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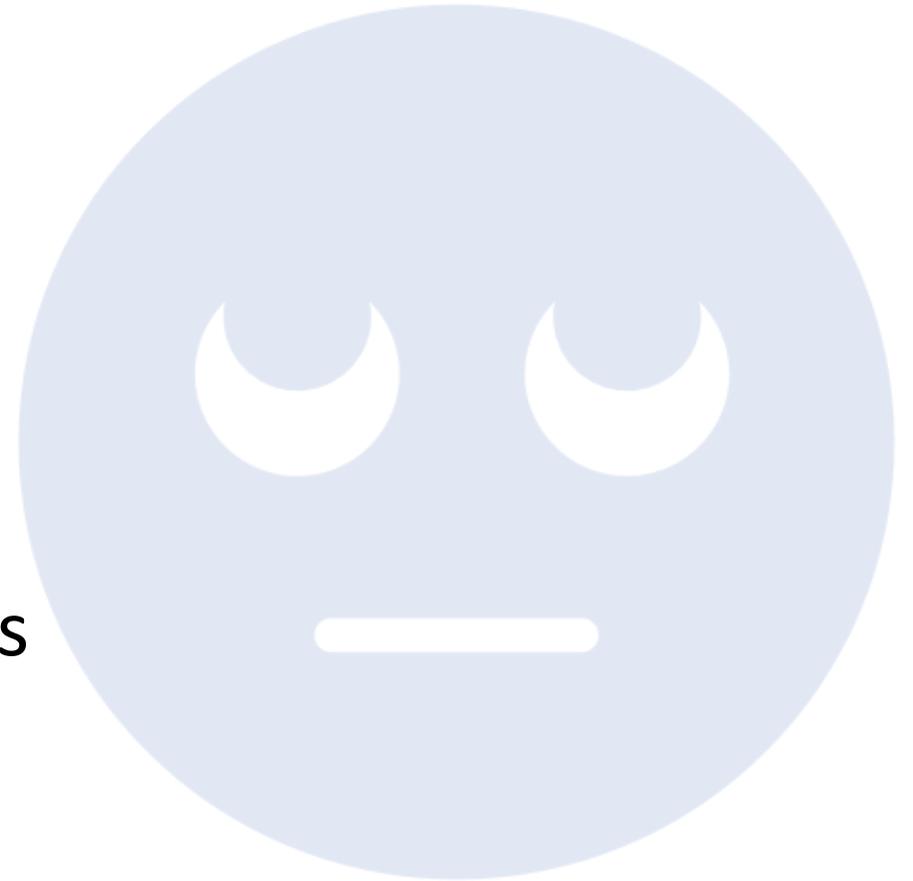
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**INSIDE**

**Prosecute Oil for deaths in unrest, says Nepal panel**

**KATHMANDU**  
A panel set up to investigate Nepal's Gen 2 protests in September last year — and the subsequent violence — has recommended action against then-Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and other senior officials. The report is yet to be officially released. » PAGE 14

**President urged not to approve Transgender Bill**

**NEW DELHI**  
A day after the Rajya Sabha passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2026, around 140 lawyers and women's rights activists wrote to the President urging her not to grant assent to it, pointing out "constitutional violations" in its provisions. » PAGE 6

**FPIs sell a record ₹1.1 lakh crore in Indian equities**

**MUMBAI**  
Foreign institutional investors (FII) sold ₹1,12,244 crore worth of Indian stocks this month as markets remain extremely exposed to oil price shocks, according to data from National Securities Depositories Ltd. » PAGE 12

**Teacher booked for 'proposing' to student in class**

**BENGALURU**  
Tension prevailed in Sri Siddhartha Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre in T. Begur, Nelamangala taluk of Bengaluru Rural district, after a group of students allegedly assaulted an assistant professor on the campus for reportedly proposing to a female student inside a classroom. » PAGE 3

**S-400 SAM 'will be delivered this year by Russia'**

**NEW DELHI**  
India is set to receive the remaining two units of the S-400 air defence system from Russia this year, with one expected as early as next month and the final delivery scheduled for November. A senior official in the Ministry of Defence confirmed that India is in close coordination with its Russian counterparts to ensure timely delivery. » PAGE 4

# Iran grants India, 4 others **Hor** passage

**Ships from India, China, Russia, Iraq, and Pak. can pass through the Strait, says Iran Foreign Minister** | **Minister thanks India, Sri Lanka for transferring naval ships facing U.S. threat to a safe location** | **President Trump has said Iran should 'get serious before it's too late, after that there's no way back'**

Stanly Johny

India and four other "friendly nations" were allowed to move their ships through the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said, adding that Tehran has established its "sovereignty" over the waterway connecting the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

He also thanked India and Sri Lanka for their "significant help" after an Iranian vessel, *IRIS Dena*, was sunk in a U.S. attack in the Indian Ocean during the conflict and said no talks were being held with Washington.

"We permitted passage through the Strait of Hormuz for friendly nations including China, Russia, India, Iraq, and Pakistan," Mr. Araghchi said in an interview with the Iran News Network that was broadcast on Wednesday night.

"The Strait of Hormuz is located in the territorial waters of Iran and Oman and Iran's sovereignty is established there. After the war, we will also have new arrangements for passing through the Strait," he said.

"In the incident of the *Dena* ship, which was fairly attacked without any warning, I must thank Sri Lanka and India for their significant help in transferring two other ships to a safe location," he added.

The Iranian frigate was attacked and sunk by a U.S. Navy submarine on March 4 off the coast of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean while returning from exercises in Visakhapatnam. At least 28 sailors were killed in the attack.

*IRIS Lavan* and *IRIS Bushehr*, which also came to the region to take part in the drills, have now docked in Kochi and Sri Lanka's Trincomalee, respectively.



The tanker Apollo Ocean unloads cargo collected from the vessel Shivok in Mangaluru on Thursday. Shivok is one of four Indian ships which crossed the Strait of Hormuz recently. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## India eyes local currency trade for West Asian oil

T.G.A. Sharad Raghavan

NEW DELHI

The Centre is "experimenting" with conducting trade with the West Asian countries in local currencies, in a bid to mitigate the fiscal double-hit of surging oil prices and a depreciating rupee, according to two senior officials in the government.

Another objective is to

messages through friends," he said.

"At present, our position is to continue resisting, continue defending our country. We have no intention of negotiating."

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said "in direct talks" between the two sides are taking place through messages being relayed by Pakistan.

"The U.S. has shared 15 points, being deliberated upon by Iran. Broader countries of Turkey and Egypt, among others, are also extending their support to this initiative," Mr. Dar wrote in a social media post.

Mr. Trump on Thursday said Iran should "better get serious soon" in talks, "before it's too late, because once that happens, there is no turning back". U.S. media have reported that the Pentagon is sending more troops to West Asia in preparation for a possible ground offensive against Iran.

AT AN IMPASSE  
» PAGE 14

"We broke open the bus windows and rescued those who could be saved," P. Subbarao said. The bodies of the deceased were transported to hospitals within an hour. DNA profiling is being carried out to identify the charred bodies, and the remains sent to the families of the deceased and ₹2 lakh to each of the injured.

The State government announced financial aid to the victims, including ₹5 lakh to the families of the deceased and ₹2 lakh to each of the injured. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed his condolences, promising ₹50,000 to the families of those who died and ₹25,000 to the injured.

**Preventive measures**  
Transport Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy visited the site and supervised the rescue

operations along with district officials. He affirmed that the State government would bear the full medical expenses of the injured and extend all support to the families of the deceased.

In order to prevent such accidents in future, the Home Minister Ms. Anitha said that check posts were being set up at 13 interstate entry points from Thursday evening to inspect buses, including those with national permits. A three-member team comprising officials from the Transport, Police and Fire departments will conduct the checks. A mobile application to assess drivers' fitness, including vision and health parameters, is also being developed and is expected to be launched within two days.

**COURAGE AMID FLAMES**  
» PAGE 3

# 14 killed as bus catches fire after crash with lorry in A.P.



The accident site in Markapuram district of Andhra Pradesh on Thursday. P1

steering wheel was jammed.

Home Minister Vangalappa Anitha told *The Hindu* the driver seemed to be the prime *faute* at fault but complete facts will be known after the detailed probe that is under way. The owner and driver Harikrishna was also injured and is now being pro-

vided treatment while under police custody.

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## India has oil for 60 days, LPG supplies for one month: govt.

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

In a bid to end speculation about India's energy stocks amid the escalating tensions in West Asia, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) on Thursday said that India has so far arranged a month of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supplies through imports, with constant additional procurement ongoing.

A statement said that India has reduced its reliance on imports for LPG, with the country producing "much more" than it needs to import.

On crude oil, the government said Indian oil companies have secured supplies that would suffice for the next 60 days, while the country already holds stocks enough for 60 days.

These 60 days of current stocks, which include crude, diesel and petrol, are an increase over the 50 days of total stocks the government had said it had at the start of the war.

Cumulatively, India currently has a total reserve capacity of 74 days of fuel stocks, including crude oil, petrol, and diesel.

**'Local production up'**  
"Nearly two months of steady supply is available for every Indian citizen regardless of what happens globally," the Ministry said.

"Next two months of crude procurement has also been secured. India is completely secure for the next many months and the quantity in strategic cavern storage is much secondary in such a

**'Cargo-charge waiver draws more tankers'**

**MANGALURU**  
With the New Mangalore Port Authority (NHMPA) waiving cargo charges for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and crude oil tankers to attract vessels for tiding over geopolitical crisis in West Asia, more vessels are sailing into the port. » PAGE 12

supply situation."

"While emphasising that there is no LPG shortage in the country, the government said that India was now producing more LPG than it needs to import. It said that, since the LPG control order issued earlier, domestic refinery production has been ramped up by 40%. This, it said, has brought the daily output to 50,000 tonnes, which is more than 60% of domestic requirements.

Additionally, with respect to imports, the government said that 8,00,000 tonnes of LPG cargoes are en route to India from the United States, Russia, Australia, and other countries.

"Approximately one full month of supply is firmly arranged, with additional procurement being finalised continuously," it stated.

Earlier in the day, Vikas Kaushal, managing director at state-owned Hindustan Petroleum said, "Over the past two days, sales have increased by more than 15% on an all-India basis... our supply chains remain strong, our outlets are fully stocked..."

## 10 killed, 35 injured as bus rams truck in M.P.

Mehul Malpani

MUMBAI

At least 10 persons were killed and 35 injured after a bus they were travelling in met with an accident and overturned in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh on Thursday. The bus was returning from an event attended by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav.

Officials said that the accident took place around 7.15 p.m. on the Nagpur highway, about 25 km from the district headquarters, when the private bus, carrying more than 45 passengers, collided head-on with a loading mini-truck and overturned.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
» PAGE 6

# STRAIT OF HORMUZ: HOW THINGS STAND

Here are key facts and figures about the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial shipping route virtually paralysed by the US-Israel-Iran war since Feb 28

## Iran has approved 26 ships

Recent crossings appeared to have used a route apparently approved by Iran around Larak Island, dubbed the 'Tehran toll booth' by shipping journal Lloyd's List. The journal said Wednesday it had tracked more than 26 ships using the corridor. No ships tracked using transponder data had crossed the Strait of Hormuz using the regular route since March 15



Jeepney drivers protest over rising fuel prices in Philippines

**95% shipping drop** | Just two vessels were detected crossing the strait heading west on Thursday. The channel typically sees around 120 daily transits, according to Lloyd's List. From March 1 to 26, commodities carriers made just 158 crossings, according to analytics firm Kpler — decrease of 95%. Of these, 100 were by oil tankers and gas carriers, and most were travelling east. More than 43% of the crossings have been by ships under US, EU or UK sanctions, according to an AFP analysis. Of the crossings by oil and gas tankers, 56% were by sanctioned vessels

## No incidents reported since March 22

Since March 1, 24 commercial vessels, including 11 tankers, have been attacked or reported incidents in the Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz or the Gulf of Oman, according to the UK naval maritime security agency UKMTO. No incidents have been reported since Sunday, according to the UKMTO

## 8 sea workers killed

Since the conflict began, at least eight seafarers or dock workers have died in incidents in the region, according to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). A further four remained missing, and 10 were injured. Around 20,000 seafarers are affected in the region, according to the IMO

## IN BRIEF



## Terror recruitment module busted in Kashmir: J&amp;K Police

The Jammu and Kashmir Police's special cell, Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK), on Thursday said it busted a recruitment module after carrying out searches at 10 locations in Kashmir Valley. According to the CIK, searches were conducted at multiple locations across the districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal, and Shopian that resulted in the "busting of a significant terrorist recruitment module". The CIK said the module was being handled by a Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist, Shahid Ahmad Lone, who originally hailed from Kangan in J&K's Ganderbal district.

## Nursing staff in Punjab launch indefinite strike over grade pay

Nursing staff at three government medical colleges and hospitals in Punjab went on an indefinite strike on Thursday, defying the State government's decision to invoke the Essential Services (Maintenance) Act (ESMA) as they demanded the restoration of the ₹4,600 grade pay. The strike affected services in government medical colleges of Patiala, Amritsar and Mohali. Routine healthcare services such as OPDs, ward management and other non-emergency operations witnessed disruptions, officials said. However, emergency services remained unaffected. The protest was held under the banner of the United Nurses Association of Punjab.

## Indore woman techie killed as teenager runs her over after dispute in residential society

Mehal Malpani  
BHOJAL

A woman software engineer was killed in Madhya Pradesh's Indore after she was run over by an 18-year-old in a car inside a residential society over a dispute about the use of a house for rental purposes, police said on Thursday.

According to the police, the incident took place at around 10.30 am on Wednesday at Shiv Vatika Township under Laasudia police station area following an argument between Kuldeep Chandhary, the owner of the house, and some residents, after which his son, Mohanish Chandhary, attacked them and bystanders with his car.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Vijay Nagar, Parag Saini told *The Hindu* that both the accused were arrested late on Wednesday

The victim, Shampa Parhad, Pandey, is survived by her husband and two children

night and booked under Bharatya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 1030 (Punishment for murder) and 1090 (Intention to murder).

The deceased has been identified as Shampa Parhad, Pandey, 42, who works at a private IT company and had shifted to the society about 15 days ago, while another woman, Reena Rawat, wife of a security guard at the society, suffered injuries in the incident when she was out for a walk. Ms. Pandey is survived by her husband and two children.

Mr. Saini said that Mr. Kuldeep Chandhary owns a penthouse in the society which was listed on Airbnb

for rental purposes but the other residents had objected to it. "The accused does not live here himself but on Wednesday when he came to the society, he learned that power to his property had been cut off. In retaliation, he cut off the power to the entire building which led to altercations with the other residents," he said.

**CCTV footage**  
"The argument, he called his son saying 'let's deal with them today'. After which the teenager came in his car and attacked those who had gathered outside the building," Mr. Saini said.

A CCTV footage of the incident has surfaced on the internet showing a white car charging at the crowd. While Ms. Rawat was hit by the car in the first lap, the car returned in speed running over Ms. Pandey even as residents tried to flee.

## Toothless ban: single-use plastic rules 84% of surveyed sites in 4 cities

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

About 84% of 560 locations surveyed across four cities — one each in eastern, north-eastern, northern and western India — continue using single-use plastic items banned across the country three years ago.

Toxics Link, a New Delhi-based environmental research and advocacy organisation, conducted a field study at specific locations across Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Guwahati, and Mumbai between April and August 2025. Its report, released on Wednesday, highlighted major gaps in enforcement and called for nationwide urgent action to strengthen implementation.

