested.

Accepting the suggestions of the senior advocates, the court impleaded the Centre in the case and issued notice.

The advocates also pointed out that various high courts, including Delhi and Madras, have taken a nuanced approach and interpreted the statement of objects and reasons of Pocso Act as not intending to criminalise consensual romantic relationships. In several cases, Madras high court adopted a legal interpretation that consensual acts did not fulfil the requirement of 'assault' in the offence of 'penetrative sexual assault'.

►Continued on P 20



Supreme Court's Directive to Government

- **Objective:** Prevent adolescents in consensual romantic relationships from being punished under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO)**.
 - **Key Decision:**
 - SC has asked the **Centre to consider decriminalising consensual adolescent relationships**.
 - A **committee of experts** will be formed through the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
 - **Report to be submitted by July 25, 2025**.
-



Context & Trigger

- The case arose from a **West Bengal woman's plea** to release her husband, jailed under POCSO for a consensual relationship when she was 14.
- SC Bench: **Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan**.
- The bench noted:
 - "Such cases must be approached from the child's perspective, not the adult's."

Judicial Observations & Concerns

- **POCSO Act's Original Intent:**
 - Protect minors from **sexual exploitation**.
 - Not intended to **criminalise consensual adolescent relationships**.
- **Calcutta High Court:**
 - Defined '**penetration**' as a unilateral act by the accused.
 - Held that **consensual acts between adolescents should not attract criminal liability**.
- **Delhi High Court:**
 - Emphasised that "**love is a fundamental human experience**".
 - Adolescents should have the **right to form emotional connections**.



Recommendations & Action Plan

- A panel of experts (e.g., from **TISS**, psychologists, legal experts) to be formed to:
 - Frame policies for **comprehensive sex education**.
 - Examine **sexual and reproductive health awareness**.
 - **UNESCO Recommendations:**
 - Sexuality education must begin at the **secondary school level**.
-

Special 17: First batch of women cadets set to pass out of NDA

Sandip.Dighe
@timesofindia.com

Pune: Cadet Ishita Sharma stands at a pivotal moment, just a week away from a significant milestone not just for her, but for the country. She is part of the first group of 17 women cadets who will graduate from Pune's National Defence Academy (NDA) on May 30, along with around 300 male counterparts.

This achievement marks a historic moment for the Indian Armed Forces, following their decision to allow women to enter the academy in June 2022. "I come from a non-military background. My parents work in the corporate sector, and my brother is an IT professional. I was pursuing a bachelor's degree in economics

when the NDA announced its entry for women. I didn't think twice before applying," Ishita told TOI.

The maiden graduating cadets share the common experience of stringent physical training, military routines, and strong bonds formed over three years at the academy. They echoed that a key aspect of their journey has been personal development, reflecting NDA's reputation for transforming young individuals into accomplished military personnel. Ishita added, "After spending three years here, I can confidently say that my personality underwent a complete transformation."

Achieving several accomplishments along the way, Ishita earned the honorary appointment of 'Division Cadet

Captain' (DCC) for her outstanding performance in all areas of training. "This is how one gets the opportunity to become a leader right from the academy. It develops your leadership character naturally," she remarked. Her fellow graduating cadets echoed similar sentiments about their stint at the academy, acknowledging the significant and transformative impact of training on their confidence.

"Before joining the academy, I was an introvert. Here, I made several friends for life. In fact, my course mates feel like family now. I would not have imagined it. You form unbreakable bonds that last forever," Ishita said, speaking to TOI outside the Sudan Block of NDA.

The cadets emphasised



Aditya Waikuli

(L-R) Shriti Daksh, Ishita Sharma, Ritul Duhan, Ishita Sangwan and Harsimran Kaur are from the first group of 17 women cadets who will graduate from the NDA on May 30

that they never had to compete with their male counterparts for opportunities during their training—they received equal chances to excel.

"Equal opportunity naturally empowers each individual. That is what makes the a-

cademy unique in all aspects," Ishita added.

All cadets faced challenges during military training in the initial stages. They worked hard on both physical fitness and overcoming mental barriers.

"Once you break that mental barrier, you push your limits to the next level each time. That is what truly matters, not how many push-ups one can do at a time," elaborated Ishita. For cadet Shriti Daksh, the initial weeks at the academy brought about a stark realisation about the realities of military training. "At the academy, I actually understood what the real experience of military training feels like," said Shriti, the daughter of a retired wing commander, who was motivated to follow in her father's footsteps. "I had no other dream or career plan than to join the Indian Armed Forces," she added.

According to Shriti, when NDA opened its doors to women, she was elated as she wanted to join the academy from

which her father graduated decades ago. "It was a significant milestone for me personally. It was a special day for both my father and me when he dropped me off at the academy, a mix of nostalgia and pride for him. Now, I am just a few days away from the moment my father experienced in his life, and I am excited to share that moment with him on May 30." Balancing military training with academics has been one of the most challenging aspects for the cadets. They often feel pressed for time, as participation in various activities alongside their daily schedules tests their mental endurance.

"You are involved everywhere—from the drill square to the swimming pool to equestrian activities. So,

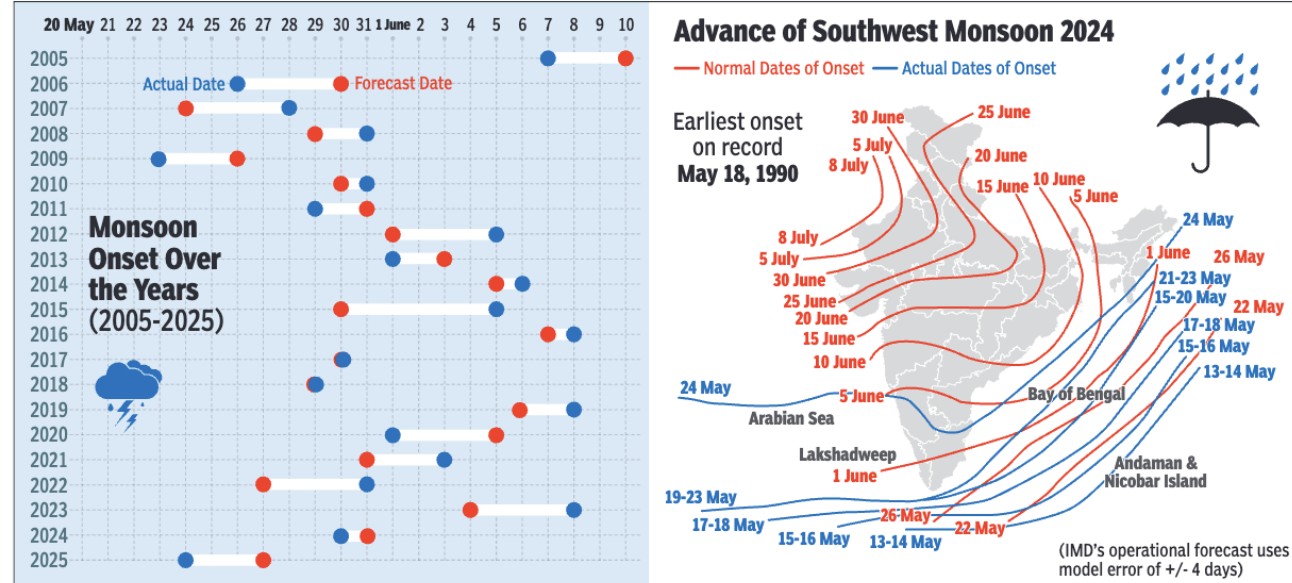
maintaining a balance is the most difficult challenge we face. We are always short on time. That's the level of our schedule," Shriti explained.

Ritul Duhan, the first Battalion Cadet Captain (BCC) from the group, is aware of the significant responsibility she carries. "We are not just completing our training; we are paving the way for future leadership and inspiring younger cadets who will follow our path," she said.

Ritul lauded the academy's adaptation to integrate female cadets. "The atmosphere has become increasingly conducive," she said, adding, "I encourage girls to join with a broader purpose, understanding that this training develops every aspect of your personality."

Conditions favourable for advance of SW monsoon

CLOUDS ON THE MOVE: MARK THE RAIN DATES



► Continued from P 1

Advance of the monsoon to most parts of Tamil Nadu and some parts of Karnataka on the very first day of the onset is significant but not unusual. It, however, signals the possibility of its fast progress in the next few days.

"Monsoon arrival in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is not unusual. It invariably happens and the monsoon will now make further progress as per our forecast," IMD chief Mrutyunjay Mo-

hapatra told TOI. Announcing the monsoon onset, the Met department said the conditions are favourable for further advance of south-west monsoon into entire Goa, some parts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, some more parts of Karnataka, remaining parts of Tamil Nadu, some more parts of northeastern states, and some parts of sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim during the next 2-3 days.

Early monsoon onset and its further advance will pave the way for early start of the

kharif (summer crops) sowing operations in the country, specifically in south and central India. Since the IMD predicted 'above normal' monsoon rainfall in most parts of the country this year, the situation may help increase the acreage and production of the summer crops such as paddy, pulses, maize and other coarse cereals and steer the country towards realising its goal of record foodgrains output of 354 million tonne in the 2025-26 crop year.

On Saturday, the mon-

soon advanced into the entire Lakshadweep area, Kerala, Mahe, some parts of Karnataka, remaining parts of Maldives and Comorin area, many parts of Tamil Nadu and some parts of Mizoram. IMD, meanwhile, predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall over west coast (Kerala, Karnataka, coastal Maharashtra & Goa) during the next seven days; coastal and ghat areas of Karnataka till May 27; and ghat areas of Tamil Nadu on May 25-26 due to prevailing weather phenomena.

1. Differential Heating:

The Indian subcontinent, particularly the northern plains and deserts, heats up significantly during the summer months, creating a low-pressure area. This draws in moist air from the sea, which then rises and condenses, leading to monsoon rains. [🔗](#)

2. ITCZ Movement:

The ITCZ, a zone of low pressure where the trade winds converge, moves northwards with the sun's movement during the northern summer. This movement of the ITCZ influences the direction of monsoon winds. [🔗](#)

3. Pressure Systems:

The presence of a low-pressure area over the Indian subcontinent and high-pressure areas over the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal contributes to the movement of monsoon winds. [🔗](#)

4. Oceanic Influence:

Oceanic conditions, particularly ENSO (El Niño and La Niña), can significantly impact the intensity and timing of the monsoon. [🔗](#)

5. Wind Fields:

The presence of westerlies and the convergence of air masses contribute to the formation of the monsoon trough, which is a key feature of the monsoon system. [🔗](#)

6. Moisture Content:

Sustained rainfall and high humidity levels in the air are essential for the monsoon to develop and persist. [🔗](#)



INSIDE



Israeli strikes leave 38 people dead in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH
Israeli strikes over the past 24 hours killed at least 38 people in Gaza, including a mother and her two children sheltering in a tent, local health officials said on Sunday. » PAGE 14

Overnight strikes by Russia kill 12 people in Ukraine

KYIV
Russian strikes killed at least 12 persons in Ukraine overnight, officials said on Sunday, as Kyiv and Moscow traded fire. » PAGE 14

In deep waters



Blasphemy: Partially submerged vehicles in an underpass near the Delhi Cantonment after heavy rain on Sunday. Flight operations were disrupted and waterlogging was reported in several areas. PTI

Caste count a means to include those left behind: PM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the caste enumeration announced as part of the decennial Census was a step towards his government's model of bringing the marginalised and those left behind in every field into the mainstream of development.

Addressing a conclave of Chief Ministers and Deputy Chief Ministers belonging to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Mr. Modi said the success of Operation Sindoor was a reaffirmation of the achievements of the government that had made in its push towards self-reliance, underscoring the accuracy and precision of indigenous defence technology.

Sources present at the meeting said Mr. Modi



Big meeting: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Bihar CM Nitish Kumar during an NDA conclave in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

asked leaders to avoid the tendency to speak out of turn, a likely reference to more than one Bharatiya Janata Party leader making contentious remarks about the achievements of the government and Operation Sindoor. The conclave is a regular event held over the years, where Chief Ministers make presentations of best practices being followed by their govern-

ments for replication in other NDA-ruled States. Two resolutions were passed at the meeting: one praising the Indian armed forces and the leadership of the Prime Minister over Operation Sindoor and another on the decision to undertake a caste census by the Modi government.

