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“Doubt grows when action stops.”

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DEAL DRIFT
'Constructive' trade deal talks held with U.S.: India
The Centre informed the Supreme Court on Friday that 10 of the 26 persons who said they had been "trafficked" to Russia to fight against Ukraine are dead. Agreeing Ukraine are dead. Agreeing Ukraine are dead. Agreeing Ukraine are dead.

POLL CONTROVERSY
Oppn. seeks removal of CEC Gyanesh Kumar
NEW DELHI
The Centre informed the Supreme Court on Friday that 10 of the 26 persons who said they had been "trafficked" to Russia to fight against Ukraine are dead. Agreeing Ukraine are dead. Agreeing Ukraine are dead.

UNIFORM TREND
Net FDI hits 45-month high in February
BANGALURU
Foreign direct investment (FDI) into India rose to a 45-month high in February, according to the Union Ministry of Commerce.

THRIFESSUR TRAGEDY
The spark that turned fatal in Mundathikode
A fireworks unit blast raises safety concerns
GROUND ZERO • PAGE 7

EMPHATIC WIN
Kohli and Padikkal power RCB past GT
SPORT • PAGE 14

INSIDE

10 'trafficked' Indians dead in Russia: Centre
NEW DELHI
The Centre informed the Supreme Court on Friday that 10 of the 26 persons who said they had been "trafficked" to Russia to fight against Ukraine are dead. Agreeing Ukraine are dead. Agreeing Ukraine are dead.

Modi promises fresh probe into R.G. Kar case
BANGALURU
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday promised a public meeting at Parliament constituency in West Bengal. He said that after the meeting of some on May 4, all files related to the case will be opened.

Kathua rape case: HC rejects bail plea of accused
CHANDIGARH
The Punjab and Haryana High Court has rejected bail for a Shudham Singh, crime accused in the 2018 rape and murder case of a minor girl in Kathua of Jammu and Kashmir, saying the crime committed by him "shook to the sentiment and judicial conscience of the court".

Israel-Lebanon ceasefire extended by 3 weeks

Trump says the U.S. will work with Lebanon in order to help it protect itself from Hezbollah | Extension of the truce imposes no obligations on Israel, says Hezbollah, vows to confront it | Israel carries out three air strikes in the town of Deir Aamies, after issuing evacuation order

Stank-Joban
Israel and Lebanon have extended their fragile ceasefire for three weeks, U.S. President Donald Trump announced on Friday after meeting representatives from both countries in Washington. The Meeting went very well. The U.S. is going to work with Lebanon in order to help it protect itself from Hezbollah. The ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon will be extended by three weeks. Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post. Besides Mr. Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee and Ambassador to Lebanon



Was seen an Israeli armoured vehicle seen inside Lebanon as the ceasefire was extended on Friday. REUTERS

attacks continued in Lebanon. 'Meaningless measure' 'I look forward to hosting the Prime Minister of Israel, Bibi Netanyahu, and the President of Lebanon, Joseph Aoun, in the near future,' Mr. Trump said on Friday. A Hezbollah lawmaker said the extension of the truce was meaningless as long as Israel continued its 'hostile actions.' Israel is continuing 'assassinations, shelling and

Iran FM Araghchi travelling to Pak. for ceasefire talks

ISLAMABAD
Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is set to visit Pakistan to discuss a ceasefire between the two countries. Araghchi will meet with Pakistani Foreign Minister Khwaja Asif. The visit is expected to last for a few days. The two countries have been in a state of tension since the outbreak of the conflict in the region.

adhering to the ceasefire, while ignoring no obligations, on the Israeli side. This is something the resistance (Hezbollah) cannot accept. On the contrary, it affirms its rejection of it and its determination to confront it. He said, according to Hezbollah's Al Manar TV. On Friday, Lebanon's National News agency reported that Israel carried out three air strikes in the town of Deir Aamies, after issuing an evacuation order. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said it issued the evacuation order from the southern Lebanese village after Hezbollah launched rockets from the area. Israel has said it is adhering to the ceasefire, while ignoring no obligations, on the Israeli side. This is something the resistance (Hezbollah) cannot accept. On the contrary, it affirms its rejection of it and its determination to confront it. He said, according to Hezbollah's Al Manar TV.

Three killed as Kuki-Naga conflict rages in Manipur

The Working Committee of Tangkhul Naga Long, the apex body of the tribe, said the Kuki extremists ambushed the NVC members. An assault case on February 7 triggered the chain of conflict between the Kukis and the Nagas in Ukhrul district, signalling a shift of violence from the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley to the hills. The clashes between the Kukis and the Meiteis broke out on May 3, 2023, claiming more than 200 human lives.

The ongoing conflict between Kuki and Naga communities in Manipur escalated on Friday, leaving three people dead and several others injured. Two of those killed in Ukhrul district were Kukis, while the third was a Tangkhul Naga. Tangkhuls are the dominant community in the district. The organisers of the two communities accused each other of attacking first. The Kuki Organisation for Human Rights (KOHHR) claimed armed Tangkhul Nagas men attacked Mitan and Shongphul Kuki villages at 5.30 a.m. The armed civilians were asleep in their homes.



Mounted team: Security personnel patrol the Kangleitlang area in Imphal West district of Manipur on Thursday.

minimised. 'The villagers, exercising their lawful right to self-defence with it, caused human fatalities, including the attack and neutralised one of the armed assailants in the process,' the KOHRHR said in a statement. The Naga Village Guard (NVC), Central Command, crushed the KOHRHR claim and said armed Kuki extremists opened fire at some of its members on patrol duty between Sirakhang and Sinakhang villages. In a statement, the NVC said Naga villagers have been patrolling their village as because of 'repeated attacks on Sirakhang village and reports of constant tactical movement in the peripheries by Kuki armed cadres under the Stunper

7 AAP MPs quit party, set to merge with BJP

Devesh K. Prakash
NEW DELHI
In a massive setback to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), seven of its 10 Rajya Sabha members on Friday broke away and are set to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), marking a significant political realignment in the Upper House. The AAP accused the BJP of launching "Operation Lotus" to break and snatch MPs.

development, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal accused the BJP of betraying Punjab. His party colleagues and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, through his Twitter, said he would urge the Rajya Sabha Chairman to disqualify the membership of Mr. Chaudha, Mr. Mittal, and Mr. Pathak for joining the BJP, as their actions violated "voluntarily relinquishing membership of their original party under the provisions of the Constitution." Seven MPs have signed the document, which was submitted to the Honourable Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, he said. Mr. Chaudha said the signatories included former cricketer Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Yitkang Singh Sahney, and Swati Malhotra. He accused AAP of having completely strayed from its core principles and values. "The very party that was formed with a solemn vow to eradicate corruption has today fallen chaotically into the hands of corrupt and compromised individuals," he said, adding that he distanced himself from AAP about a year ago as he "did not want to be complicit in their wrongdoings".

- AAP Rajya Sabha MPs joining BJP
- Signatories
- Devesh Prakash
- Sanjay Singh
- Harbhajan Singh
- Yitkang Singh Sahney
- Swati Malhotra

Meta 'automatically' blocks govt.-flagged content in India

Meta has a complaint with its membership orders after a barrage of takedown notices from the Centre and State police. India is now among a set of "limited countries" where Facebook and Instagram "automatically" restrict content, at scale and based on local law requirements, a company source told The Hindu.

Meta, the parent firm of the social media platform, has complied with censorship requests in recent weeks as the firm has been hit with a barrage of takedown notices from State police authorities as well as the Union government. Precise numbers of local law-related takedowns on the platform will only be published by the firm in the second half of 2026. The company has not been authorised police officials across the country to send takedown notices to social media platforms, operators under the Information Technology Act, under which social media platforms could lose "safe harbour" for content posted by users, and up to defaming someone in court alongside the people whose content has been removed. Meta did not provide written responses to questions from The Hindu. The firm's receptivity to non-compliance within the country appears to have increased since the IT Ministry in February reduced timelines from 36 hours to a maximum of three hours. Non-compliance within the country would lead to a loss of safe harbour. Meta did not respond to a question on whether it conducts human rights evaluations of such takedowns. The help documentation on its site says it does such evaluations. X, formerly Twitter, has

challenged the safe harbour in the Karnataka High Court, and does not comply with police takedown notices when it believes the content they target is lawful. 'Laxting censorship' Meta's response, however, is to instantaneously restrict access in response to content that has been sent through this mechanism, giving police authorities the inside power of immediate and lasting content that they can exercise by merely filing out an online form. 'Various apparatuses of the government have been used to remove content, providing 'actual knowledge' of violations of in-

formation law to platforms under Section 79(2)(b), most of which, when exercised, do not actually decrease any violation of any Indian law by the users,' Prakash Prakash, co-founder of the Centre for Internet and Society, who is a policy consultant, told The Hindu. Mr. Prakash said that content that has been sent against personally in court, which has not resulted in the content takedown, which 'show(s)... that the user has exercised their right to free speech.' 'Yet, instead of fighting for their users, Meta is thoughtfully removing content that is legally not required to remove,' Mr. Prakash said.

7 AAP MPs quit party, set to merge with BJP

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

In a massive setback to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), seven of its 10 Rajya Sabha members on Friday broke away and are set to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), marking a significant political realignment in the Upper House. The AAP accused the BJP of running "Operation Lotus" to break and poach MPs.

MPs Raghav Chadha, Sandeep Pathak, and Ashok Kumar Mittal met BJP president Nitin Nabin at the party's headquarters in the evening. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance has a strength of 141 in the Upper House.

At a press conference, Mr. Chadha said that more than two-thirds of the AAP MPs had quit the party and would merge with the BJP by exercising the provisions of the Constitution. "Seven MPs have signed the document, which was submitted to the Honourable Chairman of the Rajya Sabha," he said. Mr. Chadha said the signatories included former cricketer Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikramjit Singh Sahney, and Swati Mallwal.

He accused AAP of having completely strayed from its core principles and values. "The very party that was formed with a solemn vow to eradicate corruption has today fallen disastrously into the hands of corrupt and compromised individuals," he said, adding that he distanced himself from AAP about a year ago as he "did not want to be complicit in their wrongdoings".

He said over the past 12 years, the BJP-led Union government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi had taken several unprecedented and bold decisions to eradicate terrorism and propel India into the league of the world's top economies.

Reacting sharply to the

AAP Rajya Sabha
MPs joining BJP

- Raghav Chadha
- Sandeep Pathak
- Ashok Kumar Mittal
- Swati Mallwal
- Harbhajan Singh
- Vikramjit Singh Sahney
- Rajinder Gupta

development, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal accused the BJP of betraying Punjab. His party colleague and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, through his X handle, said he would urge the Rajya Sabha Chairman to disqualify the membership of Mr. Chadha, Mr. Mittal, and Mr. Pathak for joining the BJP, as their action entailed "voluntarily relinquishing membership of their original party under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution".