"The survey teams assessed the on-ground effectiveness of the ban across a wide range of establish-

ments, including street vendors, juice stalls, markets, small restaurants, and religious spaces, and called for nationwide urgent action to strengthen implementation.

According to the study, Bhubaneswar recorded the highest availability of banned single-use plastic items at 89% of the survey locations, closely followed by Delhi at 86%, Mumbai at 85%, and Guwahati at 78%.

"The continued presence of banned plastic items in a majority of locations suggests that enforcement remains inconsistent. Unless implementation improves and the supply of

these products is controlled, the ban will not effectively address plastic littering and pollution," Ravi Agarwal, director of Toxics Link, said.

**High customer demand**  
The study found that high customer demand for single-use plastic items with convenient features like plastic carry bags, disposable plastic cutlery, cups, plates, and straws were widely found across informal markets and small commercial establishments.

Organised stalls and larger retail outlets showed significantly better adherence to the ban, with 90% of informal markets dominated by small vendors. The latter attributes it to a higher customer demand and a higher cost of alternatives.

About 91% of the vendors across the survey sites said customers asked for carry bags. Interactions with vendors also revealed that 59% customers brought their own bags, but many others still expect vendors to provide free carry bags.

Satish Sinha, the associate director of Toxics Link, said that customer preferences partly influence the ban's effectiveness to transition from plastics to alternatives, including paper cups and plates, wooden cutlery, steel tumblers, and reusable containers. Baggage plates, cloth bags, and thicker reusable bags above 120 microns.

"Customers perceive disposable plastic as convenient but are more hygienic than reusable items. Our survey found that this perception, along with the cost

advantage of single-use plastics, continues to drive their use among small and local vendors, although the intensity of this preference varies between rural and urban areas."

**Stronger steps sought**  
The report called for stronger national action by all sectors. Recommendations include: standardising plastic materials, single-use plastic cutlery, cups, tumblers, and consumers — in line with the discussions at the intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastics, organised in Geneva, Switzerland in 2025.

It recommended more robust, reusable monitoring mechanisms with regular inspections, consistent enforcement against regulatory agencies, and consumer education to ensure compliance with the ban on single-use plastics.

## DMK returns salvo after Palaniswami's remarks on its alliance partners

Minister Sivasankar says Palaniswami visited Delhi over seat sharing as Amit Shah is the one who takes decisions in AIADMK front after former CM says DMK allies are treated like subordinates

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

The ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu on Thursday slammed AIADMK general secretary Adappadi K. Palaniswami over his comments on its alliance partners and termed it as "unnecessary". DMK leader and State Transport Minister S.S. Sivasankar on Thursday said Mr. Palaniswami had no right to comment on the seat-sharing arrangements among the constituents of the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA). Assembly election in the State has been scheduled for April 23.

Speaking to reporters in Chennai, Mr. Sivasankar questioned why the AIADMK leader visited Delhi and met BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah before announcing the number of seats and the constituencies allotted to the AIADMK's allies. He said not only Mr. Palaniswami but leaders of alliance partners too visited Delhi to discuss seat sharing and re-



Naam Tamilar Katchi chief coordinator Seeman on Thursday alleged that DMK and AIADMK have an understanding. FILE PHOTO

view differences as they "consider the BJP to be the leader of the alliance and Mr. Shah is the one who takes decisions on what happened to the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party (both suffered split in their ranks) in Maharashtra".

Termining the BJP as a party "which was once before NCP", he said by allowing the Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar) and a few other parties to contest on the BJP-Lorus symbol, the AIADMK had given greater importance to the BJP by allocating it more seats. He

added that if the AIADMK called itself a Dravidian party, it should ensure the self-respect of its party workers. Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) chief coordinator Seeman on Thursday alleged that the DMK and AIADMK have an understanding.

He claimed that the AIADMK had allotted certain constituencies of incumbent DMK Ministers to its allies, including the BJP, while ruling party would campaign against the BJP to ensure its defeat.

Mr. Seeman said the NTK would question the basis of the DMK's alliance with the Congress, "which had harmed Tamil interests".

**Ramadosh manifesto**  
Meanwhile, Parthabai Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S. Ramadosh on Thursday rejected the BJP's offer to join the Assembly as having said in a message. The BJP being offered constituencies like Tiruvannamalai would only be advantageous to the ruling DMK, he is learnt to

## Annamalai unhappy with constituencies allocated by AIADMK

S. Vijay Kumar  
CHENNAI

Former BJP Tamil Nadu president K. Annamalai has conveyed to the party national leadership his "extreme" displeasure over the constituencies allocated by the AIADMK for the April 23 Assembly election.

He is also learnt to have requested the leadership not to identify any seat for him as he had decided against contesting. He would, however, continue to work "as a party karyakartta for all BJP and NDA candidates".

Sources told *The Hindu* that Mr. Annamalai was dissatisfied with the BJP having been ruling party preferred seats only after the AIADMK finalised constituencies for two others allies. He told the leadership that the BJP's choices and prospects were "limited" by the condition that it could not seek seats represented by AIADMK MLAs.

The constituencies allotted to the BJP were not those where the party was growing or supposed to grow, the sources quoted Mr. Annamalai as having said in his message. The BJP being offered constituencies like Tiruvannamalai would only be advantageous to the ruling DMK, he is learnt to



K. Annamalai

When *The Hindu* contacted Mr. Annamalai, he said he had conveyed his views to the leadership. "I will remain loyal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah," he said, without elaborating further.

## Assam govt. has deceived tea workers: Cong. Minister

Press Trust of India  
GUWAHATI

Congress leader and Bharatbandh Minister Bandhu Tirkey on Thursday accused the Assam government of deceiving Adivasi tea garden workers by only marginally increasing their wages while several estates have been sold off.

Addressing a press conference here, Mr. Tirkey said that the tea workers did not receive the wages they deserved and that the wages were recently increased by a mere 3%.

**"No formal agreement"**  
Besides, he said there was no formal agreement and established norms for wage revision were not implemented.

The Congress election observer for Assam further asked why daily wages for tea workers have not been properly fixed despite previous promises.

## No need to stand in long queues for LPG cylinders: U.P. CM

Magan Kumar  
LICHCHAMPUR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday said there is no need to stand in long queues for LPG cylinders or to fuel stations for petrol and diesel.

He said if cylinders are booked on time, they will be delivered home in due time. Similarly, he urged citizens to visit fuel stations only when necessary and avoid unnecessary queuing, according to an official statement. The Chief Minister cautioned against rumours peddled by anti-social elements.

Mr. Adityanath, in his address at the inauguration ceremony of the Software Technology Park in the Greater Lucknow, said, "Earlier a domestic gas cylinder would last for at least a month, why are people now rushing to refill within five or six days? Bookings should be made as per schedule, and deliveries will reach homes in due course."

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# Toothless ban: single-use plastic rules 84% of surveyed sites in 4 cities

**The Hindu Bureau**

GUWAHATI

About 84% of 560 locations surveyed across four cities – one each in eastern, north-eastern, northern, and western India – continue using single-use plastic items banned across the country three years ago.

Toxics Link, a New Delhi-based environmental research and advocacy organisation, conducted a field study at specific locations across Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Guwahati, and Mumbai between April and August 2025. Its report, released on Wednesday, highlighted major gaps in enforcement and called for nationwide urgent action to strengthen implementation.

The survey teams assessed the on-ground effectiveness of the ban across a wide range of establish-



**Environmental hazard:** Banned single-use plastic covers and other waste littered across the Juhu beach in Mumbai. FILE PHOTO

ments, including street vendors, juice stalls, markets, small restaurants, grocery stores, religious sites, railway platforms, and organised retail spaces.

According to the study, Bhubaneswar recorded the highest availability of banned single-use plastic

items at 89% of the survey locations, closely followed by Delhi at 86%, Mumbai at 85%, and Guwahati at 76%.

“The continued presence of banned plastic items in a majority of locations suggests that enforcement remains inconsistent. Unless implementation improves and the supply of

these products is controlled, the ban will not effectively address plastic littering and pollution,” Ravi Agarwal, director of Toxics Link, said.

## High customer demand

The study found widespread presence of banned single-use plastic items with sectoral variations: thin plastic carry bags, disposable plastic cutlery, cups, plates, and straws were widely found across informal markets and small commercial establishments.

Organised malls and larger retail outlets showed significantly better adherence to the ban compared to informal markets dominated by small vendors. The latter attributed it to a high customer demand and a higher cost of alternatives.

About 91% of the ven-

dors across the survey sites said customers asked for carry bags. Interactions with vendors also revealed that 55% customers brought their own bags, but many customers still expect vendors to provide free carry bags.

Satish Sinha, the associate director of Toxics Link, said that customer preferences partly influence vendors’ reluctance to transition from plastics to alternatives, including paper cups and plates, wooden cutlery, steel utensils, aluminium foil containers, bagasse plates, cloth bags, and thicker reusable plastic bags above 120 microns.

“Customers perceive disposable plates and cutlery to be more hygienic than reusable items. Our survey found that this perception, along with the cost

advantage of single-use plastics, continues to drive their use among small and local vendors, although the intensity of this preference varies between rural and urban areas,” he said.

## Stronger steps sought

The report called for stronger national action by all stakeholders – government, single-use plastic manufacturers, retailers, and consumers – in line with the discussions at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution held in Geneva, Switzerland in 2025.

It recommended more robust enforcement and monitoring mechanisms with regular inspections, coordinated action among regulatory agencies, and consistent penalties to ensure compliance with the ban on single-use plastics.

## 1) Core finding of the report

### 1) रिपोर्ट का मुख्य निष्कर्ष

- A field study by Toxics Link found that banned single-use plastic items were still present at about **84% of 560 surveyed locations** across **Delhi, Mumbai, Guwahati, and Bhubaneswar**, even around three years after the national ban came into force.

टॉक्सिक्स लिंक के फील्ड अध्ययन में पाया गया कि राष्ट्रीय प्रतिबंध लागू होने के लगभग तीन वर्ष बाद भी **दिल्ली, मुंबई, गुवाहाटी और भुवनेश्वर** के **560 सर्वेक्षित स्थानों** में से लगभग **84% स्थानों** पर प्रतिबंधित सिंगल-यूज़ प्लास्टिक वस्तुएँ अब भी मौजूद थीं. [ThePrint +1](#)

- The survey covered the period from **April to August 2025** and highlighted that enforcement remains weak and uneven.

यह सर्वे **अप्रैल से अगस्त 2025** के बीच किया गया और इसने दिखाया कि प्रतिबंध का प्रवर्तन अभी भी कमजोर और असमान है.

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## 2) City-wise pattern

### 2) शहरवार स्थिति

- **Bhubaneswar** recorded the highest availability of banned items at **89%** of surveyed sites.  
भुवनेश्वर में प्रतिबंधित वस्तुओं की उपलब्धता सबसे अधिक रही, जहाँ **89%** सर्वेक्षित स्थलों पर ये वस्तुएँ मिलीं. ThePrint +1
- **Delhi** followed with **86%**, showing that even the national capital has poor compliance.  
दिल्ली **86%** के साथ दूसरे स्थान पर रही, जो बताता है कि राष्ट्रीय राजधानी में भी अनुपालन कमजोर है. ThePrint +1
- **Mumbai** had **85%** surveyed sites with banned plastic items.  
मुंबई में **85%** सर्वेक्षित स्थलों पर प्रतिबंधित प्लास्टिक वस्तुएँ मिलीं. ThePrint +1
- **Guwahati** was relatively better, but even there **76%** of sites still had banned items.  
गुवाहाटी अपेक्षाकृत बेहतर रहा, लेकिन वहाँ भी **76%** स्थलों पर प्रतिबंधित वस्तुएँ मिलीं. ThePrint +1

## 3) Where violations were most visible

### 3) उल्लंघन सबसे अधिक कहाँ दिखा

- Violations were most common in **informal markets and small commercial establishments** such as street vendors, juice stalls, grocery shops, small restaurants, weekly markets, and similar low-cost retail points.  
उल्लंघन सबसे अधिक **अनौपचारिक बाजारों और छोटे व्यावसायिक प्रतिष्ठानों** में दिखा, जैसे सड़क किनारे विक्रेता, जूस स्टॉल, किराना दुकानें, छोटे रेस्तराँ, साप्ताहिक बाजार आदि. ThePrint +1
- Commonly found banned items included **thin plastic carry bags, disposable plastic cutlery, cups, plates, and straws**.  
सबसे अधिक पाई गई प्रतिबंधित वस्तुओं में **पतली प्लास्टिक कैरी बैग, डिस्पोजेबल प्लास्टिक कटलरी, कप, प्लेट और स्ट्रॉ** शामिल थे. ThePrint +1
- **Organised malls and larger retail outlets** showed better compliance than the informal sector.  
संगठित मॉल और बड़े रिटेल आउटलेट अनौपचारिक क्षेत्र की तुलना में बेहतर अनुपालन करते दिखे. ThePrint +1

## 4) Why the ban is not working effectively

### 4) प्रतिबंध प्रभावी क्यों नहीं हो रहा

- The biggest reason is **weak enforcement**: a law exists, but monitoring, inspections, and supply-chain control remain inadequate.

सबसे बड़ा कारण **कमज़ोर प्रवर्तन** है: कानून मौजूद है, लेकिन निगरानी, निरीक्षण और आपूर्ति-श्रृंखला नियंत्रण पर्याप्त नहीं हैं।

ThePrint +1

- The study found **high customer demand** for free carry bags and disposable items, which discourages vendors from shifting to alternatives.

अध्ययन में पाया गया कि ग्राहकों की **मुफ्त कैरी बैग और डिस्पोजेबल वस्तुओं** की मांग अधिक है, जिससे विक्रेता विकल्पों की ओर नहीं बढ़ते।

Hindustan Times +1

- Around **91% of vendors** across survey sites said customers asked for carry bags.

सर्वे स्थलों पर लगभग **91% विक्रेताओं** ने कहा कि ग्राहक कैरी बैग मांगते हैं।

Hindustan Times

- Even when **55% of customers** brought their own bags, many still expected vendors to provide bags for free.

यद्यपि **55% ग्राहक** अपने बैग लेकर आए, फिर भी अनेक ग्राहकों की अपेक्षा रही कि विक्रेता मुफ्त बैग दें।

Hindustan Times

- Small vendors often see alternatives as **costlier**, while many consumers wrongly perceive disposables as more hygienic than reusable items.

छोटे विक्रेता विकल्पों को **महँगा** मानते हैं, जबकि कई उपभोक्ता गलत रूप से डिस्पोजेबल वस्तुओं को पुनः उपयोग योग्य वस्तुओं से अधिक स्वच्छ मानते हैं।

Hindustan Times +1

## 5) Historical and legal background

### 5) ऐतिहासिक और कानूनी पृष्ठभूमि

- India notified the **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021**, and from **1 July 2022** prohibited the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of identified single-use plastic items with low utility and high littering potential.

