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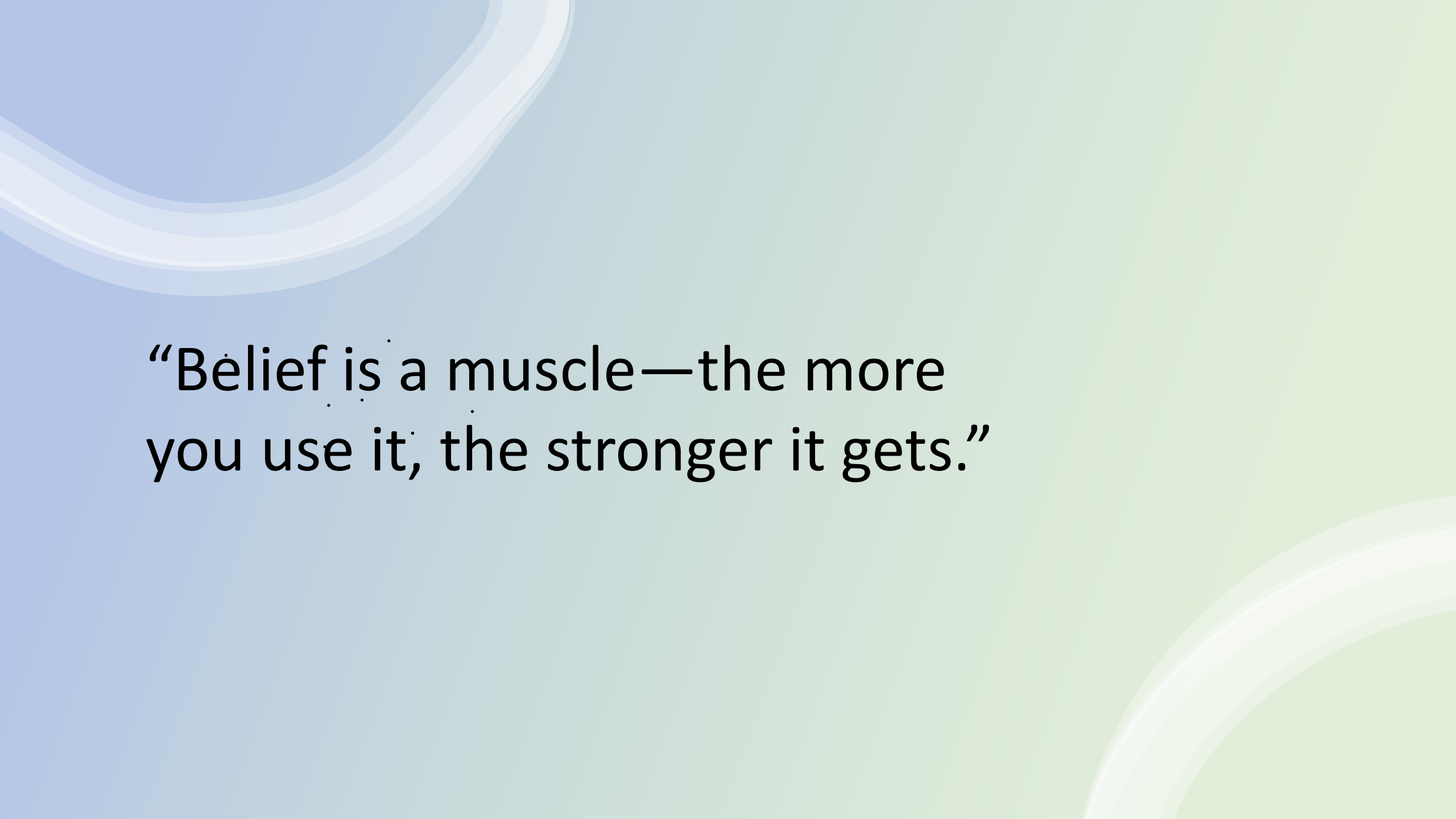


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“Belief is a muscle—the more
you use it, the stronger it gets.”

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STRATEGIC AUTONOMY
India faces major test on Chabahar
With U.S. sanctions waver ending April 28, India may have to choose between ending the 23-year-old project or facing sanctions
NEWS PAGE 8



INSIDE



N.T. launches 3rd synchronised Nilgiri Tahr study
BENGALU
The Tamil Nadu Forest Department has commenced the third synchronised survey of the Nilgiri Tahr. The annual exercise plays a crucial role in long-term conservation planning for Tamil Nadu's state animal. **» PAGE 7**



'Real contest in Bengal between Cong and BJP'
BIDHAR
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said that the electoral contest in West Bengal was between the BJP and his party, and not the Trinamool Congress, as he joined the party's campaign in the state. **» PAGE 4**

Afghans who helped U.S. can return: Taliban
KABUL
The Taliban government said on Saturday that Afghans who had to quit leaving requests over their collaboration with U.S. forces during the war, risky return home "with full confidence". **» PAGE 12**

Kalakkattuacheries
NEW DELHI
An advisory by the Centre about the security situation in Israel, amid the ongoing war in West Asia, has come into focus after Israel flew around 240 individuals from Mizoram to Te Aviv on Thursday as part of the "Operation Wings of Dawns", sanctioned by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israel flies out 240 from Mizoram amid war scare

Kalakkattuacheries
NEW DELHI
An advisory by the Centre about the security situation in Israel, amid the ongoing war in West Asia, has come into focus after Israel flew around 240 individuals from Mizoram to Te Aviv on Thursday as part of the "Operation Wings of Dawns", sanctioned by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Through members of the Israel-Mizoram community have been taken to Israel on earlier occasions, this is the first time that such a large number of them are being flown against the backdrop of the regional war. The departure of the individuals from Mizoram has brought attention to the fact that since February 28, when the U.S.-Israeli

war against Iran started, the Centre has maintained a travel advisory for Indian nationals in Israel, citing the "prevailing security situation in the region", indicating the high risk condition persisting in the country that has faced multiple attacks from Iran as well as Lebanon's pro-Iran militia Hezbollah. The Jewish Agency for

Peace march



Protesters from the Hindu Bodhi Society take out a peace walk on the occasion of Bodhi Week (Bodhi Jayanti) in Bengaluru on Saturday. **»**

U.S. envoys not to travel to Pakistan, says Trump

'Too much work,' says the U.S. President on talks as Iranian FM wraps up Islamabad visit

Araghchi meets Pakistan's leaders and thanks them for their efforts to mediate end of the war

Pakistan stresses importance of dialogue, says it would act as a bridge to 'convey' Iran proposals

APRICE, FRANCE
U.S. President Donald Trump said on Saturday he had ordered his envoys not to travel to Pakistan to continue talks with Iranian officials on ending the war. "I just cancelled the trip of my representatives going to Islamabad, Pakistan, to meet with the Iranians. Too much time wasted on travelling, too much work involved, there is tremendous infighting and confusion within their leadership." Nobody knows who is in charge, including them. Also, we have all the cards, they have none. If they want to talk, all they have to do is call". Mr. Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social.

The decision came as Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrapped up a visit to Islamabad. Mr. Araghchi met Field Marshal Asim Mianji, Pakistan's Army chief and a key figure in the resolution of the war, as well as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. "Principled positions" Mr. Araghchi, according to an Iranian statement, thanked Pakistan for its efforts but "emphasised our country's principled positions regarding the latest developments related to the ceasefire and the complete end of the imposed war against Iran". Mr. Dar posted on social media that the meeting with the Iranian delegation lasted around two hours and that Iranian ambassador "the importance of dialogue and diplomacy".

U.S. sanctions Chinese entities for Iran oil trade

WASHINGTON
The U.S. administration has imposed sanctions on Chinese companies for purchases of Iranian crude oil and other petroleum products. Around 40 Chinese shipping companies and vessels that operate as part of Iran's 'shadow fleet' have also been sanctioned under the Donald Trump administration. **» PAGE 13**

and Israel's leaders. But Mohammed Rezaei, the head of the parliamentary bloc for Hezbollah, urged the Lebanese government to withdraw from direct talks with Israel and started that a lasting peace deal of the kind sought by Trump "will not be easy to enjoy Lebanon's national consensus". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to destroy Hezbollah, said: "We have started a process to reach a historic peace between Israel and Lebanon, and it's clear to us that Hezbollah is trying to sabotage this."

On Thursday, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a three-week ceasefire, extension in Lebanon and spoke in glowing terms of peace prospects for the country after meeting with Israeli and Lebanese envoys. He voiced hope for a three-way meeting with Lebanon

response from Iran's pro-sectarian forces. "Since the last round of talks, efforts to bring the two sides back to the table have hit an impasse, with Iran refusing to return as long as a U.S. naval blockade on its ports remains in place. The Biden administration has imposed a de

AAP to seek action against seven RS MPs for defilement

JALPAIG, WEST BENGAL
NEW DELHI
The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday said it would seek the disqualification of seven Rajya Sabha members who broke away from the party, calling the "move unconstitutional and illegal".

More than 20 people were injured after protesters attempting to march to the official residence of Manipur Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday. The protesters were seeking the arrest of those involved in the April 7 bomb attack that killed two children in Bishupnagar district.

March to Manipur CM's house foiled; 22 injured

The protesters were seeking the arrest of those involved in the April 7 bomb attack that killed two children in Bishupnagar district. The protesters, mobilised by the Imphal Valley based Coordinating Committee on Manipur Injustice (CCMI), took out processions from four districts in a bid to converge at the Chief Minister's residence in Imphal. But the march was thwarted about two kilometres from Mr. Naidu's residence by security personnel. The protesters were injured in the scuffle at Taluk village. People in the Naga-majority district have been protesting the traction of the chief minister allegedly behind attacks on Naga civilians.

Israel flies out 240 from Mizoram amid war scare

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

An advisory by the Centre about the security situation in Israel, amid the ongoing war in West Asia, has come into focus after Israel flew around 240 individuals from Mizoram to Tel Aviv on Thursday as part of its 'Operation Wings of Dawn', sanctioned by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Though members of the Bnei Menashe community have been taken to Israel on earlier occasions, this is the first time that such a large number of them are being flown against the backdrop of the regional war.

The departure of the individuals from Mizoram has brought attention to the fact that since February 28, when the U.S.-Israel



Fresh start: A member of the Bnei Menashe community reacts upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv on April 23. AFP

war against Iran started, the Centre has maintained a travel advisory for Indian nationals in Israel pointing at the "prevailing security situation in the region", indicating the high risk condition persisting in the country that has faced missile attacks from Iran as well as Lebanon's pro-Iran militia Hezbollah.

The Jewish Agency for

Israel (JAFI) said Thursday's flight from New Delhi carried the first of three batches of individuals from the Bnei Menashe community, who are generally found in Churachandpur of Manipur and in areas along the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram. The rest of the community members are expected to leave in the coming days.

In a statement, JAFI said: "The flight included dozens of young families, who will initially move into absorption centres in Nof HaGalil, where they will also reunite with relatives who made 'aliyah' (religious immigration) in previous years." The total number of such individuals is expected to be around 600, it added.

In response to *The Hindu's* questions, an official maintained that India did not provide any help to facilitate the flight and said, "India's responsibility is to ensure that our citizens are not human-trafficked while travelling abroad and that apart, we cannot stop anyone from undertaking legal migration."

Official sources said that while India's advisory on the prevailing security risk in Israel exists, Israeli agen-

cies managed to proceed with the operation, as it is a religious process that they have established.

According to *The Jerusalem Post* report, the new arrivals would be settled in Kiryat Yam, a suburb near Haifa.