Replacement and raid

The sequence of events unfolded weeks after AAP replaced Mr. Chadha with Mr. Mittal as its Deputy Leader in the Upper House. Incidentally, days later, the Enforcement Directorate searched the premises of Mr. Mittal and the educational institutions promoted by him and his family in Haryana and Punjab under the Foreign Exchange Management Act.

Once considered a close confidant of Mr. Kejriwal, Mr. Chadha had been with AAP since its inception. He became the party's youngest spokesperson, national treasurer, and was elected to the Delhi Assembly in 2020. The same year, he was made the party's co-in-charge for the 2022 State Assembly polls in Punjab.

Following a landslide victory in Punjab, AAP nominated him as a Rajya Sabha member in March 2022. The next year, he was made its Deputy Leader in the House.

- **Seven of AAP's 10 Rajya Sabha MPs** broke away to **join BJP** — marking a significant political realignment in the Upper House; the 7 MPs include Raghav Chadha, Sandeep Pathak, Ashok Kumar Mittal, Swati Maliwal, Harbhajan Singh, Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Rajinder Gupta.
- **AAP के 10 में से 7 राज्यसभा सांसदों** ने BJP में शामिल होने के लिए पार्टी छोड़ी; 7 सांसदों में राघव चड्ढा, संदीप पाठक, अशोक कुमार मित्तल, स्वाति मालीवाल, हरभजन सिंह, विक्रमजीत सिंह साहनी, राजिंदर गुप्ता।
- Raghav Chadha claims **more than two-thirds** of AAP MPs quit — invoking **Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law)** provisions for a "merger" (which exempts from disqualification).
- राघव चड्ढा का दावा — **दो-तिहाई से अधिक** AAP सांसदों ने छोड़ा — "विलय" के लिए **दसवीं अनुसूची** (दल-बदल विरोधी कानून) प्रावधानों का हवाला।
- **AAP accused BJP of "Operation Lotus"** — term used for allegedly engineering defections to weaken opposition parties.
- **AAP ने BJP पर "ऑपरेशन लोटस"** का आरोप — विपक्षी दलों को कमजोर करने के लिए दल-बदल इंजीनियरिंग का आरोप।
- **AAP colleague Sanjay Singh:** Will urge Rajya Sabha Chairman to **disqualify** Chadha, Mittal, Pathak — their action = "voluntarily relinquishing membership of their original party under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution."
- **संजय सिंह:** राज्यसभा अध्यक्ष से **अयोग्यता** का आग्रह — "दसवीं अनुसूची के तहत स्वेच्छा से मूल दल की सदस्यता त्यागना।"
- BJP-led NDA has **strength of 141 in Rajya Sabha** after this development.
- इस विकास के बाद BJP-नेतृत्व NDA की **राज्यसभा में 141 की शक्ति**।

- The Anti-Defection Law (Tenth Schedule, added to Constitution in 1985) was created to stop politicians from "jumping" parties for personal gain. It says: if you voluntarily leave your party, you lose your parliamentary seat.
- दल-बदल विरोधी कानून (1985 में दसवीं अनुसूची) "दल-बदलू" राजनीतिज्ञों को व्यक्तिगत लाभ के लिए पार्टी बदलने से रोकने के लिए बनाया गया था। यह कहता है: यदि आप स्वेच्छा से पार्टी छोड़ते हैं, तो आप अपनी संसदीय सीट खो देते हैं।
- BUT there is an important exception: If 2/3 or more members of a legislative party "merge" with another party — that is NOT considered defection. This is the merger provision (Tenth Schedule Paragraph 4).
- लेकिन एक महत्वपूर्ण अपवाद: यदि विधायी दल के 2/3 या अधिक सदस्य दूसरे दल के साथ "विलय" करते हैं — वह दल-बदल नहीं माना जाता। यह विलय प्रावधान (दसवीं अनुसूची पैराग्राफ 4) है।
- Here, 7 out of 10 AAP Rajya Sabha MPs are claiming merger = 70% = more than 2/3. So they claim they cannot be disqualified.
- यहाँ, 10 में से 7 AAP राज्यसभा सांसद विलय का दावा कर रहे हैं = 70% = 2/3 से अधिक। इसलिए वे दावा करते हैं कि उन्हें अयोग्य नहीं ठहराया जा सकता।

D3. Constitutional Issue — The Key Legal Battle / मुख्य कानूनी लड़ाई

Issue	AAP's Claim	Defectors' Claim
Classification	"Voluntarily relinquishing membership" = disqualification	"Merger" = exempt from disqualification
Applicable provision	Para 2(1)(a) of Tenth Schedule	Para 4 of Tenth Schedule
Decision maker	Rajya Sabha Chairman (as Presiding Officer)	Same
Threshold	N/A (any voluntary leaving = disqualification)	2/3 of legislative party

D4. Operation Lotus Allegations / ऑपरेशन लोटस आरोप

- "Operation Lotus" = BJP's alleged strategy of engineering defections in states where it lacks majority → destabilise opposition governments, engineer floor-crossings
- Used in: Goa 2017, Karnataka 2019, Maharashtra 2019, Madhya Pradesh 2020, Bihar (various)
- Kejriwal accused BJP of "betraying Punjab" through this action
- ऑपरेशन लोटस: भाजपा की कथित रणनीति — गोवा, कर्नाटक, महाराष्ट्र, MP में उपयोग।

E. Multi-Subject Connections / बहु-विषय संबंध

History / इतिहास

- **Pre-1985 era "Aaya Rams and Gaya Rams"**: Gaya Lal (Haryana MLA, 1967) changed parties 3 times in a day → coined phrase; widespread defections destabilising governments → need for anti-defection law.
- **1985 से पहले "आया राम, गया राम"**: गया लाल (हरियाणा, 1967) ने एक दिन में 3 बार पार्टी बदली; दल-बदल विरोधी कानून की जरूरत।
- **52nd Constitutional Amendment (1985)**: Added **Tenth Schedule** to the Constitution — anti-defection law; passed during Rajiv Gandhi government.
- **52वाँ संविधान संशोधन (1985)**: दसवीं अनुसूची — दल-बदल विरोधी कानून; राजीव गांधी सरकार में।
- **91st Constitutional Amendment (2003)**: Removed the provision allowing splits (one-third members forming a faction was exempt); ONLY merger (two-thirds) now exempt.
- **91वाँ संविधान संशोधन (2003)**: विभाजन का प्रावधान हटाया (1/3 सदस्य); केवल विलय (2/3) अब छूट।

- **Key cases on Tenth Schedule:**

- **Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu (1992):** SC upheld validity of Tenth Schedule; Speaker's decision subject to judicial review BUT only AFTER decision (not during proceedings); Speaker's finality is limited
- **Nabam Rebia vs Deputy Speaker Arunachal Pradesh (2016):** Speaker facing disqualification notice cannot decide disqualification of others — conflict of interest
- **Shrimanth Balasaheb Patil vs Speaker Karnataka (2019):** SC upheld disqualification of MLAs in Karnataka; disqualification = can't contest until fresh election; Speaker's discretion limited
- **Subhash Desai vs Principal Secretary (Maharashtra 2023):** SC's 5-judge bench on Shiv Sena split — Presiding Officer's decision on disqualification subject to judicial review; important limits on Speaker's power
- **किहोतो होलोहान (1992):** दसवीं अनुसूची वैध; SC समीक्षा; **नबाम रेबिया (2016):** अयोग्यता का सामना करने वाला अध्यक्ष दूसरों का फैसला नहीं; **शिवसेना (2023):** न्यायिक समीक्षा।

F3. Future Implications / भविष्य के प्रभाव

- **Best case (AAP's perspective):** Chairman rules it's defection (not merger) → MPs disqualified → vacancies → AAP nominates fresh members → RS strength maintained.
- **AAP का सर्वोत्तम परिदृश्य:** अध्यक्ष दल-बदल घोषित → अयोग्यता → रिक्तियाँ → नए सदस्य।
- **Best case (BJP's perspective):** Merger accepted → NDA strengthens further → smooth legislation including constitutional amendments → political dominance in RS.
- **BJP का सर्वोत्तम परिदृश्य:** विलय स्वीकार → NDA मजबूत → संसदीय विधान → RS प्रभुत्व।
- **Judicial intervention:** AAP likely to challenge Chairman's decision in SC; SC increasingly reviewing presiding officers' decisions (Kihoto, Nabam, Shivases precedents).
- **न्यायिक हस्तक्षेप:** AAP SC में चुनौती देगी; SC बढ़ती समीक्षा।
- **AAP's future:** Already lost Delhi 2025; now losing 7 RS MPs; Kejriwal facing multiple cases; AAP's national relevance declining.
- **AAP का भविष्य:** दिल्ली 2025 हारी; 7 RS सांसद; Kejriwal के मामले; AAP की प्रासंगिकता घट रही।

#	Exam	Year	Question	Options	✔ Answer
1	UPSC CSE Prelims	2021	The Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, dealing with anti-defection, was added by which Constitutional Amendment?	(a) 44th Amendment (b) 52nd Amendment (c) 61st Amendment (d) 42nd Amendment	(b) 52nd Amendment (1985)
2	UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	Under the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, a member is disqualified from the House if they: 1. Voluntarily give up membership of their political party 2. Vote or abstain against party's direction without permission	(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither	(c) Both 1 and 2 — Para 2(1)(a) and 2(1)(b)
3	UPSC CSE Prelims	2023	The Tenth Schedule's merger exception (Para 4) requires what fraction of the legislative party to join another party without inviting disqualification?	(a) Simple majority (b) Three-fourths (c) Two-thirds (d) Half	(c) Two-thirds (2/3)

4	UPSC CSE Prelims	2020	Which Supreme Court case upheld the constitutional validity of the Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law) and clarified that the Speaker's decision is subject to judicial review?	(a) Minerva Mills case (b) Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu (1992) (c) Kesavananda Bharati case (d) S.R. Bommai case	(b) Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu (1992)
5	UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	The Vice President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of:	(a) Lok Sabha (b) Rajya Sabha (c) National Development Council (d) Inter-State Council	(b) Rajya Sabha
6	UPSC CSE Prelims	2021	The 91st Constitutional Amendment (2003) modified the Tenth Schedule by:	(a) Adding "games of skill" to the exception (b) Removing the exception for splits (one-third forming separate group) (c) Increasing the merger threshold to three-quarters (d) Removing the Speaker's authority	(b) Removing the exception for splits (one-third forming separate group)
7	UPSC CSE Mains GS-2	2022	"The Anti-Defection Law has failed to achieve its objectives and has, in fact, created new problems in Indian democracy." Critically examine this statement and suggest reforms.	(Mains descriptive)	Key: Aaya Ram Gaya Ram; 52nd Amendment; Para 2, 4; Speaker's partisanship; Kihoto, Nabam, Shivases; Operation Lotus; reforms (independent