भारत ने प्लास्टिक अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन (संशोधन) नियम, 2021 अधिसूचित किए, और 1 जुलाई 2022 से कम उपयोगिता तथा अधिक कूड़ा फैलाने की क्षमता वाली चिन्हित सिंगल-यूज प्लास्टिक वस्तुओं के निर्माण, आयात, भंडारण, वितरण, बिक्री और उपयोग पर रोक लगा दी. [Press Information... +1](#)

- The banned list includes items such as **earbuds with plastic sticks, balloon sticks, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, thermocol decoration material, plates, cups, glasses, cutlery, straws, trays, stirrers, wrapping films around sweet boxes/invitation cards/cigarette packets, and plastic or PVC banners below 100 microns.**

प्रतिबंधित सूची में प्लास्टिक स्टिक वाले ईयरबड्स, बैलून स्टिक, प्लास्टिक झंडे, कैंडी स्टिक, आइसक्रीम स्टिक, थर्मोकोल सजावटी सामग्री, प्लेट, कप, गिलास, कटलरी, स्ट्रॉ, ट्रे, स्टिरर, मिठाई के डिब्बों/निमंत्रण कार्ड/सिगरेट पैकेट की रैपिंग फिल्म, तथा 100 माइक्रोन से कम मोटाई वाले प्लास्टिक/PVC बैनर शामिल हैं. [Press Information... +1](#)

- The minimum thickness of plastic carry bags was raised from **50 microns to 75 microns**, and later to **120 microns** to encourage reuse and reduce littering.

प्लास्टिक कैरी बैग की न्यूनतम मोटाई 50 माइक्रोन से 75 माइक्रोन और बाद में 120 माइक्रोन की गई, ताकि उनका पुनः उपयोग बढ़े और कूड़ा कम फैले. [Press Information...](#)

- India also gave legal force to **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** for plastic packaging, meaning producers, importers, and brand owners must ensure collection and environmentally sound management of plastic packaging waste.

भारत ने प्लास्टिक पैकेजिंग के लिए **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** को कानूनी आधार दिया, अर्थात् उत्पादक, आयातक और ब्रांड मालिकों को प्लास्टिक पैकेजिंग अपशिष्ट के संग्रह और पर्यावरण-अनुकूल प्रबंधन की जिम्मेदारी निभानी होगी. [Press Information...](#)

## 6) Political and governance dimension

### 6) राजनीतिक और शासकीय आयाम

- This issue is not only environmental; it is also a **governance failure** issue because implementation requires coordination between the Union government, State governments, pollution control boards, urban local bodies, retailers, and consumers.

यह केवल पर्यावरणीय मुद्दा नहीं, बल्कि शासन-व्यवस्था की विफलता का भी प्रश्न है, क्योंकि इसके प्रभावी क्रियान्वयन के लिए केंद्र सरकार, राज्य सरकारें, प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड, शहरी निकाय, रिटेलर और उपभोक्ता—सभी के समन्वय की आवश्यकता है।

Press Information... +1

- The Union government had directed States/UTs to create **task forces, control rooms, border checkpoints, and special enforcement teams**, which shows that regulation depends heavily on administrative capacity.

केंद्र सरकार ने राज्यों/केंद्रशासित प्रदेशों को टास्क फोर्स, कंट्रोल रूम, सीमा-जांच बिंदु और विशेष प्रवर्तन दल बनाने के निर्देश दिए थे, जिससे स्पष्ट है कि यह विनियमन प्रशासनिक क्षमता पर बहुत निर्भर है।

Press Information... +1

- The present findings suggest that policy formulation happened, but **last-mile enforcement** remains the weak link.

वर्तमान निष्कर्ष बताते हैं कि नीति-निर्माण तो हुआ, लेकिन अंतिम स्तर पर प्रवर्तन अभी भी सबसे कमजोर कड़ी है।

ThePrint +1

## 7) Economic dimension

### 7) आर्थिक आयाम

- For many small vendors, single-use plastic remains attractive because it is **cheap, light, easily available, and convenient.**

अनेक छोटे विक्रेताओं के लिए सिंगल-यूज प्लास्टिक अब भी आकर्षक है, क्योंकि यह सस्ता, हल्का, आसानी से उपलब्ध और सुविधाजनक है. [Hindustan Times +1](#)

- The transition cost to alternatives such as paper, cloth, wood, steel, or bagasse is not negligible for low-margin sellers.

कागज़, कपड़ा, लकड़ी, स्टील या बैगास जैसे विकल्पों की ओर संक्रमण की लागत कम-मार्जिन वाले विक्रेताओं के लिए नगण्य नहीं है. [Hindustan Times](#)

- This means the problem is partly a **market failure**: when cheap plastic is still available in supply chains, the legal ban alone cannot change behaviour.

इसका अर्थ है कि यह आंशिक रूप से बाज़ार विफलता का मामला भी है: जब सस्ती प्लास्टिक वस्तुएँ आपूर्ति-श्रृंखला में उपलब्ध रहती हैं, तो केवल कानूनी प्रतिबंध व्यवहार नहीं बदल सकता. [Hindustan Times +1](#)

- UNEP has argued that plastic pollution can be drastically reduced through policy and market shifts toward a circular economy.

यूएनईपी ने कहा है कि नीति और बाज़ार-आधारित बदलावों के माध्यम से प्लास्टिक प्रदूषण को परिपत्र अर्थव्यवस्था की दिशा में काफी हद तक कम किया जा सकता है. [UNEP - UN Envir... +1](#)

## 8) Geographical dimension

### 8) भौगोलिक आयाम

- The four cities in the study represent different Indian regions: **north (Delhi), west (Mumbai), east (Bhubaneswar), and northeast (Guwahati)**, showing that the problem is geographically widespread rather than isolated.

अध्ययन के चार शहर भारत के अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों का प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं: उत्तर (दिल्ली), पश्चिम (मुंबई), पूर्व (भुवनेश्वर) और उत्तर-पूर्व (गुवाहाटी), जिससे स्पष्ट है कि समस्या किसी एक क्षेत्र तक सीमित नहीं बल्कि व्यापक भौगोलिक फैलाव वाली है।

ThePrint +1

- From an environmental geography perspective, plastic leakage in such cities is especially serious because litter can move into **rivers, drains, wetlands, and coastal/marine systems**, increasing flood risk, urban drainage blockage, and aquatic pollution.

पर्यावरणीय भूगोल के दृष्टिकोण से ऐसे शहरों में प्लास्टिक का रिसाव अधिक गंभीर है, क्योंकि कचरा नदियों, नालों, आर्द्रभूमियों और तटीय/समुद्री तंत्रों में पहुँच सकता है, जिससे बाढ़ का जोखिम, शहरी जलनिकासी अवरोध और जलीय प्रदूषण बढ़ता है।

Press Information... +1

- This is why the issue is important not only for waste management, but also for **urban geography, disaster management, public health, and marine ecology**.

इसी कारण यह मुद्दा केवल अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन तक सीमित नहीं, बल्कि शहरी भूगोल, आपदा प्रबंधन, जनस्वास्थ्य और समुद्री पारिस्थितिकी से भी जुड़ा है।

Press Information... +1

## 9) International context

### 9) अंतरराष्ट्रीय संदर्भ

- India had piloted a resolution on single-use plastic pollution at **UNEA-4 in 2019**, and the global negotiation process for a legally binding plastics treaty began in **2022**.

भारत ने **2019** के **UNEA-4** में सिंगल-यूज़ प्लास्टिक प्रदूषण पर एक प्रस्ताव आगे बढ़ाया था, और कानूनी रूप से बाध्यकारी वैश्विक प्लास्टिक संधि के लिए वार्ताएँ **2022** में शुरू हुईं. [Press Information... +2](#)

- The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was held in parts, including **Geneva in August 2025**, but talks adjourned without consensus on a treaty text.

इंटरगवर्नमेंटल नेगोशिएटिंग कमेटी का पाँचवाँ सत्र चरणों में हुआ, जिसमें **अगस्त 2025 में जिनेवा** भी शामिल था, लेकिन संधि-पाठ पर सहमति बने बिना वार्ता स्थगित हो गई. [UNEP - UN Envir...](#)

- This matters for India because domestic action and global treaty-making are linked: weak local enforcement reduces credibility, while a strong global framework can help standardise production, trade, and waste rules.

यह भारत के लिए इसलिए महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि घरेलू कार्रवाई और वैश्विक संधि-निर्माण एक-दूसरे से जुड़े हैं: स्थानीय स्तर पर कमजोर प्रवर्तन विश्वसनीयता घटाता है, जबकि मजबूत वैश्विक ढाँचा उत्पादन, व्यापार और अपशिष्ट नियमों को अधिक मानकीकृत कर सकता है. [UNEP - UN Envir... +1](#)

- Single-use plastic ban in India became effective for identified items from **1 July 2022**.

भारत में चिन्हित सिंगल-यूज प्लास्टिक वस्तुओं पर प्रतिबंध **1 जुलाई 2022** से प्रभावी हुआ. [Press Information... +1](#)

- Carry bag thickness rule: **75 microns from 30 September 2021** and **120 microns from 31 December 2022**.

कैरी बैग मोटाई नियम: **30 सितंबर 2021** से **75 माइक्रोन** और **31 दिसंबर 2022** से **120 माइक्रोन**. [Press Information...](#)

- Key policy framework: **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**, amended in **2021**, with EPR provisions strengthened.

प्रमुख नीतिगत ढाँचा: **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**, जिनमें **2021** में संशोधन कर EPR को मजबूत किया गया. [Press Information...](#)

- Important global body/process: **UNEA** and the **Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)** on plastic pollution.

महत्वपूर्ण वैश्विक संस्था/प्रक्रिया: **UNEA** और प्लास्टिक प्रदूषण पर **Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)**. [UNEP - UN Envir... +1](#)

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Consider the following statements regarding single-use plastic regulation in India:

भारत में सिंगल-यूज़ प्लास्टिक विनियमन के संबंध में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार कीजिए:

1. India banned identified single-use plastic items across the country from 1 July 2022.

भारत ने 1 जुलाई 2022 से चिन्हित सिंगल-यूज़ प्लास्टिक वस्तुओं पर देशव्यापी प्रतिबंध लगाया।

2. Plastic carry bags below 120 microns are permitted if sold only by organised retail outlets.

120 माइक्रोन से कम मोटाई वाले प्लास्टिक कैरी बैग संगठित रिटेल आउटलेट द्वारा बेचे जाँएँ तो अनुमेय हैं।

3. Extended Producer Responsibility applies to plastic packaging waste not covered under the identified single-use plastic phase-out list.

चिन्हित सिंगल-यूज़ प्लास्टिक चरणबद्ध निषेध सूची के बाहर आने वाले प्लास्टिक पैकेजिंग अपशिष्ट पर Extended Producer Responsibility लागू होती है।

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

**उपरोक्त में से कौन-सा/से कथन सही है/हैं?**

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Exam	Date	Exact Question	Answer	Relevance
UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination 2025	25 May 2025	Consider the following: I. Cigarette butts II. Eyeglass lenses III. Car tyres How many of them contain plastic?	(c) All the three	Related to plastic pollution and microplastics, though not specifically to the SUP ban. ( <a href="#">The Indian Express</a> )

## Women's quota Act: Centre rejects call for all-party meet

Sobhana K. Nair  
NEW DELHI

The government has rejected the Congress's proposal to hold an all-party meeting on the women's reservation Act after the ongoing Assembly election campaign for four States and a Union Territory ends on April 29, arguing that any delay would jeopardise the legislators' implementation before the 2029 Lok Sabha election.

The Centre has proposed that the delimitation exercise essential for operationalising the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam (Constitution 106<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act, 2022) be carried out on the basis of the 2011 Census rather than waiting for the ongoing delimitation. It has also proposed delimiting population as the criterion for determining a State's representation in the Lok Sabha, and instead suggested a 50% increase in the number of seats across the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. The Women's Reservation Act, when implemented, will reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women.



Mallikarjun Kharge

On Thursday, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju wrote to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge insisting that timely implementation of the Act is a shared responsibility of all political parties. Waiting for the Assembly polls to conclude, he said, would push back the timeline, as the process involves multiple, time-consuming steps. The Congress, however, remains unmoved by Mr. Rijiju's plea. In his response, Mr. Kharge wrote, "I simply fail to understand why the government is in such great hurry to further amend a Constitutional Amendment Act 30 months after it was initially passed." He reiterated that holding the meeting after the election campaign would not hinder the implementation process.

## Lapses by census officials can invite fines, prison term

If Census officials refuse to perform their duty or tamper with any Census document, they shall face up to three years of imprisonment; enumerators must also maintain polite behaviour on field visits

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

The Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (RGACC) has written to States that if a Census official refuses to perform their duty or damages or destroys any Census document, they shall face up to three years of imprisonment.

In a letter to the Chief Secretaries on March 17, Mritunjay Kumar Narayan said that for smooth conduct of Census operations, it is necessary that Census officers engaged in the conduct of houselisting, housing census, and population enumeration are informed of their specific duties under the Census Act. "Along with the duties, penalties have also been prescribed under Section 11 of the Census Act, 1948," the letter said. It added that Census enumeration is carried out under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948 and Census Rules, 1990.

For the purpose, Principal Census Officers, District or Additional District



A file photo of Census officials conducting a pre-test exercise for Census 2027 at Baleshwar district of Uttar Pradesh, six weeks before the start of the exercise

or Sub-Divisional Census Officers, Charge Officers, Supervisors and Enumerators are drawn from the State government. Around 30 lakh enumerators, mostly government school teachers, are roped in to carry out door-to-door enumeration. "The period and questionnaire of the second phase will be notified in due course of time," it stated.

It informed that preparations for the final digital Census 2027 are at an advanced stage and the first phase, i.e. houselisting and housing census, will be

conducted during April-September 2026 for a period of 30 days as notified by each State and Union Territory. It will have an option for self-enumeration to be conducted in a 15-day period just before the start of the first phase. "The period and questionnaire of the second phase will be notified in due course of time," it stated.

It stated that any Census officer or person lawfully required to assist who refuses to perform assigned duties, neglects to exercise reasonable diligence, obstructs or hinders the work, asks offensive or improper questions, makes false returns, unlawfully discloses Census information, or tampers with the Census information, shall be liable to punishment. Such offences can attract a fine of up to ₹1,000 and, in cases involving the Census Act, 1948, false returns, or document tampering, imprisonment of up to three years.

Caste is expected to be recorded in the second phase. For self-enumeration, the officials have been asked to collect "SE (The self-enumeration identity numbers)" of households and verify the data and confirm from respondent before accepting or editing the data in the mobile application for the Census.

The letter stated penalties under Section 11 of the Census Act, 1948, making compliance with the duties legally enforceable.

Self-enumeration: This will be the first digital Census first to enumerate caste in independent India, and the first to give an option to self-enumerate.

## Jaishankar, French counterpart discuss Iran, Hormuz at G7 meet

Sriram Lakshman  
LONDON

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar arrived in France on a two-day visit to represent India as a partner country at the Foreign Ministers' meeting of the G7 (Group of Seven) advanced economy nations.

The Minister held bilateral talks with his French counterpart Jean-Noël Barrot in Abbaye des Vaux-de-Cernay on Thursday, which included an "in-depth" discussion on West Asia as per the French government's readout of the meeting.

The two Ministers agreed to continue their close coordination with a view to working jointly on issues ensuring the security of the Strait of Hormuz. The meeting comes just after Israel claimed to have killed Iranian commander Alireza Tangir, who said was directly responsible for the closing of the Strait.

The participation of Jaishankar in the G7 meet-



Close coordination: Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar meets with France's Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noël Barrot on Thursday, APR 27, 2026

ings signified "the importance of France attaches to closely associating India - currently holding the BRICS presidency - with its G7 presidency," the French government said.

Front and centre of the G7 agenda this week is the war in Iran and its impact on global energy and stock markets. Discussions on the Russia-Ukraine war and the reform of multilateralism are also on the cards. "We will work to bring about a new international order and to build a more balanced and fairer system, underpinned by a renewed multilateralism. Reforming global governance and combating cross-cut-

ting threats require a collective commitment which extends beyond G7 members alone," Mr. Barrot said in a statement.