The group arrived at Ben Gurion Airport under an initiative spearheaded by the Aliyah and Integration Ministry and JAFI. They are expected to be settled in the northern part of Israel, which has been in recent months targeted by the Hezbollah. Operation Wings of Dawn is the result of a decision made by Mr. Netanyahu, Minister of Aliyah and Integration, Ofir Sofer, and Minister of Finance, Bezalel Smotrich, to complete the immigration of the rest of the Bnei Menashe community from Mizoram and Manipur.

- Israel flew ~240 members of the Bnei Menashe community from Mizoram to Tel Aviv under 'Operation Wings of Dawn'
- इज़राइल ने 'ऑपरेशन विंग्स ऑफ़ डॉन' के तहत मिज़ोरम से ~240 बनेई मनाशे सदस्यों को तेल अवीव भेजा
- India's Centre issued an advisory on the prevailing security risk for Indian nationals in Israel
- भारत के केंद्र ने इज़राइल में भारतीय नागरिकों के लिए सुरक्षा सलाह जारी की
- This is the largest single evacuation of Bnei Menashe during an active regional war
- यह एक सक्रिय क्षेत्रीय युद्ध के दौरान बनेई मनाशे का सबसे बड़ा एकल निकास है
- Israel faces missile attacks from Iran and Hezbollah; security situation is high-risk
- इज़राइल पर ईरान और हिज़बुल्लाह के मिसाइल हमले; सुरक्षा स्थिति उच्च जोखिम वाली है
- Raises questions about India's diplomatic stance and role in the diaspora's migration
- भारत की राजनयिक स्थिति और प्रवासी समुदाय के पलायन में भूमिका पर सवाल उठता है

- The **Bnei Menashe** ("Sons of Manasseh") are a community from Northeast India (mainly Mizoram and Manipur) who believe they are descendants of one of the **Ten Lost Tribes of Israel**
- **बनेई मनाशे** ("मनश्शे के पुत्र") उत्तर-पूर्व भारत (मुख्यतः मिज़ोरम और मणिपुर) का समुदाय है जो मानता है कि वे **इज़राइल की दस खोई हुई जनजातियों** में से एक के वंशज हैं
- **Aliyah** = Religious immigration of Jewish people (or recognized communities) to Israel — it is a legal right under Israel's **Law of Return**
- **अलियाह** = यहूदी लोगों (या मान्यता प्राप्त समुदायों) का इज़राइल में धार्मिक आव्रजन — यह इज़राइल के **वापसी के कानून** के तहत एक कानूनी अधिकार है
- Amid the ongoing Iran-Israel war (since Feb 28, US-Israel war on Iran began), Israel is still bringing in these communities, treating it as a religious/national priority
- चल रहे ईरान-इज़राइल युद्ध के बीच भी (28 फरवरी से यूएस-इज़राइल युद्ध शुरू), इज़राइल इन समुदायों को ला रहा है, इसे धार्मिक/राष्ट्रीय प्राथमिकता मान रहा है
- India said it did not facilitate the flight; India's job is to prevent human trafficking and allow legal migration
- भारत ने कहा कि उसने उड़ान को सुविधा नहीं दी; भारत की जिम्मेदारी मानव तस्करी रोकना और वैध प्रवास की अनुमति देना है

Player	Role
Bnei Menashe community	Emigrants; claim descent from Tribe of Manasseh
JAFI (Jewish Agency for Israel)	Coordinated the flight; NGO facilitating Aliyah
Benjamin Netanyahu	Israeli PM who sanctioned the operation
Ofir Sofer	Israel's Minister of Aliyah and Integration
Bezalel Smotrich	Israel's Finance Minister
India's Centre	Issued travel advisory; stated non-facilitation
Hezbollah	Lebanon-based pro-Iran militia targeting northern Israel

- **JAFI (यहूदी एजेंसी फॉर इज़राइल):** एक गैर-सरकारी संस्था जो अलियाह (यहूदी वापसी) को सुविधाजनक बनाती है
- **हिज़बुल्लाह:** लेबनान आधारित ईरान समर्थित मिलिशिया, उत्तरी इज़राइल को निशाना बनाता है

History / इतिहास

- **Ten Lost Tribes of Israel:** After Assyrian conquest (~722 BCE), ten of twelve tribes of Israel scattered globally; Bnei Menashe claims descent from Tribe of **Manasseh**
- **इज़राइल की दस खोई हुई जनजातियाँ:** अशशूरी विजय (~722 ईसा पूर्व) के बाद दस जनजातियाँ बिखर गईं; बनेई मनाशे **मनश्शे जनजाति** के वंशज होने का दावा करते हैं
- **Zionism** (19th century movement): For the return of Jewish people to their ancestral homeland
- **ज़ायोनीवाद** (19वीं सदी का आंदोलन): यहूदी लोगों की अपनी पैतृक मातृभूमि में वापसी के लिए
- Israel established in **1948**; recognised by India in **1950**
- इज़राइल **1948** में स्थापित; भारत द्वारा **1950** में मान्यता दी गई

Geography / भूगोल

- **Mizoram:** Shares border with Myanmar (east) and Bangladesh (west); capital — **Aizawl**
- **मिज़ोरम:** म्यांमार (पूर्व) और बांग्लादेश (पश्चिम) से सीमा; राजधानी — **आइजोल**
- **Churachandpur:** District in southern Manipur; predominantly Kuki-Zo tribal area
- **चुराचंदपुर:** दक्षिणी मणिपुर का जिला; मुख्यतः कुकी-ज़ो आदिवासी क्षेत्र
- **Haifa:** Port city in northern Israel on the **Mediterranean Sea**; important strategic and industrial centre
- **हाइफा:** उत्तरी इज़राइल में **भूमध्य सागर** पर बंदरगाह शहर; महत्वपूर्ण रणनीतिक और औद्योगिक केंद्र
- **Ben Gurion Airport:** Israel's main international airport near **Tel Aviv**
- **बेन गुरियन एयरपोर्ट:** तेल अवीव के पास इज़राइल का मुख्य अंतर्राष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डा

Consider the following statements about the Bnei Menashe community: बनेई मनाशे समुदाय के बारे में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. They are primarily found in Mizoram and Manipur along the India-Myanmar border.
2. Israel's Law of Return (1950) gives them the legal right to immigrate to Israel.
3. The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) is a government body of the Israeli state.
4. Aliyah refers to the economic migration of Jewish people to Western countries.

IN BRIEF



Use knowledge as a tool, be job creators: Vice-President

Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan on Saturday called upon the youth to use their knowledge as a tool for progress and take on the role of job creators and nation builders. "The true measure of education lies in its application for the betterment of society, innovation and ethical values," Mr. Radhakrishnan said. The Vice President was addressing the 35th convocation ceremony of Rajabhat University in Jaipur in the presence of its Chancellor and Governor, Haribhai Bagde. He urged the graduates to contribute meaningfully to society, uphold compassion, respect diversity, and work towards the greater good.

It was unwarranted to quote me: ex-Army chief Naravane

Former Army chief General Manoj Naravane has come out with two books since his unpublicised mission, *Four Stars of Deceit*, caused a controversy earlier this year and looking back, he said it was "not warranted" to unnecessarily quote and drag him into the limelight. The General, in an interview, said that he has moved on since then, having written two books and a third to be released soon. "As far as I am concerned, the matter ended there, and I have moved on," he said.

SC surprised on currency notes destroyed by rodents

The Supreme Court has expressed surprise that currency notes, which were allegedly infected from the possession of an accused in a corruption case lodged in Bihar, were destroyed by rodents. A bench of Justices J.R. Pawbhada and K.V. Viswanathan, said, "We wonder how many such currency notes were destroyed in this manner and how many such notes are still in circulation, as they are not kept in a safe place. It's a huge revenue loss for the State." The issue cropped up before the bench while hearing a plea filed by a woman who was serving as a child development programme officer in 2014 and was arrested and sentenced to four years in prison for her involvement in a corruption case.

Avalanche hits highway to Ladakh, vehicles stranded

A snow avalanche on Saturday hit the Kailash-Ladakh National Highway (NH-1) and left many vehicles stranded. One driver was reportedly injured after the avalanche. Snow avalanches started sliding into a major avalanche in the afternoon at Shitwan Nallah, which connects Narayang to the Koshule Valley with Deras in Ladakh. Several vehicles were hit by the avalanche and forced the closure of traffic on the highway. A rescue and relief operation has been launched. "Commuters stuck on the highway were shifted to safer locations and vehicles are being retrieved," officials said. The area has seen fresh snowfall in recent times.

SUDOKU

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Count the vulnerable: Census chief

Registrar-General Mritunjay Kumar Narayan asks officials to ensure that such sections of people, including those affected by communal, political and social tensions, are counted as any omission may lead to litigation in future, information on demolition and new constructions is he noted, he adds

Vishala Shakh
NEW DELHI

The Registrar-General and Census Commissioner, Mritunjay Kumar Narayan, has asked the state directors to identify and prepare a list of villages, habitats and sections of the population vulnerable to "threat, intimidation or interference" during the on-going Census exercise.

The Commissioner asked the States to avoid enumerators who may be biased towards specific social or religious communities as far as possible as their appointment for fieldwork could prove counter-productive.

In an April 20 communication to the Directorate of Census Operations, Mr. Narayan asked officials to ensure that vulnerable sections of people, which include those affected by communal, political, and social tensions, are counted as any omission may lead to litigation in future.

Earlier this week, three members of a family were



Counting on: The States are divided in award enumerators who may be biased towards any community, caste, caste status.

arrested in Dhankanal, Odisha, for allegedly attacking four teachers when they went to the house for Census fieldwork.

A central support helpline, 1855, for queries and guidance related to the first phase of the Census House Listing Operations (HLO), has been launched. The Census is being conducted in two phases — HLO and Population Enumeration.

The first phase will be conducted from April 1 to September 30 in phases for all States. The second phase, which will also count castes, will be carried out in February 2027. This is the first digital Census and the first to allow self-enumeration.

Risk assessment

The charge officers, who are in charge of field operations, have been asked to prepare the list by touring sites and areas, and in consultation with the local village officials, police or other development officials.

"They should identify

now started living in villages that were uninhabited during the previous Census. Then they were to be enumerated without omission.

"At the same time, the information about the areas where demolition has taken place on new residential construction should have come up or otherwise major construction activities such as road works, irrigation dams, etc. are in operation should also be available. Special efforts are required to enumerate people residing in such areas," the letter said.

Teachers on duty
Elaborating on the role of enumerators, the letter stated that the Right to Education (RTE) Act has specifically allowed the use of teachers in Census activity and they may be appointed enumerators or supervisors in the first preference.

"In case of shortage of teachers, other officials of the government and local bodies are to be appointed as Census personnel. The

officials appointed should preferably be from the local area and should be familiar with local conditions. However, if there is a situation on ground which suggests that a local would act in a biased manner and this would affect the Census, the PCD (Principal Charge Officer) should appoint persons from outside the area. However, program leaders, persons with severe chronic ailments, severe disabilities, persons below matriculate, persons biased towards specific social/religious communities, etc., may be avoided to the extent possible as appointing them for fieldwork would be difficult counter-productive," it said. Pointing out that the details once recorded cannot be altered at a later stage, he said that in the past, some of the District Magistrates had approached the Census organization with the plea that the Census enumeration had not been carried out properly in their districts and that the situation may be rectified.

No restriction on women's entry into mosques to offer namaz, AIMPLB informs Supreme Court

Zina Ull Sahab
NEW DELHI

In a significant upshot for Muslim women seeking permission to offer prayers inside mosques, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has advised before the Supreme Court that there is no restriction in Islam on women entering mosques to offer namaz.