8	UPSC CSE Prelims	2019	Rajya Sabha members are elected by:	(a) Direct election by citizens (b) President of India (c) Members of State Legislative Assemblies (d) Both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies	(c) Members of State Legislative Assemblies — by STV proportional representation
9	UPSC CSE Prelims	2023	In the landmark case of Nabam Rebia vs Deputy Speaker (2016), the Supreme Court held that:	(a) Speaker has absolute immunity in defection cases (b) Anti-Defection Law violates free speech (c) A Speaker against whom a notice for removal is pending cannot decide disqualification petitions (d) Only President can decide defection matters	(c) Speaker with removal notice pending cannot decide
10	UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	How many members does the Rajya Sabha have in total?	(a) 233 (b) 238 (c) 240 (d) 245	(d) 245 — 233 elected + 12 nominated

Consider the following statements about the Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law) and the AAP-BJP merger controversy: दसवीं अनुसूची (दल-बदल विरोधी कानून) और AAP-BJP विलय विवाद के बारे में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. The Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution was added by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment in 1985 to address the problem of political defections exemplified by the "Aaya Ram Gaya Ram" phenomenon. भारतीय संविधान की दसवीं अनुसूची 1985 में 52वें संविधान संशोधन द्वारा "आया राम गया राम" घटना द्वारा उजागर राजनीतिक दल-बदल की समस्या को संबोधित करने के लिए जोड़ी गई थी।
2. The 91st Constitutional Amendment (2003) removed the exception for "splits" — where one-third of the legislative party could form a separate group without attracting disqualification — leaving only the merger exception. 91वें संविधान संशोधन (2003) ने "विभाजन" के लिए अपवाद हटा दिया — जहाँ विधायी दल का एक-तिहाई अयोग्यता आकर्षित किए बिना एक अलग समूह बना सकता था — केवल विलय अपवाद छोड़कर।
3. Under Para 4 of the Tenth Schedule, if two-thirds of a legislative party merge with another party, neither the merging members nor the remaining members face disqualification. दसवीं अनुसूची के Para 4 के तहत, यदि विधायी दल के दो-तिहाई दूसरी पार्टी के साथ विलय करते हैं, तो न तो विलय करने वाले सदस्यों को और न ही शेष सदस्यों को अयोग्यता का सामना करना पड़ता है।
4. The decision to disqualify a Rajya Sabha member under the Tenth Schedule is made by the Vice President of India, who serves as the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. दसवीं अनुसूची के तहत राज्यसभा सदस्य को अयोग्य घोषित करने का निर्णय भारत के उपराष्ट्रपति द्वारा किया जाता है, जो राज्यसभा के पदेन सभापति के रूप में कार्य करते हैं।

Which of the statements given above are correct?

Meta ‘automatically’ blocks govt.-flagged content in India

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

India is now among a set of “limited countries” where Facebook and Instagram “automatically restrict content, at scale and based on local law requirements,” a company source told *The Hindu*.

Meta, the parent firm of both social media platforms, has complied with censorship orders on a large scale in recent weeks, as the firm has been hit with a barrage of takedown notices from State police authorities as well as the Union government. Precise numbers of local law-related takedowns on the platforms will only be published by the firm in the

second half of 2026.

The Sahyog portal, which provides a web link for authorised police officials around the country to send takedown notices to social media platforms, operates under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, under which social media platforms could lose “safe harbour” for content posted by users, and end up defending themselves in court alongside the people whose content has been targeted by authorities.

Meta did not provide written responses to questions from *The Hindu*. The firm’s receptivity to non-binding takedown notices appears to have increased since the IT Ministry in Fe-

Limited access

Meta has complied with censorship orders after a barrage of takedown notices from the Centre and State police



■ India is now among a set of “limited countries” where Facebook and Instagram ‘automatically restrict content, at scale, based on local law requirements’

■ The Sahyog portal works as a centralised platform for issuing takedown orders to internet intermediaries, including social media platforms

■ The portal operates under section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act, which has provisions to take away ‘safe harbour’ for platforms for non-compliance with notices

bruary reduced timelines from 36 hours to a maximum of three hours.

Non-compliance within this timeline would lead to a loss of safe harbour. Meta did not respond to a ques-

tion on whether it conducts human rights evaluations on such takedowns. The help documentation on its site says it does such evaluations.

X, formerly Twitter, has

challenged the Sahyog portal in the Karnataka High Court, and does not comply with police takedown notices when it believes the content they target is lawful.

‘Lasting censorship’

Meta’s response, however, is to instantaneously restrict access in response to content that has been sent through this mechanism, giving police authorities wide powers of immediate and lasting censorship that they can exercise by merely filling out an online form.

“Various apparatuses of the government have been issuing notices (not orders) providing ‘actual knowledge’ of violations of In-

dian law to platforms under Section 79(3)(b), most of which, when scrutinised, do not actually disclose any violation of any Indian law by the users,” Pranesh Prakash, co-founder of the Centre for Internet and Society, who is now a tech law and policy consultant, told *The Hindu*. Mr. Prakash said that users are seldom acted against personally in court, with the matter ending in the content takedown, which “show[s] ... that the platforms would not be held liable either.”

“Yet, instead of fighting for their users, Meta is unthinkingly removing content it is legally not even required to remove,” Mr. Prakash said.

- India is now among a set of "**limited countries**" where **Facebook and Instagram "automatically restrict content, at scale, based on local law requirements"** — revealed by a company source to The Hindu.
- भारत अब "**सीमित देशों**" के समूह में शामिल है जहाँ **Facebook और Instagram "स्थानीय कानून आवश्यकताओं के आधार पर, पैमाने पर, स्वचालित रूप से सामग्री प्रतिबंधित करते हैं।"**
- **Meta** (parent of Facebook, Instagram) has **complied with censorship orders on a large scale** after being hit with a **barrage of takedown notices** from both **State police authorities and the Union Government**.
- **Meta** ने राज्य पुलिस अधिकारियों और केंद्र सरकार दोनों से टेकडाउन नोटिस की बाढ़ के बाद बड़े पैमाने पर सेंसरशिप आदेशों का पालन किया।
- **Sahyog portal**: A centralised platform for issuing takedown orders to internet intermediaries (social media) — operates under **Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act** — authorised police officials can send takedown notices directly; non-compliance = loss of "**safe harbour**" protection.
- **सहयोग पोर्टल**: इंटरनेट मध्यस्थों को टेकडाउन आदेश जारी करने का केंद्रीकृत मंच — **IT अधिनियम की धारा 79(3)(b)** के तहत संचालित — अधिकृत पुलिस अधिकारी सीधे नोटिस भेज सकते हैं; गैर-अनुपालन = "**सेफ हार्बर**" सुरक्षा खोना।

- **IT Ministry in February reduced timelines from 36 hours to a maximum of 3 hours** for responding to takedown notices — making it practically impossible to conduct human rights evaluations.
- **IT मंत्रालय ने फरवरी में टेकडाउन नोटिस के जवाब की समय-सीमा 36 घंटे से घटाकर अधिकतम 3 घंटे कर दी** — मानवाधिकार मूल्यांकन करना व्यावहारिक रूप से असंभव।
- **Expert concern:** Meta "is unthinkingly removing content it is legally not even required to remove" — giving police "wide powers of immediate and lasting censorship that they can exercise by merely filling out an online form."
- **विशेषज्ञ चिंता:** Meta "बिना सोचे-समझे वह सामग्री हटा रही है जिसे वह कानूनी रूप से हटाने के लिए भी आवश्यक नहीं है" — पुलिस को "केवल एक ऑनलाइन फॉर्म भरकर तत्काल और स्थायी सेंसरशिप की व्यापक शक्तियाँ।"
- **X (formerly Twitter) has challenged Sahyog portal in the Karnataka High Court** and does NOT comply with police takedown notices when it believes the content is lawful.
- **X (पूर्व में Twitter) ने कर्नाटक उच्च न्यायालय में सहयोग पोर्टल को चुनौती दी है** और जब उसे लगता है कि सामग्री कानूनी है तो वह पुलिस टेकडाउन नोटिस का पालन नहीं करती।

D2. The Sahyog Portal / सहयोग पोर्टल

- **Function:** Web link for authorised police officials → send takedown notices → social media platforms
- **Legal basis: Section 79(3)(b) of IT Act, 2000** — intermediary loses safe harbour if it doesn't act on government notice
- **Non-compliance:** Loss of "safe harbour" → platform held liable for user-posted content → massive legal exposure
- **Problem:** Centralised, easy-to-use → volume of notices increases dramatically → "apparatuses of the government issuing notices (not orders)"
- **सहयोग:** धारा 79(3)(b); सेफ हार्बर खोना; केंद्रीकृत; नोटिस (आदेश नहीं)।

D3. Section 79 IT Act — "Safe Harbour" / सेफ हार्बर

- **Section 79:** "Exemption from liability of intermediary in certain cases" — intermediary NOT liable for user-generated content IF it follows due diligence and doesn't initiate or alter content
- **Section 79(3)(b):** Intermediary loses protection IF it **fails to act on** government/court notice to remove unlawful content
- **Effect:** Threat of losing safe harbour → platforms over-comply → remove content even if not clearly unlawful
- **धारा 79:** "कुछ मामलों में मध्यस्थ की दायित्व से छूट"; धारा 79(3)(b) — सरकारी नोटिस पर कार्रवाई न करने पर सुरक्षा खोना।

F1. Past Background / भूतकाल

- **2000:** IT Act passed — Section 79 creates safe harbour; Section 69A for blocking.
- **2000:** IT अधिनियम — धारा 79, 69A।
- **2015:** Shreya Singhal — Section 66A struck down; Section 79(3)(b) clarified.
- **2015:** Shreya Singhal।
- **2021:** IT (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules — new obligations for social media.
- **2021:** IT नियम।
- **2023-24:** Sahyog portal launched; centralised police notice mechanism.
- **2023-24:** सहयोग पोर्टल।
- **February 2026:** IT Ministry reduced compliance timeline 36 hrs → 3 hrs.
- **फरवरी 2026:** 36 → 3 घंटे।

F2. Present Situation / वर्तमान स्थिति

- India classified as "limited country" by Meta; automatic content restriction; X challenging Sahyog in Karnataka HC; 3-hour deadline; expert criticism; lasting censorship concern.
- "सीमित देश"; स्वचालित प्रतिबंध; X कर्नाटक HC में; 3 घंटे; विशेषज्ञ आलोचना।

- **Global Comparison — Intermediary Liability:**

Country/Region	Framework	Approach
USA	Section 230, Communications Decency Act	Broad safe harbour; platforms not liable for user content; limited government blocking power
EU	Digital Services Act (DSA) 2022	Risk-based; transparency; independent oversight; faster removal but with human rights safeguards
India	IT Act + IT Rules 2021 + Sahyog	Safe harbour conditional; increasing government control; short compliance windows
China	Great Firewall + platform liability	Government controls; extensive blocking; platforms fully compliant