The resolution on Operation Sindoor was moved by Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma and seconded by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, while the resolution on caste census was moved by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and seconded by Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Shinde, who is also the leader of BJP ally Shiv Sena, said, "The world needs to hear India's resolve through Operation Sindoor loud and clear - whoever dares to provoke India will be wiped out. The strength of our defence forces is the impenetrable shield protecting the nation."

Briefing media after the meeting, BJP president J.P. Nadda said the resolution on the caste census, it was being clarified that the NDA "does not believe in caste politics but caste enumeration will help those left behind in different fields to develop."

"Enumerating caste was always part of our political imagination and it was an NDA government, under (Bihar) Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, which had proposed to do this first," Mr. Nadda said.

The third Narendra Modi government will be completing a year on June 4, with the NDA completing 11 years in power with Mr. Modi at the helm, which will be marked on June 9. "We will on June 25 also be marking the 50th anniversary of the Emergency in India, and will on this occasion again see who worked to suspend democratic rights in the country and who defended these values," Mr. Nadda said.

district, was viewed as "undermining the identity of Manipur, its name, pride and respect", making the COCOMI demand an apology from the Governor and the resignation of the State's Security Adviser Kuldip Singh, and Deputy P.K. Singh, and Director-General of Police Rajiv Singh within 48 hours from Wednesday midnight.

The New Delhi-based campaign was launched on

Sunday to protest against the "failure" of the Government to apologise and the government's "reluctance" to remove the three top officials.

"Deeply concerning" The COCOMI condemned the actions of the security personnel.

"The deployment of such aggressive crowd control measures against unarmed civilians, including women, is deeply concerning," the organisation said, demanding that such "hostile" actions by security forces must immediately cease and be thoroughly reviewed.

The organisation also said a seven-member delegation of its members will leave for New Delhi on Monday to hold a meeting



Closed off: Security personnel stop protesters near the Raj Bhavan in Imphal on Sunday. AP

with the officials of the Union Home Ministry the following day. The meeting seeks to initiate follow-up action on the resolutions adopted during the Manipur People's Convention held in Imphal on May 3, on the second anniversary of the ethnic conflict.

The COCOMI said the agenda for the meeting would also include "a public apology from the Governor for the perceived insult to the people of Manipur," resignation or immediate transfer of the Chief Secretary, the Director-General of Police, and the Security Adviser, "all of whom are viewed as incompetent and responsible for making anti-State decision, which has added to the deteriorating situation".

Three arrested for attacking four men suspected of transporting beef in U.P.

Mayank Kumar

LUCKNOW

Three people were arrested in Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday on charges of beating up four people and setting on fire a mini-truck allegedly laden with beef on Saturday.

Two first information reports (FIR), one based on a petition from the father of one of the injured and the other on the basis of a complaint from villagers on illegal cow slaughtering, have been registered over the issue, Amrit Jain, Superintendent of Police, Aligarh Rural, told *The Hindu*, adding that there was peace in the locality now.

Special police teams have been formed to identify and arrest other attackers, and the police are waiting for a lab test report on the meat to proceed

further in the case.

The four injured individuals are currently receiving treatment at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Hospital in Aligarh. Mr. Jain said they were out of danger.

The allegations are being investigated and the meat sample has been sent to Mathura for lab test. We are waiting for the report on the meat sample to proceed further. Whatever facts come to light during the course of investigation, based on that, arrest and legal action will be taken," Mr. Jain said.

The named individuals accused in the FIR are linked to a fringe right-wing group.

Opposition targets govt. Teams from different political parties, including the Samajwadi Party (SP) and

One FIR registered for the attack, and another on a complaint of alleged cow slaughtering

the Congress, and social groups visited the injured in the hospital. They demanded that strict action be taken against the accused.

Opposition political parties targeted the State government over the incident, questioning if attack on Muslims and cow vigilantism has become a State policy.

"What has happened in Aligarh is in continuation of various forms and ways of attack on the Muslim community. Cow vigilantism has become a State policy with Muslims being beaten up by ele-

ments and fringe groups close to the BJP... The administration must punish individuals taking law into their hands," said Shuhrawaz Alam, national secretary, Congress.

The SP said that after the Pahalgam terror attack, some groups with vested interests were trying to create such an atmosphere as to target the Muslim community.

After Pahalgam, many incidents of attacks on minorities have been reported in U.P. Some people with vested interests are trying to target the Muslim community and the Aligarh incident of cow vigilantism is one such example. The government should take serious note of it and make sure such incidents are not repeated in future," said Arneque Jamei, an SP spokesperson.

Bypolls to five Assembly seats in four States on June 19: EC

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Sunday announced that by-elections to five Assembly seats in four States will be held on June 19.

By-elections will be held in two Assembly constituencies in Gujarat and one each in Kerala, West Bengal and Punjab.

Counting of votes will take place on June 23. The last date for filing nominations will be June 22. The withdrawal of candidature will be June 25.

The first elections since Ganesha Kumar took over as the Chief Election Commissioner in February.

Ballot beckons

The Election Commission on Sunday announced by-elections to five Assembly seats in four States

■ All the five Assembly seats will go to the polls on June 19
■ Bypolls will be held for Kadi and Visavadar seats in Gujarat, Nilambur in Kerala, Ludhiana in Punjab, and Kulligan in West Bengal
■ The last date for filing nominations is June 22 and that of withdrawal of candidature is June 25
■ The votes will be counted on June 23

sambhai Punjabbhai Solanki, BJP MLA for Kadi, had passed away. In Visavadar the Bhayani Bhupendrabhai Chaudhary, a Minister resigned from the Aam Aadmi party and joined the Congress. The Nilambur seat in Kerala will go to the polls following the death of sitting member of P.V. Anvar. In the Ludhiana seat of Punjab, by-

polls are being held due to the death of AAP MLA Gurpreet Bassi Gogi. The Aam Aadmi Party has named Rajya Sabha member Sanjeev Arora as its candidate. In Kulligan Assembly seat in West Bengal was necessitated following the death of sitting Trinamool Congress MLA Nasiruddin Ahamed.

INBRIEF



Government to unveil Bharat Forecasting System today

The government will on Monday unveil a new "Bharat Forecasting System" (BFS) that will enable the weather office to provide more accurate and localised predictions. Developed by the Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, it will provide forecasts with a 6 km resolution — the highest in the world — that would allow forecasters to predict small-scale weather features accurately. "We will now be able to issue more localised and accurate weather forecasts," M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said. The new forecasting model was made possible due to installation of the new supercomputer Arka at the ITM campus last year. —

Man arrested in Punjab for vandalising Ambedkar statue

A man was arrested in Hoshiarpur on Sunday for attempting to vandalise a statue of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and damage a replica of the Indian Constitution near the statue, the police said. The incident took place near the bus stand at Ambedkar Chowk. An FIR has been registered under relevant provision of the ITES and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act on the complaint of Sukhdev Singh, secretary of the Punjab Bahujan Samaj Party, an off-duty constable, the accused had claimed he did not accept Dr. Ambedkar or the Constitution, the officer said, adding further investigation is under way. —

'Children are unique, parents have an influence on their development'

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

There is no alternative to a balanced diet, good sleep, and physical activity in raising a happy, normal, and active child, doctors underlined at a webinar on "How to raise a healthy child" on Sunday.

The webinar, organised by The Hindu in collaboration with Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore, was the fifth edition in a series of 15 under the "Healthy India Happy India" initiative to inspire and promote well-being. Focusing on child health and the development of newborns to adolescents, the panelists highlighted the importance of prioritising nutrition, monitoring growth and milestones in different age groups, and positive parenting skills to enable children to blossom into happy and confident



youngsters. Delivering a talk on maternal health and healthy newborns, Murugesan A., Assistant Professor in the Department of Neonatology, Jawahar Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, Puducherry, said parents should make use of the Mother and Child Protection (MCP) card, and guidelines that are available online in local languages, free of cost. "The MCP card is a valuable but underused

tool," he said, adding, "It carries pictorial documentation of what needs to be done in each month of pregnancy and the new-born's growth, detailing on vaccines and immunisation, breastfeeding and nutrition. Every family should utilise this resource."

"Every child is unique and parents have an immense influence on their development," Sonia Kurian, head of the Department of Paediatrics at Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore, spoke about the cognitive, physical, and psychological development in 10- to 19-year-olds.

"A mother can breast-feed a child up to two years of age along with other weaning foods but if a child is bottle-fed longer, they don't get enough nutrients from milk alone, and run the risk of becoming obese and getting blood pressure and diabetes later in life," Dr. Kurian warned.

She advised parents to watch out for delayed milestones in their babies from two months to three years. These could include delayed walking and talking, lack of visual fixation and social smiles, no head control, lack of response to sounds and objects, and unintelligible speech and gestures. V. Nagarajan, consultant paediatrician at Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore, spoke about the cognitive, physical, and psychological development in 10- to 19-year-olds.

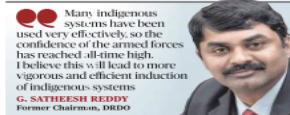
He said anaemia, anxiety disorders, and overweight were commonly seen in adolescent years, and it was for the parents to understand their child and provide a safe, loving, and supportive environment to help them to be independent and confident young people.

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

India has shown complete dominance during Operation Sindoor, showcasing its air power and air defence capability, said G. Satheesh Reddy, former Secretary, Research and Development, and Chairman, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), while expressing happiness that the majority of them are indigenous systems.

He cautioned that technology is changing very fast, and the process of development should not be so long that the technology gets outdated by the time it is inducted.

"I want to say that this war brought many positive things to India. First, many indigenous systems have been used very effectively, so the confidence of the armed forces in the indigenous equipment has increased. All-time believe this will lead to more vigorous and efficient induction of indige-

G. SATHEESH REDDY
Former Chairman, DRDO

Many indigenous systems have been used very effectively, so the confidence of the armed forces in the indigenous equipment has increased. All-time believe this will lead to more vigorous and efficient induction of indige-

from this conflict — and they have given an opportunity for growth and challenges to all stakeholders who are also gearing up to meet the challenges. The country's multi-armed air defence system worked seamlessly during the conflict from May 7 to May 10, integrating a range of systems from the long-range S-400, medium-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems, Akash and Spyder, and various air defence guns. Dr. Reddy said he is particularly proud of the Akash SAM, one of the missiles developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development programme. "It was a project which was conceived by



none other than Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. I heard that our armed forces are extremely happy with the performance of that system. Noting that almost all attempts of attack by the enemy were neutralised by the country's air defence systems mid-air itself, Dr. Reddy said that Operation Sindoor proved the effectiveness of India's air defence systems, largely home-grown, while also showcasing the depth in its attack arsenal to be able to target and neutralise any base locations of the enemy. On what the country should focus on in the near future, he stressed that investing in niche technologies is key as also investing in countering the base locations of the enemy. On what the country should focus on in the near future, he stressed that investing in niche technologies is key as also investing in countering the base locations of the enemy. On what the country should focus on in the near future, he stressed that investing in niche technologies is key as also investing in countering the base locations of the enemy.

ISS trip draws closer. Shubhanshu Shukla enters quarantine

Hemant C.S.
BENGALURU

Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and other crew members of the Axiom-4 (Ax-4) mission to the International Space Station (ISS) are entering quarantine ahead of the scheduled launch on June 8 from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

The Indian astronaut and crew members were given a send-off by employees of Axiom Space Inc. on Sunday. "Thank you so much for your contribution, I may not know you personally but I understand that it is each one of you that have contributed to this mission being a success and ensure it will be a success," Group Captain Shukla, the pilot of the Ax-4 mission, told Axiom Space employees.

"The Ax-4 crew is on the way to quarantine. Before they go, Axiom Space employees came together to celebrate. Crew Send-off is a tradition that pays tribute to the dedication and tireless efforts of the staff prior to the crew embarking on their mission. From #TeamAxiom, Godspeed #Ax4! Axiom Space said in a post on X.



Shubhanshu Shukla

The other crew members on the mission are Commander Peggy Whitson of the U.S., Mission Specialist Sławosz Uznański-Wisniewski of Poland, and Mission Specialist Ti-bor Kapu of Hungary.