**Bilateral talks** Mr. Jaishankar also met bilaterally with the Foreign Ministers of Canada, Japan and South Korea. Talks with Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand focused on advancing the bilateral agenda and also dwell on developments in West Asia. Mr. Jaishankar said on social media site X.

At a session on global governance, Mr. Jaishankar emphasised the urgency of UN Security Council reforms. India and several other countries have been seeking a permanent seat on the body.

The Minister also raised energy challenges and concerns around fertilizer supplies and food security impacting the Global South. Friday's session on Iran will only be for G7 countries and a session on Ukraine will be in the G7 and Ukraine format.

## Panel pitches dedicated force to improve accident response on highways

Jagriti Chandra  
NEW DELHI

Flagging a major gap in highway safety enforcement, a parliamentary committee has recommended the creation of a dedicated National Highway Safety Patrol to improve accident response, enforce traffic discipline, and protect road assets.

The dedicated patrol force which has demonstrated effectiveness in asset protection and passenger safety across the railway network," according to a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture chaired by Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The committee also recommended the creation of a dedicated National Highway Safety Patrol to improve accident response, enforce traffic discipline, and protect road assets. The committee also recommended the creation of a dedicated National Highway Safety Patrol to improve accident response, enforce traffic discipline, and protect road assets.

The National Highways Authority (NHA) reported over 52,600 deaths in 2024.

A drop of India recording 4.73 lakh road accidents and 1.7 lakh fatalities in 2024, with the National Highways alone accounting for over 52,600 deaths, according to the Transport Research Wing of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

According to the panel, even a pilot rollout on high-accident corridors and expressways could significantly improve real-time response during the "golden hour" (the critical

## 'Pak's mediator role in U.S.-Iran conflict a shame for India'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday said India's diplomacy had suffered an "embarrassment" after Pakistan was reportedly considered for a mediating role between Iran and the U.S. amid the ongoing West Asia tensions.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramoosh said in a post on X that the development reflected a setback to India's regional diplomacy and criticised the Union government's foreign policy approach.

Mr. Ramoosh questioned Pakistan's suitability as a mediator, citing its past record, including allegations of sponsoring terrorism, supporting terrorist Osama bin Laden and being involved in nuclear proliferation.

He also referred to Pakistan's record of waging war against its own citizens and religious minorities in provinces such as Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and bombing civilian and medical facilities in Afghanistan. "That Pakistan can even be considered for such a mediating



Jairam Ramoosh

role is a most damning indictment of both the substance and style of Prime Minister Modi's diplomacy, which has been full of bombast and marked by cowardice," he alleged. Referring to recent remarks by Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir, he alleged that India had not been able to effectively counter Pakistan's narrative internationally. He further claimed that Pakistan's growing engagement with the U.S. indicated its global stage.

"The External Affairs Minister said that India is not a broker country. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the colonial failures in our diplomacy, outreach, and narrative management have made a broken country a broker country..." he said

## CBi conducts searches in SBI-Reliance Telecom case

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has conducted searches after registering a case against Reliance Telecom Ltd., its former directors Satish Sethi and Gautam B. Doshi, and others, for allegedly cheating the State Bank of India to the tune of ₹14.98 crore.

According to the agency, the case has been instituted on a complaint from the bank, which was part of a consortium of 11 banks that had sanctioned ₹735 crore as a term loan facility to Reliance Telecom Ltd.

**Documents recovered** "After registration of the case, the CBI has conducted searches in Mumbai at the residence of Satish Sethi, Gautam B. Doshi, and the registered office of Reliance Telecom Ltd. Various documents connected with the loan transactions have been recovered," it said.

## S-400 deliveries expedited as India enhances air defence

Saurabh Trivedi  
NEW DELHI

India is set to receive the remaining two units of the S-400 air defence system from Russia this year, with one expected as early as next month and the final delivery scheduled for November.

A senior official in the Ministry of Defence confirmed that India is in close coordination with Russian counterparts to ensure timely delivery. The matter has been discussed at the highest levels. "Out of the remaining two S-400 systems, one will be delivered next month (April) and the last one by November," the official said, adding that the timeline has been expedited after earlier delays



Strengthening systems: India signed a \$5.43 billion deal with Russia in 2018 for five squadrons of the S-400 system

caused by supply chain disruptions and the Russia-Ukraine war. Earlier, it was "Out of the remaining two S-400 systems, one will be delivered next month (April) and the last one by November," the official said, adding that the timeline has been expedited after earlier delays caused by supply chain disruptions and the Russia-Ukraine war. Earlier, it was "Out of the remaining two S-400 systems, one will be delivered next month (April) and the last one by November," the official said, adding that the timeline has been expedited after earlier delays caused by supply chain disruptions and the Russia-Ukraine war. Earlier, it was "Out of the remaining two S-400 systems, one will be delivered next month (April) and the last one by November," the official said, adding that the timeline has been expedited after earlier delays caused by supply chain disruptions and the Russia-Ukraine war. 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# Panel pitches dedicated force to improve accident response on highways

**Jagriti Chandra**

NEW DELHI

Flagging a major gap in highway safety enforcement, a parliamentary committee has recommended the creation of a dedicated National Highway Safety Patrol to improve accident response, enforce traffic discipline, and protect road assets across the country's expanding highway network.

The dedicated patrol will draw upon "models such as the Railway Protection Force which has demonstrated effectiveness in asset protection and passenger safety across the railway network", according to a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture chaired by Janata Dal (United) MP Sanjay K. Jha, which was tabled in Parliament on Wednesday.

The recommendation comes against the back-



The National Highways accounted for over 52,600 deaths in 2024.

drop of India recording 4.73 lakh road accidents and 1.7 lakh fatalities in 2024, with the National Highways alone accounting for over 52,600 deaths, according to the Transport Research Wing of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

According to the panel, even a pilot rollout on high-accident corridors and expressways could significantly improve real-time response during the "golden hour" (the critical

first 60 minutes after a severe traumatic injury), enforce speed and lane discipline on access-controlled roads, and deter encroachments and damage to highway infrastructure. The patrol will complement digital enforcement systems being deployed under the Intelligent Traffic Management System.

"The Committee is of the view that the present dependence on State Police forces, whose jurisdiction and priorities extend well beyond highway safety, is insufficient for the scale of the National Highway network, and a dedicated institutional mechanism warrants serious consideration," the report stated.

Separately, the committee flagged gaps in the government's approach to black spot remediation, noting the absence of data to verify whether previously treated accident-prone locations remain safe.

## 1) Main issue in the news

### 1) समाचार का मुख्य मुद्दा

- A Parliamentary Standing Committee has recommended creating a **dedicated National Highway Safety Patrol** to improve accident response, enforce lane and speed discipline, and protect highway infrastructure.

एक संसदीय स्थायी समिति ने **समर्पित National Highway Safety Patrol** बनाने की सिफारिश की है, ताकि दुर्घटना प्रतिक्रिया बेहतर हो, लेन और गति अनुशासन लागू हो, तथा राजमार्ग अवसंरचना की रक्षा की जा सके। [Press Information... +1](#)

- The recommendation comes from concern that the present dependence on **State Police forces alone** is not sufficient for the scale and special needs of India's expanding national highway network. यह सिफारिश इस चिंता से जुड़ी है कि केवल **राज्य पुलिस बलों पर निर्भरता** भारत के तेजी से बढ़ते राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग नेटवर्क की विशेष आवश्यकताओं और विशालता के लिए पर्याप्त नहीं है। [Press Information...](#)

## 2) Why this recommendation matters

### 2) यह सिफारिश महत्वपूर्ण क्यों है

- India continues to face a severe road safety crisis. The article cites about **4.73 lakh road accidents** and nearly **1.7 lakh deaths** in 2024, with **National Highways alone accounting for over 52,600 deaths**.

भारत अब भी गंभीर सड़क सुरक्षा संकट का सामना कर रहा है। लेख के अनुसार 2024 में लगभग **4.73 लाख सड़क दुर्घटनाएँ** और करीब **1.7 लाख मौतें** हुईं, जिनमें **केवल राष्ट्रीय राजमार्गों पर 52,600 से अधिक मौतें** हुईं। [Vajiram and Ravi +1](#)

- This shows that highways, though designed for faster travel and better connectivity, also become zones of high-risk fatal crashes if enforcement, emergency response, and road engineering are weak. यह दिखाता है कि राजमार्ग, तेज आवागमन और बेहतर कनेक्टिविटी के लिए बनाए जाने के बावजूद, यदि प्रवर्तन, आपात प्रतिक्रिया और सड़क अभियांत्रिकी कमजोर हो, तो अत्यधिक घातक दुर्घटनाओं के क्षेत्र बन जाते हैं। [Press Information... +1](#)

### 3) What the proposed patrol would do

#### 3) प्रस्तावित गश्ती बल क्या करेगा

- It would improve **real-time accident response**, especially on expressways and high-accident corridors.

यह विशेषकर एक्सप्रेसवे और अधिक दुर्घटना-प्रवण कॉरिडोर पर वास्तविक समय दुर्घटना प्रतिक्रिया को बेहतर करेगा।

[Press Information...](#)

- It would help preserve the **golden hour**, the first critical hour after a severe injury, when timely intervention can save lives.

यह गोल्डन आवर को सुरक्षित रखने में मदद करेगा, जो गंभीर चोट के बाद का पहला महत्वपूर्ण घंटा होता है और जिसमें समय पर उपचार से जीवन बचाया जा सकता है।

[Press Information... +1](#)

- It would enforce **speed control, lane discipline, and access control** on highways.

यह राजमार्गों पर गति नियंत्रण, लेन अनुशासन और एक्सेस कंट्रोल लागू करेगा।

[Press Information...](#)

- It would deter **encroachments, illegal stopping, and damage to highway assets**.

यह अतिक्रमण, अवैध रुकावट और राजमार्ग परिसंपत्तियों को नुकसान रोकने में सहायक होगा।

[Press Information...](#)

- It is expected to complement digital systems such as the **Intelligent Traffic Management System** rather than replace them.

इसका उद्देश्य **Intelligent Traffic Management System** जैसे डिजिटल तंत्रों का स्थान लेना नहीं, बल्कि उन्हें पूरक बनाना है।

[Press Information...](#)

#### 4) Why state-police-only enforcement is seen as inadequate

#### 4) केवल राज्य पुलिस आधारित प्रवर्तन को अपर्याप्त क्यों माना गया

- State police handle many priorities beyond highways, including law and order, local crime, crowd control, and VIP duties.

राज्य पुलिस राजमार्गों के अलावा कानून-व्यवस्था, स्थानीय अपराध, भीड़ नियंत्रण और वीआईपी ड्यूटी जैसी अनेक जिम्मेदारियाँ निभाती है।

- Because of this, highway-specific safety enforcement often becomes diluted or inconsistent.

इसी कारण राजमार्ग-विशिष्ट सुरक्षा प्रवर्तन अक्सर कमजोर या असंगत हो जाता है।

- A dedicated force would provide **specialization, continuity, training, and exclusive operational focus** on highway safety.

एक समर्पित बल राजमार्ग सुरक्षा पर विशेषज्ञता, निरंतरता, प्रशिक्षण और विशिष्ट परिचालन फोकस प्रदान करेगा।

## 5) Golden Hour and emergency care significance

### 5) गोल्डन आवर और आपात चिकित्सा का महत्व

- The “golden hour” refers to the **first hour after a serious traumatic injury**, when prompt medical care can drastically improve survival chances.

“गोल्डन आवर” का अर्थ गंभीर आघात के बाद का पहला घंटा है, जिसमें शीघ्र चिकित्सा सहायता जीवन-रक्षा की संभावना को बहुत बढ़ा देती है। [Press Information... +1](#)

- The government has moved in this direction through the **Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme, 2025**, later continued in 2026, with treatment cover up to **₹1.5 lakh** for eligible victims.

सरकार ने इस दिशा में **Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme, 2025** के माध्यम से कदम बढ़ाया, जिसे 2026 में आगे बढ़ाया गया, और पात्र पीड़ितों के लिए **₹1.5 लाख** तक उपचार कवर की व्यवस्था की गई।

[Press Information... +1](#)

- But medical schemes alone are not enough; victims must be **found quickly, reached quickly, stabilized quickly, and transferred quickly**. That is where a highway patrol can make a major difference.

लेकिन केवल चिकित्सा योजनाएँ पर्याप्त नहीं हैं; पीड़ित को **शीघ्र खोजा जाए, शीघ्र पहुँचा जाए, शीघ्र स्थिर किया जाए और शीघ्र स्थानांतरित किया जाए**—यहीं राजमार्ग गश्ती बल बड़ा अंतर ला सकता है। यह उपलब्ध आधिकारिक योजना ढाँचे और समिति की सिफारिशों से निकला तार्किक निष्कर्ष है। [Press Information... +1](#)

## 6) Black spots: another major concern

### 6) ब्लैक स्पॉट: एक अन्य बड़ा प्रश्न

- The report also flagged deficiencies in **black spot remediation**, meaning dangerous locations where repeated accidents occur.

रिपोर्ट ने ब्लैक स्पॉट सुधार में भी कमियों की ओर संकेत किया, अर्थात वे खतरनाक स्थान जहाँ बार-बार दुर्घटनाएँ होती हैं।

Press Information...

- The government has said black spots on National Highways are identified based on repeated fatal and grievous accidents, and interim correction measures include road markings, signages, crash barriers, road studs, and closure of unauthorized openings.

सरकार ने बताया है कि राष्ट्रीय राजमार्गों पर ब्लैक स्पॉट ऐसे स्थानों को माना जाता है जहाँ बार-बार घातक और गंभीर दुर्घटनाएँ होती हैं, और इनके त्वरित सुधार हेतु रोड मार्किंग, साइनज, क्रैश बैरियर, रोड स्टड्स और अनधिकृत खुलावों को बंद करने जैसे उपाय किए जाते हैं।

Press Information... +1

- The committee's concern is that without reliable post-remediation data, it is hard to know whether previously treated accident-prone stretches have actually become safer.