1	UPSC CSE Prelims	2023	Under Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, the "safe harbour" protection for internet intermediaries is lost if:	(a) They have more than 50 million users (b) They fail to act on actual knowledge conveyed by government about unlawful content (Section 79(3)(b)) (c) They store government data without permission (d) They charge users for their services	(b) Fail to act on actual knowledge — Section 79(3)(b)
2	UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	In the landmark case of Shreya Singhal vs Union of India (2015), the Supreme Court:	(a) Upheld Section 66A of IT Act as constitutional (b) Struck down both Section 66A and 79 as unconstitutional (c) Struck down Section 66A as unconstitutional but upheld Sections 69A and 79 (d) Held all IT Act provisions unconstitutional	(c) 66A struck down; 69A and 79 upheld

3	UPSC CSE Prelims	2021	Under Section 69A of the IT Act, the Central Government can issue directions to block access to websites. Such blocking is done on which grounds? 1. Sovereignty and integrity 2. Security of State 3. Public order 4. Commercial disputes	(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1, 2 and 3 only (c) 1, 2, 3 and additionally decency, morality, contempt (d) Only on court order	(c) Multiple grounds — sovereignty, security, public order, decency, contempt, incitement
4	UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is responsible for which of the following? 1. IT policy and Internet governance 2. Cybersecurity (CERT-In) 3. Telecom spectrum allocation	(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 (c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3	(b) 1 and 2 — Spectrum allocation is under DoT/Ministry of Communications

5 UPSC 2022 "Of the following, which is not a function of the Ministry of Information and Public Relations?" (a) To provide information to the public (b) To disseminate information to the public (c) To provide information to the media (d) To disseminate information to the media

5	UPSC CSE Prelims	2023	"Chilling effect" in the context of freedom of expression refers to:	(a) Impact of winter on outdoor political gatherings (b) Deterrence of legitimate speech or expression due to fear of legal action (c) Government's policy of cooling tensions through dialogue (d) Economic downturn reducing political activity	(b) Deterrence of legitimate speech due to legal fear
6	UPSC CSE Mains GS-2	2022	"The Shreya Singhal judgment struck the right balance between freedom of expression and government's power to regulate online speech." Critically examine this statement in the context of India's evolving internet governance framework.	<i>(Mains descriptive)</i>	Key: Article 19(1)(a) and 19(2); Section 66A struck; 69A procedural safeguards; 79(3)(b) — actual knowledge standard; IT Rules 2021; Sahyog; chilling effect

7	UPSC CSE Prelims	2021	Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression. Which of the following is NOT a ground for reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2)?	(a) Security of State (b) Public order (c) Personal privacy (d) Contempt of court	(c) Personal privacy — NOT listed in Article 19(2); listed grounds include sovereignty, security, friendly relations, public order, decency, morality, contempt, defamation, incitement
8	UPSC CSE Prelims	2023	The IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 require "Significant Social Media Intermediaries" to appoint which of the following? 1. Chief Compliance Officer 2. Nodal Contact Person 3. Resident Grievance Officer	(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) All three (d) 2 and 3 only	(c) All three — Significant intermediaries must have all three
9	UPSC CSE Prelims	2020	Section 66A of the IT Act, 2000 was struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional in:	(a) 2013 (b) 2014 (c) 2015 (d) 2016	(c) 2015 — Shreya Singhal vs Union of India

Consider the following statements about India's internet content governance and the Sahyog portal: भारत के इंटरनेट सामग्री शासन और सहयोग पोर्टल के बारे में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. India is now among a set of "limited countries" where Meta's Facebook and Instagram automatically restrict content at scale based on local law requirements, following a barrage of takedown notices from both State police and the Union Government. भारत अब "सीमित देशों" के समूह में शामिल है जहाँ Meta के Facebook और Instagram राज्य पुलिस और केंद्र सरकार दोनों से टेकडाउन नोटिस की बाढ़ के बाद स्थानीय कानून आवश्यकताओं के आधार पर स्वचालित रूप से सामग्री प्रतिबंधित करते हैं।
2. The Sahyog portal operates under Section 69A of the IT Act, which allows the Central Government to block websites, and authorised police officials can use it to directly order platforms to remove content permanently. सहयोग पोर्टल IT अधिनियम की धारा 69A के तहत संचालित होता है, जो केंद्र सरकार को वेबसाइट ब्लॉक करने की अनुमति देता है, और अधिकृत पुलिस अधिकारी इसका उपयोग प्लेटफॉर्म को सामग्री स्थायी रूप से हटाने का सीधे आदेश देने के लिए कर सकते हैं।
3. The Ministry of IT reduced the timeline for platforms to comply with takedown notices from 36 hours to a maximum of 3 hours in February, making it practically impossible to conduct human rights evaluations before removing content. IT मंत्रालय ने फरवरी में टेकडाउन नोटिस का पालन करने की समय-सीमा 36 घंटे से घटाकर अधिकतम 3 घंटे कर दी, जिससे सामग्री हटाने से पहले मानवाधिकार मूल्यांकन करना व्यावहारिक रूप से असंभव हो गया।
4. X (formerly Twitter) has complied with all Sahyog portal notices, unlike Meta which has challenged the portal in the Karnataka High Court. X (पूर्व में Twitter) ने सहयोग पोर्टल के सभी नोटिस का पालन किया है, Meta के विपरीत जिसने कर्नाटक उच्च न्यायालय में पोर्टल को चुनौती दी है।

Which of the statements given above are correct?

IN BRIEF



Rupee ends 15 paise weaker at 94.16 against U.S. dollar

The rupee extended its losing streak for the fifth day in a row, depreciating 15 paise to close at 94.16 against the U.S. dollar on Friday due to higher crude oil prices and strengthening American currency, with prospects of West Asia peace talks hanging in the balance. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.25 and stayed range-bound throughout the session, hitting that day's high of 94.18 and low of 94.31 against the greenback.

Mines ministry announces ₹5,000 cr. incentive scheme

Seeking to incentivise States towards ensuring that mines are placed faster for auctions, the Ministry of Mines has instituted an incentive scheme with an outlay of ₹5,000 crore for FY 2026-27. Incorporated under the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI), it centres around quicker operationalisation of mines, readiness in placing mines for auction, governance and integration, with the Ministry's central monitoring portal.

IndusInd Bank beats profit view on fewer new bad loans

IndusInd Bank reported a bigger-than-expected fourth-quarter profit on Friday, as the pace of additions to bad loans slowed, with provisions also dropping. The private lender posted a profit of ₹5.13 billion (₹56.55 million) for the quarter ended March 31, per I-SMEI-computed data. In the year-ago quarter, the bank had reported its biggest-ever quarterly loss. Analysts said stress in segments such as microfinance, where IndusInd Bank grappled with high bad loans, would ease during the quarter, as the bank tightened lending, improving its asset quality.

Shriram Fin Q4 net surges 40%, flags West Asia risk

Prag Frost of India

Non-banking lender Shriram Finance reported a 40% jump in consolidated profit to ₹1,021 crore during the March quarter and flagged risks from the West Asia crisis and likely monsoon deficit to businesses. The firm is maintaining its 10% assets under management (AUM) growth target for FY27 despite the headwinds it will be facing, a top company official said. "We had initially budgeted for the year to grow at 10%, Shriram Finance executive vice-chairman Anand Ravankar said. "Now, looking at the crisis, we need to rethink it, but we have not expanded it, so, we are still maintaining 10%," he added.

JSW, Japan's JFE to infuse ₹32,000 cr. to boost steel capacity

NATVANANDAR BATH

JSW Steel and Japan's JFE Steel Corporation proposed to infuse ₹32,000 crore via the joint venture (JV) to augment steel production capacity from 4.5 million tonnes per annum to more than 10 mtpa in Odisha's Santsipal district. The 50:50 JV will see output of Bhushan Power and Steel Ltd., Santsipal, acquired by JSW, rising from 4.5 mtpa to over 10 mtpa. CM Mohan Mahapatra Pradhan, JFE group CMD Eshwar Prasad and JFE Steel president Masayuki Hirano were present. "JFE Steel has committed about ₹18,790 crore for its 30% stake with half of

Santsipal Growth Corridor is likely to attract investments of ₹1 lakh crore and generate 2 lakh jobs

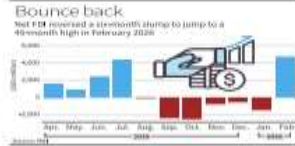
that already invested. The plant makes hot-rolled and cold-rolled steel, bars, wire rods and pipes," as per a statement. The JV will combine JFE's advanced technology with JSW's experience to boost output. Mr. Mahi said, "A 'Santsipal Growth Corridor' will be developed encompassing Boudkela, Barougola, Bargarh and Durgam which is likely to attract investments of ₹1 lakh crore and generate employment opportunities to over two lakh people."

Net FDI hits 45-month high in Feb., Fit to width month 'jinx'

Inflows exceeded outflows of direct investment by \$4.6 bn, gross FDI grew 61.6% to a seven-month high of nearly \$9 bn. India remains an attractive destination for greenfield FDI projects, says RBI

T.C.A. Bharadwaj

Net foreign direct investment (FDI) into India turned positive in February 2024 after six months of being in the negative. Latest Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data show, in February, the inflows exceeded outflows of direct investment by \$4.6 billion, the highest in nearly four years.



The main reason for this was a simultaneous increase in inward FDI in multi-month high, while the quantum of money that left the country fell to multi-year lows. Gross FDI in February 2024, or the total amount of money coming in as direct investment, grew 61.6% to a seven-month high of nearly \$9 billion. Over the course of the first 11 months of the financial year, gross FDI stood at \$65.3 billion, a growth of 18.1% over the same period of the previous financial year. "Manufacturing, consumer services, financial services, business services, and communication services accounted for more than two-thirds of total equity inflows during 2023-24 so far (up to February)," the RBI said. "Furthermore, Singapore, the U.S., Macaronesia, Japan, and the Netherlands were the major source countries of inward FDI to India, accounting for around three-fourth of the total inflows."

RBI highlights mixed economic trends in India on war impact

The Hindu Bureau

The Indian economy is giving mixed signals in the wake of the West Asia crisis, with some demand indicators remaining strong, while others showed signs of supply indicators starting to show signs of stress, the Reserve Bank of India noted in its latest analysis on

the economy. It added that the possibility of the supply crunch turning into a demand shock in India in the future warrants "careful and continuous assessment". The RBI also noted that high-frequency indicators of economic activity displayed divergent trends, demand conditions remained resilient, despite

domestic high-frequency indicators for March, in general, do not reflect much adverse impact of the global supply chain bottlenecks. It noted that automobile softening continued, while the Goods and Services Tax (GST) deflationary out, while logistics indicators such as e-way bill genera-

RBI cancels banking licence of Paytm Payments Bank

Lalatenka Mishra

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday cancelled the banking licence issued to Paytm Payments Bank Limited under Section 22 (4) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (BR Act) effective from close of business on April 24, 2024. "Consequently, Paytm Payments Bank Limited is prohibited from conducting the business of banking as defined in Section 2(i) or any additional business specified under Section 6 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 with immediate effect," the RBI said in a circular. The regulator said it would make an application for winding up of the bank, before any further deposits or top-ups in existing customer accounts, prepaid instruments, and wallets. "Paytm's parent company has been at logger heads with the regulator for several years now."