Senior advocate M.R. Shamshad, appearing for the Board, made the submission before a nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant hearing the Shabir-muhammad reference case, with related petitions on women's entry into mosques.

The couple had requested the Mohammed Jama Masjid in Pune to allow women entry to offer prayers. However, the request was denied following which Ms. Yaseen approached the Supreme Court seeking relief under the writ of mandamus.

Broad agreement
In the ongoing case, Mr. Shamshad said that Islamic practice does not bar women from entering mosques, though their participation in congregational prayers is not mandatory.

Asked by the Chief Justice of India on whether the injunctions issued to enter a mosque, Mr. Shamshad said there was broad agreement across Islamic denominations on this point.

"The Prophet himself said, 'Don't stop women

from entering mosques. There is clarity on this,' he said.

The senior advocate pointed out that while it is essential for men to attend congregational prayers in the mosque, women had a choice. They were exempted, not prohibited. "For a woman, it is preferable that she stays at home and prays, and she gets the same religious reward. But if a woman wants to come, she can come," he said.

"Since there is no sanction sanctions inside the mosque, nobody can insist to stand at a particular place or, for that matter, to be the first to lead the namaz," he said. However, he pointed out that there is a certain procedure and "certain discipline that has

to be followed" inside the premises of a mosque.

No insistence
Mr. Shamshad said that while Islam does not bar women from visiting mosques, they cannot insist on entering through the main door or demand the renovation of physical barriers separating men and women inside mosques.

There are separate halls for men and women in Islamic places of pilgrimage at Mecca, and Medina in Saudi Arabia. Wiggins participated in five daily prayers besides the Friday prayers. They perform Hajj in India, mosques are designed keeping in mind on men with almost no attention paid to women worshippers.

Cong. attacks RSS, Modi over Madhav's comments on India-U.S. ties

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, citing a recent statement by former BJP general secretary and key BJP functionary Ram Madhav on India-United States relations, took aim at the saffron outfit saying it has become "Rashtra Surber Sangh". In a social tweet on Saturday, Mr. Gandhi said Mr. Madhav had revealed the BJP's "fake nationalism and the nature of servitude to the

"Rashtra Surber Sangh. Fake nationalism in Nagpur. Pure servility in the USA. Ram Madhav has only revealed Sangh's true nature," Mr. Gandhi posted on X.

After his video came out that India agreed to stop buying oil from Iran and Russia, Mr. Madhav issued an apology, and said his statement was incorrect. "What I said was wrong, India did not agree to stopping import of oil from Russia anytime. Also it vigorously protested 80% tariff imposition. I was trying to make a limited counterpoint to the other parties, but factually incorrect. My apologies," Mr. Madhav said.

Earlier, the RSS leader had said the decision not to buy oil from Iran and Russia had invited criticism from the Opposition.

"We agreed to a 50% in tariff. Agreed means we did not say anything. We maintain our patience. 50% tariffs are agreed. Today, in the new trade deal also we agreed for 10% tariffs, higher than what is used to be. I mean, average tariff," Mr. Madhav had said earlier.

Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal, citing Mr. Madhav's comments, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had lost his authority to continue in the post. "There was once a time when the U.S. 'Plect was in the Bay of Bengal, and India didn't have access to the sea today, where a compromised PM has handed over India's sovereignty to the U.S.," Mr. Venugopal said.

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A British produced and Portuguese directed film with an Assam-born actor in the lead role was screened at the Guadalajara International Film Festival in Mexico on Friday.

A *Teacher's Gift* was part of the Premium category section, one of the festival's prominent competition strands, regarded as one of the leading cinematic events in the world.

Directed by Artur Ribeiro, the film is produced by a duo of Assam, India, and Portugal. It features an ensemble cast, including Anjali Paul, Thiruvananthapuram-based actor Rajdeep Choudhary, and born in Silchar in southern Assam, the lead actor and writer of the film.

Increasing visibility
Mr. Choudhary had previously appeared in Hindi films such as *Jark & Jark* and *Chand* on his journey from Northeast India to the U.K. adds a per-

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

sonal dimension to the film's growing global presence, reflecting the increasing visibility of regional voices in contemporary cinema.

Before its selection in Guadalajara, *Teacher's Gift* had a steady presence across the international festival circuit, with official selections at Tribeca Film Festival, London, the International Film Festival of India, and the BRIS Prime Film Festival.

A *Teacher's Gift* has been selected for the restricted View Film Festival, a BIFA-qualifying festival, making it eligible for consideration at the British Independent Film Awards, 2026. In addition, it was included in the WAFFS Raaz Film market, connecting it with industry professionals and expanding its reach within global networks.

"Bringing A Teacher's Gift to an international audience at Guadalajara is a deeply meaningful moment for me. The story is rooted in personal experience, and no one I travel across cultures and connects with diverse audiences is both humbling and encouraging," Mr. Choudhary said.

No restriction on women's entry into mosques to offer namaz, AIMPLB informs Supreme Court

Ziya Us Salam

NEW DELHI

In a significant upshot for Muslim women seeking permission to offer prayers inside mosques, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has admitted before the Supreme Court that there is no restriction in Islam on women entering mosques to offer namaz.

Senior advocate M.R. Shamshad, appearing for the Board, made the submission before a nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant hearing the Sabarimala reference case, with related petitions on women's entry into mosques tagged to the case as they too involve constitutional



questions with respect to Articles 25 and 26.

The question of the right of women to enter mosques stemmed from a PIL petition filed in March 2019 by a Pune-based couple, Yasmeen Zuber Ahmad and her husband, Zuber Ahmad Nazir Ahmad Peerzade.

The couple had requested the Mohmidiya Jama Masjid in Pune to allow wo-

men entry to offer prayers. However, the request was denied following which Ms. Yasmeen approached the Supreme Court seeking relief under the writ of mandamus.

Broad agreement

In the ongoing case, Mr. Shamshad said Islamic practice does not bar women from entering mosques, though their participation in congregational prayers is not mandatory.

Asked by the Chief Justice of India on whether women were allowed to enter a mosque, Mr. Shamshad said there was broad agreement across Islamic denominations on this point.

"The Prophet himself said, 'Don't stop women

coming to the mosque.' There is clarity on this," he said.

The senior advocate pointed out that while it is essential for men to attend congregational prayers in the mosque, women had a choice. They were exempted, not prohibited. "For a woman, it is preferable that she stays at home and prays, and she gets the same religious reward. But if a woman wants to come, she can come," he said.

"Since there is no sanctum sanctorum inside the mosque, nobody can insist to stand at a particular place or, for that matter, to be the first to lead the namaz," he said. However, he pointed out that there is a certain procedure and "certain discipline that has

to be followed" inside the premises of a mosque.

No insistence

Mr. Shamshad said that while Islam does not bar women from visiting mosques, they cannot insist on entering through the main door or demand the removal of physical barriers separating men and women inside mosques.

There are separate halls for men and women in Islamic places of pilgrimage at Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. Women participate in five daily prayers besides the Friday prayers. They perform Haj too. In India, mosques are designed keeping in mind only men with almost no attention paid to women worshippers.

- **AIMPLB** admitted before the Supreme Court that Islam places **no restriction** on women entering mosques to offer namaz
- **AIMPLB** ने सर्वोच्च न्यायालय में स्वीकार किया कि इस्लाम में महिलाओं के नमाज़ के लिए मस्जिद में प्रवेश पर **कोई प्रतिबंध नहीं है**
- The submission was made before a **nine-judge Constitution Bench** headed by CJI **Surya Kant**
- यह बयान CJI **सूर्यकांत** की अध्यक्षता में **नौ-न्यायाधीश संविधान पीठ** के सामने दिया गया
- Case is linked to the **Sabarimala reference case** — which concerns women's religious entry rights broadly
- यह मामला **सबरीमाला संदर्भ मामले** से जुड़ा है — जो महिलाओं के धार्मिक प्रवेश अधिकारों से व्यापक रूप से संबंधित है
- The PIL was filed in **March 2019** by a Pune-based couple seeking entry into **Mohmidiya Jama Masjid, Pune**
- PIL **मार्च 2019** में एक पुणे दंपति द्वारा **मोहमिदिया जामा मस्जिद**, पुणे में प्रवेश हेतु दायर की गई थी
- Raises critical questions on **Articles 25 and 26** — religious freedom vs. gender equality
- **अनुच्छेद 25 और 26** पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न उठाता है — धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता बनाम लैंगिक समानता

- A Muslim couple from Pune went to court saying they were denied entry into a mosque for women to pray; they asked the Supreme Court to order the mosque to allow women
- पुणे के एक मुस्लिम दंपति ने अदालत में कहा कि महिलाओं को नमाज़ के लिए मस्जिद में प्रवेश से रोका गया; उन्होंने सर्वोच्च न्यायालय से मस्जिद को महिलाओं को अनुमति देने का आदेश मांगा
- The Supreme Court is hearing this along with the bigger Sabarimala case — which asks: can religious institutions restrict women's entry?
- सर्वोच्च न्यायालय इसे सबरीमाला के बड़े मामले के साथ सुन रहा है — जो पूछता है: क्या धार्मिक संस्थाएं महिलाओं के प्रवेश पर रोक लगा सकती हैं?
- AIMPLB (the main Islamic law body in India) told the court Islam does not ban women from mosques — but women also cannot demand to enter through the main door or remove barriers
- AIMPLB (भारत में मुख्य इस्लामी कानून निकाय) ने कोर्ट को बताया — इस्लाम महिलाओं पर मस्जिद में प्रतिबंध नहीं लगाता; लेकिन महिलाएं मुख्य द्वार से प्रवेश या अवरोध हटाने की मांग भी नहीं कर सकतीं
- This is a nuanced case at the intersection of **religion, gender rights, and constitutional law**
- यह धर्म, लैंगिक अधिकारों और संवैधानिक कानून के संगम पर एक सूक्ष्म मामला है

D1. What Happened? / क्या हुआ?

- **AIMPLB's senior advocate M.R. Shamshad** submitted before Supreme Court: Islam does not bar women from entering mosques
- **AIMPLB के वरिष्ठ अधिवक्ता M.R. शमशाद** ने सर्वोच्च न्यायालय में प्रस्तुत किया: इस्लाम महिलाओं को मस्जिद में प्रवेश से नहीं रोकता
- However, he added: women participation in **congregational (Jama'at) prayers is not mandatory** — it is preferable for women to pray at home; they get the same religious reward
- लेकिन उन्होंने कहा: **सामूहिक नमाज़** में महिलाओं की भागीदारी अनिवार्य नहीं है; महिलाओं का घर पर नमाज़ पढ़ना बेहतर है; उन्हें समान धार्मिक पुण्य मिलता है
- Women **cannot insist** on entering through the main door or demand removal of barriers (separation walls) between men and women inside mosques
- महिलाएं मुख्य द्वार से प्रवेश की **जिद नहीं कर सकतीं** और न ही मस्जिद के भीतर पुरुषों-महिलाओं को अलग करने वाली बाधाएं हटाने की मांग कर सकती हैं
- Case is being heard by a **9-judge Constitution Bench** (the largest bench type, signifying grave constitutional importance)
- मामला **9-न्यायाधीश संविधान पीठ** (सबसे बड़ी पीठ; गंभीर संवैधानिक महत्व) द्वारा सुना जा रहा है

- Can courts direct a mosque (religious institution) to allow women entry? —
Constitutional question
- क्या अदालतें मस्जिद (धार्मिक संस्था) को महिलाओं को प्रवेश देने का निर्देश दे सकती हैं? — **संवैधानिक प्रश्न**
- **Article 25:** Right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion (subject to public order, morality, health)
- **अनुच्छेद 25:** स्वतंत्र रूप से धर्म को मानने, आचरण करने और प्रचार करने का अधिकार (लोक व्यवस्था, नैतिकता, स्वास्थ्य के अधीन)
- **Article 26:** Right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion
- **अनुच्छेद 26:** धार्मिक संप्रदायों को अपने धर्म-संबंधी मामलों का प्रबंधन करने का अधिकार
- **Tension:** Does Article 26 (autonomy of mosque) override Article 25 (woman's right to practice religion)?
- **तनाव:** क्या अनुच्छेद 26 (मस्जिद की स्वायत्तता) अनुच्छेद 25 (महिला का धर्म पालन करने का अधिकार) पर भारी पड़ता है?