समिति की चिंता यह है कि सुधार के बाद विश्वसनीय आँकड़े न होने पर यह जानना कठिन है कि पहले से उपचारित दुर्घटना-प्रवण खंड वास्तव में सुरक्षित हुए भी हैं या नहीं।

Press Information... +1

Topic	Fact	तथ्य
Parliamentary body	Recommendation came from the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture chaired by Sanjay Kumar Jha	सिफारिश परिवहन, पर्यटन और संस्कृति संबंधी विभागीय संसदीय स्थायी समिति ने की, जिसकी अध्यक्षता संजय कुमार झा करते हैं
Core recommendation	Creation of a dedicated National Highway Safety Patrol	एक समर्पित National Highway Safety Patrol बनाने की सिफारिश
2024 accident burden	Around 4.73 lakh road accidents and about 1.7 lakh deaths in India in 2024	2024 में भारत में लगभग 4.73 लाख सड़क दुर्घटनाएँ और करीब 1.7 लाख मौतें
NH deaths	National Highways accounted for over 52,600 deaths	राष्ट्रीय राजमार्गों पर 52,600 से अधिक मौतें दर्ज हुईं
Golden Hour	First hour after serious trauma is most critical for saving life	गंभीर आघात के बाद पहला घंटा जीवन बचाने के लिए सबसे महत्वपूर्ण होता है
2025 scheme	Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme, 2025 was notified on a pan-India basis	Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme, 2025 को अखिल भारतीय स्तर पर अधिसूचित किया गया
Treatment cover	Up to ₹1.5 lakh for eligible road accident victims	पात्र सड़क दुर्घटना पीड़ितों के लिए ₹1.5 लाख तक उपचार कवर
Black spots	Hazardous stretches are identified and rectified through engineering and safety measures	खतरनाक स्थलों की पहचान कर अभियांत्रिकी और सुरक्षा उपायों से उनका सुधार किया जाता है

Consider the following statements:

निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार कीजिए:

1. The proposed National Highway Safety Patrol is aimed at improving accident response during the golden hour.

प्रस्तावित National Highway Safety Patrol का उद्देश्य गोल्डन आवर के दौरान दुर्घटना प्रतिक्रिया में सुधार करना है।

2. The committee held that existing dependence on State Police alone is fully adequate for highway safety needs.

समिति का मत था कि राजमार्ग सुरक्षा के लिए केवल राज्य पुलिस पर वर्तमान निर्भरता पूर्णतः पर्याप्त है।

3. Black spot remediation refers to identification and correction of accident-prone road stretches.

ब्लैक स्पॉट सुधार का अर्थ दुर्घटना-प्रवण सड़क खंडों की पहचान और सुधार से है।

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

**उपरोक्त में से कौन-से कथन सही हैं?**

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

IN BRIEF



Maharashtra Minister's video with transwoman stirs row

Maharashtra Minister Narhari Zirwal has landed in a controversy after his video with a transwoman surfaced on social media, with the Opposition Congress demanding the NCP leader's sacking over his "obscene and unethical behaviour".

CBI arrests human trafficking 'kingpin' in cyberscam case

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a person for his alleged involvement as a "kingpin" in trafficking unsuspecting Indian citizens to cyberscam compounds operating in Myanmar.

The Hindu Group to host World of Women Awards

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

The Hindu Group is all set to host the "World of Women (WoW) Awards 2026", a platform that recognises exceptional women across business, science, arts, culture, education, sports and beyond, in Chennai at 6.30 p.m. on Friday.



push boundaries, and build a more inclusive and progressive future. The event will bring together leaders, change-makers, and visionaries, who have not only excelled

Home Ministry sends 290 takedown notices a day

Social media platforms required to remove unlawful content within three hours of receipt of order; Ministry report also shows sharp rise in number of cybersecurity incidents in recent years

Vilasrao Deshmukh NEW DELHI

Within a year of being empowered to direct issue takedown notices for online content, the Union Home Ministry issued an average of 290 such notices every day, according to the Ministry's data.

On March 13, 2024, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (4C) was designated as the Ministry's agency to perform the functions under Section 79 (3) (b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

According to the Ministry's annual report for 2024-25, published on Wednesday, till March 31, 2025, "1,11,185 suspicious online content have been blocked under Section 79 (3)(b) of IT Act."

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a person for his alleged involvement as a "kingpin" in trafficking unsuspecting Indian citizens to cyberscam compounds operating in Myanmar.

Tracking cybersecurity

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is designated as the national agency for responding to cybersecurity incidents, which has seen a rise in recent years.



Table with 3 columns: Online Content (290 takedown notices/day), 3-hour deadline for platforms to act.

1,11,185 pieces of suspicious online content have been blocked under Section 79(3)(b) of IT Act, says report

The Home Ministry has challenged this provision and the Sabotage portal, which enables police across the country to track suspicious content on a common platform, in the Karnataka High Court.

Social media platforms required to remove unlawful content within three hours of receipt of order

Social media platforms are required to remove unlawful content within three hours of the receipt of an order of a court of competent jurisdiction or a reasoned instruction by the Appropriate Government or its agency, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) informed Parliament recently.

Cybersecurity cases

Separately, on March 24, the Ministry informed the Lok Sabha that the number of cybersecurity incidents reported in India has risen sharply over the past five years, according to data tracked by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In).

10 killed, 35 injured as bus collides with mini-truck in M.P.

Mehul Malpani BHOPAL

At least 10 persons were killed and 35 injured after a bus they were travelling in met with an accident and overturned in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh on Thursday, officials said.



Police and ambulances respond to the fatal bus-mini truck collision in MP.

According to officials, the accident took place around 7.15 p.m. on the Nagpur highway, about 25 km from the district headquarters, when the private bus, carrying more than 45 passengers, collided head-on with a loading mini-truck and overturned.

Collector Harendra Narayan told The Hindu that 10 persons, including three women and a child, were killed and about 35 people injured.

The deceased include the drivers of both vehicles. He said that while those three receiving treatment at the district hospital were not out of danger, one critical patient had been referred to Nagpur in Maharashtra.

launch development works worth over ₹500 crore as well as a religious event in Chhindwara. The victims were returning from the event, which got over around 6 p.m., in an administration-organised private vehicle.

Mr. Yadav expressed grief over the deaths and said a team of doctors had been sent from Jabalpur to Chhindwara and Nagpur. He said the injured would be treated free of cost.

President urged not to grant assent to Transgender Amendment Bill

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

A day after the Rajya Sabha passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, around 140 lawyers and women's rights activists wrote to President Droupadi Murmu urging her not to grant assent to the Bill.



Transgender activists protest against the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Thursday.

The letter was written by All-India Feminist Alliance (AIFA), a pan-India collective of grassroots organisations, along with the National Alliance for Justice, Accountability and Rights (NAJAR), a forum of lawyers and legal professionals.

Persons had said that they were not consulted. Soon after the Rajya Sabha passed it on Wednesday, two members and representatives submitted their resignations, the letter pointed out.

that the right to self-determination of gender is a fundamental right protected under Articles 14 and 19 of the Constitution.

Further, they said the introduction of a medical board, who recommend and issue certificates of identity, also goes against the Supreme Court's stance in NALSA, which rejected such a requirement, adding that this violates the "right to bodily integrity and privacy" as enshrined in the Constitution.

By removing the guarantee of self-perceived identity, narrowing the definition of who qualifies as transgender, and introducing layers of medical and administrative scrutiny, transgender people, activists and allies, say that the many will be erased and made invisible by the Bill.

Transgender rights activist resigns from NHRC body

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit MUMBAI

Transgender rights activist Harish Iyer on Thursday resigned from the position of Advisor on the Core Group on LGFTQ+ issues at the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in protest of the alleged failure of NHRC to stand for the LGFTQ+ community.

He slammed the government and NHRC for not consulting the core group on any of the key issues before passing the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill, 2026, calling his association with NHRC "untenable".

CROSSWORD 14752

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and numbers.

- Across: 9 Sharpen pen, show uprightness (7); 11 A month before Masters, perhaps (7); 12 Choice before a politician on eloquence (7); 13 Old-fashioned in the middle misspelled (8); 15 Finally, recommending for you - the usual thin porridge (5)

SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers and empty cells.

- Across: 10 Pains South African golfer's name inside (7); 12 Set boundaries on a quiet board of cash (5); 13 Gorgeous! Sun in India shinning, but not at home (9); 15 US president accepts second time success (7); 16 A horse with fat flanks always trails behind (7); 18 Old-fashioned uniform - long for a solo dance (3,4); 19 Tests to block representation by law (7)

FAITH Bhagavatam, a guiding light

Srimad Bhagavata Purana, composed by sage Veda Vyasa, illumines the path of devotion (bhakti). It elaborates on the divine incarnations of Lord Vishnu and expounds the principles of dharma, devotion, and righteous living.

The Bhagavata itself provides answers to these questions. It declares that whenever adharma rises and dharma declines, the divine manifests to restore cosmic order.

# Home Ministry sends 290 takedown notices a day

Social media platforms required to remove unlawful content within three hours of receipt of order; Ministry report also shows sharp rise in number of cybersecurity incidents in recent years

**Vijaita Singh**  
NEW DELHI

**W**ithin a year of being empowered to directly issue takedown notices for online content, the Union Home Ministry issued an average of 290 such notices every day, according to the Ministry's data.

On March 13, 2024, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) was designated as the Ministry's agency to perform the functions under Section 79 (3) (b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

According to the Ministry's annual report for 2024-25, published on Wednesday, till March 31, 2025, "1,11,185 suspicious online content have been blocked under Section 79 (3)(b) of IT Act."

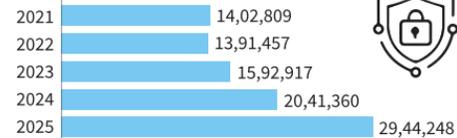
Though Section 79(1) of the IT Act shields online platforms and social media intermediaries from legal liability for content posted by users, Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act says that the shield will not apply if they fail to take down the content despite being flagged by government authorities.

Social media intermedi-

## Tracking cybersecurity

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is designated as the national agency for responding to cybersecurity incidents, which has seen a rise in recent years

### NUMBER OF CYBERSECURITY INCIDENTS



### ONLINE CONTENT

**290**  
takedown  
notices/day  
(average)

**1,11,185**  
content pieces  
blocked  
(2024-25)

**3-hour**  
deadline for  
platforms  
to act

**1,11,185 pieces of suspicious online content have been blocked under Section 79(3)(b) of IT Act, says report**

ary X had challenged this provision and the Sahyog portal, which enables police across the country to send such notices through a common platform, in the Karnataka High Court but the petition was turned down by the court in 2025.

*The Hindu* reported on March 29, 2025 that nearly a third of the 66 takedown notices sent to X by the I4C sought removal of content about Union Ministers and Central government agen-

cies. Social media platforms and other intermediaries are required to remove unlawful content within three hours of the receipt of an order of a court of competent jurisdiction or a reasoned intimation by the Appropriate Government or its agency, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY) informed Parliament recently.

Besides the Home Ministry, there are other government departments empowered under the particular section to issue takedown notices.

### Cybersecurity cases

Separately, on March 24, the Ministry informed the Lok Sabha that the number

of cybersecurity incidents reported in India has risen sharply over the past five years, according to data tracked by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), the national agency responsible for responding to cyber threats.

CERT-In, which functions under provisions of Section 70B of the Information Technology Act, 2000, recorded 29.44 lakh cyber security incidents in 2025, the highest figure in the last five years. The number of such incidents was 20.41 lakh in 2024.

As per CERT-In, the highest number of cyber incidents reported is from National Capital Territory of Delhi.

# Why do we need a living will?

Failing to plan ahead is often what separates a peaceful, dignified passing from a prolonged and distressing ordeal for the patient and their family; a living will might be all that humans have available to speak on our behalf when we no longer have a voice, in a life filled with unpredictability

Rajeev Jayadevan

**B**irth and death represent the two ends of a person's timeline. A disproportionate amount of preparation, attention and care is given to the first half – ranging from the anticipation of pregnancy, counselling and check-ups, to delivery and extravagant first birthday celebrations. Unfortunately, the same attention is rarely given to the opposite end – that is death. It is often left to chance, fuelled by the vague hope that 'the right treatment decision will somehow be taken at the right time by someone.'

Therein lies the problem. No one – not even a doctor – knows exactly how their life will end, or whether they will be able to speak for themselves in their final days. It could be a relatively sudden event or a long-drawn-out process following a severe, irreversible illness. That choice isn't ours to make. Ultimately, failing to plan ahead is often what separates a peaceful, dignified passing from a prolonged and distressing ordeal for the patient and their family.

A living will is a legal document that safeguards the individual's treatment preferences for certain irreversible conditions, essentially taking the burden off relatives and doctors in deciding on treatments in specific situations. Not having one could sometimes lead to crucial treatment decisions that the patient would not have made by themselves, needlessly prolonging their suffering.

The focus of a living will is specifically for situations in which the person develops a medical condition that is terminal or irreversible. There will be no compromise in routine treatment measures for other illnesses. For instance, a college lecturer suffers a brain injury from hypoxia after a near-drowning incident in a river. The person is paralysed, opens their eyes but cannot recognise anyone or respond – a condition commonly referred to as a persistent vegetative state. This could also happen following head injury, choking on food, strangulation or a stroke.

In such situations, not only is recovery not generally possible, but the person may remain in that condition for prolonged periods – painful for the family to watch and also expensive in the long run. Another example is a person with metastatic cancer at a stage where further treatment offers no improvement, where the person may be better off receiving comfort care (palliative care) than remaining in the ICU receiving more rounds of chemotherapy that only diminish quality of life in the limited days that remain.

Most people would expect their family members or close friends to step in and take the right decisions along with the doctors. However, in reality, the situation can turn chaotic because of emotional conflict, guilt, differences of opinion and contrasting attitudes among several family decision-makers – at the end of which doctors will often take the safest route



The focus of a living will is specifically for situations in which the person develops a medical condition that is terminal or irreversible. Without a living will, many terminally ill patients spend their final days in the ICU, attached to numerous tubes, unable to speak, and cared for by strangers. GETTY IMAGES

possible: continuing every treatment measure prescribed in the books, without consideration for quality of life or prospects for recovery. In addition, our next of kin may not be alive or available to make these decisions for us in the distant future. A safer alternative is for individuals to document their preferences ahead of time, when they are still in good physical and mental health, and also discuss it in advance with family members so that there is no conflict if and when the time comes.

The living will does not need to be invoked for everyone who is dying, especially when the person is still able to discuss their wishes with their doctors. The danger of not preparing one is that sometimes, other people may end up making life-changing decisions on our behalf when we are not in a position to indicate our preferences.

For instance, if a person enters an irreversible persistent vegetative state, doctors may place a feeding tube that pierces the stomach wall – because the patient can no longer swallow. Such individuals can remain in a paralysed, bedridden state for several years, sometimes a decade or longer. This may not be what the person would have wanted. In contrast, if this person had previously made a living will (advance directive) stating they did not want artificial feeding in the event of an irreversible illness, the treatment plan could shift to comfort care. This gives the person a chance to pass away gradually, in peace, and surrounded by loved ones.

The Supreme Court legally recognised these "advance directives" in the *Common Cause vs. Union of India (2018)* case. More recently, in the case of *Hatish Rana* – where no living will existed – the Supreme Court enabled doctors to stop artificial feeding by classifying it as a

treatment measure, while continuing comfort care until a natural death occurred. Without a living will, many terminally ill patients spend their final days in the ICU, attached to numerous tubes, unable to speak, and cared for by strangers. This "disconnected" mode of dying not only results in poor quality of life for the patient but also causes profound emotional distress for the family left behind.

**Clarity on treatments**  
A living will typically specifies which life-sustaining treatments to withhold or withdraw – such as ventilators, feeding tubes, or CPR – only if the patient has no hope of recovery. It does not apply to routine hospitalisations, surgeries, or the treatment of common illnesses. For example, a person with metastatic cancer who has written a living will to avoid ICU care and artificial feeding for their underlying terminal illness will still receive full treatment for a limb fracture or appendicitis. In such cases, if they are temporarily unable to eat, they will receive artificial feeding and post-operative ICU care just like any other patient – to help them recover.

Artificial feeding is a life-saving tool for reversible conditions; it only becomes a point of concern when used to indefinitely prolong a state of irreversible suffering.

Studies have shown that having a living will does not affect total survival. At the same time, it helps reduce unnecessary medical interventions and expenses.

Discussing one's preferences with close relatives and the family doctor is helpful to receive guidance and clarity while planning a living will. Guidelines for EOLC (End Of Life Care) by The Indian Association of Critical Care Medicine and

the Indian Association of Palliative Care have been published. Templates available online can be customised – as each individual may have different viewpoints for end of life care.