A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket will launch the Ax-4 crew aboard a SpaceX Dragon spacecraft to the International Space Station from Launch Complex 39A at the Kennedy Space Center.

The Ax-4 crew will spend up to 14 days at the orbiting laboratory. Axiom Group Captain Shukla, who is also one of the four astronaut-designates selected for the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Gaganyaan mission, will be the first Indian astronaut to reach the ISS, and the first Indian in space after 40 years.

Meghalaya's new cave-dwelling fish adapts to streams underground: study

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

An underground cave in Meghalaya, in focus for a conflict over a Shivalinga-like rock, has yielded a new-to-science fish that adapts to streams underground. A team of zoologists, led by Kargang Sarma of Gauhati University's Department of Zoology, has recorded the discovery.

Schistura densiclavata as a new species of troglomorphic fish from Krem Mawmthuin in the State's East Khasi Hills district.

A troglomorphic animal is essentially a cave-dwelling animal that can thrive and reproduce in epigean, or aboveground, environments.

Dr. Sarma and Dr. Khir Bainsaid Mukhim of the study published in the latest issue of the *Journal of Fish Biology*. The authors are Hrishikesh Choudhury, Rajdeep Das, Rajant Chandran, Rajeev K. Singh, Debasak P. Warbah, Wandan Lyngdoh, Uttam Kumar Bainsaid, and Dandadhar Sarma.

The newly described loach, a bottom-dwelling fish with barbels hanging



Schistura densiclavata, a new species of troglomorphic loach, was found in East Khasi Hills district. SPEC. ADVERTISEMENT

from the mouth, was found in a cool, slow-flowing stream about 60 metres inside the cave, where the temperature was 18 degrees Celsius and oxygen levels were low. Belonging to the Nemacheilidae family, *Schistura densiclavata* is adapted to the dark, subterranean environment but can also

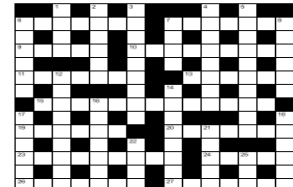
survive in surface waters. According to the authors, it retains pigment and eyesight, unlike other cave-dwelling fishes.

The newly described loach has a pale yellow-green body "marked with 14-20 greyish black to faint black bars" and a thick stripe near the dorsal fin. This stripe gave the loach its name — *densiclavata*, which means "thick stripe" in Latin.

The study said the *Schistura densiclavata* males are slimmer with irregular patterns and puffer cheeks, while the females are sturdier with consistent markings.

"Genetic testing confirmed it as a completely new species... The distribution of the new species is limited to the cave, which suggests endemism in this cave system," the researchers said.

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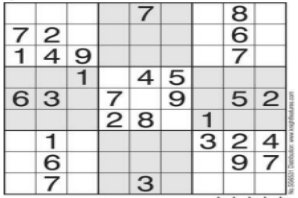
Across

- 6 Spouse returned blame and then split (7)
- 7 Rebellion allowed par (7)
- 9 Our really lovely old place starts with a deck (5)
- 10 One from Guangzhou's unable to live: seen desperate (9)
- 11 Royal assassin's fit to be sent out to just someone in danger (7)

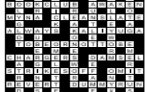
To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site at <https://www.puzzlesindia.com>

- 13 Obscure way to remove top of disk (3-3)
- 15 Victor, one day, it could explode around area creating cancer causing stuff (13)
- 19 Black ship's water tank (6)
- 20 Jealous of blended vino - English and American bottles were (5-4)
- 21 Journey to ends of capital in submarine for performance (7)
- 24 Love to go in for a rough style (5)
- 26 Stockpile of unopened jam (7)
- 27 Loose relative loses foot to snake (7)
- Down
- 1 Test of morals? (4)
- 2 Killer is up around new gym, at the centre of library (6)
- 3 If of adult rock's contrived (9)
- 4 Often young vines lacking strings essentially are transported from former Serbia? (8)
- 5 Entire bird's autonomic heart is at medium speed (13)
- 6 Earnings for climbing into mine (6)
- 7 Drawbacks of having no interest in stars (4)
- 8 Make clothes colourful, even, and mostly positive (3-3)
- 9 Delay in revoking Artificial Intelligence paper: rebel gets left (10)
- 14 Netat's tasty on the outside, surprisingly bitter in the middle (9)
- 16 Amateur experiment exploded, settler escaped (8)
- 17 A boy: one taking drink is an offender (6)
- 18 Middle-East German, softly dozing (6)
- 19 Musical direction: S, A, L, O (5)
- 20 God rubbed on bottom of knee gives happiness (4)
- 23 Prud animal with end of rod, squeezing top of tail (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Sainthood conduct

Whenever a person feels overwhelmed by problems in life, he would go to a temple or unburden himself to a guru and seek his blessings to overcome the same. This was particularly true of the 68th Pontiff of the Kanchi Math, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Sankaracharya, fondly known as Maha Periyava, said P. Swaminathan in a discourse.

A saint known for his travels to every nook and cranny, he was also known to camp in cities as well. Nearly 80 years ago, Maha Periyava was camping in the Sankara Math at Thambu Chetty Street in Parry's, Chennai. One day, after finishing his discourse, he suddenly entered the Kalikambal temple there and deeply impressed with the vibe, turned to the young son of the priest and blessed him to prepare well for a divine career in the temple. The young lad in later days came to be known as Sivachariar. Once, Sivachariar and Tiruvetkadu Ramadas Swami were heading to the airport to take a flight to Hyderabad when they met with an accident. Passers-by stood nonplussed on how to help, when the then Chief Minister, en route to Delhi, stopped at the accident site, assured top medical aid for the two spiritualists, who were rushed to the government hospital. As news of the accident went viral, Maha Periyava's Math was the first to send prasada to the two men. A steel rod was implanted in Sivachariar's right hand, which could have got in the way of his spiritual activities. For, as the priest, he had to perform certain mudras to the temple deity. Sivachariar sought an audience with Maha Periyava, who with his yogic power helped the priest not just heal physically but also boosted his morale.



Government to unveil Bharat Forecasting System today

The government will on Monday unveil a new “Bharat Forecasting System” (BFS) that will enable the weather office to provide more accurate and localised predictions. Developed by the Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, it will provide forecasts with a 6 km resolution – the highest in the world – that would allow forecasters to predict small-scale weather features accurately. “We will now be able to issue more localised and accurate weather forecasts,” M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said. The new forecasting model was made possible due to installation of the new supercomputer Arka at the IITM campus last year. PTI

Time for a new India-Africa digital compact

Africa Day (May 25) marks the founding of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 and symbolises the continent's ongoing journey towards unity, independence, and development. To usher in a new era of growth, the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020-2030) positions digital innovation at the heart of its agenda. It recognises the need for governments to adopt digital solutions that can accelerate socio-economic progress.

This evolving paradigm is also reshaping India's approach to development diplomacy in Africa. For decades, India has blended state-led financing with socially embedded solutions, ranging from capacity-building through technical training to infrastructure projects backed by concessional lines of credit. Increasingly, social enterprises delivering low-cost, high-impact innovations have also become part of New Delhi's engagement, reflecting a shift toward more inclusive and adaptable partnerships.

A digital partnership

India's development approach is now entering a new phase, marked by more integrated, technology-driven partnerships. This builds on early initiatives such as the Pan-African e-Network, launched in 2009, which provided tele-medicine and tele-education through satellite and fibre-optic infrastructure, implemented by TCI, on behalf of the Indian government.

Expanding on this, and building on the success of its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) systems, such as Aadhaar, UPI, CoWIN, and DIKSHA, India is now focusing on sharing and co-creating digital solutions to tackle challenges in governance and service delivery challenges. This shift comes at a crucial moment for Africa, where many governments are advancing national and continental digital agendas, aligned with initiatives such as the Policy and Regulatory



Veda Vaidyanathan
Fellow, Foreign Policy and Security Studies, Centre for Social and Economic Progress

Initiative for Digital Africa and the Smart Africa Alliance, aimed at harnessing technology for inclusive and sustainable development.

The contours of a digital partnership between India and Africa are already emerging. In 2021, Togo's National Agency for Identification signed an MoU with the International Institute of Information Technology Madras (IIIT-M) to implement the Modular Open-Source Identification Platform as the foundation for its national digital ID system. In 2023, Zambia signed an MoU with the Centre for Digital Public Infrastructure at IIIT-B to support the implementation and scaling up of the Smart Zambia Initiative, a national effort to advance digital transformation across government services. In 2024, the Bank of Namibia signed a pact with the National Payments Corporation of India for developing a UPI-like instant payment system. Ghana, too, is linking its payment system with India's UPI to enable faster transactions. These partnerships reflect a growing interest in India's DPI model, which offers affordability, scalability, and a public-oriented approach.

However, these advances of India's digital diplomacy in Africa are not occurring in a vacuum. As research by Polshadke Soule highlights, African governments typically choose digital partners not based on ideological alignment or geopolitical loyalty, but on the partner's capacity to meet national digital priorities. In this context, China has frequently emerged as a preferred collaborator, thanks to state-backed financial mechanisms that lower the cost of adoption, especially in infrastructure-heavy domains. But it is not alone in shaping Africa's digital future: the European Union, the U.S., and India are competing for influence. What sets India apart is not just its digital public good, but its framing of DPI as a digital public good, open-source, and adaptable.

India's DPI model offers a public-oriented alternative to a more surveillance-driven or proprietary approach. The opportunity lies in adapting these tools to local contexts through genuine state-led collaboration, beyond technology transfer.

In this context, the establishment of the first overseas campus of the Indian Institute of Technology Madras in Zanzibar represents a strategic intervention. By offering advanced academic programmes in Data Science and AI and integrating with Indian private sector partners to fund scholarships, the initiative aligns technical capacity-building with broader socio-economic goals. If scaled effectively, such models could power Africa's digital infrastructure.

Challenges However, challenges persist. Africa is home to the world's largest digital divide. This exclusion is shaped by the high costs of data and devices, stark rural-urban disparities in connectivity, and a persistent gender gap in digital access and literacy. Moreover, the expansion of digital infrastructure hinges on a reliable energy supply, a critical bottleneck in many African countries. Meeting the growing energy demands of digital transformation will require coordinated investments in sustainable power generation and grid expansion.

Regardless, the groundwork for digital governance is advancing. About 85% of African countries now have national ID systems with digital capabilities, and over 70% collect biometric data for authentication purposes. This presents a strong foundation on which to build inclusive and interoperable public digital platforms. A new India-Africa digital compact, anchored in mutual respect, co-development, and long-term institutional partnerships, could serve as a scalable framework for advancing digital inclusion.

The wait for judicial finality

Why the Kerala government is keenly watching the Waqf proceedings in Court

STATE OF PLAY

K.S. Sudhi
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The Kerala government, which is opposed to the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2024, is closely watching the legal proceedings in the Waqf case in the Supreme Court.

In 2019, the Waqf Board in Kerala claimed over more than 400 acres of land in Munambam, a coastal village in Ernakulam district. The inhabitants of Munambam are mostly Christian families numbering around 600. When several residents of the village began demanding restoration of the revenue rights of their holdings, the State BJP saw an opportunity. The party unleashed a campaign arguing that enactment of the new law would resolve the issue. It also hoped that this pitch would help it make some inroads into the Christian voters of the State. However, its hopes were dashed when it later emerged that the law would be of little use in solving the issue as there are no specific provisions in the 2025 amendment that will directly address the issue. BJP leaders have themselves clarified that they will have to wage a legal battle to get the issue solved.

The ruling LDF and the Opposition UDP are united in their opposition to the Waqf (Amendment) Act and wasted no time in campaigning against what they termed as "deceitful acts" of the BJP to exploit the issue. Immediately, BJP leaders, including Union Ministers, went on a damage-control exercise. They tried to save the party from political embarrassment and from the possibility of losing the trust of the residents of



Munambam residents and Christian voters by requesting them to wait for just three months. They contended that the Rules of the amended Act would be notified in this period. However, the Union government is yet to publish the Rules, even as the constitutional validity of the Act is being challenged in the Supreme Court. The intense legal battle may take time to conclude and further delay the notification of the Rules.