- **Sabarimala Case (2018):** SC held that women aged 10–50 cannot be barred from Sabarimala temple (Kerala); 5-judge bench gave split verdict; referred larger questions to 9-judge bench
- **सबरीमाला मामला (2018):** SC ने कहा 10–50 आयु की महिलाओं को सबरीमाला मंदिर से नहीं रोका जा सकता; 5-न्यायाधीश पीठ ने विभाजित फैसला दिया; बड़े प्रश्न 9-न्यायाधीश पीठ को भेजे
- The 9-judge bench is now deciding: **Can courts interfere in religious practices that discriminate based on gender?**
- 9-न्यायाधीश पीठ अब तय कर रही है: **क्या अदालतें उन धार्मिक प्रथाओं में हस्तक्षेप कर सकती हैं जो लिंग के आधार पर भेदभाव करती हैं?**
- This mosque case has been **tagged** to the Sabarimala reference as it involves the same constitutional questions
- यह मस्जिद मामला सबरीमाला संदर्भ से **जोड़ा गया** है क्योंकि इसमें वही संवैधानिक प्रश्न हैं

D5. Why Important for India? / भारत के लिए क्यों महत्वपूर्ण?

- Touches the fundamental debate: **Essential Religious Practices (ERP) doctrine** — courts only protect what is "essential" to a religion; who decides what is "essential"?
- मूल बहस को छूता है: **अनिवार्य धार्मिक प्रथाएं (ERP) सिद्धांत** — न्यायालय केवल उसी की रक्षा करते हैं जो धर्म के लिए "अनिवार्य" है; "अनिवार्य" क्या है यह कौन तय करता है?
- Sets precedent for women's entry into **dargahs, temples, churches, synagogues** etc.
- दरगाह, मंदिर, चर्च, सभागृह आदि में महिलाओं के प्रवेश पर मिसाल स्थापित करता है
- Intersects with **gender equality (Article 14, 15)** and **right to religion (Articles 25–28)**
- लैंगिक समानता (अनुच्छेद 14, 15) और धर्म का अधिकार (अनुच्छेद 25–28) से जुड़ता है

- **ERP (Essential Religious Practices) Doctrine:** Established in **Commissioner v. LT Swamiar (1954)**; courts will only protect practices that are "essential" to a religion, not peripheral ones
- **ERP सिद्धांत: कमिश्नर बनाम LT स्वामियार (1954)** में स्थापित; अदालतें केवल उन प्रथाओं की रक्षा करती हैं जो धर्म के लिए "अनिवार्य" हैं
- **Key cases on religious freedom in India:**
 - Shirur Mutt Case (1954) — defined "religion" broadly
 - Sabarimala (2018) — women's entry
 - Triple Talaq (2017) — instant talaq unconstitutional
 - Hijab case (Karnataka HC 2022) — upheld ban on hijab in classrooms
- **भारत में धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता के प्रमुख मामले:** शिरूर मठ (1954), सबरीमाला (2018), तीन तलाक (2017), हिजाब मामला (2022)
- **Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025:** Passed by Parliament; allows non-Muslim members in Waqf Boards; removes self-declaration of Waqf; controversial
- **वक्फ (संशोधन) अधिनियम 2025:** संसद द्वारा पारित; वक्फ बोर्डों में गैर-मुस्लिम सदस्यों की अनुमति; स्व-घोषणा वक्फ हटाया; विवादास्पद
- **Constitutional Morality vs. Popular Morality:** Concept used by SC in Sabarimala — Constitutional morality (values of Constitution) must prevail over popular morality (social customs)
- **संवैधानिक नैतिकता बनाम लोकप्रिय नैतिकता:** सबरीमाला में SC द्वारा प्रयुक्त अवधारणा

Skyroot Aerospace flags off Vikram-1, India's first private orbital launch soon

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 25

IN A major boost to India's space industry, Skyroot Aerospace is likely to become the first private company to launch an orbital space rocket. On Saturday, Skyroot flagged off the payload fairing for its Vikram-1 rocket in Hyderabad, with the launch of the rocket slated for later this year. The payload fairing — the upper nose cone of the launch vehicle that houses the satellites — is now headed for India's only spaceport in Sriharikota, where it will be integrated with the rest of the launch vehicle.

"We completed the most critical testing of Vikram-1 and are excited to begin integration and launch campaign activities next week at the spaceport towards this historic launch," said Naga Bharath Daka, co-founder and COO, Skyroot Aerospace. Launch campaign is the period



Telangana CM Revanth Reddy flags off payload fairing for Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 rocket, in Sriharikota on Saturday. ANI

before a launch when the vehicle is integrated, tested and prepared. Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, also present at the flag-off event, said that it was a key milestone in the state's pursuit of becoming a global leader in the aerospace sector.

Telangana is among a hand-

ful states with their own space policy — the first step towards creating space manufacturing hubs, such as the launch vehicle hub in Tamil Nadu and a satellite hub in Gujarat. The launch of India's first privately manufactured PSLV (polar satellite launch vehicle) — ISRO's

workhorse launcher — is also likely to take place this year.

Among Skyroot's many small launch vehicle projects, Vikram-1 is a multi-stage launch vehicle with solid and liquid fuel-based engines designed for launching satellites weighing up to 350 kg to low earth orbit. The low earth orbit is the region of space from 160 km to 2,000 km above the surface of Earth. The number of satellites being launched in this region has skyrocketed in recent years, with many being the Starlink communication satellites.

Vikram-1 is different as the rocket is made of carbon composite instead of metals, and houses a 3D-printed indigenously made engine — making its manufacturing and assembly easier, quicker and cheaper. The launch vehicle has been named to honour Dr Vikram Sarabhai, considered to be the father of the Indian space programme.

Aspect	Key Points (English)	मुख्य बिंदु (Hindi)
Company	Skyroot Aerospace	Skyroot Aerospace भारत का निजी अंतरिक्ष स्टार्टअप
Mission	Vikram-1: India's first private orbital launch vehicle	विक्रम-1: भारत का पहला निजी ऑर्बिटल लॉन्च वाहन
Recent Event	Payload fairing flagged off in Hyderabad	हैदराबाद में पेलोड फेयरिंग का फ्लैग-ऑफ
Launch Site	Satish Dhawan Space Centre	Satish Dhawan Space Centre से प्रक्षेपण
Rocket Type	Multi-stage launch vehicle (solid + liquid fuel)	बहु-चरणीय रॉकेट (ठोस + तरल ईंधन)
Payload Capacity	Up to 350 kg to Low Earth Orbit (LEO)	350 किग्रा तक निम्न पृथ्वी कक्षा (LEO) में
Orbit Range (LEO)	160 km – 2000 km above Earth	160–2000 किमी ऊँचाई
Technology	Carbon composite structure + 3D printed engine	कार्बन कंपोजिट संरचना + 3D प्रिंटेड इंजन
Naming	Named after Vikram Sarabhai	Vikram Sarabhai के नाम पर
Significance	First private company aiming orbital launch in India	भारत में निजी ऑर्बिटल लॉन्च की शुरुआत
State Role	Telangana emerging as aerospace hub	तेलंगाना एयरोस्पेस हब बन रहा है
Industrial Ecosystem	Space manufacturing hubs in Tamil Nadu & Gujarat	तमिलनाडु व गुजरात में स्पेस मैन्युफैक्चरिंग हब

Q. With reference to India's private space sector, consider the following statements:

1. Vikram-1 is India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle.
2. It uses only liquid fuel for propulsion.
3. It is designed to place satellites in Low Earth Orbit.

Which of the above is/are correct?

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

Who is Ashok Kumar Lahiri, the new Vice Chairperson of policy think tank NITI Aayog

Ravi Dutta Mishra

New Delhi, April 25

A DAY after being appointed as NITI Aayog's Vice Chairperson, Ashok Kumar Lahiri met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday. Lahiri, a former Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) and a member of the 15th Finance Commission, will take over from Suman Bery, whose term ends later this month.

Announcing his appointment, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a social media post, on Saturday said, "NITI Aayog has emerged as a vital pillar in India's policy-making architecture, fostering cooperative federalism, furthering reforms and boosting 'Ease of Living.'

"It serves as a dynamic platform for innovation and long-term strategic thinking across sectors." PM Modi also announced the reconstitution of the NITI Aayog with Lahiri as Vice Chairman and Rajiv Gauba, KV Raju, Gobardhan Das, Abhay Karandikar and M Srinivas as full-time members.

Das is the second member to be appointed from West Bengal amid the ongoing state elections. He is currently serving as the director of the Indian Institute of Science Education and



Lahiri met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday. X/@NARENDRAMODI

Research (IISER), Bhopal.

Unlike his predecessor, Bery, who was a career economist and research administrator, Lahiri has extensive experience in administration and electoral affairs and is currently a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the West Bengal Assembly from the BJP.

Lahiri's appointment comes in the midst of the West Bengal elections and a time when NITI Aayog has begun playing a larger role in pushing for cross-sector reforms in the country.

As an economist, Lahiri had been known to advocate for better partnership between the

three levels of governments, Union, state and local, and efficacy at the grassroots.

In the central government, Lahiri had served as the chief economic advisor (CEA) between October 2002 and June 2007, appointed under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government and continuing under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's tenure.

In Bengal, he had been critical of the Communist governments and a proponent of encouraging entrepreneurship for reviving business sentiment in Bengal.

Apart from the post of CEA,

• NEW MANDATE

PM MODI also announced the reconstitution of the NITI Aayog with Rajiv Gauba, KV Raju, Gobardhan Das, Abhay Karandikar and M Srinivas as full-time members.

UNDER CENTRAL government, Lahiri had served as the CEA between October 2002 and June 2007, appointed under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government and continuing under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's tenure.

Lahiri has been an Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Finance, has had stints in the International Monetary Fund as Senior Economist and in the World Bank as Consultant, was director of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy between February 1998 and October 2002, a member of the 15th Finance Commission, and a non-executive chairman of the Bandhan Bank.