RBI said it would make an application before the HC for winding up of the bank. The Payments Bank licence issued to it, thereby violating the provisions of Section 22 (3) of the BR Act. Earlier, the bank was also directed to stop onboarding of new customers with effect from March 11, 2023. "Thereafter, on January 31, 2024 and February 16, 2024, certain business restrictions were also imposed on the bank, disallowing any further deposits or top-ups in existing customer accounts, prepaid instruments, and wallets. "Paytm's parent company has been at logger heads with the regulator for several years now."

Planet protection



Green party Budget Party guests hold a banner reading "Our Future, Our Responsibility" as they attend a demonstration organised by the Fridays For Future movement, "Our budget, our future" for an end to subsidies for oil and gas, outside of the Hallberg palace of the Indian square in Vienna, Austria.

India sells 30-year green debt at 'greenium' last

Basanta

India sold 30-year green bonds at a 6-basis-point discount, a sign of investor maturity government securities, the largest such premium since January 2023. A premium is the lower yield investors are willing to accept for bonds that finance environment-friendly sustainable projects. "The RBI sold the bond at 7.5426% coupon versus a 7.5426% yield on the 30-year 7.24% 2055 bond."

India's cybersecurity market set to grow to ₹15.06 billion by 2031

Lalatenka Mishra

Retention digitisation, rising cyber risk exposure, a zero-trust architectural investments in advanced threat detection, and zero-trust solutions has placed India's cybersecurity economy on a high-growth trajectory. The market is projected to surge from ₹6.56 billion in 2023 to ₹15.06 billion by 2031, growing at a CAGR of 18%, industry officials said. With over 400 cybersecurity product companies, India is emerging as a global hub for cyber innova-

tion and resilience, they added. Akshay Yadava, director, Unique Identification Authority of India said, "In a zero-trust architectural cybersecurity can no longer rely on perimeter defences alone. Organisations must adopt strong identity frameworks built on multi-factor authentication and continuous verification to ensure that only the right individuals access critical systems and data." "In a country like India, where over 1.4 billion digital transactions, secure

Noida Airport names Nitu Samra as Interim CEO

The Hindu Bureau

Noida International Airport has appointed CEO Nitu Samra as interim CEO after the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security denied security clearance to CEO Christoph Schmelmann, a Swiss national, which held up the launch of flight operations at the recently inaugurated airport. "With immediate effect, Nitu Samra has been appointed as CEO on an interim basis, until the board of directors can conclude a formal selection process," Noida International Airport said in a statement. Mr. Schmelmann, who was the CEO since August 2020, will move to the board of directors as executive vice-chairman.

RIL Q4 net slips 13% to ₹16,971 crore, oil & gas hit, firm to pay ₹6 dividend

The Hindu Bureau

Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) reported a 13% year-on-year fall in Q4 consolidated net profit to ₹16,971 crore as the oil and gas unit suffered a hit while retail had a flat bottomline. Gross revenue at ₹3,35,290 crore increased 12.9% as Oil & Chemicals (O&C), Digital Services and Retail units delivered double-digit revenue growth. Oil and gas revenue slid on natural decline in KG D6 production, RIL said.



The board has declared a dividend of ₹6 per share. For FY26 consolidated

9.8%. While In Platform revenue rose 11.7%, Reliance Retail's grew 11.8% and O&C revenue grew 6%. "Through fiscal FY2025, we faced geopolitical disruptions, volatile energy prices and shifting global trade patterns weighing on businesses across the world," said CMD Mukesh D. Ambani, RIL. "India held its economic growth course through all this as did RIL. The breadth of portfolio and strong local orientation helped navigate volatility in external environment."

RBI cancels banking licence of Paytm Payments Bank

Lalatendu Mishra

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday cancelled the banking licence issued to Paytm Payments Bank Limited under Section 22 (4) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 ('BR Act') effective from close of business on April 24, 2026.

"Consequently, Paytm Payments Bank Limited is prohibited from conducting the business of 'banking' as defined in Section 5(b) or any additional business specified under Section 6 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 with immediate effect," the RBI said in a circular.

The regulator said it would make an application for winding up of the bank, before the High Court.

Paytm Payments Bank had enough liquidity to repay its entire deposit liability upon winding up, the RBI said. The action was taken because the bank failed to comply with the conditions stipulated in

The logo for Paytm Payments Bank, featuring the word "paytm" in a bold, blue, lowercase font, with "payments" in a smaller, blue, lowercase font below it, and "bank" in a blue, lowercase font below that. The logo is set against a white background with a blue horizontal bar above it.

RBI said it would make an application before the HC for winding up of the bank.

the Payments Bank licence issued to it, thereby violating the provisions of Section 22 (3)(g) of the BR Act.

Earlier, the bank was directed to stop onboarding of new customers with effect from March 11, 2022.

Thereafter, on January 31, 2024 and February 16, 2024, certain business restrictions were also imposed on the bank, disallowing any further deposits or top-ups in existing customer accounts, prepaid instruments, and wallets.

Paytm's parent company has been at logger heads with the regulator for several years now.

- **RBI cancelled the banking licence of Paytm Payments Bank Limited under Section 22(4) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 — effective from close of business on April 24, 2026.**
- **RBI ने Paytm Payments Bank Limited का बैंकिंग लाइसेंस रद्द किया — बैंकिंग विनियमन अधिनियम, 1949 की धारा 22(4) के तहत — 24 अप्रैल 2026 को कारोबार बंद होने से प्रभावी।**
- Paytm Payments Bank **prohibited from conducting the business of 'banking'** as defined in Section 5(b) or any additional business under Section 6 of the BR Act.
- Paytm Payments Bank को धारा 5(b) में परिभाषित 'बैंकिंग' कारोबार या धारा 6 के तहत कोई अतिरिक्त कारोबार करने से **प्रतिबंधित**।
- **Reason:** Bank failed to comply with conditions stipulated in the Payments Bank licence — violating provisions of **Section 22(3)(g) of the BR Act.**
- **कारण:** बैंक पेमेंट्स बैंक लाइसेंस में निर्धारित शर्तों का पालन करने में विफल — **BR अधिनियम की धारा 22(3)(g)** के प्रावधानों का उल्लंघन।
- **RBI will apply to High Court for winding up;** Paytm Payments Bank has enough liquidity to repay entire deposit liability upon winding up.
- **RBI उच्च न्यायालय में समापन के लिए आवेदन करेगा;** Paytm Payments Bank के पास समापन पर पूरी जमा देयता चुकाने के लिए पर्याप्त तरलता।
- **Timeline of regulatory action:** Stop new customer onboarding from **March 11, 2022;** business restrictions on **January 31, 2024 and February 16, 2024** (no new deposits/top-ups); now **final licence cancellation April 24, 2026.**
- **नियामकीय कार्रवाई की समयरेखा:** 11 मार्च 2022 — नए ग्राहक ऑनबोर्डिंग रोकें; 31 जनवरी और 16 फरवरी 2024 — व्यावसायिक प्रतिबंध; 24 अप्रैल 2026 — अंतिम लाइसेंस रद्द।
- **Context:** Paytm's parent company has been "**at loggerheads with the regulator for several years**".
- **संदर्भ:** Paytm की मूल कंपनी "कई वर्षों से नियामक से टकराव में"।

- Paytm Payments Bank was a special type of bank (payments bank) — it could accept deposits (up to ₹2 lakh) and facilitate payments, but couldn't give loans. It was set up in 2017.
- Paytm Payments Bank एक विशेष प्रकार का बैंक (पेमेंट्स बैंक) था — यह जमा स्वीकार कर सकता था (₹2 लाख तक) और भुगतान की सुविधा दे सकता था, लेकिन ऋण नहीं दे सकता था।
- RBI had been giving warnings for years — first it stopped the bank from taking new customers (2022), then stopped fresh deposits (2024). Finally, RBI has now cancelled the licence entirely — the bank must close down.
- RBI वर्षों से चेतावनियाँ दे रही थी — पहले नए ग्राहक लेना बंद करवाया (2022), फिर नई जमा बंद (2024)। अंततः RBI ने अब लाइसेंस पूरी तरह रद्द किया।
- The reason is "non-compliance with conditions of the payments bank licence" — exactly what conditions were violated isn't specified in this article, but likely involves KYC norms, data sharing with parent company, money laundering concerns, etc.
- कारण "पेमेंट्स बैंक लाइसेंस की शर्तों का अनुपालन नहीं" — सटीक उल्लंघन इस लेख में निर्दिष्ट नहीं, लेकिन संभवतः KYC मानदंड, पैरेंट कंपनी के साथ डेटा साझाकरण, मनी लॉन्ड्रिंग चिंताएं।
- Key reassurance: The bank has enough money to repay all depositors — so depositors won't lose money. This is important for public confidence in the banking system.
- मुख्य आश्वासन: बैंक के पास सभी जमाकर्ताओं को वापस भुगतान करने के लिए पर्याप्त धन है — जमाकर्ता पैसा नहीं खोएंगे।

D3. Legal Framework — BR Act Provisions / BR अधिनियम प्रावधान

- **Section 5(b):** Defines "banking" — accepting deposits from public for lending or investment; repayable on demand or otherwise
- **Section 6:** Additional businesses a banking company can engage in
- **Section 22(3)(g):** Condition for granting banking licence — bank must fulfill specific conditions; violation = grounds for cancellation
- **Section 22(4):** Power to cancel banking licence — if bank violates conditions stipulated under Section 22(3)
- **धारा 5(b):** "बैंकिंग" की परिभाषा | **धारा 6:** अतिरिक्त कारोबार | **धारा 22(3)(g):** लाइसेंस शर्तें | **धारा 22(4):** लाइसेंस रद्द करने की शक्ति।

D4. Payments Bank — What It Is / पेमेंट्स बैंक क्या है

- **Concept:** Introduced by RBI based on Nachiket Mor Committee (2013) recommendations; differentiated banking
- **What it can do:** Accept deposits up to ₹2 lakh per customer; payments and remittances; mobile banking; debit cards; issue prepaid instruments
- **What it CANNOT do:** Give loans (credit); issue credit cards; accept NRI deposits
- **Purpose:** Financial inclusion — serve migrant workers, low-income households, small businesses
- **RBI approval:** 2015 — 11 entities given in-principle approval; Paytm Payments Bank, Airtel Payments Bank, India Post Payments Bank, Jio Payments Bank etc.
- **पेमेंट्स बैंक:** ₹2 लाख तक जमा; भुगतान; कोई ऋण नहीं; वित्तीय समावेशन; 2015 में 11 को मंजूरी।