To add to the BJP's woes, legal experts have been cautioning the residents of Munambam against being too optimistic about the changes that the Rules could bring in to support their cause. They say no Rule can prescribe anything which has not already been mentioned in the parent law. Rules, they argue, are the enabling provisions of the parent law; they are not binding on the courts. The Board had acted in this direction much before the government took a call on challenging the new legislation. The Board had acted in this direction much before the government took a call on challenging the new legislation. The Board had acted in this direction much before the government took a call on challenging the new legislation.

Meanwhile, the new chairperson of the Waqf Tribunal, T.K. Minimol, who was a district and sessions judge serving in Thrissur, will have to consider whether the litigation regarding Munambam, initiated two years ago. The constitutional challenges raised regarding the 2025 Act have left the Kerala Waqf Board, which is at the corner of the term, in a confused position. It does not want to antagonise any sections of society. Board, which is headed by a nominee of the CPI (M), ended

on December 19, 2024. The Kerala High Court had asked the Board to continue in office for two more months or until the election for picking up members, whichever is earlier, was completed. Its order came before the legislation was enacted. The 2025 legislation, which has done away with the election process, has proposed that members be nominated to the Board. Also, it has made provisions for nominating non-Muslims to the Board, which has come under legal challenge before the Supreme Court. The Board has to put on hold the process of reconstruction even after the expiry of its term.

The State government, which had earlier thought of reconstituting the Board as prescribed in the Waqf (Amendment) Act, appears to have decided not to act in haste and wait for the Court's verdict as it had raised objections to several provisions of the Act. After hesitating for some time, the Kerala government decided to implement in the litigation before the top court challenging the constitutional validity of the 2025 legislation. The Board had acted in this direction much before the government took a call on challenging the new legislation. The Board had acted in this direction much before the government took a call on challenging the new legislation.

Much like the residents of Munambam, the Kerala government too is waiting for the legal battle to be over to decide its next steps, both legal and political. With the local body elections, considered the semi-finals to the Assembly polls to be held next year, around the corner, the State government is treading a careful path. It does not want to antagonise any sections of society.

Share of cardiac and diabetic deaths soar in India

COVID-19 interrupted India's long-term shift in mortality patterns from communicable to non-communicable diseases

DATA POINT

Vignesh Radhakrishnan

The share of Indians dying from cardiovascular diseases and diabetes has surged, while deaths from malaria, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, and perinatal conditions have declined. Notably, the share of deaths from fevers of unknown origin has increased over the years. In contrast, the share of deaths due to cancer has remained relatively flat. Over time, while more and more Indians have been dying from non-communicable diseases, fewer have been dying from communicable diseases. However, this trend reversed during the pandemic, when deaths from COVID-19 surged (Chart 1).

The share of men who died from cardiovascular diseases rose from 21.5% in 2004-06 to 32% in 2019-21, and the share of women from 17.8% to 27.7% (Chart 2). Deaths due to diabetes mellitus among men increased from 1.5% to 3.3% over the same period. Among women, the share rose from 1.6% to 4.2% (Chart 3).

The share of men and women who died from cancer has remained flat in the range of 6-7% over the years (Chart 4). Due to medical interventions, the share of men and women who died due to perinatal conditions (Chart 5), diarrhoeal disease (Chart 6) and tuberculosis (Chart 7) has come down. The share of men and women who died due to perinatal deaths declined from 8% to 2%. For diarrhoea, the corresponding numbers were 6-9% to 2-3%, and for tuberculosis, from 4-6% to 2-3%.

The share of people who died from fevers of unknown origin went up from 2% among men to 8%, and from 3% among women to 6.5% (Chart 9). Also, the share who died due to ill-defined causes is higher now than it was two decades ago.

What's killing Indians?

Data sourced from the 'Cause of Death' statistics published by the Office of the Registrar General of India
Bhurat A. Ramona, Roida NM, Christy Jose J, R.P. Joshi, Anurag, Shree Mathew, P and Rithin Andrews R, who are interning with The Hindu Data Team, collected the data

The assignment of cause of death involved medical certification by a doctor, followed by a review by trained physicians who examined the death reports using a web-based system developed specifically for this study

Chart 2: The share of men and women who died from cardiovascular diseases (in %)



Chart 3: The share of men and women who died due to diabetes mellitus (in %)

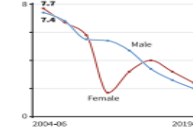


Chart 4: The share of men and women who died due to cancer (in %)



Chart 5: The share of men and women who died from fever of unknown origin (in %)



Chart 6: The share of men and women who died from diarrhoeal disease (in %)

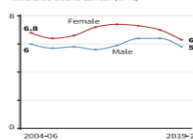


Chart 7: The share of men and women who died from tuberculosis (in %)

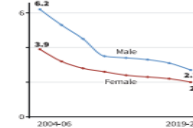


Chart 8: The share of men and women who died from liver of unknown origin (in %)

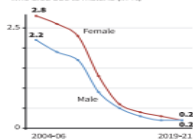
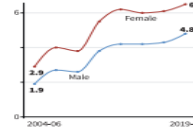


Chart 9: The share of men and women who died from ill-defined causes (in %)



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 26, 1975

Curbs on export of rare birds and mammals

Calcutta, May 25: The Centre has further listed 44 rare species and endangered categories of birds and imposed restrictions on their export under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, according to an official source.

Besides, three species of reptiles and 37 species of mammals were brought under the purview of the restrictive order which came into force this morning.

While the birds include munias, mynas, finches and pigeons (except blue rock pigeons), the reptiles are chameleons, rat snakes and water snake. Among the mammals Andaman wild pig, Assamese macaque, common dolphin, hyena, Nilgiri thar and jackal are listed.

Under the order only registered exporters of wildlife and wildlife products will be allowed to despatch the listed birds, reptiles and mammals through the major ports of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and Delhi on production of a wild certificate to be issued by the State's Chief Wildlife Warden.

Earlier, the Centre under the Act had totally banned trade in 70 rare and endangered species of mammals, 18 reptiles and 44 birds to protect and preserve wildlife in the country. The trade in butterflies and moth and dragonfly had also been banned.

While a separate policy in regard to rhinos, monkeys, bonnet monkeys and peacock-tail feather has yet to be announced, the export of non-poisonous live snakes will be allowed on shipping bills by the registered exporters of wildlife in all permissible destinations with a limited ceiling.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 26, 1925

Earthquake in Japan

Osaka, May 23: It is estimated that 200 persons have been killed and 500 injured at Toyoka as the result of an earthquake. Many hundreds of casualties occurred at Kenosaki, where an extensive fire broke out, the whole town being ablaze and a great stampede followed.

Seismological observations indicate that the earthquake was caused by a landslide.

Damage to sericulture has been most extensive economically, but only about one million yens worth of property is covered by insurance.

What's killing Indians?

Data sourced from the 'Cause of Death' statistics published by the Office of the Registrar General of India

Bharat A. Ramana, Raida NM, Christiya Jose J, R.P Josmani Joan, Shane Mathew. P and Rithinn Andrewson R, who are interning with The Hindu Data Team, collated the data

The assignment of cause of death involved medical evaluation by two independent trained physicians who examined the field reports using a web-based system developed specifically for this study

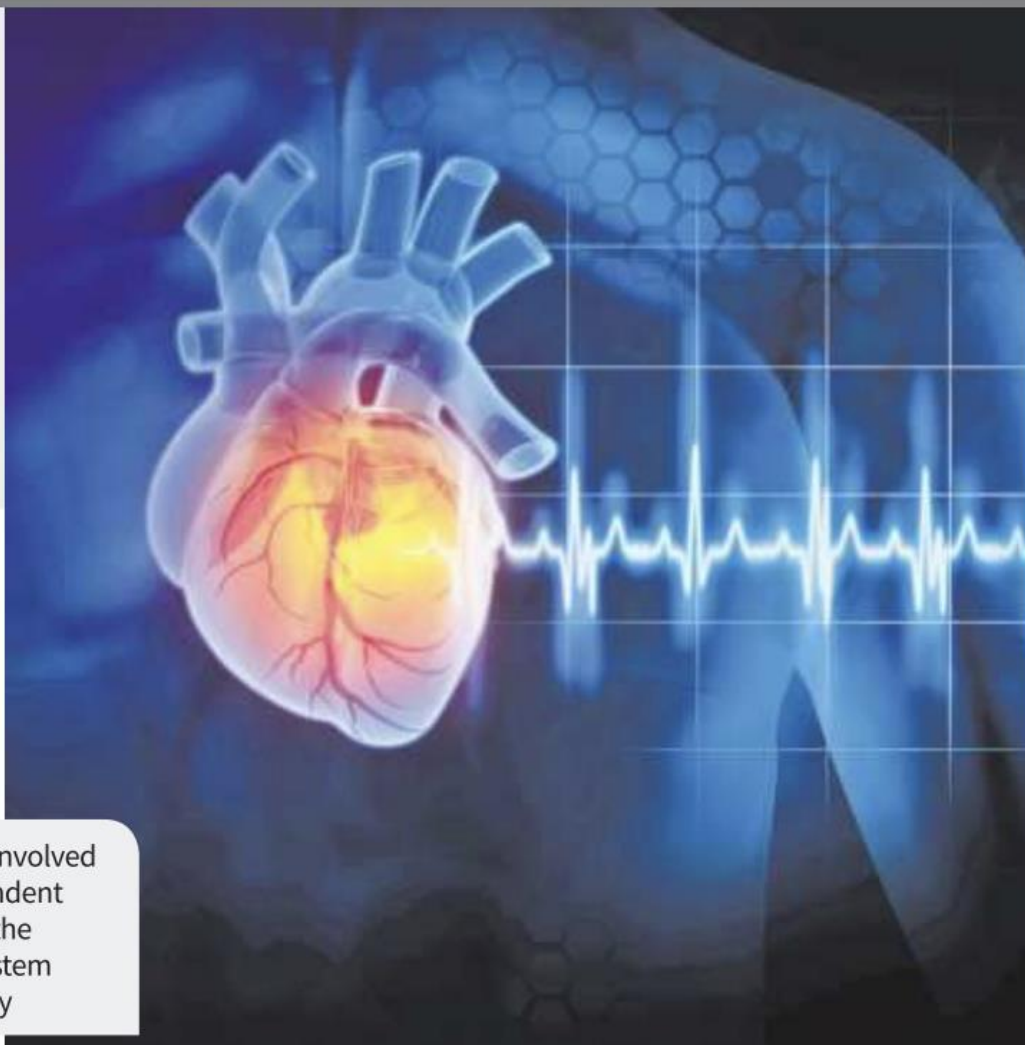


Chart 1: While more and more Indians have been dying from non-communicable diseases, fewer have been dying from communicable diseases. However, this trend reversed slightly during the pandemic, when deaths from COVID-19 surged

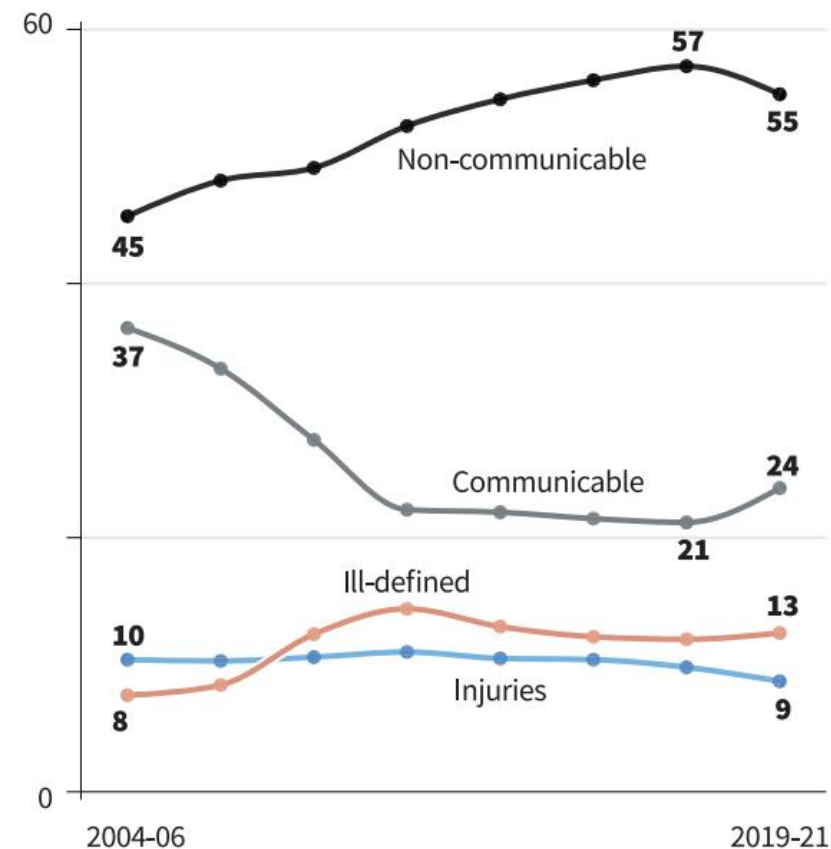


Chart 2: The share of men and women who died from cardiovascular diseases (in %)