He retired as executive director from the Asian Development Bank in June 2013.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Aspect	Key Points (English)	मुख्य बिंदु (Hindi)
Person	<u>Ashok Kumar Lahiri</u>	<u>Ashok Kumar Lahiri</u>
New Role	Vice Chairman of <u>NITI Aayog</u>	<u>NITI Aayog के उपाध्यक्ष</u>
Replaces	Suman Bery	सुमन बेरी का स्थान लिया
Appointment By	<u>Narendra Modi</u>	<u>Narendra Modi द्वारा नियुक्त</u>
Previous Roles	Former Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) to Govt. of India	भारत सरकार के पूर्व मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार
CEA Tenure	2002–2007 (under Vajpayee & Manmohan Singh)	2002–2007 (वाजपेयी व मनमोहन सिंह के समय)
Other Positions	Member, 15th Finance Commission; Director, NIPFP	15वें वित्त आयोग के सदस्य; NIPFP निदेशक
Global Experience	Worked with IMF & World Bank	IMF व विश्व बैंक में कार्य
Political Role	MLA (West Bengal) from BJP	पश्चिम बंगाल से BJP विधायक
ADB Role	Former Executive Director, Asian Development Bank	एशियाई विकास बैंक में कार्यकारी निदेशक
Economic Views	Advocates reforms, entrepreneurship, cooperative federalism	सुधार, उद्यमिता व सहकारी संघवाद के समर्थक

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LAST LEG IN BENGAL
PM focuses on Matuas, Mamata slams SIR

NEWS | PAGE 8



THIN-LINED FRAMES
Photographer Raghu Rai passes away

NEWS | PAGE 8



DAY OF RECKONING
Syria begins public trial of Assad, allies

FOREIGN | PAGE 14



HEAT SHOCK
Summer hits income of gig workers
Resilience for them is safe work, stable pay

EDITORIAL | PAGE 9



CONTRASTING VIBES
GT crushes CSK, KKR pips LSG in Super Over

SPORT | PAGE 16

INSIDE



Kerala conducts scaled-down Thrissur Pooram

THRISSEER
The Thrissur Pooram unfolded on Sunday. After the fireworks display at Mandalamkavu that climaxed at here, authorities had decided to hold this year's event without fireworks. While all other major rituals were retained, the Automotion was curtailed to just 15 minutes, with just 10 sets of parallel to be displayed. ■ PAGE 2



21 children with disability conquer Everest base camp

SHYAWADA
Twenty-one children with disability from government schools across Andhra Pradesh have successfully completed a trek to the Everest base camp in Nepal, reaching an altitude of 5,365 metres. The expedition was organised with support from the School Education Department. ■ PAGE 2

Shivakumar says he will abide by top brass's orders

BEHALLEBILI
A day after returning from Delhi, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.R. Shivakumar on Sunday said that he and Chief Minister Siddaramanah would abide by the Congress high command's decision on leadership in the State government. ■ PAGE 2

Trump unhurt as gunman attacks press event

Man armed with guns and knives storms lobby outside White House Correspondents' Dinner | One officer, shot in bullet-proof vest, recovering; gunman was tackled, being checked in hospital | Trump says he believes that he was the intended target, Modi expresses relief U.S. President is safe

Associated Press
WASHINGTON
A man armed with guns and knives stormed the lobby outside the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner attended by U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday night, charging toward the ballroom in a chaotic encounter with Secret Service agents as guests fled under tables at the sound of shots being fired.
The President was unharmed and was rushed off the stage. U.S. law enforcement said the sole suspect has been detained and will face charges on Monday in federal court.
Video posted by Mr. Trump showed the suspect

running past security barriers as Secret Service agents ran toward him. One officer was shot in a bullet-resistant vest but was recovering, officials said. The gunman was tackled to the ground and was not injured, the police said.
Mr. Trump later said he believed he was the target of the attack.
The police believe the assailant, Cole Thomas Allen, 33, from California, opened fire and acted alone but did not say who was his intended target or describe a motive.
World leaders expressed shock over the incident with Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying he was "relieved to learn that President Trump, the First

lady and Vice-President are safe and unharmed".
I extended my best wishes for their continued safety and well-being. Violence has no place in a democracy and must be unequivocally condemned", Mr. Modi said on X.
Authorities said Vice-President J.D. Vance was removed from the room first, while agents initially covered Mr. Trump in place before escorting him and First Lady Melania

Trump from the room. The shooting suspect was identified as Cole Thomas Allen of Torrance, California, according to two law-enforcement officials. The President said the gunman had left a message, to which he described as "allegedly anti-Christian," without providing details. The suspect sent writings to family members minutes before the shooting. The New York Post said the suspect had written in the note that his targets would be "proscribed from high-end ranking to lower."
On Sunday, U.S. Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said that Mr. Trump and officials in his administration were the likely targets in the shooting incident.
Mr. Trump told presspersons at a late-night White House briefing that he believed he was the target of the attack. Later in an interview with Fox News, the President said the suspect's family had

Running on empty



Running on empty: Participants dismount an LPG cylinder, take part in the TCS world 10k marathon in Bengaluru on Sunday, as the LPG crisis continues to impact lives. A/LIN/SCIENCE

Disqualify all seven defecting MPs, AAP says in petition to RS Chairman

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI
The Aam Aadmi Party on Sunday submitted a petition to Rajya Sabha Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan seeking the disqualification of seven MPs who have quit the party and merged with the Bharatiya Janata Party.
Addressing a press conference, Sanjay Singh, leader of the AAP in the Rajya Sabha, said the move by the Rajya Sabha Chairman was against the provisions of the anti-defection law.
The party urged the Chairman to terminate their membership, underlining that they were elected to the Upper House on an AAP ticket but had now done

These members were elected by the AAP and they later chose to leave and join another party. This is a betrayal of the people of Punjab and also of the Constitution of India.
SANJAY SINGH
AAP leader
These members were elected to join the BJP. On Friday, Mr. Chaudhary, Ashok Mittal, Sandeep Pathak, Harbhajan Singh, Rajender Gupta, Vikram Sahni, and Swati Malhotra quit and merged with the BJP.
The AAP has 10 members in the Upper House. The defectors group arguing it has the required two-thirds majority to avoid disqualification. The

press court lawyer, I have sent a petition to the Chairman requesting that the membership of those members be reassessed as per the 10th Schedule of the Constitution," he said.
He termed the move by Mr. Chaudhary and the others a "betrayal" of the people's mandate, and said he expected the Chairman to take an "unbiased" decision at the earliest. Six of the seven MPs who quit the party were from Punjab.
"These members were elected by the AAP and later they chose to leave and join another party. This is a betrayal of the people of Punjab and also of the Constitution," Mr. Singh said.
AAP protests 'betrayal' ■ PAGE 2

New Zealand, India to sign free trade pact today; tariffs to be removed on all exports

T.G.A. Bharadwaj
NEW DELHI
India and New Zealand will on Monday sign a Free Trade Agreement that will remove tariffs on 100% of India's exports to New Zealand, and will also sharply reduce or remove tariffs on 98% of current imports from that country.
Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday took to social media to welcome Todd McClay, New Zealand's Minister for Trade & Investment, to New Delhi, ahead of the signing of the pact.
"As we approach the final stages of the FTA signing on April 27th, his visit marks a defining moment in our bilateral journey, reflecting the trust, shared values, and common vision that underpin our partnership for sustainable economic

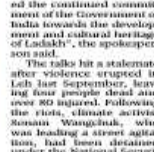


Union Minister Piyush Goyal welcomes Todd McClay, New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment, on Saturday.

incomes and auto components. On average, New Zealand levied a tariff of 2.2% in 2019, which will come down to zero under the agreement.
The pact between the countries is one of the fastest negotiated trade agreements that India has entered into, with negotiations being announced in March 2018 and concluding in December.
India has also managed to keep several items out of the FTA, including all dairy products such as milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, and cheese, animal products other than sheep meat, vegetable products such as onion, chana, peas, corn, and almonds, sugar, artificial honey, animal vegetable or microbial fats and oils, arms and ammunition, gems and jewellery, and copper and aluminium and their products.
The FTA includes a provision wherein New Zealand will invest \$20 billion in India over 15 years.
The deal also includes provisions relating to the mobility of working professionals, students, and Indian students can work up to 20 hours per week while studying in New Zealand, with extended post-study work visas.
India has offered New Zealand exporters market access in 70.03% of the tariff lines with 30% of these lines seeing tariffs being removed. India will see a phased removal toward the "constructive demeratic dialogue with the New Zealand government, 80% of the country's current exports will see tariffs either reduced to zero or sharply reduced.

Centre to resume Ladakh Statehood talks on May 22

Prerna Ashu
SHRINAGAR
Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinod Kumar Saxena said here on Sunday that discussions between the Union Home Ministry and civil society bodies would resume on May 22 in demand for Statehood and inclusion of the Union Territory in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
The announcement, ending an impasse, came days ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Ladakh on April 30 and May 1.
The meeting of the subcommittee on political dialogue will carry forward the "constructive demeratic dialogue with the New Zealand government, 80% of the country's current exports will see tariffs either reduced to zero or sharply reduced.
The announcement came days ahead of Amit Shah's visit to Ladakh on April 30 and May 1.
Mr. Shah's visit "reflects



Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinod Kumar Saxena.

of the continued commitment of the Government of India towards the development and cultural heritage of Ladakh," the spokesman said.
The talks hit a stalemate after violence erupted in Leh last September, leaving four people dead and over 800 injured. Following the riots, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who was leading a street agitation, had been detained under the National Security Act for six months.
The Union government formed a judicial commission last October to inquire into the circumstances that resulted in the violence.
The Centre's outreach earlier this month failed to fracture into any major achievements on the core demands of the civil society groups: the Leh Army Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance.



Lok Sabha Laif Sakhil Gandhi interacts with tribal community in Andaman and Nicobar Islands on April 26, 2026.

Rahul Gandhi plans Great Nicobar visit, clearance awaited

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi on Sunday began his three-day visit to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the Congress convention in Port Blair, following which the Congress leader is scheduled to visit Great Nicobar Island as well, where the Union government is planning a ₹2,000-crore mega infrastructure project amid tribal communities' concerns that they will be displaced and lose their rights over the forests there.

The Congress in-charge of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Manoj Kumar, said Mr. Gandhi assured the people in Port Blair that he would "continue to fight for justice, development, and rights of the people of Andaman and Nicobar in Delhi". While noting that Mr. Gandhi also intended to visit Great Nicobar, Mr. Kumar said they were "awaiting permission from the

Modi hails India's strides in nuclear, wind energy

Prime Minister says civil nuclear programme has greatly helped different sectors; highlights that the country now ranks fourth in world in wind energy capacity; calls for Census participation

T.G.A. Bharat Bhargava NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed the achievement of criticality in the fast breeder nuclear reactor at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu as a "historic milestone in India's nuclear energy journey".

During his monthly Mann Ki Baat address, the Prime Minister focused on India's nuclear and renewable energy efforts, as well as on various nature conservation initiatives being undertaken across the country.

The delegation, comprising leaders from the Tribal Council of Lakshadweep and Chief Minister, had told Mr. Gandhi about the issues they were facing with the local administration, their demands to relocate to their ancestral villages, and that their consent for this project had been obtained under pressure and without self-will, despite which the project was being continued.

Soon after the project received Stage 1 clearance in 2022, the Tribal Council withdrew the consent for the project, and had since been alleging that their forest rights under the 2006 Forest Rights Act had not been satisfied and that they were being pressured to sign "agreements" for their ancestral lands.



tion for the first time. "This stage signifies the reactor entering the operational phase," Mr. Modi said.

"This is a historic milestone in India's nuclear energy journey. And importantly, this nuclear reactor is built entirely with indigenous technology."

Strides in wind energy The Prime Minister also spoke about India's wind energy sector, saying that the country had recently achieved a major milestone with wind energy generation capacity exceeding 56 gigawatts (GW). Mr. Modi said, "Friends, just a few days ago, our nuclear scientists announced India's pride with another major achievement. The fast breeder reactor at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, has achieved criticality."

He further explained that criticality in the stage in which a reactor successfully executes a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction, this is the diligence of our youth, this is a symbol of the collective will-power of the nation."

Mr. Modi said 2027 data several States in India such as Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, were leading the charge in this sector. "In areas like Kerala, Punjab, and Uttarakhand in Gujarat, although previously only deserts were visible, large renewable energy parks are now being built."