- **Banking history in India:** Imperial Bank (1921) → SBI (1955); Bank nationalisation (1969 — 14 banks; 1980 — 6 more); financial sector reforms (1991 — Narasimham Committee); private bank licences (2003-04 — Yes Bank, Kotak); payments bank (2015-17).
- **भारत में बैंकिंग:** 1921 इम्पीरियल → SBI 1955; 1969 राष्ट्रीयकरण; 1991 सुधार; 2015 पेमेंट्स बैंक।
- **PMC Bank crisis (2019):** Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank collapsed; depositors suffered; led to stricter oversight; RBI extended BR Act to cooperative banks (2020).
- **PMC बैंक (2019):** पंजाब और महाराष्ट्र; जमाकर्ता नुकसान; सहकारी बैंकों पर BR अधिनियम विस्तार।
- **Yes Bank crisis (2020):** Yes Bank nearly collapsed; RBI intervened; forced SBI to take over; depositors saved; shows RBI's role as backstop.
- **Yes Bank (2020):** RBI ने SBI को अधिग्रहण के लिए मजबूर किया; जमाकर्ता बचाए।

Geography / भूगोल

- **Paytm's customer base:** Large presence in UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, MP — states with significant unbanked populations; payments bank was crucial for financial inclusion in these areas.
- **Paytm का ग्राहक आधार:** UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, MP में बड़ी उपस्थिति — वित्तीय समावेशन के लिए महत्वपूर्ण।

Feature	Payments Bank	Small Finance Bank	Commercial Bank
Accept deposits	Yes (≤₹2 lakh)	Yes	Yes
Give loans	NO	Yes	Yes
Credit cards	NO	Yes	Yes
Debit cards	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mobile banking	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prepaid instruments	Yes	Limited	No
NRI deposits	NO	Yes	Yes
Investment in govt. securities	Yes (75%+ of deposits)	Yes	Yes
FDI cap	74% (same as private banks)	74%	74%

- **Payments Banks approved (2015) — Current status:**
 1. **Airtel Payments Bank** — operational
 2. **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)** — operational (Govt. owned)
 3. **Fino Payments Bank** — operational (now converted to SFB)
 4. **Jio Payments Bank** — operational
 5. **Paytm Payments Bank** — **CANCELLED**
 6. **NSDL Payments Bank** — operational
 7. Aditya Birla — withdrew
 8. Tech Mahindra — withdrew
 9. Cholamandalam — surrendered
 10. Sun Pharmaceutical — surrendered
 11. Vodafone M-Pesa — operational then merged
- **DICGC (Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation):**
 - Subsidiary of RBI; established 1978
 - Insures deposits up to **₹5 lakh per depositor per bank**
 - This limit was raised from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh in 2020 (Union Budget)
 - Covers: Commercial banks, cooperative banks, RRBs, small finance banks, payments banks
 - Premium: Paid by banks (not depositors)
 - **DICGC:** RBI की सहायक; 1978; ₹5 लाख बीमा (2020 में ₹1 लाख से बढ़ाया); बैंक प्रीमियम देते हैं।

- **Key Banking Failures — India's Experience:**

Bank	Year	Issue	Resolution
Global Trust Bank	2004	Bad loans, fraud	Merged with Oriental Bank of Commerce
Lehman India	2008	Global crisis	Limited impact on India
PMC Bank	2019	Fraud, hidden NPAs	Restrictions; merged with Unity SFB
Yes Bank	2020	Bad loans, governance	RBI-orchestrated SBI rescue
Lakshmi Vilas Bank	2020	Capital inadequacy	Merged with DBS India
Paytm Payments Bank	2026	Licence violations	Winding up

#	Exam	Year	Question	Options	✔ Answer
1	UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	Under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, the Reserve Bank of India has the power to cancel a bank's licence under which Section?	(a) Section 5 (b) Section 17 (c) Section 22 (d) Section 35	(c) Section 22 — Section 22(4) specifically for cancellation
2	UPSC CSE Prelims	2023	Which of the following correctly describes a "Payments Bank" in India?	(a) Bank that focuses on agricultural lending (b) Bank that can accept deposits without any limit and give loans (c) Bank that can accept deposits up to ₹2 lakh and facilitate payments but cannot give loans (d) Bank that only operates digitally with no physical presence	(c) Deposits ≤ ₹2 lakh; payments; NO loans
3	UPSC CSE Prelims	2021	The concept of Payments Banks and Small Finance Banks in India was recommended by which committee?	(a) Raghuram Rajan Committee (b) Deepak Mohanty Committee (c) Nachiket Mor Committee (2013) (d) Nayak Committee	(c) Nachiket Mor Committee (2013)

4	UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) insures deposits up to what amount per depositor per bank?	(a) ₹1 lakh (b) ₹2 lakh (c) ₹5 lakh (d) ₹10 lakh	(c) ₹5 lakh — raised from ₹1 lakh in 2020
5	UPSC CSE Prelims	2021	The DICGC (Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation) is:	(a) A subsidiary of SEBI (b) An independent statutory body under Finance Ministry (c) A wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (d) A joint venture between RBI and NABARD	(c) Wholly-owned subsidiary of RBI
6	UPSC CSE Prelims	2023	Which of the following functions can a Payments Bank in India perform? 1. Accept deposits up to ₹2 lakh 2. Issue debit cards 3. Provide loans to small businesses	(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3	(c) 1 and 2 only — Payments banks CANNOT give loans

7	UPSC CSE Mains GS-3	2022	"The failure of payments banks like Paytm signals challenges in India's differentiated banking model." Critically examine the payments bank model and its role in financial inclusion.	(Mains descriptive)	Key: Nachiket Mor; differentiated banking; IPPB vs Paytm; KYC issues; PMLA; ₹2 lakh limit; JAM trinity; DICGC protection; RBI's regulatory role
8	UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	Under the JAM (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) Trinity, which of the following is/are correct? 1. Jan Dhan accounts can be linked to Payments Banks 2. Aadhaar-based KYC is used for account opening 3. Mobile banking is the primary delivery channel	(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) All three (d) 2 and 3 only	(c) All three — JAM trinity uses all three components
9	UPSC CSE Prelims	2021	Which section of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, defines "banking"?	(a) Section 3 (b) Section 5(b) (c) Section 7 (d) Section 12	(b) Section 5(b) — defines banking as accepting deposits for lending/investment
10	SSC CGL	2024	Paytm Payments Bank's banking licence was cancelled by RBI under which provision of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949?	(a) Section 17(4) (b) Section 35(4) (c) Section 22(4) (d) Section 45(4)	(c) Section 22(4)



L. Statement-Based MCQ / कथन-आधारित MCQ

Consider the following statements about Paytm Payments Bank and the Banking Regulation Act, 1949: Paytm Payments Bank और बैंकिंग विनियमन अधिनियम, 1949 के बारे में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. RBI cancelled Paytm Payments Bank's licence under Section 22(4) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, effective from April 24, 2026, because the bank failed to comply with the conditions stipulated in its Payments Bank licence. RBI ने बैंकिंग विनियमन अधिनियम, 1949 की धारा 22(4) के तहत 24 अप्रैल 2026 से Paytm Payments Bank का लाइसेंस रद्द किया, क्योंकि बैंक पेमेंट्स बैंक लाइसेंस में निर्धारित शर्तों का पालन करने में विफल रहा।
2. Upon cancellation of its licence, Paytm Payments Bank was found to have insufficient liquidity to repay its depositors, necessitating DICGC insurance to compensate affected customers. लाइसेंस रद्द होने पर, Paytm Payments Bank के पास जमाकर्ताओं को चुकाने के लिए अपर्याप्त तरलता पाई गई, जिससे प्रभावित ग्राहकों को मुआवजा देने के लिए DICGC बीमा की आवश्यकता हुई।
3. Prior to the final licence cancellation, RBI had directed Paytm Payments Bank to stop onboarding new customers from March 11, 2022 and subsequently imposed business restrictions in January-February 2024. अंतिम लाइसेंस रद्दीकरण से पहले, RBI ने 11 मार्च 2022 से नए ग्राहकों की ऑनबोर्डिंग बंद करने और बाद में जनवरी-फरवरी 2024 में व्यावसायिक प्रतिबंध लगाने का निर्देश दिया था।
4. A Payments Bank in India, unlike regular commercial banks, is prohibited from issuing loans to its customers but can accept deposits of up to ₹2 lakh per customer. भारत में पेमेंट्स बैंक, नियमित वाणिज्यिक बैंकों के विपरीत, अपने ग्राहकों को ऋण देने से प्रतिबंधित है लेकिन प्रति ग्राहक ₹2 लाख तक जमा स्वीकार कर सकता है।

Which of the statements given above are correct?

Drought displaces tens of thousands in Somalia: UN

Agence France Presse
GENEVA

Drought displaced almost 63,000 people in just five Somali districts since the start of the year, the UN said Friday, estimating that the countrywide number could be in the hundreds of thousands.

The United Nations' migration agency said that in the five out of Somalia's 18 districts that it had surveyed, three out of every four new displacements were attributed to drought, while hunger levels were rising. In Baidoa, Deynile, Khasha, Dii-insoor and Doolow, the International Organization for Migration warned that worsening drought conditions were driving crop failure and the collapse of livelihoods.

While the numbers beyond those five districts remained unclear, Bruno Kolly, IOM's senior programme coordinator for Somalia, said the agency estimated that across the country, "the total figure would be around 1,200,000".

And even if the Gu rainy season, which runs between April and June, brings above-normal rainfall, nearly 1.25 million more people are projected to be displaced by drought during that period, according to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix.

At the end of February, UN-backed experts warned that the number of people in Somalia experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity had nearly doubled in the past year to 9.5 million.

"That's almost one out of every three in the country who are facing high levels of hunger," Mr. Kolly said, highlighting that "more than 1.8 million children are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition this year".

At the same time, he warned that UN agencies and their partners had received just 14% of the total funding requested for humanitarian aid in Somalia this year.

Chinese EVs and flying cars steal show at world's biggest auto expo

Automakers showcase AI, humanoid robots and flying-car ambitions at the Auto China exhibition in Beijing on Friday; over 1,400 vehicles from hundreds of Chinese and foreign companies are on display at two sprawling venues till May 3

Agence France Presse
BEIJING

Thousands squeezed into the world's biggest car show Friday, snapping selfies beside Chinese electric vehicles as automakers showcased AI, humanoid robots and flying-car ambitions in a car-throat market.

Hordes of influencers posed in front of gleaming models at the capital's cavernous international exhibition centre, starting to arrive in cars stuffed with outfit changes, while animated CEOs worked the crowds in front of massive LED screens.

Foreign overseas brands such as Volkswagen, Toyota and BMW once dominated in China, but have lost market share in past years as domestic firms had been down to the electric vehicle revolution and undercut them on price.

Chinese manufacturers including BYD, Xiaomi and XPeng are now also at the forefront of integrating AI software and autonomous driving technology into their EVs.

The Auto China exhibition, hosted at two side-by-side venues, spans 3,800,000 square metres (four million square feet), according to organisers.