For instance, one person may not want any form of artificial feeding if an irreversible illness is confirmed – that is, if they become unable to swallow or feed themselves. Others may agree to artificial feeding, but may not want to be attached to a ventilator if their breathing becomes weak. A third person may agree to ventilator care but will not want CPR, and a fourth may want everything possible to be done. Patient autonomy dictates that individuals have the right to decide the treatment measures they will receive – as long as these decisions are taken in a state of sound mind.

Once drafted, the document requires the signatures of two witnesses and that of a public notary or gazetted officer. A magistrate's signature is no longer a requirement in India, thus the process has been simplified.

A living will is not just for older people. Young adults may be involved in road accidents or other sudden catastrophic events and hence benefit from having one. They can always update their living will depending on any change in preferences as they get older.

To sum it up, a living will might be all that we have available to speak on our behalf when we no longer have a voice, in a life filled with unpredictability. Reserved for irreversible or terminal illnesses, it cannot be invoked for recoverable illnesses, and therefore will not affect routine medical or surgical care.

*(Dr. Rajeev Jayadevan is a consultant, research cell, Kerala State IMA and honorary senior consultant in gastroenterologist, Sunrise Hospital Cochin. rajeevjayadevan@gmail.com)*

## THE GIST

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## HUMERUS



## SNIPPETS

### Use of technology in research related to health

**Use of stem cell therapy for autism**



Press Trust of India

The National Medical Commission has issued an advisory declaring stem cell therapy illegal for the treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder in compliance with a Supreme Court order. The move is aimed at curbing illegal practices by private clinics in metropolitan and tier-2 cities that claim to treat autism and cerebral palsy using stem cell therapy, sources said. According to the advisory issued based on ICMR recommendations on Wednesday to all medical colleges, hospitals and registered medical practitioners, stem cell therapy can now be used only for 32 approved diseases.

**Mice cloning and genetic mutations**



Reuters

Revealing the limitations of cloning, researchers who repeatedly cloned mice for two decades have discovered that such serial duplication creates new genetic mutations that accumulate over the generations and ultimately become fatal. A total of 1,206 cloned laboratory mice were generated from a single female donor mouse from 2005 to 2025 in research conducted in Japan. There were no outward signs of trouble through the first 25 generations, but mutations subsequently began piling up until becoming fatal. The 58th generation of the clones, burdened by mutations, died a few days after birth.

**Framework for animal testing**



Reuters

Britain's medicines regulator said on Wednesday it will introduce a framework by the end of 2026, which would allow drug makers to skip a review of the data for drugs being developed without animal testing before applying for approval. The draft guidance from the United Kingdom's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency aims to reduce reliance on animal studies and aligns with a broader global push to limit such testing. The U.S. FDA too had issued draft guidance encouraging companies to reduce animal testing and adopt alternatives.

**Fake X-rays and the use of AI**

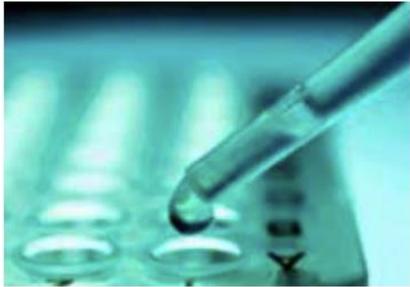


Reuters

Fake X-ray images created by artificial intelligence tools to resemble true results from human patients can fool not only experienced radiologists but also the artificial intelligence tools themselves, according to a study. The study illustrates the potential for manipulation by bad actors. Seventeen radiologists from 12 hospitals in six countries reviewed 264 X-ray images, half of which had been generated by the artificial intelligence tools including ChatGPT or RosentGen. When radiologist readers were unaware of the study's true purpose, only 41% spontaneously identified AI-generated images, according to a report.

# Use of technology in research related to health

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# Use of technology in health-related research: detailed summary

## स्वास्थ्य संबंधी शोध में प्रौद्योगिकी का उपयोग: विस्तृत सार

### 1) Main theme

#### 1) मुख्य विषय

- The page highlights how modern science and technology are rapidly transforming health research, regulation, diagnosis, and ethics.

यह पृष्ठ दिखाता है कि आधुनिक विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी किस प्रकार स्वास्थ्य अनुसंधान, विनियमन, निदान और नैतिकता को तेज़ी से बदल रहे हैं।

- At the same time, it also shows that every new technology brings both **promise** and **risk**. साथ ही यह भी स्पष्ट करता है कि हर नई तकनीक अपने साथ **संभावना** और **जोखिम** दोनों लाती है।
- The four reports together cover:

ये चारों समाचार मिलकर निम्न विषयों को कवर करते हैं:

- stem cell therapy and medical ethics  
स्टेम सेल थेरेपी और चिकित्सीय नैतिकता
- cloning and genetic instability  
क्लोनिंग और आनुवंशिक अस्थिरता
- reduction of animal testing in drug development  
दवा विकास में पशु-परीक्षण की कमी
- misuse of AI in medical imaging  
मेडिकल इमेजिंग में एआई का दुरुपयोग

## Part 1: Stem cell therapy for autism

### भाग 1: ऑटिज़्म के लिए स्टेम सेल थेरेपी

#### 2) What the news says

##### 2) समाचार क्या कहता है

- The National Medical Commission has issued an advisory stating that stem cell therapy is illegal for the treatment of **Autism Spectrum Disorder** in routine medical practice.  
नेशनल मेडिकल कमीशन ने परामर्श जारी कर कहा है कि **Autism Spectrum Disorder** के उपचार हेतु नियमित चिकित्सा अभ्यास में स्टेम सेल थेरेपी वैध नहीं है।
- This action is aimed at stopping private clinics that make unproven claims of curing autism or cerebral palsy through stem cell treatment.  
इस कदम का उद्देश्य उन निजी क्लिनिकों पर रोक लगाना है जो स्टेम सेल उपचार से ऑटिज़्म या सेरेब्रल पाल्सी ठीक करने के अप्रमाणित दावे करते हैं।
- The advisory is linked to regulatory and judicial concern that such use lacks adequate scientific proof.  
यह परामर्श नियामकीय और न्यायिक चिंता से जुड़ा है कि ऐसे उपयोग के पक्ष में पर्याप्त वैज्ञानिक प्रमाण उपलब्ध नहीं हैं।

#### 3) What are stem cells?

##### 3) स्टेम सेल क्या होते हैं

- Stem cells are special cells that can develop into different kinds of body cells.  
स्टेम सेल ऐसी विशेष कोशिकाएँ हैं जो शरीर की विभिन्न प्रकार की कोशिकाओं में विकसित हो सकती हैं।
- They are important in regenerative medicine because they may help repair damaged tissues in selected medical conditions.  
पुनर्योजी चिकित्सा में इनका महत्व इसलिए है क्योंकि ये कुछ चुनिंदा रोग स्थितियों में क्षतिग्रस्त ऊतकों की मरम्मत में सहायक हो सकती हैं।
- However, medical use of stem cells must be based on **strong evidence, approved protocols, and ethical supervision.**  
किंतु स्टेम सेल का चिकित्सीय उपयोग मजबूत साक्ष्य, अनुमोदित प्रोटोकॉल और नैतिक निगरानी पर आधारित होना चाहिए।

#### 4) Why autism treatment through stem cells is controversial

#### 4) स्टेम सेल द्वारा ऑटिज़्म उपचार विवादित क्यों है

- Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition, not a simple tissue injury that can be directly “repaired” like a wound.  
ऑटिज़्म एक न्यूरो-डेवलपमेंटल अवस्था है, न कि कोई साधारण ऊतक-चोट जिसे घाव की तरह सीधे “ठीक” कर दिया जाए।
- Therefore, extraordinary claims of cure require very high-quality evidence.  
इसलिए “इलाज” के असाधारण दावों के लिए अत्यंत उच्च गुणवत्ता वाले वैज्ञानिक प्रमाण आवश्यक होते हैं।
- When clinics market expensive unproven therapies to vulnerable families, it becomes an issue of **medical ethics, consumer protection, and evidence-based medicine.**  
जब क्लिनिक संवेदनशील परिवारों को महंगी और अप्रमाणित थेरेपी बेचते हैं, तो यह चिकित्सीय नैतिकता, उपभोक्ता संरक्षण और साक्ष्य-आधारित चिकित्सा का प्रश्न बन जाता है।

#### 5) Exam value

#### 5) परीक्षा महत्व

- This issue is important for questions related to:  
यह विषय निम्न प्रकार के प्रश्नों के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है:
  - biotechnology  
जैव-प्रौद्योगिकी
  - medical ethics  
चिकित्सा नैतिकता
  - regulation of health technologies  
स्वास्थ्य प्रौद्योगिकी का विनियमन
  - evidence-based medicine  
साक्ष्य-आधारित चिकित्सा

## Part 2: Mice cloning and genetic mutations

### भाग 2: चूहों की क्लोनिंग और आनुवंशिक उत्परिवर्तन

#### 6) What the news says

#### 6) समाचार क्या कहता है

- A long-term study in Japan repeatedly cloned mice over many generations. जापान में एक दीर्घकालिक अध्ययन में चूहों की अनेक पीढ़ियों तक बार-बार क्लोनिंग की गई।
- The study found that repeated cloning caused **serious genetic mutations** that accumulated across generations. अध्ययन में पाया गया कि बार-बार क्लोनिंग करने से गंभीर आनुवंशिक उत्परिवर्तन हुए, जो पीढ़ी-दर-पीढ़ी जमा होते गए।
- These mutations eventually became so severe that later-generation clones died soon after birth. ये उत्परिवर्तन अंततः इतने गंभीर हो गए कि बाद की पीढ़ियों के क्लोन जन्म के कुछ समय बाद ही मर गए।

#### 7) What is cloning?

#### 7) क्लोनिंग क्या है

- Cloning is the production of a genetically very similar copy of an organism. क्लोनिंग किसी जीव की आनुवंशिक रूप से अत्यंत समान प्रति तैयार करने की प्रक्रिया है।
- In animal cloning, a common method is **somatic cell nuclear transfer**. पशु क्लोनिंग में एक सामान्य विधि **somatic cell nuclear transfer** होती है।
- In this process, the nucleus of a body cell is inserted into an egg cell whose original nucleus has been removed. इस प्रक्रिया में शरीर की एक कोशिका का नाभिक उस अंडाणु में स्थापित किया जाता है जिसका मूल नाभिक निकाल दिया गया हो।

## 8) Why this study is important

### 8) यह अध्ययन महत्वपूर्ण क्यों है

- It reveals that cloning is not an endlessly stable process.  
यह बताता है कि क्लोनिंग अनंतकाल तक स्थिर रहने वाली प्रक्रिया नहीं है।
- Repeated cloning may magnify genetic defects over time.  
बार-बार क्लोनिंग समय के साथ आनुवंशिक दोषों को बढ़ा सकती है।
- This supports the biological importance of sexual reproduction in maintaining long-term genetic health.  
यह दीर्घकालिक आनुवंशिक स्वास्थ्य बनाए रखने में लैंगिक प्रजनन के जैविक महत्व को भी रेखांकित करता है।

## 9) Broader scientific significance

### 9) व्यापक वैज्ञानिक महत्व

- The study is relevant to developmental biology, genetics, reproductive technology, and bioethics.  
यह अध्ययन विकासात्मक जीवविज्ञान, आनुवंशिकी, प्रजनन प्रौद्योगिकी और जैव-नैतिकता से संबंधित है।
- It also reminds us that laboratory success in early generations does not guarantee long-term biological viability.  
यह हमें यह भी याद दिलाता है कि प्रारंभिक पीढ़ियों में प्रयोगशाला-स्तरीय सफलता दीर्घकालिक जैविक व्यवहार्यता की गारंटी नहीं देती।
- This is important in debates around cloning of animals, endangered species, and possibly future reproductive technologies.  
यह पशुओं, संकटग्रस्त प्रजातियों और संभावित भविष्य की प्रजनन तकनीकों पर होने वाली बहसों में महत्वपूर्ण है।

## Part 3: Framework for reduced animal testing

### भाग 3: पशु-परीक्षण कम करने के लिए रूपरेखा

#### 10) What the news says

#### 10) समाचार क्या कहता है

- Britain's medicines regulator has proposed a framework under which drugmakers may seek regulatory review of data for drugs developed without animal testing before approval.  
ब्रिटेन के औषधि नियामक ने ऐसी रूपरेखा प्रस्तावित की है जिसके अंतर्गत दवा कंपनियाँ पशु-परीक्षण के बिना विकसित दवाओं के डेटा की नियामकीय समीक्षा, अनुमोदन से पहले, करा सकेंगी।
- The idea is to reduce reliance on animal testing and encourage scientifically valid alternatives.  
इसका उद्देश्य पशु-परीक्षण पर निर्भरता कम करना और वैज्ञानिक रूप से मान्य विकल्पों को बढ़ावा देना है।

#### 11) Why animal testing has traditionally been used

#### 11) पशु-परीक्षण परंपरागत रूप से क्यों किया जाता रहा है

- Before giving a new drug to humans, regulators want evidence on safety, toxicity, and biological effects.  
किसी नई दवा को मनुष्यों पर देने से पहले नियामक उसकी सुरक्षा, विषाक्तता और जैविक प्रभावों के साक्ष्य चाहते हैं।
- Historically, animals were used as models to estimate how a drug might behave in living systems.  
ऐतिहासिक रूप से, दवा जीवित तंत्र में कैसे व्यवहार करेगी, इसका अनुमान लगाने के लिए पशुओं को मॉडल के रूप में उपयोग किया जाता था।

## 12) Why alternatives are now being encouraged

### 12) अब विकल्पों को क्यों प्रोत्साहित किया जा रहा है

- Animal studies are costly, slow, ethically contested, and sometimes poor predictors of human biology.  
पशु-अध्ययन महंगे, धीमे, नैतिक रूप से विवादास्पद होते हैं और कई बार मानव जीवविज्ञान का सटीक पूर्वानुमान भी नहीं देते।
- Newer methods such as organoids, organ-on-chip systems, computational toxicology, in vitro testing, and AI-assisted modeling may reduce dependence on animals.  
organoids, organ-on-chip systems, computational toxicology, in vitro testing और AI-assisted modeling जैसी नई विधियाँ पशुओं पर निर्भरता घटा सकती हैं।
- This shift is linked to the **3Rs principle**:  
यह परिवर्तन **3Rs principle** से जुड़ा है:
  - Replace  
Replace (पशु के स्थान पर विकल्प)
  - Reduce  
Reduce (पशु उपयोग में कमी)
  - Refine  
Refine (पीड़ा को कम करना)

निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार कीजिए:

1. स्टेम सेल थेरेपी का हर चिकित्सीय उपयोग वैज्ञानिक रूप से सिद्ध और नियमित रूप से अनुमोदित है।  
Every medical use of stem cell therapy is scientifically proven and routinely approved.
2. बार-बार की गई क्लोनिंग से पीढ़ियों के साथ आनुवंशिक दोष जमा हो सकते हैं।  
Repeated cloning can lead to accumulation of genetic defects across generations.
3. पशु-परीक्षण के विकल्पों को बढ़ावा देने का उद्देश्य केवल लागत कम करना है, नैतिकता से उसका कोई संबंध नहीं है।  
The promotion of alternatives to animal testing is only about reducing cost and has no connection with ethics.
4. एआई-जनित नकली मेडिकल इमेज स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में एक उभरती हुई विश्वसनीयता और सुरक्षा चुनौती हैं।  
AI-generated fake medical images are an emerging trust and security challenge in healthcare.

उपरोक्त में से कौन-से कथन सही हैं?