Critical Census Mr. Modi also spoke about the Census 2027 data collection process, noting that it is the responsibility of all of us. Your participation is crucial. The information you provide is completely secure, kept confidential, and protected with digital security. Let us all participate in this process. Make Census 2027 a success.

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The further explained that Census 2027 had been made digital, with all information recorded directly in digital form by workers going door-to-door using a mobile app. "This time your participation in the Census has also been made easier, you can enter your information yourself," Mr. Modi explained. "This facility will open for you 15 days before the worker's arrival. You can enter the information as per your convenience. When you complete the process, you receive a special ID. This ID will be sent only deserts were visible, large renewable energy parks are now being built."

"This process, he added, streamlined the need to enter information again, thereby saving time and simplifying the process. When you complete the process, you receive a special ID. This ID will be sent only deserts were visible, large renewable energy parks are now being built."

"So far, the house listing of approximately 12 million families has been completed," he added.

At Chintan Shivir, DNT enumeration in Census discussed

Abhinav Lakshman NEW DELHI

The Social Justice Ministry on Sunday concluded a three-day "Chintan Shivir" (brainstorming session), during which the inclusion of denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic tribes (DNTs) in the ongoing Census 2027 exercise was one of the key focus areas.

The DNT communities have been demanding a separate column or question in the Census forms, specifically to account for their populations across the country. Community leaders are also mobilising support for a separate schedule for DNTs in a part with the list of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. The Supreme Court dismissed a petition last month seeking a Census question for DNTs and a separate classification for them, leaving them the liberty to approach the government on the matter.

During the Chintan Shivir, the Social Justice Ministry brought together Centre and State government officials to discuss the future of its schemes for marginalised sections through panel discussions, breakout sessions and thematic round tables.

Social Justice Minister Virendra Kumar said on Sunday that the session were "a serious and result-oriented platform for the Centre, States and Union Territories to reflect collec-

The Ministry brought together Centre and State officials to discuss the future of its schemes for marginalised sections

tively on how social justice delivery can be made more accessible, responsive and implementation-driven". The brainstorming session also discussed other largely and hostel schemes for SC and OBC students, comprehensive support for transgender people and how to align schemes for them with the new amendments enacted by Parliament in 2026. While a central focus of the sessions on DNT welfare was the principal bottleneck in form of State and Union Territory governments not providing DNT community certificates, hampering their access to schemes, across different sections, the issue of obtaining an accurate count of DNT populations across the country also kept coming up, officials said.

This comes even as members of Centre's Development Welfare Board for DNTs raise concerns over the lack of clarity on their enumeration in the ongoing Census. "As of now, we don't know if there will be a column for DNTs. So we don't know if there will be a DNT column as well or how this is going to be done," one Board official said.

Hanging glaciers: NGT issues notice to Centre

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has sought a response from the Centre and states regarding the danger that hanging glaciers pose on the mountain slopes of central Himalayas.

The NGT has taken suo motu cognisance of a report citing a study which flagged the environmental concerns. It said the report indicated a violation of the provisions of the Environment Protection Act.

'Right to safe travel on highways part of right to life'

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has declared that the safety of commuters against road accidents and the right to safe passage on highways are part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

"National Highways constitute approximately 45% of total road length but account for nearly 10% of total fatalities. A road, particularly a high speed expressway, must not become a corridor of peril due to administrative lethargy or infrastructural gaps. The loss of even a single life to avoidable hazards like illegal parking or blockages, not only represents a failure of the state's protective obligation," a Bench of Justices J.K. Maheshwari and A.K. Chaudhary observed in an April 13 order.

The loss of life to avoidable hazards points at failure of the state's protective obligation, says SC

The order arose from a suo motu case filed on the loss of a total of 34 lives in successive road accidents on November 2 and November 3 last year in Rajasthan and Telangana.

On the draw



Manipur, a state in the northeastern region of India, has been in the news for its political and social issues. The BJP has been a significant force in the state's politics.

Experts call for data-led approach to tackle public health challenges

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

The webinar "Public Health in India: From Reactive Care to Preventive Ecosystems" held on Saturday highlighted the urgent need to strengthen preventive healthcare, build data-driven systems, and develop a skilled public health workforce to address the country's evolving health challenges.

Organised by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) in association with The Hindu's Future Career Conversations series, the session focused on India's ongoing shift from a curative model of care to prevention-led public health systems.

Noting the contrast, Hari Singh, Dean, School of Public Health, SRMIST, said, "The wide range of public health challenges facing India, from infec-



tion-based approaches and more robust data-driven surveillance systems, noting that "public health responses must increasingly rely on data to anticipate and manage risks effectively".

As an expert, Member, State Planning Commission, Tamil Nadu, provided insights into Tamil Nadu's public health model.

Explaining the State's structured systems and preparedness strategy, he noted that consistent public focus, better investment in health and system areas such as digital health systems and the growing relevance of technology in shaping future public health. "The SRMIST discussed the role of artificial intelligence and digital tools in strengthening public health."

He said that "AI in public health is most effective when it builds on existing systems and strengthens

Industrial Halted

By N. Srinivasan

Extended late-night parades and heated debates marked the meeting of the 12 custom BRICS Deputy Foreign Ministers and Special Envoy in New Delhi that ended with a joint statement on Friday. The Hindu has heard that the meeting was a success for India's BRICS Presidency this year.

While delegates from the United Arab Emirates and Iran spent most of the time in West Asia, a member of diplomatic and official staff present or briefed about the discussions said on Friday. The Hindu also saw an unprecedented attempt by India to highlight its role in the BRICS Presidency this year.



Participants raised questions on career opportunities and academic pathways in public health. The panelists highlighted the need for interdisciplinary skill sets, including epidemiology, data analysis, and policy understanding. "Public health requires an evidence-based approach, a strong scientific temper and most importantly, impartiality," they noted.

NCB seizes 5 kg of heroin in Manipur, arrests three

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Narcotics Control Bureau, in a joint operation with the State police and Assam Rifles, has seized about 5.42 kg of heroin with estimated value of ₹1 crore in Manipur's Churachandpur district.

A joint team on April 23 in a village in the district suspected of carrying narcotics and recovered 475 soap cases containing heroin, it said, adding that three people were arrested.

West Asia war, language on Israel derail joint statement at BRICS meet

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

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'Right to safe travel on highways part of right to life'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has declared that the safety of commuters against road accidents and the right to safe passage on highways are part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

"National Highways constitute approximately 2% of India's total road length but account for nearly 30% of all road fatalities. A road, particularly a high-speed expressway, must not become a corri-

The loss of life to avoidable hazards points at failure of the state's protective umbrella, says SC

dor of peril due to administrative lethargy or infrastructural gaps. The loss of even a single life to avoidable hazards like illegal parking or blackspots, etc., represents a failure of the state's protective umbrella," a Bench of Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Atul S. Chandurkar observed in

an April 13 order. The court issued a series of directions, including the immediate prohibition on the construction or operation of any commercial structure within the right-of-way of any National Highway. The order also directed that vehicles should park/stop only at designated areas.

The order arose from a *suo motu* case based on the loss of a total of 34 lives in successive road accidents on November 2 and November 3 last year in Rajasthan and Telangana.

Aspect	Key Points (English)	मुख्य बिंदु (Hindi)
Judgment	Supreme Court of India declared safe travel on highways part of Right to Life	Supreme Court of India ने सुरक्षित यात्रा को जीवन के अधिकार का हिस्सा माना
Constitutional Basis	Article 21 includes road safety & safe passage	Article 21 में सड़क सुरक्षा शामिल
Core Principle	Right to life = Right to safe movement on highways	जीवन का अधिकार = सुरक्षित यात्रा का अधिकार
Key Observation	Deaths due to avoidable hazards reflect failure of state	टालने योग्य दुर्घटनाएं राज्य की विफलता दर्शाती हैं
Bench	Justices J.K. Maheshwari & Atul S. Chandurkar	न्यायमूर्ति जे.के. महेश्वरी व अतुल चंदुरकर
Case Type	Suo motu case (court took cognizance itself)	स्वतः संज्ञान (सुओ मोटू) मामला
Trigger	34 deaths in road accidents (Rajasthan & Telangana)	राजस्थान व तेलंगाना में 34 मौतें

Highway Safety – Key Data

Aspect	Details (English)	विवरण (Hindi)
Highway Share	National Highways = ~2% of road network	राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग = ~2% सड़क नेटवर्क
Fatality Share	Account for ~30% of road accident deaths	~30% सड़क दुर्घटना मौतें
Reason	High speed, poor infrastructure, violations	तेज गति, खराब ढांचा, उल्लंघन

Court Directions

Directive	Explanation (English)	व्याख्या (Hindi)
Ban on Construction	No commercial structures within highway right-of-way	राजमार्ग क्षेत्र में व्यावसायिक निर्माण पर रोक
Parking Regulation	Vehicles must stop only at designated areas	वाहनों को निर्धारित स्थान पर ही रोकना
Administrative Responsibility	State must ensure safety infrastructure	राज्य को सुरक्षा व्यवस्था सुनिश्चित करनी होगी

In Kohli's backyard, RCB holds all the aces against host DC

Bethell set to get another opportunity at the top for the defending champion. Axar & Co. in desperate need of a win to get the campaign back on track after failing to defend 264 against PBKS



Fire-bolting: Pathbhell will look to weigh in with big runs for RCB. SHYAMSUBRAMANIAN

IPL 19
Virat Kohli
NEW DELHI

Defensive innings against Punjab Kings on Saturday had the fluctuations of a volatile stock market. So wildly did it oscillate from the sublime to the ridiculous, as an exemplary batting effort to start off for 100 - DC's highest total in IPL history - was followed by a heroic 40-run knock by the host in the final. While the bowing appeared rudimentary on a pitch that played better than expected, the onslaught of dropped catches

spread the wildfire, allowing Shreyas Iyer and Prathibhan Singh to make merry with half-centuries. Dispiriting as that was, Axar Patel's men have little time to contemplate, given that they run into another

formidable opponent in Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Monday. Besides Royal Challengers' meeting with confidence after five wins from seven matches, 'Captain' Kohli is accompanied by the likelihood of the defending champion enjoying a lion's share of the support. Virat Kohli, the one constant in RCB's ever-evolving set-up, may no longer be being lauded, but his leadership of the national capital continue to exhibit fierce loyalty to a superstar whose formative years can be traced to the by-lanes of west Delhi.

More importantly, the 37-year-old is showing no sign of slowing down in white-ball cricket. Despite prolonged breaks from competitive cricket following his Test retirement last year, his impact for the southern franchise hasn't dimmed in the slightest - 328 runs in seven innings at 54.00 is proof. The former skipper will be given company by Jacob Bethell at the top of the order. With Phil Salt yet to recover from injury, Bethell, who was drafted in for the last game, will get another chance to step up.

Krunal changing the landscape of finger-spin in IPL: Karthik

Mixek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

For the sake of convenience mostly, Krunal Pandya is classified as a left-arm orthodox spinner. But what leaves his left arm at the point of delivery doesn't always qualify as orthodox or even spin.

The variance in length can be extreme, with his repertoire including a sharp bouncer as well as the ball in the back hole. Add his occasional loopy release to the mix and he is able to keep the batters guessing in a format where his brethren of finger-spinners increasingly appear redundant.

The 25-year-old's methods may not necessarily please the classical purveyors of the craft from yesterday, but he is seeking effectiveness rather than endorsement.