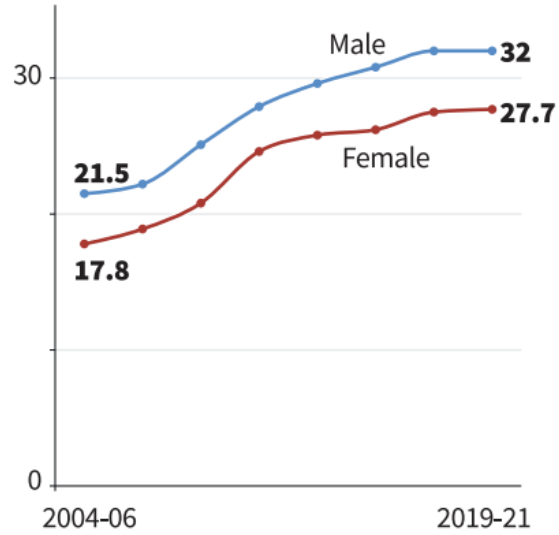


Chart 3: The share of men and women who died due to diabetes mellitus (in %)

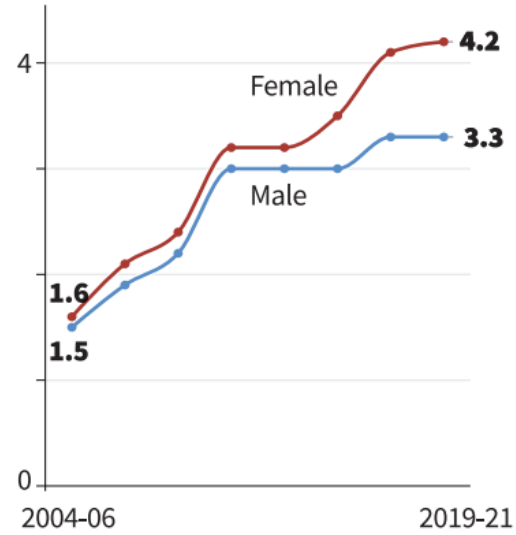


Chart 4: The share of men and women who died due to cancer (in %)

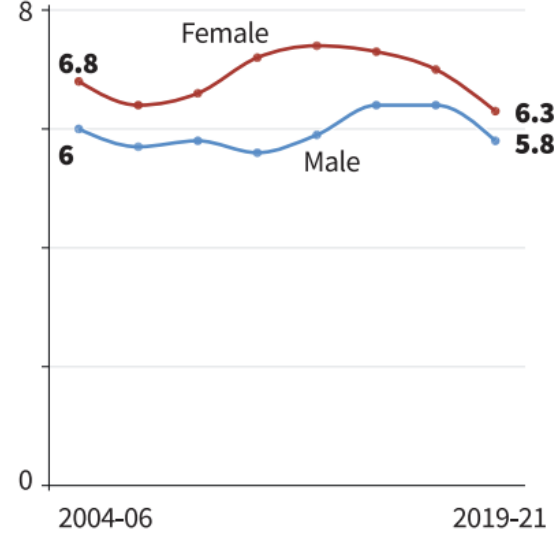


Chart 5: The share of men and women who died due to malaria (in %)

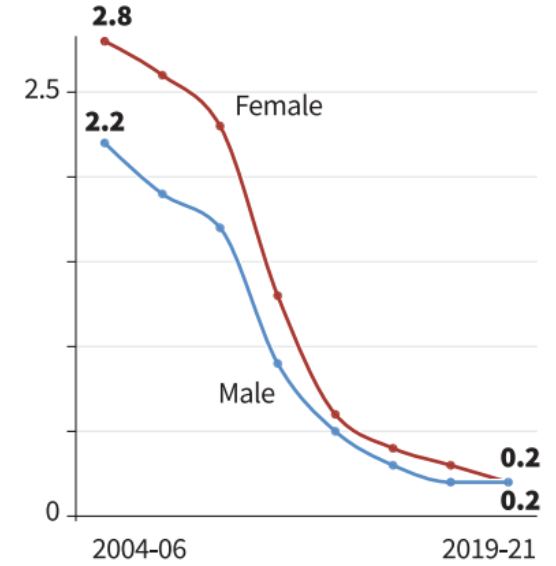


Chart 6: The share of men and women who died from perinatal conditions (in %)

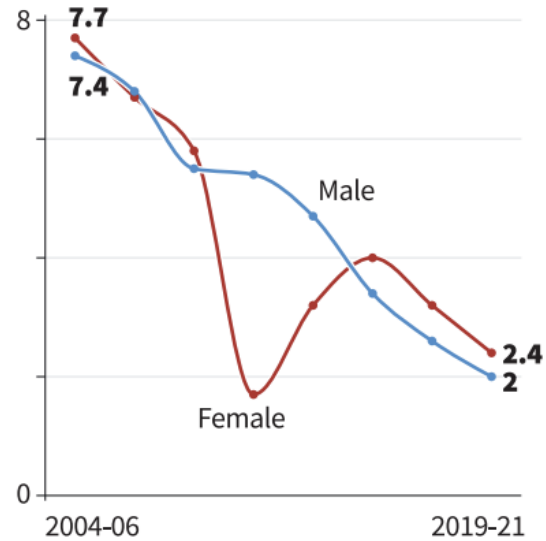


Chart 7: The share of men and women who died from diarrhoeal diseases (in %)

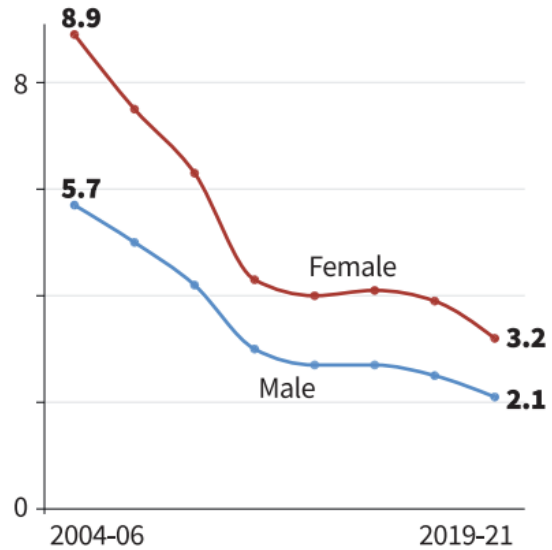


Chart 8: The share of men and women who died from tuberculosis (in %)

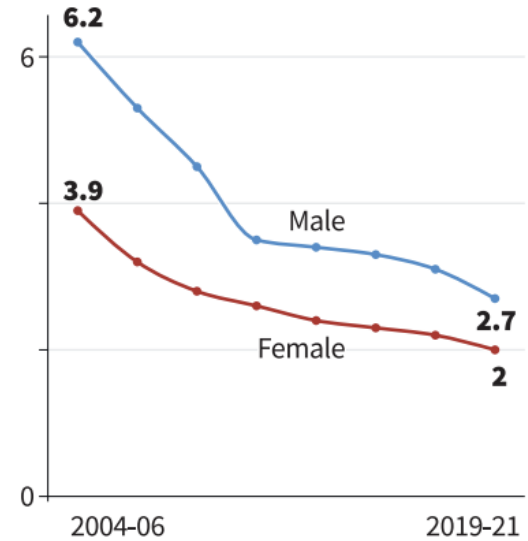
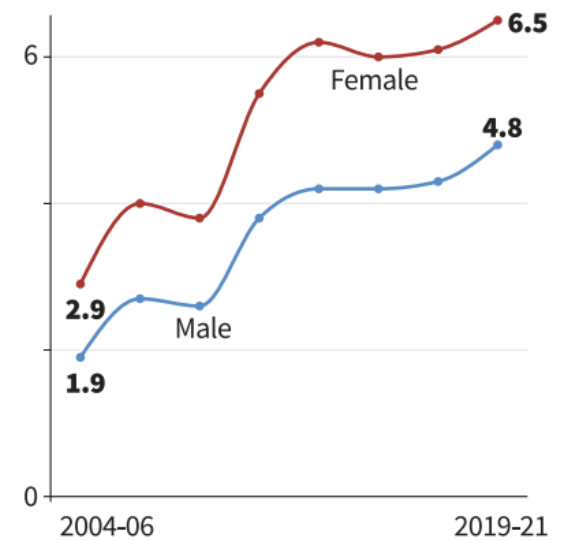


Chart 9: The share of men and women who died from fever of unknown origin (in %)



CACHE

Google's AI Matryoshka: restructuring the search giant

The technology behemoth's recent I/O conference revealed a layered AI strategy, promising immense power but also raising profound questions about data, intellectual property, and user privacy

John Xavier

Google's annual I/O developer conference in 2025 was less a showcase of disparate product updates and more a systematic unveiling of an AI-centric future. The unspoken theme was that of a Matryoshka doll: at its core, a refined and potent artificial intelligence, with each successive layer representing a product or platform drawing life from this central intelligence. Google is not merely sprinkling AI across its offerings; it is fundamentally restructuring its vast ecosystem around it. The result is an increasingly interconnected and agentic experience, one that extends to users, developers, and enterprises alike, prompting a re-evaluation of the firm's responsibilities concerning the data that fuels this transformation.

"More intelligence is available, for everyone, everywhere," declared Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and its parent company, Alphabet. "And the world is responding, adopting AI faster than ever before." This statement signals a push towards a more intelligent, autonomous, and personalised Google. Yet, as each layer of this AI Matryoshka is peeled back, the data upon which this intelligence is built, the copyrighted material ingested by its models, and the implications for user privacy are brought into sharper focus, forming a critical, if less trumpeted, narrative.

It has been nearly two years since Satya Nadella of Microsoft described Google as an "800-pound gorilla" challenged to perform new AI tricks. Google's response, particularly evident at I/O 2025, suggests the gorilla is learning to pirouette.

At the innermost core of Google's AI strategy lie its foundational models. The keenly awaited Gemini 2.5 Flash and Pro models, now nearing general availability, represent more than incremental improvements; they are a refined engine for AI experiences. The "enhanced reasoning mode in Gemini 2.5 Pro," dubbed Deep Think, leverages parallel processing, demonstrates impressive capabilities in complex mathematics and coding, even achieving a notable score on the 2025 USAMO, a demanding mathematics benchmark. While Deep Think will initially be available to select testers via the Gemini API, its potential to grapple with highly complex problems signals a significant advancement in AI reasoning.

Workhorse upgraded
Gemini 2.5 Flash, the workhorse model, has also received substantial upgrades, purportedly becoming "better in nearly every dimension." It boasts increased efficiency, using 20-30% fewer tokens than the units of data processed by AI models, and is set to become the default in the Gemini application. These models, enhanced with native audio input and output for more naturalistic conversational interactions in 2.5 Pro and Flash, and a pioneering multi-speaker real-time speech function supporting two voices across 24 languages, constitute the powerful nucleus from which all other AI functionalities radiate.

This computational prowess is built



Complete change: Google CEO Sundar Pichai addresses the crowd during Google's annual I/O developers conference in Mountain View, California on May 20, 2025. AFP

upon Google's proprietary Tensor Processing Units (TPUs). The seventh generation TPU, Ironwood, is said to deliver a tenfold performance increase over its predecessor, offering a formidable 42.5 exaFLOPS of compute per pod. Such hardware forms the bedrock for training and deploying these sophisticated AI systems.

However, the very power of these generative models, especially Imagen 4 and Veo 3 for visual media, and Lyria 2 for music generation, necessitates a closer look at their training data. The creation of rich, nuanced outputs depends on ingesting colossal datasets.