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 4 only

# Next & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Number of beds to be added to Andhra Pradesh hospitals

**10,000** The completion of multiplicity hospitals in Warangal and Hyderabad will add 10,000 beds to the State public health system, said Telangana Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. He also said that the department is developing a website where non-resident Telangana doctors can register to volunteer. **PH**

### Increase in allocation of commercial gas to Rajasthan

**10** per cent. The Union government has increased the allocation of commercial gas to Rajasthan by 10%, following a request from the State, officials said on Thursday. The State government had earlier urged the Centre for additional gas allocation to meet the growing demand. Following this request, the allocation of commercial gas was increased, the official said. **PH**

### Increase in India's carbon emissions in 2023

**0.70** in per cent. This is the slowest annual increase in more than two decades, data from a research analysis showed, as record clean-energy additions and weak power demand curbed the rise in fossil fuel use. This is a sharp slowdown from the growth of 4%-11% in the preceding four years, excluding the impact of COVID in 2020. **SEI/ANSS**

### Amount of 'wartime' budget South Korea aims to roll out

**17** in \$ billion. Officials aim to "draw up a supplementary budget worth 25 trillion won next month — funded by excess tax revenue — in response to the prolonged Middle East conflict", the government said in a statement. The bill aims to support small and mid-sized firms and vulnerable households hit by the prolonged war. **APF**

### Donations received by the ruling BJP in 2024-25

**6,074** in ₹ crore. Donations to national parties surged by 161% in 2024-25 from the previous fiscal, with the BJP accounting for the overwhelming majority, according to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms. Total donations above ₹20,000 declared stood at ₹6,648.563 crore. **PH**

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# What is driving the fall in gold prices?

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## EXPLAINER

Areena Arora

### The story so far:

Gold, long seen as a safe haven in times of crisis, is behaving differently this time since the onset of the West Asian conflict on February 28. Since the start of the war, gold prices have fallen sharply. In India, 24-carat gold, which was trading close to ₹1.9 lakh per 10 grams in late January, has dropped to around ₹1.3 lakh per 10 grams. In most crises over the past two decades, gold has either held its value or risen. During the 2008 financial meltdown, gold surged as banking systems faltered. It rose sharply again during the COVID-19 pandemic as economies shut down and central banks flooded markets with liquidity. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, gold surged nearly 10% in the weeks following the start of the conflict. "Everybody should turn to gold as a safe haven when there is a political crisis, a military crisis, a financial crisis, or an oil crisis. That's the first thing we do," Bhagwan Das, former associate professor of Economics at Loyola College, Chennai, said. So why isn't that happening now?

**Why does gold usually rise in a crisis?** Gold does not pay interest, unlike other common assets. So, when returns on other safe assets such as U.S. government bonds rise, gold becomes less attractive because investors can earn a steady income from bonds. But when bond yields fall or uncertainty spikes, the reverse happens, and investors move into gold to preserve their wealth. There is also the dollar factor. Gold is priced in U.S. dollars globally. When the dollar weakens, gold becomes cheaper for buyers using other currencies, pushing up demand and prices. A weaker dollar and lower interest rates combined, which was the case in several past global crises — are gold's best friends.

**What changed this time?** Several things changed at once, and all of them have pushed gold prices down. Factors that usually support gold, low interest rates, and a weaker dollar, have all moved in the opposite direction. When the West Asian conflict began, oil prices jumped sharply, crossing \$120 a barrel and breaching \$100 per barrel for the first time since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The war created one of the largest supply disruptions in the global oil market, according to a March report by the International Energy Agency.

Higher oil prices push up the cost of almost everything, raising fears of inflation. In response, central banks typically raise interest rates to cool demand. While rates have not yet risen further, expectations have shifted. Markets now expect rates to stay higher for longer.

When investors expect interest rates to remain high, government bonds, which pay a fixed return, become more attractive. Gold, which yields no interest, has to compete with that. Even without an actual rate hike, the mere expectation that rate cuts are off the table is enough to push investors toward bonds and away from gold.

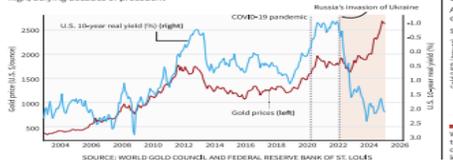
Before the conflict, inflation had been easing globally, and major central banks had been signalling rate cuts to support slowing economies. The oil shock changed that calculus.

## Shifts in safe havens

Physical demand for gold jewellery has softened as consumers adjust to higher prices. But investment demand, particularly through gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs), has remained resilient.

### Gold stopped following the rules in 2022

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, gold has kept climbing even as real yields have stayed high, defying decades of precedent.



"The changing expectation of central bank policy actions has been a key factor," said Kavita Chacko, Research Head for India at the World Gold Council. Higher expected interest rates also make dollar-denominated assets such as U.S. Treasury bonds more attractive. As money flows into these assets, the dollar strengthens — and a stronger dollar makes gold more expensive for foreign buyers, dampening demand. "The strengthening dollar increases the opportunity cost of holding gold," Ms. Chacko said. "That has been a key factor influencing prices."

**Why are investors now selling gold specifically?** Gold had been having a strong run. Internationally, prices touched over \$5,000 per troy ounce before the conflict began. In India, prices hit an all-time high of nearly ₹1.9 lakh per 10 grams of 24-carat gold in late January 2024, capping a streak in which prices had more than doubled over two years, driven by geopolitical uncertainty, central bank buying, and a weakening dollar through most of 2023.

When prices fall sharply from such highs, a chain reaction can set in. Investors who had set automatic sell orders to limit their losses see those orders trigger, flooding an already falling market with supply. That pushes prices down further, triggering more sell orders. Yet, the fall in prices feeds itself. Compounding this is a liquidity crunch amid looming fears of a prolonged war and potentially long-lasting oil supply disruption. Stock markets have fallen sharply since the conflict began, and when one part of a portfolio bleeds,

investors often sell what is still in profit to cover the damage. Gold, sitting on years of gains, is an obvious candidate. "It is a liquidity issue. Other asset classes have seen sharp falls, so you make up for shortfalls there, cover losses there by booking some profits here," Ms. Chacko said.

### Is the dollar now the haven gold used to be?

To some extent, yes, at least in the short run. There is a growing push to move away from the dollar. Its share in global foreign exchange reserves has declined from about 78% in the early 2000s to under 60% in recent years, as countries diversify into other currencies and gold, according to the U.S. Federal Reserve. But that shift has limits, and the dollar still dominates a third of all global trade denominated in it. It remains the currency countries need when they buy oil or pay for imports. For now, when a crisis hits, the world still reaches for dollars.

When oil, also priced in dollars, becomes more expensive, countries need more dollars to pay for their imports, driving up demand for the dollar. "American dollar is the go-to currency whenever there is a threat of inflation caused by rising crude oil prices," Mr. Das said. "Gold has lost its appeal temporarily. The emphasis is going back to the dollar." But gold has not lost its shine yet. Central banks that are among the largest and most consistent buyers of gold have not stopped accumulating it. Purchases slowed modestly in 2023 compared to the three years prior, but remained well above historical averages, Ms. Chacko said. The World Gold Council's data for

## THE GIST

Gold prices have fallen sharply since the onset of the West Asian conflict as expectations of higher interest rates for longer, a stronger dollar, and rising bond yields reduced gold's appeal as a non-interest-bearing asset.

A chain reaction of sell orders, profit booking amid a liquidity crunch, and investors covering losses in falling stock markets has added to the downward pressure on prices.

Despite the correction, underlying demand remains strong, with positive ETF inflows, continued central bank buying, and analysts viewing the fall as a temporary situation with long-term appreciation intact.

February 2024 points to a strong rebound in central bank buying. After the U.S. and its Western allies froze Russian financial assets held in Western banks following the Ukraine invasion, many governments pivoted to concluding that financial assets alone were insufficient as reserves. Gold, which is a physical asset that cannot be frozen or sanctioned, became more attractive.

**Should ordinary investors be worried?** Price corrections of this kind are not unusual, Mr. Das said. Gold has experienced sharp pullbacks before, including after its peaks in 2011 and 2020, only to recover and move higher eventually. "In India, the picture is more nuanced. Physical demand for jewellery has softened as consumers adjust to higher prices. But investment demand, particularly through gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs), has remained resilient.

Gold ETF inflows in India were positive for the tenth consecutive month in February, according to World Gold Council data, even as some investors booked profits. Physical demand for gold remained strong. While February gold imports were 38% lower than January, they were still over 80% higher in volume compared to the same month last year. "The underlying demand is still there," said Ms. Chacko. "When there has been a correction and people see prices stabilise, there is often an immediate rush to buy. The sentiment appears to be quite positive and bullish."

**What happens next then?** Much depends on how the West Asian conflict unfolds. If oil prices stabilise or fall, inflation fears will be eased, rate hike expectations will recede, and gold's appeal as a non-interest-bearing asset will increase again. If the conflict deepens and oil climbs further, stagflation which is prolonged slow growth combined with high inflation, becomes a real concern, which has historically also been good for gold.

"Price correction is a normal thing in every market," Mr. Das said. "Gold will certainly appreciate in the future. This is a temporary situation." The short-term picture is volatile and uncertain, and how far prices will move remains anyone's guess. The longer-term forecast, analysts say, remains intact.



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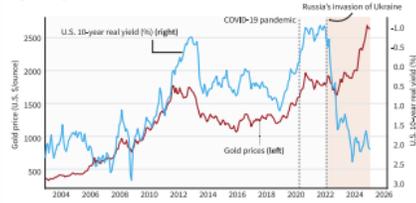
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SOURCE: WORLD GOLD COUNCIL AND FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ST. LOUIS

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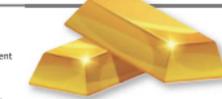
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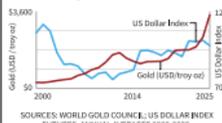
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### For 25 years, gold rose when the dollar fell. Not anymore

A 25-year relationship that has held through wars, crises and rate cycles



SOURCES: WORLD GOLD COUNCIL; US DOLLAR INDEX FUTURES, ANNUAL AVERAGES 2000-2025.

The dollar is still the world's go-to currency in a crisis. When oil prices spike, inflation fears prompt investors to pull money away from gold to ensure liquidity. That demand for liquidity has kept the dollar strong even as its long-term dominance slowly erodes.

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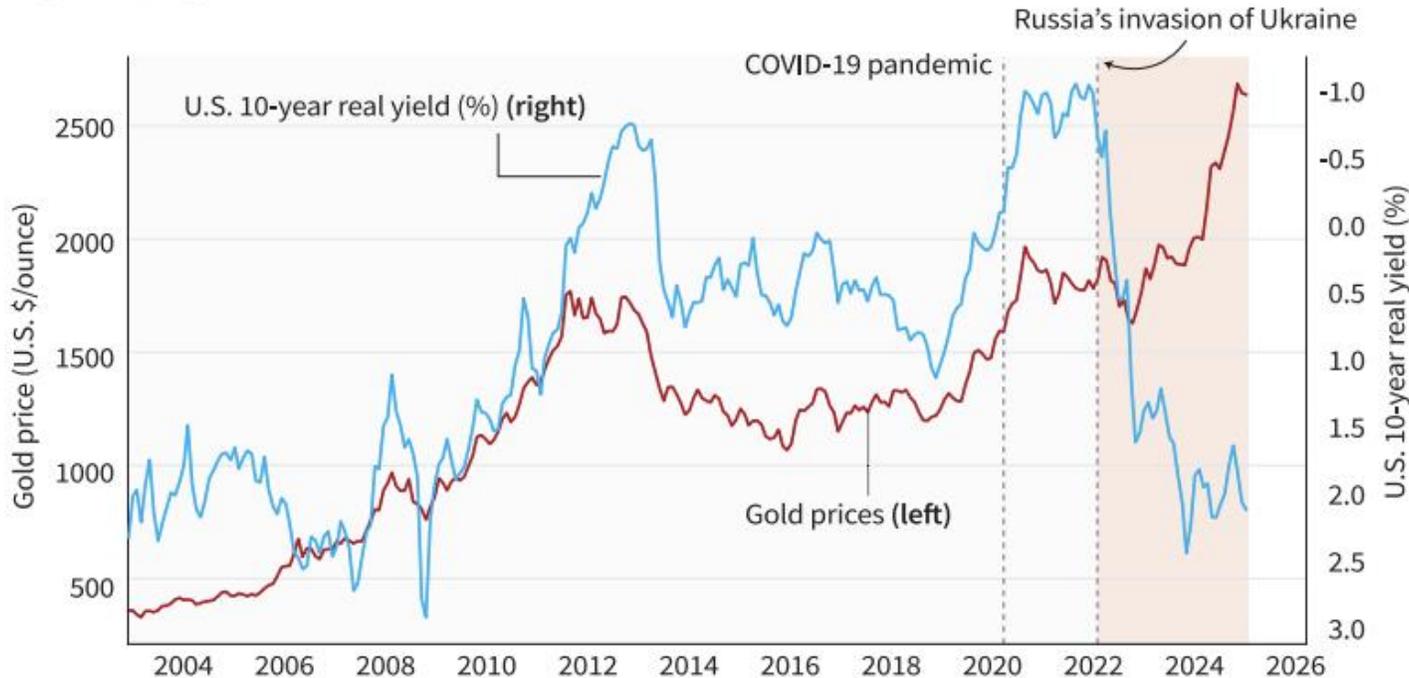
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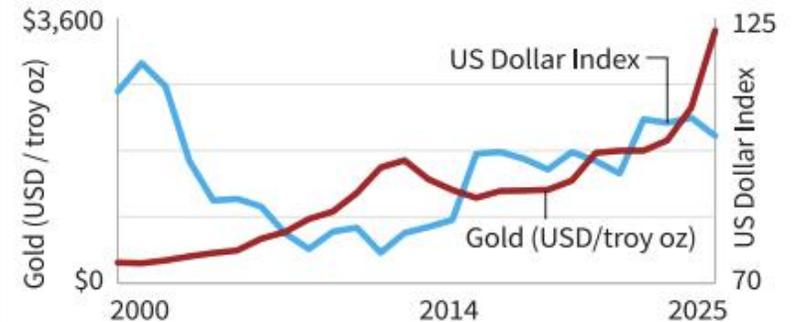


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## 1) Main theme

### 1) मुख्य विषय

- Gold prices have corrected after a strong rally, and the fall is mainly being linked to changing global financial conditions rather than any one single reason.

सोने की कीमतों में तेज़ बढ़त के बाद सुधार आया है, और यह गिरावट मुख्यतः वैश्विक वित्तीय परिस्थितियों में बदलाव से जुड़ी मानी जा रही है, न कि किसी एक कारण से।

- The article explains that gold is reacting to shifts in **interest rate expectations, the strength of the U.S. dollar, investor profit-booking, and changing risk sentiment.**

लेख बताता है कि सोना ब्याज दर अपेक्षाओं, अमेरिकी डॉलर की मजबूती, निवेशकों की मुनाफावसूली और बदलती जोखिम-धारणा के अनुसार प्रतिक्रिया दे रहा है।

- Even though prices are falling in the short term, the broader safe-haven appeal of gold has not completely disappeared.

अल्पकाल में कीमतें गिर रही हैं, फिर भी सोने का सुरक्षित निवेश वाला व्यापक आकर्षण पूरी तरह समाप्त नहीं हुआ है।

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## 2) Why gold usually rises in a crisis

### 2) संकट के समय सोना आमतौर पर क्यों बढ़ता है

- Gold is often treated as a **safe-haven asset**.