The unique approach is bearing fruit for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Having taken 17 wickets for



Big wicket: Krunal has been a key player for RCB. SHYAMSUBRAMANIAN

the title-winning outfit last season, Krunal has claimed eight scalps in seven matches in 2026. Dinesh Karthik, RCB's batting coach and mentor, feels the southpaw is redefining the rules of finger-spin.

"He is a player that this game is going to remember for a long time because he is doing something that has not been done before. He's pushing the boundaries of what a finger-spinner means," Karthik told reporters on Monday.

"His bowling deliveries that people really couldn't fathom a few years ago and he's using them very effectively. He's not an someone who's just doing it because it looks cool. He knows that it does create a doubt in the batter."

"He is a trend-setter. IPL is changing the landscape of cricket and Krunal is changing the landscape of finger-spin bowling," the former wicketkeeper-batter added.

I think he's my new favourite player: Cummins all praise for Suryavanshi

Fransix Balle
JANPAUR

Despite scoring a stunning 36-ball hundred, Rajasthan Royals' Suryavanshi ended on the losing side in an IPL 2026 game, after Ishan Kishan and Abhinav Sharma orchestrated a masterful feat for Hyderabad.

Nevertheless, with his blazing ton at the Swastik Stadium here in Jaipur, Suryavanshi earned himself a braver admirer - 2011 skipper Pat Cummins. "Yeah, I think he's my new favourite player. He hits the ball so hard, and it's great to watch. It's good fun," said Cummins in the post-match spin bowling.

Earlier in the day, as the Aussie pacer ran into howl



Up, up and away: Cummins is all praise for Suryavanshi, despite being at the losing end of his own batting over seven overs.

er, bolting him for four consecutive aces, to four parts of the ground - a pull, a whip of the pads and two auspicious behind drives past long on and long off.

The 2011 skipper had parked two fielders in the leg-side outposts and dished out a shortish delivery, slating it away from Suryavanshi.

The seemingly obvious trap had no impact on the Royals' opener. Without even retreating fully to his back foot, he flat-batted the ball for a six in front of the leg-side square.

"You've got to be right on the money as a bowler, because if you're not, it's going a long way. He's aggressive. He's had a great start to his career. Like the way he plays," admitted Cummins.



Hamza Ali Akbar completed a triathlon race to win victory on Sunday. SHYAMSUBRAMANIAN

Ham keeps John at bay to take the honours

SINGAPORE OPEN
S. Shrivatsanan
SINGAPORE

The final round of the Singapore Open on Sunday witnessed thrill and aplomb. But overnight top-performer Hamza Ali Akbar of South Korea kept his composure in the crunch, leading off a quartet that broke from Australian Cameron John, to walk away with the title. My taking up the top two spots on the leaderboard, Ham and John also looked their tickets to The Open Championship at Royal Birkdale in Southport later this year.

Among Indians, Singaporean Bhullar and Pulraj Singh had contrasting outings at the par-71 course as Golf Club Singapore course to finish last 2016.

Ham, who entered the last leg of the International Series event with a four-stroke advantage, saw his lead cut when he teed off on a solitary shot at one point as John tried to give the Korean a run for his money. The trophy chasers and other challengers had to be backed to for longer than expected after rain thra-

shed effectiveness rather than endorsement.

The unique approach is bearing fruit for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Having taken 17 wickets for

ing effectiveness rather than endorsement.

The unique approach is bearing fruit for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Having taken 17 wickets for

Kwizera blazes to TCS World IOK Bengaluru record



That winning feeling: Kwizera claims the international women's category. Also taking top spot are Niyakura (international women), Harmanjot and Sanjivni (Indian men and women). SHYAMSUBRAMANIAN

ATHLETICS
Ashwini Ashal
BANGALURU

Rodriguez Kwizera blitzed through the field to set a new men's event record at the TCS World IOK Bengaluru 2026 here on Sunday.

Kwizera stepped on the podium in the final stretch to finish with a timing of 27:36, well under the previous mark of 27:38 set by Nicholas Kipkorir Kileli in 2022.

Kwizera, who missed the top spot to Kenya's Sebastian Sawa in a photo-finish here three years ago, won \$24,000 (including the event record bonus of \$5,000).

"I wanted to go for the event record, I am glad I did it," Kwizera said.

stiff challenge
Kenya's Florence Niyakura overcame a stiff challenge from favourite Brenda Jepsichir to claim the international women's title.

At the 70m stage, it was Florence, Brenda, Ethiopian Melat Biratu and Kenya's Judy Chepkwony who formed the leader pack.

Ethiopia took over in the last eight turns, at the Callison Park metro station.

Now on her own, Florence led the race until the 40m mark - after passing the St. Channanawany Stadium, it pulled away from its rivals.

Kwizera kept a high pace in the long straight finish on Callison Road to edge Kenya's record.

"The challenge was the

Sawe becomes first man to run a marathon under two hours



Blistering pace: Sawe and Assefa produced the best-ever times while winning the London Marathon. AP

ATHLETICS
Kenya's Sebastian Sawe became the first man to run a marathon in under two hours when he won the London Marathon in one hour, 59m and 36seconds on Sunday.

The 31-year-old shattered the world record held by the late Kelvin Kiptum who set a time of 2:00:35 at the Chicago Marathon in October 2023.

Kenya's Sawe ran the marathon in under two hours with 1:59:34, while Jacob Kilian of Ethiopia took bronze in 2:02:28.

"I got Assefa of Ethiopia broke her own women's only world record on route to victory. The 26-year-old pulled away from Rosayna Hudson Chel and Joyceline Jepkosgei to cross the finish line in 2:15:41 seconds, beating the record of 2:15:50 she set last year in London.

China's Wang Yaping was second in 2:18:33, while Jepkosgei took the bronze in 2:18:55.

SNAPSHOTS
Indian women revive hopes with win over Ukraine
The young Indian women's team received a massive morale boost as they clinched 4-1 victory over European Championship bronze medalist Ukraine in its second of 192-192 Cup badminton clash here, bouncing back strongly after a narrow 2-3 loss to host Denmark in the quarter-finals.

Abhay betters 20
The result: Ukraine 4-1 (Dhanraj Prasad vs Polina Shchegoleva 21-18, 10-21); Tamil Shama vs Yekaterina Likhacheva 21-12, 11-21; Nivika Singh vs Maria Stupachenko 22-21, 21-13; Anupriya Saini vs Anissa Singh 14-21, 11-21; Parvathi vs Parvathi 11-21, 11-21.

Abhay betters 20
The result: Ukraine 4-1 (Dhanraj Prasad vs Polina Shchegoleva 21-18, 10-21); Tamil Shama vs Yekaterina Likhacheva 21-12, 11-21; Nivika Singh vs Maria Stupachenko 22-21, 21-13; Anupriya Saini vs Anissa Singh 14-21, 11-21; Parvathi vs Parvathi 11-21, 11-21.

Sawe becomes first man to run a marathon under two hours

Reuters

LONDON

Kenya's Sabastian Sawe became the first man to run a marathon in under two hours when he won the London Marathon in one hour, 59m and 30seconds on Sunday.

The 31-year-old shattered the world record held by the late Kelvin Kiptum who set a time of 2:00:35 at the Chicago Marathon in October 2023.

Yomif Kejelcha of Ethiopia was second in his debut with 1:59.41, while Jacob Kiplimo of Uganda took bronze in 2:02.28.

Tigst Assefa of Ethiopia



Blistering runs: Sawe and Assefa produced the best-ever times while winning the London Marathon. AFP

broke her own women's only world record en route to victory. The 29-year-old pulled away from Kenyans Hellen Obiri and Joyciline Jepkosgei down the home stretch to cross the finish

line in 2:15.41 seconds, beating the record of 2:15.50 she set last year in London.

Obiri was second in 2:15.53, while Jepkosgei took the bronze in 2:15.55.

Aspect	Key Points (English)	मुख्य बिंदु (Hindi)
Athlete	<u>Sabastian Sawe</u>	<u>Sabastian Sawe</u>
Achievement	First man to run a marathon under 2 hours (1:59:30)	2 घंटे से कम में मैराथन पूरा करने वाले पहले पुरुष (1:59:30)
Event	<u>London Marathon</u>	<u>London Marathon</u>
Previous Record	Held by <u>Kelvin Kiptum</u> (2:00:35, Chicago 2023)	<u>Kelvin Kiptum</u> का रिकॉर्ड (2:00:35)
Age	31 years	31 वर्ष
Nationality	Kenya	केन्या
Second Place	Yomif Kejelcha (Ethiopia) – 1:59:41	योमिफ केजेलचा – 1:59:41
Third Place	Jacob Kiplimo (Uganda) – 2:02:28	जैकब किप्लिमो – 2:02:28

Women's Marathon – Key Highlights

Aspect	Details (English)	विवरण (Hindi)
Winner	<u>Tigst Assefa</u>	<u>Tigst Assefa</u>
Record Time	2:15:41 (new record)	2:15:41 (नया रिकॉर्ड)
Previous Record	2:15:50 (her own record)	2:15:50 (स्वयं का रिकॉर्ड)
Second Place	Hellen Obiri – 2:15:53	हेलन ओबिरी
Third Place	Joyciline Jepkosgei – 2:15:55	जॉयसिलीन जेपकोसगेई

Added Exam Facts

Topic	Key Points (English)	मुख्य बिंदु (Hindi)
Marathon Distance	42.195 km	42.195 किमी
Origin	Ancient Greece (Battle of Marathon)	प्राचीन ग्रीस
Dominance	East African runners dominate long-distance events	पूर्वी अफ्रीकी धावकों का दबदबा
Physiology Factor	High altitude training advantage	ऊंचाई पर प्रशिक्षण का लाभ



Sebastian Sawe became the first-ever athlete to dip below the 2-hour mark. REUTERS

In Chinese military's new Atlas drone swarm system, much to worry for India



EXPERT EXPLAINS

SUYASH DESAI

NON-RESIDENT FELLOW WITH FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, PHILADELPHIA

THE CHINESE People's Liberation Army (PLA) unveiled its new Atlas drone swarm system (*atelas*) last month. The system combines features like simultaneous mass launch, nearly 100 drones, and a single human touchpoint to control them all.

The system is like a mini-battlefield network on wheels, where drones are truck-launched, remotely navigated by a single operator, and capable of scouting, communicating, confusing, and attacking defenses across a large perimeter. More im-

portantly, it is a very small, independent unit that is easy to hide, camouflage, and operate from remote corners.

What is this system?

The Atlas system can simultaneously launch up to 96 small- and medium-sized speed drones that can form defensive structures and precision formations.

The launch time between drones is less than three seconds. Thus, within 300 seconds, the system can launch all 96 drones. For context, amid the recent West Asia war, the US advanced E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft at the Prince Sultan Airbase in Saudi Arabia was destroyed by a swarm of 29 drones and a few ballistic missiles.

Purely on scale, in the US, the Department of War's "Perdix" and Defense Advanced Research Project Agency's "Offset" systems can launch 103 micro-drones and 250 unmanned systems, respectively. Even China's "mothership" (*Jiu Tian*) can launch up to 100-150 drones.

But Atlas stands out for its intelligence because, in modern military warfare,

counting drones is an outdated metric. The real victory lies in the cognitive test: can these 90 to 100 drones think individually and as a unit, reroute, identify, reidentify targets, and execute multiple strikes — all with only one human touchpoint? It is here that the Atlas Drone Swarm system outshines its competitors, at least theoretically.

The Atlas system has undergone multiple advanced tests. This includes the March test, when the PLA conducted the first full media demonstration for it.

Who is the manufacturer?

China Electronic Technology Group Corporation (CETC) (*zhongguo dianzi keji jituan gongsi*), established in 2002, one of the leaders of China's push for achieving civil-military integration, has manufactured the Atlas system. It is a state-owned electronics and telecommunications conglomerate and works with the PLA.