More than 1,400 vehicles from hundreds of Chinese and foreign companies are on display from



Seeing the future: People watch the unveiling of new SUV models, starting EV five and third-generation Yuan PLUS, at Beijing International Automotive Exhibition on Friday. AP/WIDEWORLD

Friday, when the show opened to industry professionals and the media, and later to the public from April 29 till May 2.

While traditional leading brands like Germany's BMW and Mercedes held sweeping areas of the vast halls, most of the event's mega stages were dominated by Chinese brands including BYD and battery giant CATL.

At the sprawling expo, crowds cheered as XPeng chief executive He Xiaopeng unveiled the company's new G6, a six-seat electric SUV.

The imposing 5.2-metre vehicle incorporates AI technology and is aimed at breaking into the luxury market, Mr. He said. It would soon be fol-

lowed by humanoid robots this year, Mr. He promised, and eventually by flying cars, which XPeng hopes to launch even earlier this year.

Foreign automakers are increasingly collaborating with Chinese firms to stay competitive.

BMW has partnered with CATL, while Audi is using Huawei's driving assistance systems and Volkswagen is co-developing EVs with Guangdong-based XPeng.

XPeng President Brian Gu said companies were "leveraging their respective strengths to collaborate with China," a trend he said would continue.

Mr. Gu has his eyes set on export markets including the Gulf and Europe, where he anticipates

growth to accelerate.

In the last year, we started local production, and this year we are going to launch even more new products for the European market, which he said was responsible for half of XPeng's global sales in 2022.

Asked by AFP how Mr. Trump's tariffs were affecting XPeng, he said only that the U.S. market remained an important one.

Pierce competition
This year, companies are also jostling to sell space, analysts say, with many SUVs' new growth areas targeting customers prioritizing styling and comfort.

Mr. Gu has his eyes set on export markets including the Gulf and Europe, where he anticipates

market, and these big SUVs address that need," independent analyst Lei King wrote in a blog this week.

Firms have flooded the domestic market in recent years with trade-in schemes, offering huge discounts to customers to give up their old car for a new one.

The fierce price war led Chinese officials last year to call for tighter price monitoring and improving long-term regulation of competition.

But prosecutors appear unfazed. Mr. Lei wrote, naming at least eight EV brands from Chinese automakers that have cropped up over the last two years.

Electric vehicles, an area China dominates, are also gaining traction as rising global oil prices linked to the West Asia war push drivers away from fossil fuel-powered models.

Chinese tech on display Friday were favored the road. Dozens of people appeared to clamor into an entrance on the left, a 10-meter-long Chinese aviation startup AutoFlight, part of China's wider push to dominate the low-altitude economy.

For Chinese auto enthusiasts (Qi), domestic EVs were the experts' clear main choices.

The comparison, foreign brands seem to have a weaker presence and in China, "has become a customer retention and replacement rate (Appraise) driven

Rebuilding trust with Iran will take ages, says UAE

Agence France Presse
CHANTILLY

Rebuilding trust between Abu Dhabi and Tehran will take "ages and ages", UAE presidential advisor Anwar Gargash said Friday, after Iran targeted the United Arab Emirates during the West Asia conflict.

"You can't be attacked with 2,000 missiles and drones and then talk to me about trust. That will take ages and ages," Mr. Gargash said at a World Policy Conference in the town of Chantilly, north of Paris.

The top official said that 80% of the Iranian attacks targeted "civilians, civilian infrastructure," he said.

"Tehran was telling the Arab Gulf countries that you don't matter in my calculations, and I think this is going to last for a very long time," he said.

"To the region - to the UAE and other countries, Iran will be seen as a strategic threat," he said.

Iran's U.S. strikes on Iraq in late February sparked region-wide concern, with Tehran targeting U.S. allies in the Gulf.

A ceasefire was agreed at the start of the month, but peace talks in Pakistan have stalled in recent days.

Since the truce, the U.S. and Iran have shifted their focus to the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports ordinarily flow. Iran has all but closed it in retaliation for the U.S. while the U.S. has imposed a blockade of its own on Iranian ports.

Bangladesh sweats as West Asia fuel shortages force rampant power cuts

Agence France Presse
DHAKA

Bangladesh is battling a hardware and frequent power cuts, as soaring electricity demand outstrips limited generation capacity constrained by shortages linked to the West Asia war.

Temperatures have hit 40C across a swathe of the country of 170 million people, forcing the government to impose load-shedding as demand exceeds supply.

"Neither my children nor I could sleep last night due to frequent power cuts. It was extremely hot," Shilpa Yasmin Mirza, a 26-year-old mother of two from northeastern Patuakhali district, told AFP on Friday.

"We have had power cuts before, but this year we cannot get electricity for even two hours at a stretch."

The South Asian nation imports 90% of its oil and gas, much of it from West Asia, where energy shipments through the Strait of



Running an empty A man taps on his smartphone while waiting in a queue to refuel at a filling station in Dhaka. AP

Hormuz have been disrupted since war began in late February.

"We have a huge electricity generation capacity, but due to shortages of gas fuel, we are unable to utilize it," senior Energy Ministry official Yvonne Rahman told reporters on Thursday.

Arifuddin Islam Amin, the Junior Power Minister, told Parliament on Friday that electricity demand was 16,000 megawatts, against generation of 14,126 megawatts.

"Limited load-shedding was required," Mr. Amin said. "To maintain fairness, we have decided to introduce limited, experimental load-shedding of 100 megawatts in Dhaka. It is not acceptable that urban residents enjoy comfort while farmers suffer."

Bangladesh has also seen queues lasting several hours at gas stations this week, although Energy Minister Iqbal Hossain Mahmud has blamed power buying and insisted the country has enough fuel.

They already have," said Tariq Thaler, director of the Gulf International Forum research institute.

Qatar has already stopped liquefied natural gas production and, along with energy producers in Kuwait and Bahrain, de-classified forces nuclear.

In Dubai, unusually light traffic and deserted tourist areas tell the tale of a city still waiting for a return to normality.

Weeks into a fragile truce, the initial shock has subsided with children returning to school in the UAE and Qatar after more than a month of distance learning. But some are still struggling to find jobs. Many families fled UAE for safety, but some are still in place for security incidents.

More than numbers



Massed grief: A fence stuffed with 20,000 teddy bears - each symbolising a Ukrainian child allegedly abducted by Russia since the war began, standing to organisers - stands on the National Mall near the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. AP

Thursday, the Russian Federation's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the United States had "abducted" 10,000 Ukrainian children since the start of the war in February. The statement came as the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution condemning the Russian Federation's actions. The resolution states that the Russian Federation has "abducted" 10,000 Ukrainian children since the start of the war in February. The resolution also calls for the United States to take action to protect the rights of these children. The Russian Federation has denied the allegations and has accused the United States of fabricating the numbers. The United States has said that it has evidence to support its claims. The Russian Federation has said that it has evidence to support its claims. The United States has said that it has evidence to support its claims. The Russian Federation has said that it has evidence to support its claims.

Gulf states caught between war and peace as U.S.-Iran stand-off drags on

Agence France Presse
DUBAI

After weathering unprecedented attacks from Iran, the wealthy Gulf states are now stuck between war and peace as talks stall and the vital Strait of Hormuz remains all but closed, threatening economic recovery.

The longer the Gulf's fate remains uncertain, the longer economic recovery will take, and analysts warn that the traditional U.S. allies will struggle to influence Washington's decisions when it comes to war and peace.

Ensnared in peace
The Gulf states have spent a long time with the Strait of Hormuz blocked, some of those states are going to suffer huge blows. And

business. It is unclear whether stalled talks, so far centred around the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian enrichment, will produce a deal addressing the Gulf's main concerns and strip Iran of its control over the key waterway and keeping its missiles and proxies in check.

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Ensnared in peace
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A man from the UAE national flag is by itself in Dubai after the Prime Minister's call to host it as a symbol of unity and peace. AP

One luxury hotel employee said some staff have not returned home, while others have had their salaries cut. The hotel has also been closed for several days.

Half of the Gulf countries are expecting a contraction this year, while slower growth is projected for Saudi Arabia, and the International Monetary Fund.

Big, oil-rich countries with deep pockets can

boost their economies again, but their prospects hinge on how long the crisis lasts and whether a final resolution can provide assurances for the future. It had about of the International Monetary Fund told AFP.

"Worse case scenario"
The Hormuz blockade has exposed most of the Gulf's dependence on the key waterway.

But even for countries like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which have access to pipelines that allow some to bypass the waterway, diversification efforts are a risk.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia have set up a joint intelligence center to track and counter threats, but also

are investing in artificial intelligence expertise and data centres.

"The U.S. has really opened a Pandora's box for the Gulf states," Mr. Thaler said.

If Iran is allowed to maintain "a veto over their economic" indefinitely through its control of Hormuz, he added, that would be "an extremely challenging and vulnerable situation for the Gulf."

Iran is not at the negotiating table and could still open any deal. "To insist going to continue to 'show the strategy' to Iran," Mr. Thaler said, referring to the strategy he repeated, periodic attacks.

"And it is facing its own problems with the Gulf issue, the monarchies have found themselves on the sidelines of the talks despite being in the firing line."

+

AP

Chinese EVs and flying cars steal show at world's biggest auto expo

Automakers showcase AI, humanoid robots and flying-car ambitions at the Auto China exhibition in Beijing on Friday; over 1,400 vehicles from hundreds of Chinese and foreign companies are on display at two sprawling venues till May 3

Agence France Presse
BEIJING

Thousands squeezed into the world's biggest car show Friday, snapping selfies beside Chinese electric vehicles as automakers showcased AI, humanoid robots and flying-car ambitions in a cut-throat market.

Rows of influencers posed in front of gleaming models at the capital's cavernous international exhibition centre, darting to suitcases stuffed with outfit changes, while animated CEOs worked the crowds in front of massive LED screens.

Legacy overseas brands such as Volkswagen, Toyota and BMW once dominated in China, but have lost market share in past years to domestic firms that beat them to the electric vehicle revolution and undercut them on price.

Chinese manufacturers including BYD, Xiaomi and XPeng are now also at the forefront of integrating AI software and autonomous driving technology into their EVs. The Auto China exhibition, hosted at two side-by-side venues, spans 3,80,000 square metres (four million square feet), according to organisers – more than 50 football pitches.

More than 1,400 vehicles from hundreds of Chinese and foreign companies are on display from



Driving the future: People watch the unveiling of new BYD models, Datang EV Pre and third-generation Yuan PLUS, at Beijing International Automotive Exhibition on Friday. REUTERS

Friday, when the show opened to industry professionals and the media, and later to the public from April 28 until May 3.

While traditional leading brands like Germany's BMW and Mercedes held sweeping areas of the vast halls, most of the event's mega stages were dominated by Chinese brands including BYD and battery giant CATL.

At the sprawling expo, crowds cheered as XPeng chief executive He Xiaopeng unveiled the company's new GX, a six-seat electric SUV.

The imposing 5.2-metre vehicle incorporates AI technology and is aimed at breaking into the luxury market, Mr. He said.