Persistent industry-wide concerns revolve around the use of copyrighted material without explicit consent or remuneration for original creators. Google highlighted tools such as SynthID, designed to watermark AI-generated content, and a new SynthID Detector for its verification. Yet, these are mitigations, not comprehensive solutions, to the intricate and ongoing debate surrounding copyright and fair use in an era increasingly defined by generative AI. The

provenance and fiduciary responsibility over the data remain complex issues.

Platform proliferation

One layer out from the core models are the platforms and APIs that democratise access to this AI. The Gemini API and Vertex AI are pivotal here, serving as the primary conduits for developers and enterprises. Google aims to improve the developer experience by offering "thought summaries," providing transparency into the model's reasoning, and extending "thinking budgets" to Gemini 2.5 Pro, giving developers more control over computational resources.

Critically, native software development kit (SDK) support for the Model Context Protocol (MCP) has been incorporated into the Gemini API. This represents a significant move towards fostering a more interconnected ecosystem of AI agents, enabling them to communicate and collaborate with greater efficacy by sharing contextual information. This inter-agent communication, while powerful, also introduces new vectors for data security considerations, as

information flows between potentially diverse systems. Project Mariner, a research tool, is also being integrated into the Gemini API and Vertex AI, allowing users to experiment with its task automation capabilities.

AI meets the user

The outermost layers of Google's AI Matryoshka are where users most directly encounter AI, often without fully comprehending the sophisticated infrastructure beneath. This is where Google is reimaging search, commerce, coding, and application integration.

The "AI Mode" in Search, scheduled for rollout to users in the United States, will offer enhanced reasoning and multimodal search capabilities, powered by a customised version of Gemini 2.5. A feature within this mode, Deep Search, is designed to generate comprehensive, cited reports. The quality and impartiality of these citations, especially when generated by AI, will be an area for careful scrutiny.

Within AI Mode, a novel shopping experience will allow users to virtually try on clothes by uploading their own photographs. Once a product is selected, an "agentic checkout" feature, initially available in the U.S., promises to complete the purchase. Such a feature inherently requires access to sensitive personal and financial data, raising questions about data minimisation, security, and the potential for profiling.

The all-in-one app

The Gemini application itself is being significantly augmented. The Live feature is now generally available on Android and iOS, and the app incorporates more native generation. For subscribers to the new Google AI Ultra tier, the app will feature the latest video generation tool, complete with native audio. A "Deep Research" function within the app can now draw upon users' private documents and images. While potentially offering powerful personal insights, this feature dives deep into personal data pools, demanding robust privacy safeguards and transparent consent mechanisms. How this data is firewallled, processed, and protected from misuse or overreach will be paramount.

Canva, the creative workplace within Gemini, has been made more intuitive with the Gemini 2.5 models, facilitating the creation of interactive infographics, quizzes, and even podcast-style Audio Overviews in 45 languages. Furthermore, Gemini is being integrated into the Chrome browser initially for Pro and Ultra subscribers in the U.S., enabling users to query and summarise webpage content.

For developers, the new asynchronous coding agent, Jules, is now in public beta globally where Gemini models are accessible. It integrates directly with existing code repositories, understanding project context to write tests, build features, and rectify bugs using Gemini 2.5 Pro.

Mr. Pichai's "new phase of the AI platform shift" is undeniably underway. Google's introduction of a new Google AI Ultra subscription tier offers users differentiated access to its most advanced AI capabilities. This stratification, however, prompts questions about whether the most robust privacy-enhancing features or responsible AI controls will be universally available or if a "privacy premium" could emerge, where deeper safeguards are reserved for paying customers. As Google rearchitects itself around AI, the intricate web of control between innovation, utility, and the stewardship of data will define its next chapter. The layers of the Matryoshka are still being revealed, and with each one, the responsibilities grow.



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

My teacher was debarred from college

The thesis was interesting and had a couple of great points. But, as a whole, it was undercooked

S. Upendran

"Come on in! The look on your face suggests that you have bad news." "On my way here, I got a call from my sister and she was..." "I hope she and her family are okay, and there's nothing..."

"They're all doing fine. It's her husband's younger brother. He's a lawyer, and several judges have threatened to debar him."

"Don't they mean the same thing? I was told that..."

"No, they don't; they have different meanings. Both 'debar' and 'disbar' are mostly used as verbs, and both have the stress on the second syllable."

"So, the two words are pronounced 'de-BAR' and 'dis-BAIR'?"

"That's right. When you 'debar' an individual from doing something, what you're doing is..."

"When you 'disbar' someone, you prevent them from doing something..." "You are officially prohibiting the person from doing it. It could be a law that stops one."

"I see. How about this example? The two debarred teachers were instructed not to set foot on campus again."

"That sounds like a good example! The expelled diplomat was debarred from entering the country."

"I think I understand what 'debar' means. Tell me what 'disbar' means." "It is a term that's mostly used in legal contexts. When you say that a lawyer has been 'disbarred', what you're suggesting is that he's been kicked out of the legal profession."

"Meaning he cannot practise law anymore for he's no longer a lawyer?" "Very good! The lawyer has done something seriously wrong, and his licence to practise law has been revoked."

"I didn't know what to do because both my lawyers had been disbarred..." "That's interesting. What did you do?"

"That was just an example. Called you several times around 6 o'clock yesterday, and got no response. Where were you? I was in the theatre watching the movie you'd recommended."

"Really? You're full of surprise! I hope you liked the movie as much as I did." "I'm not so sure about that. The movie was entertaining. But I thought the story was undercooked. You see, the hero..."

"The story was undercooked? What are you talking about? Vegetables can be undercooked, but not stories..." "Well, believe it or not, even stories can be. When you say that a story or a plot has been undercooked, what you're suggesting is that it hasn't been fully developed."

"In other words, there's something lacking. It lacks depth." supendran@gmail.com

Word of the day

Arbitration:

the hearing and determination of a dispute by an impartial referee agreed to by both parties (jurisprudence); the act of deciding as an arbiter; giving authoritative judgment

Synonym: mediation

Usage: They submitted their disagreement to arbitration.

Pronunciation: /arbi'treɪʃən/

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɑː.bɪ'treɪ.ʃən/, /ɑː.bɪ'treɪ.ʃən/

THE DAILY QUIZ

Perhaps there's no surer sign of economic fortune than towering skyscrapers. This quiz takes a closer look at six iconic ones

Vasudevan Mukundh

QUESTION 1

The Tokyo Skytree is the world's tallest tower. Its architecture combines traditional Japanese styles with... an avant-garde movement of the early 21st century with roots in the work of Buckminster Fuller, among others. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 2

The construction of this towering building began in 2004 and the outer structure was completed in 2009. It was originally to be named after its host city but the city's political hand changed it to the name of its counterpart in a neighbouring territory for the latter's help shoring up its developer's finances during the 2008 recession. Name the building.

QUESTION 3

The Gulf of Mexico is the location of a 640-metre-high structure built in 2000 and operated by an American multinational company. The structure is notable for being one of the tallest in world, even though most of it is supported by buoyancy because it stands in water. Name the company.

QUESTION 4

Nersis 118 in Kuala Lumpur is the second-tallest building in the world. Its development costs were footed by the Malaysian government. Name the Malaysian prime minister who defunded the controversial expense but whose endorsement was instrumental to his conviction and imprisonment in the 1MDB corruption scandal.

QUESTION 5

The buildings in questions 2, 4, and the visual all belong to a class of structures called... skyscrapers — an apt name given their height. There are only four in the world. Fill in the blank.



Visual question: Name this building, which remains the world's only one of its kind to be certified LEED Platinum for its environmental friendliness.

Questions and Answers to the May 23 daily quiz:
1. The... and the... methods are both used to generate supercriticality in a process known as nuclear fission. **Ans:** Gun and Implosion
2. This was a programme in the U.S. to develop and use nuclear explosives for peaceful purposes, especially in construction. **Ans:** Operation Plowshare
3. When a nuclear weapon explodes, one of the effects is called the electromagnetic pulse. Gamma radiation collides with air molecules to produce high-energy electrons. Name this effect. **Ans:** Compton effect
4. The only way to create a purely fusion nuclear bomb is to use naturally occurring isotopes that exist in an elevated energetic state. Name these isotopes. **Ans:** Nuclear Isomers
5. In 1955, a document was released in London by two well-known scientists on the devastating potential of nuclear weaponry. Name the document. **Ans:** Russell-Einstein Manifesto
Visual: Name this Soviet facility. **Ans:** Obninsk Nuclear Power Plant
Early Birds: Tamal Biswas| Piyali Tuli| Sunil Madhavan| Dodo Jayaditya| Gourang Sharma

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'

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Google's annual I/O developer conference in 2025 was less a showcase of disparate product updates and more a systematic unveiling of an AI-centric future. The unspoken theme was that of a Matryoshka doll: at its core, a refined and potent artificial intelligence, with each successive layer representing a product or platform drawing life from this central intelligence. Google is not merely sprinkling AI across its offerings; it is fundamentally restructuring its vast ecosystem around it. The result is an increasingly interconnected and agentic experience, one that extends to users, developers, and enterprises alike, prompting a re-evaluation of the firm's responsibilities concerning the data that fuels this transformation.

"More intelligence is available, for everyone, everywhere," declared Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and its parent company, Alphabet. "And the world is responding, adopting AI faster than ever before." This statement signals a push towards a more intelligent, autonomous, and personalised Google. Yet, as each layer of this AI Matryoshka is peeled back, the data upon which this intelligence is built, the copyrighted material ingested by its models, and the implications for user privacy are brought into sharper focus, forming a critical, if less trumpeted, narrative.

It has been nearly two years since Satya Nadella of Microsoft described Google as an "800-pound gorilla" challenged to perform new AI tricks. Google's response, particularly evident at I/O 2025, suggests the gorilla is learning to pirouette.

At the innermost core of Google's AI strategy lie its foundational models. The keenly awaited Gemini 2.5 Flash and Pro models, now nearing general availability, represent more than incremental improvements; they are a refined engine for AI experiences. The "enhanced reasoning mode in Gemini 2.5 Pro," dubbed Deep Think, leverages parallel processing, demonstrates impressive capabilities in complex mathematics and coding, even achieving a notable score on the 2025 USAMO, a demanding mathematics benchmark. While Deep Think will initially be available to select testers via the Gemini API, its potential to grapple with highly complex problems signals a significant advancement in AI reasoning.

Workhorse upgraded

Gemini 2.5 Flash, the workhorse model, has also received substantial upgrades, purportedly becoming "better in nearly every dimension." It boasts increased efficiency, using 20-30% fewer tokens (the units of data processed by AI models), and is set to become the default in the Gemini application. These models, enhanced with native audio output for more naturalistic conversational interactions in 2.5 Pro and Flash, and a pioneering multi-speaker text-to-speech function supporting two voices across 24 languages, constitute the powerful nucleus from which all other AI functionalities radiate.

This computational prowess is built



Complete change: Google CEO Sundar Pichai addresses the crowd during Google's annual I/O developers conference in Mountain View, California on May 20, 2025. *APF*

upon Google's proprietary Tensor Processing Units (TPUs). The seventh generation TPU, Ironwood, is said to deliver a tenfold performance increase over its predecessor, offering a formidable 42.5 exaFLOPS of compute per pod. Such hardware forms the bedrock for training and deploying these sophisticated AI systems.

However, the very power of these generative models, especially Imagen 4 and Veo 3 for visual media, and Lyria 2 for music generation, necessitates a closer look at their training data. The creation of rich, nuanced outputs depends on ingesting colossal datasets.

Persistent industry-wide concerns revolve around the use of copyrighted material without explicit consent or remuneration for original creators. Google highlighted tools such as SynthID, designed to watermark AI-generated content, and a new SynthID Detector for its verification. Yet, these are mitigations, not comprehensive solutions, to the intricate and ongoing debate surrounding copyright and fair use in an era increasingly defined by generative AI. The

provenance and fiduciary responsibility over the data remain complex issues.

Platform proliferation

One layer out from the core models are the platforms and APIs that democratise access to this AI. The Gemini API and Vertex AI are pivotal here, serving as the primary conduits for developers and enterprises. Google aims to improve the developer experience by offering "thought summaries," providing transparency into the model's reasoning, and extending "thinking budgets" to Gemini 2.5 Pro, giving developers more control over computational resources.