सोने को अक्सर सुरक्षित निवेश परिसंपत्ति माना जाता है।

- In times of war, financial instability, inflation fears, or recession worries, many investors move money into gold.

युद्ध, वित्तीय अस्थिरता, महंगाई की आशंका या मंदी के डर के समय कई निवेशक अपना धन सोने में लगाते हैं।

- Gold becomes attractive because it is a physical store of value and is not directly dependent on the creditworthiness of a company or government.

सोना इसलिए आकर्षक बनता है क्योंकि यह मूल्य का भौतिक भंडार है और किसी कंपनी या सरकार की साख पर सीधे निर्भर नहीं करता।

- Historically, gold has often gained during periods of uncertainty such as wars, banking stress, and monetary instability.

ऐतिहासिक रूप से सोना युद्ध, बैंकिंग तनाव और मौद्रिक अस्थिरता जैसी अनिश्चित परिस्थितियों में अक्सर मजबूत हुआ है।

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### 3) Why gold prices are falling now

#### 3) अभी सोने की कीमतें क्यों गिर रही हैं

##### (a) Higher interest rate expectations

###### (क) ऊँची ब्याज दर अपेक्षाएँ

- Gold does not pay interest or dividend.  
सोना ब्याज या डिविडेंड नहीं देता।
- When markets expect central banks, especially the U.S. Federal Reserve, to keep interest rates high, bonds and fixed-income assets become more attractive.  
जब बाजार को लगता है कि केंद्रीय बैंक, विशेषकर अमेरिकी फेडरल रिज़र्व, ब्याज दरें ऊँची रखेंगे, तब बॉन्ड और फिक्स्ड-इनकम निवेश अधिक आकर्षक बन जाते हैं।
- As a result, investors may shift away from gold toward interest-bearing assets.  
परिणामस्वरूप निवेशक सोने से निकलकर ब्याज देने वाली परिसंपत्तियों की ओर जा सकते हैं।

##### (b) Stronger U.S. dollar

###### (ख) मजबूत अमेरिकी डॉलर

- Gold is internationally priced largely in U.S. dollars.  
अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में सोने का मूल्य मुख्यतः अमेरिकी डॉलर में तय होता है।
- When the dollar becomes stronger, gold becomes more expensive for buyers using other currencies.  
जब डॉलर मजबूत होता है, तब अन्य मुद्राओं में भुगतान करने वाले खरीदारों के लिए सोना महंगा पड़ता है।
- This weakens global demand and can push prices downward.  
इससे वैश्विक मांग कमजोर पड़ती है और कीमतों पर दबाव आता है।

### (c) Profit-booking by investors

#### (ग) निवेशकों द्वारा मुनाफावसूली

- Gold had risen sharply in recent years, especially after geopolitical tensions and global uncertainty.  
हाल के वर्षों में, विशेषकर भू-राजनीतिक तनाव और वैश्विक अनिश्चितता के बाद, सोना तेज़ी से बढ़ा था।
- After such a rally, many investors sell to lock in profits.  
ऐसी तेज़ बढ़त के बाद कई निवेशक लाभ सुरक्षित करने के लिए बिकवाली करते हैं।
- This selling pressure can deepen the correction.  
यह बिकवाली कीमतों में गिरावट को और बढ़ा सकती है।

### (d) Liquidity pressure in markets

#### (घ) बाजार में तरलता दबाव

- Sometimes investors sell even safe assets like gold when they need cash to cover losses elsewhere.  
कई बार निवेशक नकदी की जरूरत पड़ने पर सोने जैसी सुरक्षित परिसंपत्तियाँ भी बेच देते हैं ताकि कहीं और हुए नुकसान की भरपाई कर सकें।
  - In such situations, gold may fall not because it has become weak fundamentally, but because investors need liquidity.  
ऐसी स्थिति में सोना मूलभूत रूप से कमजोर होने के कारण नहीं, बल्कि नकदी की आवश्यकता के कारण गिर सकता है।
-

#### 4) Role of the U.S. dollar in gold pricing

#### 4) सोने की कीमत में अमेरिकी डॉलर की भूमिका

- The dollar remains the world's dominant reserve currency and trade currency.  
डॉलर अब भी विश्व की प्रमुख आरक्षित मुद्रा और व्यापारिक मुद्रा है।
- A strong dollar often pulls capital toward U.S. assets.  
मजबूत डॉलर अक्सर पूंजी को अमेरिकी परिसंपत्तियों की ओर खींचता है।
- When U.S. yields are high and the dollar is strong, gold faces a double pressure:  
जब अमेरिकी बॉन्ड प्रतिफल ऊँचे हों और डॉलर मजबूत हो, तब सोने पर दोहरा दबाव आता है:
  - investors prefer yield-generating assets  
निवेशक प्रतिफल देने वाली परिसंपत्तियाँ पसंद करते हैं
  - non-dollar buyers face higher costs  
गैर-डॉलर खरीदारों के लिए लागत बढ़ जाती है
- Therefore, dollar strength and gold often move in opposite directions.  
इसलिए डॉलर की मजबूती और सोने की कीमतें अक्सर विपरीत दिशा में चलती हैं।

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#### 5) Why central bank expectations matter

#### 5) केंद्रीय बैंक की अपेक्षाएँ क्यों महत्वपूर्ण हैं

- Gold is very sensitive to expectations about **future interest rates**, not just current rates.  
सोना केवल वर्तमान ब्याज दरों पर नहीं, बल्कि भविष्य की ब्याज दर अपेक्षाओं पर भी बहुत संवेदनशील रहता है।
- If markets expect rate cuts, gold usually gets support because the opportunity cost of holding gold falls.  
यदि बाजार को दर कटौती की उम्मीद हो, तो सोने को समर्थन मिलता है क्योंकि सोना रखने की अवसर-लागत घट जाती है।
- If markets expect rates to stay high for longer, gold loses some shine.  
यदि बाजार को लगे कि दरें लंबे समय तक ऊँची रहेंगी, तो सोने की चमक कुछ कम हो जाती है।
- Thus, gold is deeply connected to global monetary policy.  
इसलिए सोना वैश्विक मौद्रिक नीति से गहराई से जुड़ा हुआ है।

## 6) Is physical demand still strong?

### 6) क्या भौतिक मांग अब भी मजबूत है?

- Physical jewellery demand can soften when prices become too high.  
जब कीमतें बहुत अधिक हो जाती हैं, तब आभूषणों की भौतिक मांग कमजोर पड़ सकती है।
  - Consumers often postpone purchases when they think gold has become too expensive.  
जब उपभोक्ताओं को लगता है कि सोना बहुत महंगा हो गया है, तो वे खरीद टाल देते हैं।
  - However, investment demand through institutional routes, funds, and central banks may still remain resilient.  
फिर भी संस्थागत निवेश, फंड्स और केंद्रीय बैंकों के माध्यम से निवेश मांग बनी रह सकती है।
  - So, physical demand and investment demand do not always move in the same way.  
इसलिए भौतिक मांग और निवेश मांग हमेशा एक जैसी दिशा में नहीं चलतीं।
- 

## 7) Safe haven, but not always rising

### 7) सुरक्षित परिसंपत्ति, लेकिन हमेशा नहीं बढ़ती

- A common misconception is that gold always rises during uncertainty.  
एक सामान्य गलतफहमी यह है कि अनिश्चितता के समय सोना हमेशा बढ़ता है।
- In reality, gold can also fall during crises if:  
वास्तव में संकट के समय भी सोना गिर सकता है, यदि:
  - the dollar becomes very strong  
डॉलर बहुत मजबूत हो जाए
  - investors urgently need liquidity  
निवेशकों को तुरंत नकदी चाहिए
  - bond yields rise sharply  
बॉन्ड प्रतिफल तेज़ी से बढ़ जाएँ
- Therefore, gold is a safe haven over the long run, but its short-term price movement can still be volatile.  
इसलिए सोना दीर्घकाल में सुरक्षित परिसंपत्ति है, लेकिन अल्पकाल में इसकी कीमतें काफी उतार-चढ़ाव वाली हो सकती हैं।

## 8) Historical background of gold as an asset

### 8) परिसंपत्ति के रूप में सोने की ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि

- Gold has been used for centuries as a store of value, ornament, and symbol of wealth.  
सोना सदियों से मूल्य-संग्रह, आभूषण और संपत्ति के प्रतीक के रूप में उपयोग होता आया है।
  - For a long time, many monetary systems were linked to gold directly or indirectly.  
लंबे समय तक अनेक मौद्रिक प्रणालियाँ प्रत्यक्ष या परोक्ष रूप से सोने से जुड़ी थीं।
  - Even after the end of the classical gold standard, gold retained importance in central bank reserves and investor psychology.  
पारंपरिक गोल्ड स्टैंडर्ड के समाप्त होने के बाद भी सोना केंद्रीय बैंक भंडार और निवेशकों की मानसिकता में महत्वपूर्ण बना रहा।
  - During inflationary periods and geopolitical shocks, gold has repeatedly returned to prominence.  
महंगाई और भू-राजनीतिक झटकों के समय सोना बार-बार महत्वपूर्ण बनकर उभरा है।
- 

## 9) Economic significance

### 9) आर्थिक महत्व

- Gold is not only a commodity but also a financial asset.  
सोना केवल एक वस्तु नहीं, बल्कि एक वित्तीय परिसंपत्ति भी है।
- Its price reflects inflation expectations, currency strength, interest rates, and global risk appetite.  
इसकी कीमत महंगाई अपेक्षाओं, मुद्रा की मजबूती, ब्याज दरों और वैश्विक जोखिम-रुझान को दर्शाती है।
- For countries like India, gold also has a large cultural and household savings dimension.  
भारत जैसे देशों में सोने का सांस्कृतिक और घरेलू बचत से जुड़ा बड़ा महत्व भी है।
- High gold prices affect jewellery demand, imports, trade balance, and household buying behaviour.  
ऊँची सोने की कीमतें आभूषण मांग, आयात, व्यापार संतुलन और घरेलू खरीद व्यवहार को प्रभावित करती हैं।

## 11) Will gold recover again?

### 11) क्या सोना फिर से संभल सकता है?

- Gold can recover if interest rate expectations soften.  
यदि ब्याज दर अपेक्षाएँ नरम पड़ती हैं, तो सोना फिर संभल सकता है।
  - It can also gain if geopolitical tensions rise again.  
यदि भू-राजनीतिक तनाव फिर बढ़ता है, तो भी सोने को समर्थन मिल सकता है।
  - A weaker dollar would also help gold.  
कमजोर डॉलर भी सोने के लिए सहायक होगा।
  - Continued central bank buying and long-term demand for diversification may keep the broader bullish case alive.  
केंद्रीय बैंकों की लगातार खरीद और विविधीकरण की दीर्घकालिक मांग सोने के पक्ष में व्यापक रुझान को बनाए रख सकती है।
  - Thus, the present fall may be a correction rather than a permanent reversal.  
अतः वर्तमान गिरावट स्थायी उलटफेर नहीं, बल्कि एक सुधार भी हो सकती है।
- 

## 12) Analytical conclusion

### 12) विश्लेषणात्मक निष्कर्ष

- Gold is falling mainly because **high interest rate expectations, a stronger dollar, and profit-booking** are outweighing its safe-haven appeal in the short run.  
सोना मुख्यतः इसलिए गिर रहा है क्योंकि ऊँची ब्याज दर अपेक्षाएँ, मजबूत डॉलर और मुनाफावसूली अल्पकाल में उसके सुरक्षित निवेश आकर्षण पर भारी पड़ रहे हैं।
  - But the long-term case for gold remains connected to **inflation hedging, crisis protection, reserve diversification, and investor psychology**.  
किंतु दीर्घकाल में सोने का महत्व अब भी महंगाई से सुरक्षा, संकट-रक्षा, रिज़र्व विविधीकरण और निवेशक मनोविज्ञान से जुड़ा हुआ है।
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# Ex-rapper Balen Shah, 35, to take oath as Nepal PM today

Vishant.Agarwala  
@timesofindia.com

Balendra “Balen” Shah, 35, is set to take oath as Nepal’s prime minister on Friday, coinciding with Ram Navami as observed in the Himalayan country. It would put one of the world’s youngest PMs in office and mark a dramatic rise for the rapper-turned-politician who forged his political career taking on Singha Durbar, the Himalayan nation’s seat of power.

Shah, the former Kathmandu mayor who repeatedly clashed with Singha Durbar and cast it as the symbol of the city’s political frustrations, is set to govern from the same complex. It’s a striking turn for a politician who built his profile by accusing the federal estab-

## PRIME MINISTERS BY AGE OF 40

Person	Country	Age at that time
William Pitt the Younger	UK	24.6 (1783)
Sebastian Kurz*	Austria	31.3 (2017)
Waldemar Pawlak	Poland	32.8 (1992)
Sanna Marin	Finland	34.1 (2019)
Oleksiy Honcharuk	Ukraine	35.2 (2019)
Benazir Bhutto	Pakistan	35.5 (1988)
Zhan Videnov	Bulgaria	35.9 (1995)
Philip Dimitrov	Bulgaria	36.6 (1991)
Kristrun Frostadottir	Iceland	36.6 (2024)
Chris Watson	Australia	37.1 (1904)
Jacinda Ardern	New Zealand	37.3 (2017)
Simon Harris#	Ireland	37.5 (2024)
Paetongtarn Shinawatra	Thailand	38 (2024)
Juri Ratas	Estonia	38.4 (2016)
Leo Varadkar#	Ireland	38.4 (2017)
Sergey Stanishev	Bulgaria	39.3 (2005)
Joseph Clark	Canada	40 (1979)

\* Chancellor, equivalent to PM, # Taoiseach, equivalent to PM

lishment of obstructing Kathmandu’s right to govern itself.

Few episodes captured the conflict as starkly as Shah’s Sept 2023 post after police stopped a Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) vehicle carrying his wife on a public holiday. Shah wrote: “...if any of our KMC vehicles are stopped by the govt (in future), I will set Singha Durbar on fire.” He later deleted the post, but the remark captured the confrontational style that made him a national figure. In Sept 2025, when Singha Durbar was indeed set on fire during the Gen Z uprising, the KP Sharma Oli govt accused KMC of not sending firefighters on time. Shah rejected the charge.

But his confrontations have extended beyond Singha Durbar. During the “Adipur-

ush” row in June 2023—a dialogue in the film refers to Sita as the “daughter of India”, a reference many in Nepal protested as they believe Sita was born in that country’s Janakpur—Shah banned the screening of Indian films in Kathmandu and refused to comply with a court order. That defiance strengthened his image among supporters, while critics saw in it the same impulsiveness that could become a liability in higher office.

That is why Shah’s move to the federal complex is more than a political promotion. “Ultimately, his real test will not be in his decisions, but in his perspective... Will he weaken institutions in the charm of popularity, or strengthen institutions to make his popularity enduring?” a columnist wrote.



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# Word of the day

## **Clandestine:**

conducted with or marked by hidden aims or methods

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**Synonyms:** secret, covert, private

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**Usage:** *They held a clandestine meeting late at night.*

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**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/clandestine

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**International Phonetic**

**Alphabet:** /klændestɪn/

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# Word of the day

## **Beatific:**

experiencing or bestowing celestial joy

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**Synonyms:** serene, cheerful, ecstatic

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**Usage:** *She gave a beatific smile after hearing the good news.*

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**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/beatific

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**International Phonetic**

**Alphabet:** /bi:ətɪfɪk/

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Thank you 😊