It would soon be fol-

lowed by humanoid robots this year, Mr. He promised, and eventually by flying cars, which XPeng hopes to mass-produce.

Foreign automakers are increasingly collaborating with Chinese firms to stay competitive.

BMW has partnered with CATL, while Audi is using Huawei's driving assistance systems and Volkswagen is co-developing EVs with Guangzhou-based XPeng.

XPeng President Brian Gu said companies were "leveraging their respective strength to collaborate with China" a trend he said would continue.

Mr. Gu has his eyes set on export markets including the Gulf and Europe, where he anticipates

growth to accelerate.

"In the last year, we started local production, and this year we are going to launch even more new products for the European market" which he said was responsible for half of XPeng's global sales in 2025.

Asked by AFP how Mr. Trump's tariffs were affecting XPeng, he said only that the U.S. market remained an important one.

Fierce competition

This year, companies are also jostling to sell space, analysts say, with roomy SUVs' new growth area targeting customers prioritising seating and comfort.

China "has become a customer retention and replacement/upgrade-driven

market, and these big SUVs address that need," independent analyst Lei Xing wrote in a blog this week.

Firms have flooded the domestic market in recent years with trade-in schemes, offering huge discounts to customers to give up their old car for a new one.

The fierce price war led Chinese officials last year to call for tighter price monitoring and improving long-term regulation of competition.

But newcomers appear unfazed, Mr. Lei wrote, naming at least eight EV brands from Chinese automakers that have cropped up over the last two years.

Electric vehicles, an area China dominates, are also gaining traction as rising global oil prices linked to the West Asia war push drivers away from fossil fuel-powered models.

Chinese tech on display Friday went beyond the road. Dozens of people queued to clamber into an enormous air taxi, a 10-seater from Chinese aviation startup AutoFlight, part of China's wider push to dominate the low-altitude economy.

For Chinese auto enthusiast Dal, domestic EVs were the expo's clear main characters.

"In comparison, foreign brands seem to have a weaker presence and less visibility," the 30-year-old influencer, who gave only his surname, said.

Topic (English)	विषय (हिंदी)	Key Points (English)	मुख्य बिंदु (हिंदी)	Added Facts for Exam
Event Overview	कार्यक्रम परिचय	Auto China Expo held in Beijing; world's largest auto show	बीजिंग में आयोजित ऑटो चाइना एक्सपो; दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा ऑटो शो	Biennial event; alternates with Shanghai Auto Show
Scale of Exhibition	प्रदर्शनी का पैमाना	1,400+ vehicles; hundreds of companies; two venues	1400+ वाहन; सैकड़ों कंपनियां; दो स्थान	Area ~3.8 lakh sq. meters (~50 football fields)
Dominance of Chinese EVs	चीनी इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों का वर्चस्व	Chinese brands (BYD, Xiaomi, XPeng) leading EV revolution	चीनी ब्रांड EV क्षेत्र में अग्रणी	China = world's largest EV market (~60% global sales)
Technology Showcase	तकनीकी प्रदर्शन	AI integration, autonomous driving, humanoid robots	AI, स्वचालित ड्राइविंग, ह्यूमनॉइड रोबोट का प्रदर्शन	China pushing "AI + Mobility" ecosystem
Flying Cars	उड़ने वाली कारें	Companies like XPeng exploring flying taxis	XPeng जैसी कंपनियां एयर टैक्सी पर काम कर रही हैं	Part of "Low-Altitude Economy" policy in China
Foreign Companies Role	विदेशी कंपनियों की भूमिका	BMW, Audi, Volkswagen collaborating with Chinese firms	BMW, Audi, Volkswagen चीनी कंपनियों के साथ सहयोग कर रहे हैं	CATL (China) = world's largest EV battery maker
Market Competition	बाजार प्रतिस्पर्धा	Intense price wars; discounts for consumers	भारी मूल्य प्रतिस्पर्धा और छूट	Govt monitoring to avoid unhealthy competition
SUV Trend	SUV का ट्रेंड	Shift toward large, comfortable SUVs	बड़े और आरामदायक SUV की मांग	SUVs = fastest-growing segment globally

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Export Strategy	निर्यात रणनीति	Focus on Europe & Gulf markets	यूरोप और खाड़ी देशों पर फोकस	China is top EV exporter globally
Policy Push	नीतिगत समर्थन	Trade-in schemes & govt support for EV adoption	पुरानी गाड़ी बदलने की योजना और सरकारी समर्थन	China's NEV policy drives adoption
Oil Price Impact	तेल कीमतों का प्रभाव	High global oil prices boosting EV demand	तेल की बढ़ती कीमतों से EV की मांग बढ़ी	EVs seen as alternative to fossil fuels
Consumer Experience	उपभोक्ता अनुभव	Visitors experienced air taxis & futuristic tech	लोगों ने एयर टैक्सी और भविष्य की तकनीक देखी	Focus shifting from product → experience

ZERO-DUTY ACCESS IN KEY EXPORT SECTORS; \$20-BN FDI IN 15 YEARS

India, New Zealand to sign free trade pact on Monday

MUKESH JAGOTA
New Delhi, April 24

INDIA AND NEW ZEALAND will sign a free trade agreement (FTA) on Monday that will entail a commitment of \$20-billion investment by the island nation in India over the next 15 years, along with zero-duty access for New Delhi in all key export sectors.

"We will sign our FTA with India on Monday," Christopher Luxon, New Zealand prime minister posted on X, highlighting the opportunities the agreement is expected to unlock for New Zealand businesses.

The agreement, finalised on December 22 last year, is among the fastest trade deals negotiated by India, with talks beginning in March 2025. It will be formally signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and New Zealand's Investment Minister Todd McClay.

This marks the second attempt by the two countries to conclude an FTA. The first round of negotiations, held between 2010 and 2015, saw 10 rounds of talks before stalling, largely over New Zealand's demand for greater access to India's dairy market.

In the current agreement, India has secured exclusions for sensitive dairy products such as

A DONE DEAL

■ It will be formally signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and New Zealand's Investment Minister Todd McClay

■ The agreement was finalised on December 22, 2025

■ Talks began in March 2025

■ India has retained protections on nearly **30%**

■ India will immediately remove tariffs on products such as wood, wool, sheep meat, leather, and rawhides



■ Tariffs on petroleum, machinery, and certain milk derivatives like peptones will be phased out over time

milk, cream, yogurt, and cheese. Other excluded categories include most animal products (except sheep meat), select vegetable products, sugar, artificial honey, vegetable and animal fats and oils, as well as gems and jewellery, copper, and aluminium articles.

Because the dairy sector — the backbone of New Zealand's economy, accounting for 34% of its total exports — is excluded, the deal has been opposed by Prime Minister Luxon's coalition partner. New Zealand First leader Winston Peters described it as a "low-quality deal", specifically citing concerns over immigration provisions and the

lack of traditional market access for New Zealand's biggest export, dairy. However, Luxon has secured support from the main opposition New Zealand Labour Party for the agreement.

Under the FTA, duties on all Indian exports to New Zealand will be eliminated. India, on its part, has offered market access across a little over 70% of its tariff lines, while retaining protections on nearly 30%.

India will immediately remove tariffs on products such as wood, wool, sheep meat, leather, and rawhides. Tariffs on petroleum, machinery, and certain milk derivatives like peptones will be

phased out over time. In sectors such as wines, pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, polymers, and aluminium, duties will be reduced but not fully eliminated. Duties on honey, apples, kiwi fruit and albumin including milk albumin the duties will be reduced and a quota on imports will be placed.

The agreement also includes provisions for mobility, offering a quota of 5,000 visas for skilled Indian professionals for stays of up to three years. Eligible sectors include AYUSH practitioners, yoga instructors, chefs, music teachers, as well as professionals in IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction.

India's Free Trade Agreement with New Zealand: Key Details and Impact					📄 Share
Aspect (English)	पहलू (हिंदी)	Key Details (English)	मुख्य विवरण (हिंदी)	Added Facts for Exam	
Agreement Type	समझौते का प्रकार	Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India & New Zealand	भारत और न्यूजीलैंड के बीच मुक्त व्यापार समझौता	FTA reduces tariffs & boosts trade flows	
Signing Details	हस्ताक्षर विवरण	To be signed by Piyush Goyal & Todd McClay	पीयूष गोयल और टॉड मैक्ले द्वारा हस्ताक्षर	Reflects India's Indo-Pacific trade strategy	
Timeline	समयरेखा	Talks: March 2025; Finalised: Dec 22, 2025; Signing: April 2026	वार्ता: मार्च 2025; अंतिम: दिसंबर 2025; हस्ताक्षर: अप्रैल 2026	Fastest FTA negotiated by India	
Investment Commitment	निवेश प्रतिबद्धता	\$20 billion FDI expected over 15 years	15 वर्षों में \$20 अरब निवेश की उम्मीद	Helps infrastructure, logistics, manufacturing	
Tariff Policy	शुल्क नीति	Zero-duty access for key export sectors	प्रमुख निर्यात क्षेत्रों में शून्य शुल्क	Improves export competitiveness	
India's Tariff Removal	भारत द्वारा शुल्क हटाना	Immediate removal on wood, wool, sheep meat, leather	लकड़ी, ऊन, भेड़ मांस, चमड़ा पर तत्काल शुल्क समाप्त	Boosts NZ primary sector exports	
Sensitive Sector Protection	संवेदनशील क्षेत्र संरक्षण	India retains protection on ~30% tariff lines	भारत लगभग 30% वस्तुओं पर संरक्षण रखेगा	Protects domestic farmers & MSMEs	
Dairy Sector	डेयरी क्षेत्र	Largely excluded from agreement	डेयरी क्षेत्र समझौते से बाहर	NZ dairy = 34% of its exports	
Phased Tariff Reduction	चरणबद्ध शुल्क कमी	Tariffs on petroleum, machinery	पेट्रोलियम, यंत्रों पर धीरे-धीरे	Common FTA strategy to avoid shock	

Phased Tariff Reduction	चरणबद्ध शुल्क कमी	Tariffs on petroleum, machinery, milk derivatives reduced gradually	पेट्रोलियम, मशीनरी आदि पर धीरे-धीरे शुल्क कम होंगे	Common FTA strategy to avoid shock
Export Access	निर्यात पहुंच	Indian exports to NZ get duty-free access	भारतीय निर्यात को NZ में शून्य शुल्क	Sectors: pharma, textiles, engineering goods
Labour Mobility	श्रम गतिशीलता	5,000 visas for Indian professionals (up to 3 years)	भारतीय पेशेवरों के लिए 5000 वीज़ा	Covers IT, healthcare, education sectors
Exclusions	अपवर्जन	Some animal products, sugar, oils, jewellery excluded	कुछ उत्पाद समझौते से बाहर	Protects domestic industries
Political Context	राजनीतिक संदर्भ	NZ domestic opposition due to dairy concerns	डेयरी क्षेत्र को लेकर विरोध	Shows trade vs domestic politics balance

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