Critically, native software development kit (SDK) support for the Model Context Protocol (MCP) has been incorporated into the Gemini API. This represents a significant move towards fostering a more interconnected ecosystem of AI agents, enabling them to communicate and collaborate with greater efficacy by sharing contextual information. This inter-agent communication, while powerful, also introduces new vectors for data security considerations, as

information flows between potentially diverse systems. Project Mariner, a research tool, is also being integrated into the Gemini API and Vertex AI, allowing users to experiment with its task automation capabilities.

AI meets the user

The outermost layers of Google's AI Matryoshka are where users most directly encounter AI, often without fully comprehending the sophisticated infrastructure beneath. This is where Google is reimagining search, commerce, coding, and application integration.

The "AI Mode" in Search, scheduled for rollout to users in the United States, will offer enhanced reasoning and multimodal search capabilities, powered by a customised version of Gemini 2.5. A feature within this mode, Deep Search, is designed to generate comprehensive, cited reports. The quality and impartiality of these citations, especially when generated by AI, will be an area for careful scrutiny.

Within AI Mode, a novel shopping experience will allow users to virtually try on clothes by uploading their own photographs. Once a product is selected, an "agentic checkout" feature, initially available in the U.S., promises to complete the purchase. Such a feature inherently requires access to sensitive personal and financial data, raising questions about data minimisation, security, and the potential for profiling.

The all-in-one app

The Gemini application itself is being significantly augmented. The Live feature is now generally available on Android and iOS, and the app incorporates image generation. For subscribers to the new Google AI Ultra tier, the app will feature the latest video generation tool, complete with native audio. A "Deep Research" function within the app can now draw upon users' private documents and images. While potentially offering powerful personal insights, this feature dives deep into personal data pools, demanding robust privacy safeguards and transparent consent mechanisms. How this data is firewalled, processed, and protected from misuse or overreach will be paramount.

Canvas, the creative workspace within Gemini, has been made more intuitive with the Gemini 2.5 models, facilitating the creation of interactive infographics, quizzes, and even podcast-style Audio Overviews in 45 languages. Furthermore, Gemini is being integrated into the Chrome browser (initially for Pro and Ultra subscribers in the U.S.), enabling users to query and summarise webpage content.

For developers, the new asynchronous coding agent, Jules, is now in public beta globally where Gemini models are accessible. It integrates directly with existing code repositories, understanding project context to write tests, build features, and rectify bugs using Gemini 2.5 Pro.

Mr. Pichai's "new phase of the AI platform shift" is undeniably underway. Google's introduction of a new Google AI Ultra subscription tier offers users differentiated access to its most advanced AI capabilities. This stratification, however, prompts questions about whether the most robust privacy-enhancing features or responsible AI controls will be universally available or if a "privacy premium" could emerge, where deeper safeguards are reserved for paying customers. As Google rearchitects itself around AI, the intricate dance between innovation, utility, and the stewardship of data will define its next chapter. The layers of the Matryoshka are still being revealed, and with each one, the responsibilities grow.

Main Theme

- Google's I/O 2025 focused on **AI-centric transformation**.
 - The concept of a **"Matryoshka" doll** metaphor represents:
 - Multiple AI layers
 - Each layer refining the previous
 - Drawing intelligence from a core engine (Gemini AI)
-

Strategic Restructuring

- Google is **reorganising its full ecosystem** around AI.
- Move affects:
 - Users
 - Developers
 - Enterprises
 - Data policies and responsibilities

Foundational AI Models

- **Gemini 2.5 Flash and Pro**
 - More than incremental updates
 - Introduced enhanced search, commerce, coding, multimodal AI
 - Flash: Speed-focused
 - Pro: Power-focused
 - **"Deep Think" reasoning mode**
 - Multimodal capability
 - Supports coding, math, logic
-



AI at Work

AI in Search

- **Deep Search Mode:**
 - Customized with Gemini 2.5.A
 - Multimodal and analytical
 - Creates **detailed, cited reports**

AI in Shopping

- **“Agentic Checkout” feature:**
 - Users upload product images
 - AI handles product comparison and checkout
 - Raises data security and financial privacy concerns

Developer Tools & API

- Gemini API, Gemini Flash and Gemini Pro now public
- **Project Turing, Tensor Processing Units, and DeepMind** all contribute backend infrastructure
- **Project Astra** introduced for task automation
- **Model Context Protocol (MCP):**
 - Aims for **AI interoperability**
 - Facilitates **cross-app knowledge sharing**

Jury out on pay-per-view service for *Sitaare Zameen Par*

Aamir Khan tests economics of digital film distribution

URVI MALVANIA
Mumbai, May 25

IN A CLASSIC high-risk, high-reward play, actor Aamir Khan is rolling the dice in a way few Bollywood stars have dared to.

At a time when streaming giants rule the digital roost, Khan is pushing boundaries by choosing YouTube's pay-per-view service for the digital distribution of his next title – *Sitaare Zameen Par*.

The jury is out on the move to skip the streaming platforms, with some trade experts hailing it as audacious and visionary, while others are terming it as too risky a bet.

One of the biggest pay-offs of this strategy could be a longer theatrical run since users will have to pay to watch the movie, one way or another. When a film is sold to a streaming platform, it becomes part of

NEW WATERS

■ Aamir Khan is pushing boundaries by choosing YouTube's pay-per-view service for the digital distribution of his next title – *Sitaare Zameen Par*



■ One of the biggest pay-offs of this strategy could be a longer theatrical run since users will have to pay to watch the movie, one way or another

■ Box-office collections of films have been suffering because of streaming platforms as people prefer to watch movies at home

■ Taking the movie to YouTube also allows Khan, who has also produced the film, to cast a wider net in terms of audience

its library, often available for free under a subscription or ad-supported model. "In this case, people will have to pay anyway, and if the movie does well, it could drive more people to the theatres," says Komal Nahata, leading film trade analyst, editor of film trade magazine 'Film Information' and host of popu-

lar podcast 'Game Changers'.

Box office collections of films have been suffering because of streaming platforms as people prefer to watch movies, especially those without any visual spectacle (like superhero films or those with a 3D/4D release), in the comfort of their homes

on subscribed OTT platforms at the time of their choosing. However, if the film is not available as part of a subscription or membership on digital, people may just feel inclined to go to the movies in the traditional way.

Continued on Page 5

Key Strategy:

- Aamir Khan opts for **YouTube's pay-per-view (TVOD)** service for distributing his film **Sitaare Zameen Par**.

Economics:

- **Revenue Share:**
 - Producer retains **70%**.
 - Platform takes **30%**.
- **Box Office Boost:**
 - Users paying to watch online may also drive **theatrical attendance**.



Expert Views:

- **High risk, high reward:**
 - If the film works, could **democratize film distribution**.
 - Could inspire **independent filmmakers** to adopt similar models.
- **Challenges:**
 - Piracy.
 - No upfront payments like OTT platforms.
 - Dependent on performance and engagement.



Reach & Accessibility:

- YouTube has **2.5 billion users globally**, making it the most accessible platform.
- Helps bypass traditional OTT deals and gain **direct audience access**.

INDIA MAY BECOME 3RD LARGEST ECONOMY BY 2028

After overtaking Japan in 2025, India is projected to surpass Germany by 2028 to become the world's third-largest economy in nominal dollar GDP terms, according to IMF. The projections show India's GDP rising from \$3.9 trillion in 2024 to \$5.58 trillion in 2028 — reflecting not just steady growth but also the country's growing share in the global economy



GDP \$Tn	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
US	29.2	30.5	31.7	32.9	34.3
China	18.8	19.2	20.4	21.7	23.1
Germany	4.66	4.75	4.91	5.08	5.25
India	3.91	4.187	4.60	5.07	5.58
Japan	4.03	4.186	4.37	4.52	4.71

“It is only the US, China and Germany which are larger than India, and if we stick to what is being planned and what is being thought through, in 2.5-3 years, we will be the third largest economy

— B V R SUBRAHMANYAM | CEO, NITI AAYOG



Kala-Azar

- Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to eliminate Kala-azar, during an event co-organised by the African Union and WHO on the sidelines of the **78th World Health Assembly in Geneva**.

Kala-azar (visceral leishmaniasis)

- Leishmaniasis is caused by **protozoan parasites** which are transmitted by the bite of infected **female phlebotomine sandflies**.
- The term “kala-azar,” meaning “**black disease**,” refers to the skin discoloration associated with the infection.
- The parasite primarily targets the **reticuloendothelial system**, particularly affecting the bone marrow, spleen, and liver.
- It is one of the 20 **neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)** identified by WHO.
- **Symptoms:** Prolonged fever, Weight loss, Fatigue, Enlargement of the spleen and liver, Anaemia etc.

Government Interventions



Government of India launched a centrally sponsored **Kala-azar control Programme in 1990-91.**



The National Health Policy (2002) envisaged kala-azar Elimination by 2010 which was revised later to 2015.

The **WHO** aims for its elimination by **2030.**

The logo features a large white circle with a thin grey border, centered on a dark grey background. Inside the circle, the text "World Hydrogen Summit" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with "2025" centered below it in the same style.

World Hydrogen Summit 2025

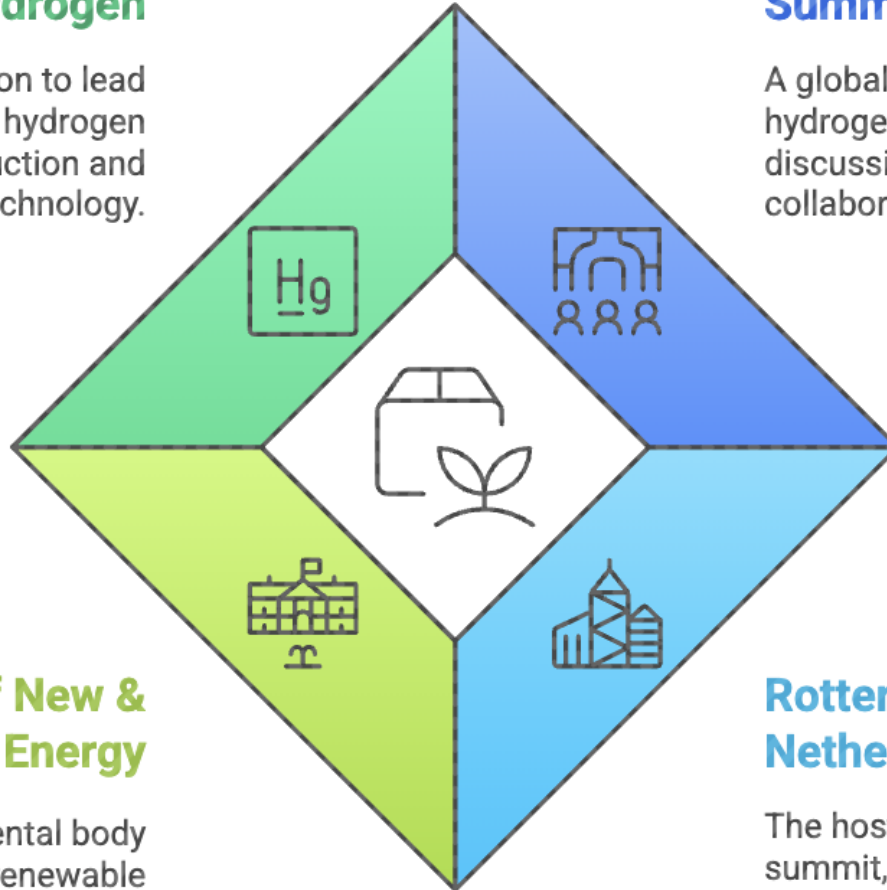
India's Green Hydrogen Vision

Global Hub for Green Hydrogen

India's ambition to lead in green hydrogen production and technology.

World Hydrogen Summit 2025

A global platform for hydrogen energy discussions and collaborations.



Ministry of New & Renewable Energy

The governmental body driving India's renewable energy policies.

Rotterdam, Netherlands

The host city for the summit, known for its strategic location and infrastructure.

Grey Hydrogen

Process:
Steam Reforming

Source:
Natural Gas



Blue Hydrogen

Process:
Steam Reforming
With Carbon Capture

Source:
Natural Gas



Green Hydrogen

Process:
Electrolysis

Source:
Renewable
Energies



Black Hydrogen

Process:
Gasification

Source:
Coal



Pink Hydrogen

Process:
Electrolysis

Source:
Nuclear
Energy



Turquoise Hydrogen

Process:
Pyrolysis

Source:
Natural
Gas



Yellow Hydrogen

Process:
Electrolysis

Source:
Solar
Energy



NATIONAL GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION

NODAL MINISTRY

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

OBJECTIVE

- Decarbonise energy/industrial/mobility sector
- Develop indigenous manufacturing capacities
- Create export opportunities for GH_2 and its derivative

COMPONENTS OF NGHM

- Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Programme (SIGHT)
- Strategic Hydrogen Innovation Partnership (SHIP) (PPP for R&D)

*GH_2 is not commercially viable at present; current cost in India is around ₹350-400/kg.
The National Hydrogen Energy Mission aims to bring it down under ₹100/kg.*

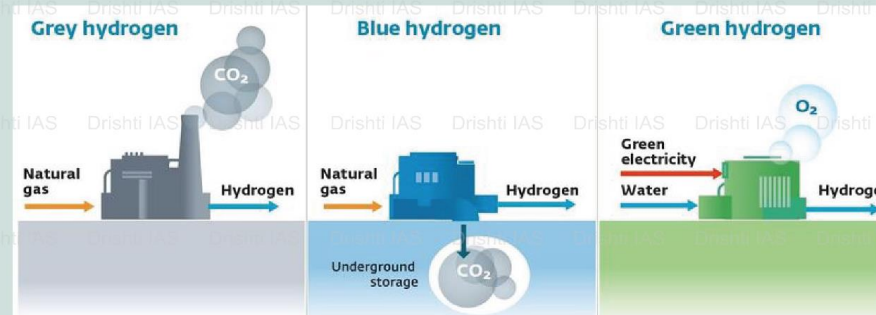
Expected Outcomes by 2030

- ◆ Atleast 5MMT GH_2 annual production
- ◆ Rs 1 lakh crore fossil fuel import savings
- ◆ 6 lakh jobs
- ◆ 50MMT CO_2 annual emissions averted
- ◆ ₹ 8 lakh crore investment

HYDROGEN AND GREEN HYDROGEN

Hydrogen is the most common element in nature but exists only in combination with other elements. It has to be extracted from naturally occurring compounds (like water).

Green Hydrogen (GH_2) is made by splitting water through an electrical process called electrolysis, using an electrolyser powered by renewable energy (RE).





Sagar Mein Samman Initiative

Empowering Women Seafarers through Sagar Mein Samman Initiative

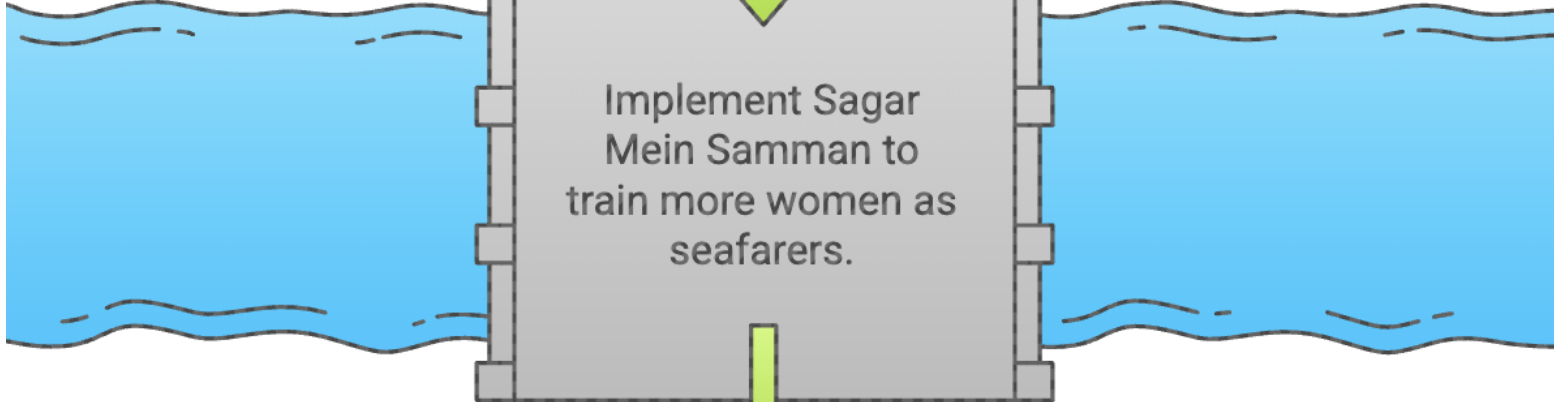
Limited female representation hinders maritime growth.



Implement Sagar Mein Samman to train more women as seafarers.



Increased skilled workforce drives India's maritime ambitions.



Celebrating Women in Maritime: A Journey to 2025

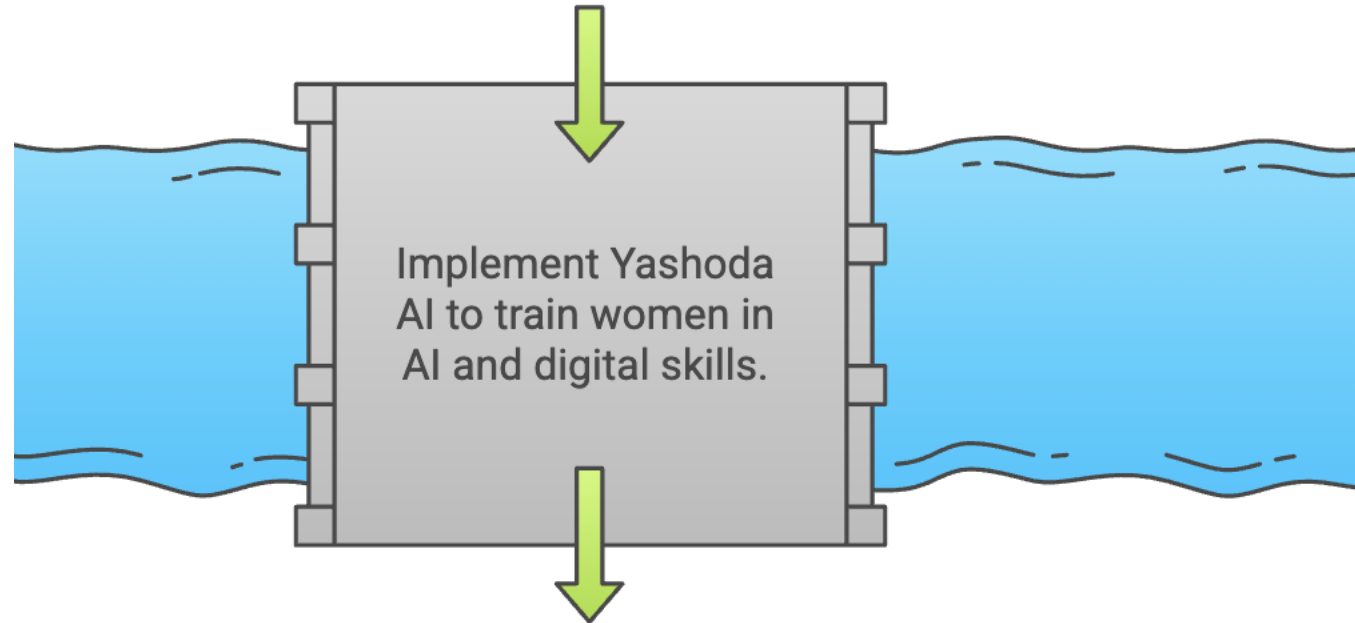




Yashoda AI

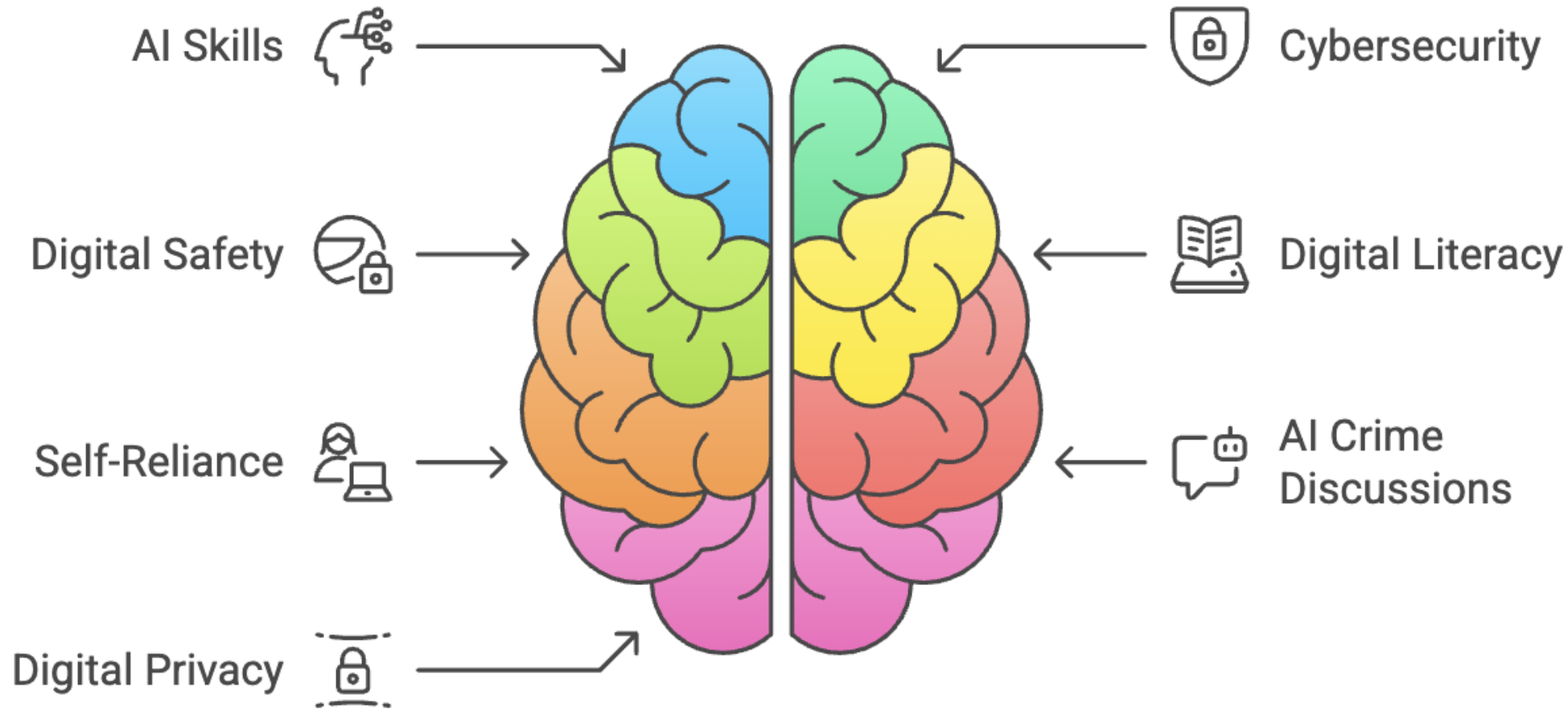
Yashoda AI empowers women through digital literacy.

Women lack AI and digital skills.



Women are skilled and digitally aware.

Empowering Women in the Digital Age



Word of the day

Arbitration:

the hearing and determination of a dispute by an impartial referee agreed to by both parties (jurisprudence); the act of deciding as an arbiter; giving authoritative judgment


Synonym: mediation

Usage: *They submitted their disagreement to arbitration.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/
arbitrationpro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /ɑː.bɪˈtʃeɪ.ʃən/, [ɑː.bəˈtʃeɪ.ʃən]

A blurred background image showing a group of people in a meeting or conference, with several hands raised in the air, suggesting applause or agreement. The image is soft-focused, with a warm, slightly hazy light. In the foreground, a person's hand is visible on the right, wearing a black watch, and another hand is visible on the left, both reaching towards the center. The overall mood is positive and collaborative.

Thank you
guys.