CETC has been responsible for China's major defence electronic breakthroughs, including the technology that gave China its first nuclear bomb, guided mis-



The Atlas drone swarm operations system.

CHINA MILITARY ONLINE

sile, and geo-orbital satellite.

What is the role of drones in the PLA?

Conceptually, as detailed in the 2020 version of *The Science of Military Strategy*, a publication of China's Academy of Military Science, "intelligentisation" (*zhinenghua*) is a defining paradigm of future conflicts. The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) explicitly stated that future wars will be "uncrewed and intelligent".

In the past 50 years, China has consistently learned from others' wars. For instance, the two Gulf Wars compelled the PLA to pursue a strategy of winning local wars under informatised conditions. Similarly, China is taking notes on drone use from recent conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Palestine conflict, India's Operation Sindoor, and the US's Operation Epic Fury.

On the ground, the intelligent guesswork is that China has tens of thousands of unmanned aerial vehicles across all four variants — smaller drones, medium-altitude long-endurance, high-altitude long-endurance, and advanced, novel, and stealth drones. These have been deployed across all PLA theatre commands and military districts and have been regularly included in operations in the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, and around the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India. Some of them are also tested in Ukraine, Gaza, and with Houthis Rebels around the Red Sea area.

In the past 18 months, the PLA has also tested a "drone mothership" capable of re-

leasing 100-150 smaller loitering drones.

What are the implications for India?

The Atlas system can confuse and overwhelm Taiwan's and India's air defences, forcing these countries to waste multiple resources on eliminating them, which is difficult given its mobility and camouflage.

Furthermore, the system's algorithm-driven kill chain and autonomous, independent target identification make it lethal against strategically valuable targets.

Especially on the India front, Tibet's advanced road and rail network enables quick deployment and launch. These swarms could also be used to disturb the Indian army's logistics and infrastructure lines by attacking the approach roads to India's forward-deployed posts. Behind enemy lines, attacks isolate the forward posts.

Finally, counter-jamming these swarms is challenging since they share information and adjust formations and targets without central human intervention.

LONGER VERSION ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED

Aspect	Key Points (English)	मुख्य बिंदु (Hindi)
System Name	Atlas Drone Swarm System	एटलस ड्रोन स्वार्म प्रणाली
Developed By	<u>People's Liberation Army (PLA)</u>	<u>People's Liberation Army</u>
Manufacturer	<u>China Electronics Technology Group Corporation</u>	<u>China Electronics Technology Group Corporation</u>
Type	Drone swarm warfare system	ड्रोन स्वार्म युद्ध प्रणाली
Key Feature	Launch up to 96 drones simultaneously	एक साथ 96 ड्रोन लॉन्च
Launch Speed	< 3 seconds between drones	ड्रोन लॉन्च अंतर < 3 सेकंड
Control	Single human operator (AI-assisted autonomy)	एक ऑपरेटर द्वारा नियंत्रण (AI आधारित)
Capabilities	Scouting, communication, confusion, precision attack	निगरानी, संचार, भ्रम, सटीक हमला
Technology	Autonomous coordination, algorithm-driven targeting	स्वायत्त समन्वय, एल्गोरिथ्म आधारित लक्ष्य
Deployment Nature	Mobile, camouflaged, remote operation	मोबाइल, छिपाने योग्य, दूरस्थ संचालन

✂ Concept: Drone Swarm Warfare

Aspect	Explanation (English)	व्याख्या (Hindi)
Definition	Multiple drones acting as a coordinated unit	कई ड्रोन मिलकर एक इकाई की तरह कार्य
Core Idea	"Quantity + Intelligence" > individual power	संख्या + बुद्धिमत्ता = अधिक शक्ति
AI Role	Autonomous decision-making & target selection	स्वायत्त निर्णय व लक्ष्य चयन
Advantage	Overwhelm air defence systems	वायु रक्षा को भ्रमित/अधिक भार देना
Challenge	Difficult to jam or intercept all drones	सभी ड्रोन को रोकना कठिन

🌐 Global Context

Aspect	Details (English)	विवरण (Hindi)
Learning Source	Gulf Wars, Russia-Ukraine war, Israel conflicts	खाड़ी युद्ध, रूस-यूक्रेन युद्ध, इजराइल संघर्ष
China Strategy	"Intelligentised warfare" doctrine	"इंटेलिजेंटाइज्ड वॉरफेयर" सिद्धांत
Drone Types	Small, medium-altitude, high-altitude, stealth drones	विभिन्न प्रकार के ड्रोन
Recent Use	Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, LAC region	ताइवान, दक्षिण चीन सागर, LAC

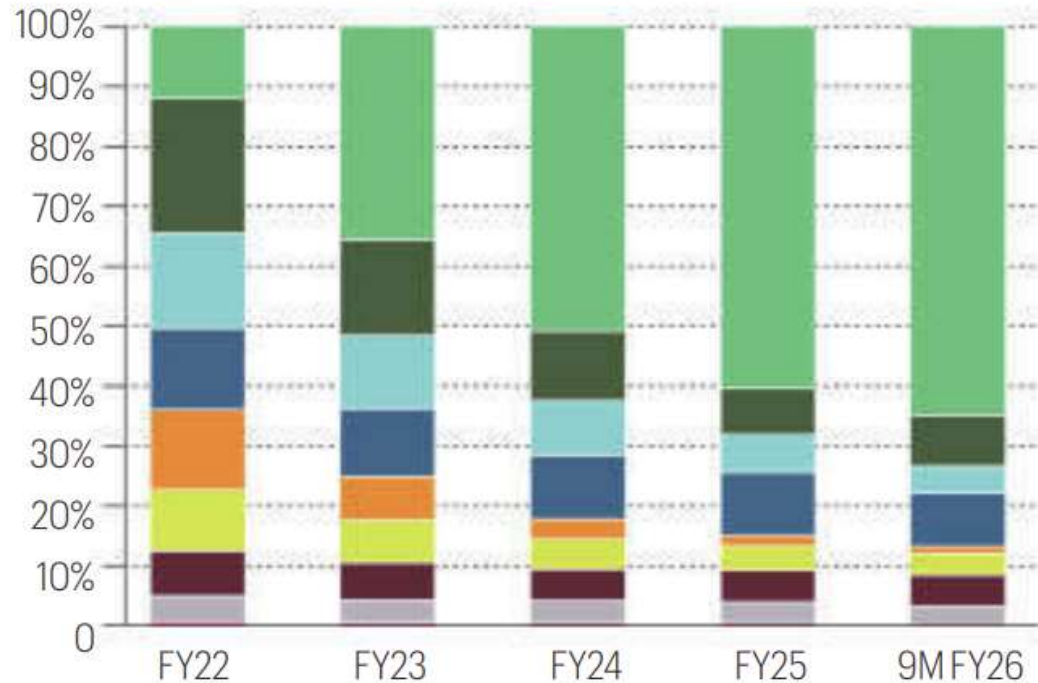
● Rising sway of UPI

Unified Payments Interface has changed the way money is spent. Wallets have turned thinner, mostly containing cards — which too stay put there, venturing out occasionally. UPI has made transactions easier and quicker. No wonder it processed over 645 mn daily transactions in 2025.

UPI expands further; prepaid instruments & credit cards see strong gains

Split of Payment transaction (%) by volume

■ UPI
 ■ Prepaid Instrument
 ■ IMPS
 ■ NEFT
 ■ Debit Card
■ NACH
 ■ Credit Card
 ■ APBS
 ■ RTGS
■ No. of transactions



	YoY Change (9M FY26 vs 9M FY25)	Average Ticket Size (9M FY26)
UPI	32%	₹1,298
Prepaid Instrument	43%	₹284
IMPS	-10%	₹14,517
NEFT	5%	₹48,134
Debit Card	-22%	₹3,414
NACH	7%	₹11,267
Credit Card	27%	₹4,003
APBS	7%	₹1,944
RTGS	14%	₹66,98,063

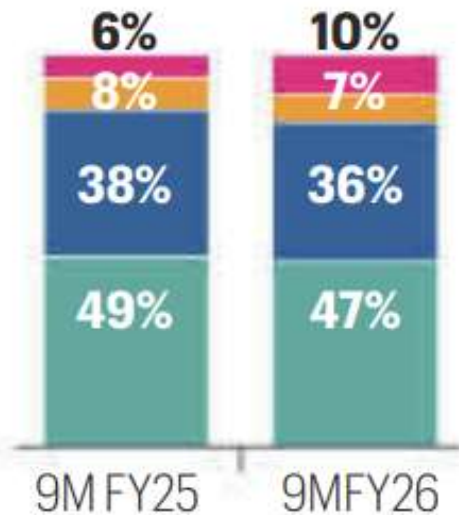
Note: Only domestic financial transactions are considered;

1. RTGS transactions excludes interbank transactions; Volumes of RTGS is less than 0.5%

Share of top 3 UPI apps declines

UPI transaction volume share by app*

● PhonePe ● GPay
● Paytm ● Others



Share of other banks & PSPs

	9M FY25	9M FY26
Navi	11%	25%
Super Money	3%	12%
CRED	16%	8%
Fampay	7%	7%
Open	12%	7%
BHIM	3%	5%
Amazon pay	8%	5%
Others	41%	32%

Top five banks across digital payment categories

Share of Remitter Bank	9M FY25	9M FY26
State Bank of India	26%	26%
HDFC Bank	8%	8%
Bank of Baroda	6%	7%
Union Bank of India	6%	6%
Punjab National Bank	5%	5%

*Total may not sum to 100 because of differences due to rounding off

Source: RBI data, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) statistics, BCG analysis

How world cities are tackling heat

GREEN CORRIDORS

MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA

Medellín developed 30 “green corridors” (shade-providing routes) along waterways and roads, reducing surrounding temperatures by up to 3°C to 4°C.

MASSIVE TREE PLANTING

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

The city committed to planting one million trees to increase vegetation cover by 50% to combat deforestation and heat.

REFLECTIVE PAVEMENT PAINT

LOS ANGELES, USA

LA is piloting painting asphalt with specialised coatings that reflect sun rays, lowering street-level surface temperatures by up to 5.5° C. Like many cities, it’s replacing traditional concrete with porous materials that allow moisture to evaporate, providing passive cooling.

ROOFTOP FORESTS AND LIVING WALLS

ROTTERDAM, PARIS

Rotterdam is transforming its roofs into green spaces to reduce building temperatures and manage water, while Paris is planting 1,70,000 trees to create “cool islands.”

GREEN LIVING ROOMS

FRANKFURT, GERMANY

The city placed portable, plant-covered structures to provide instant shade and natural cooling in busy, hot spots.

COOL ISLAND NETWORKS

PARIS, FRANCE

The city authorities mapped over 800 shady, cool spots — parks, fountains, and air-conditioned museums — accessible via an app.

NATURAL AIR VENTILATION ZONES

TOKYO, JAPAN

Urban planners have mandated the orientation of buildings to allow sea breeze to flow into the city, preventing heat trapping.

HEATWAVE PREPAREDNESS SIMULATIONS

BARCELONA, SPAIN

Barcelona is simulating a 50° heatwave to test the city’s preparedness, ensuring that emergency services and public infrastructure can handle severe, fast-approaching extreme heat.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

Cities like Miami and Phoenix have appointed Chief Heat Officers to

coordinate heat response, warn citizens and implement rapid, targeted support for vulnerable neighbourhoods.



Word of the day

Foolhardy:

marked by defiant disregard for danger or consequences

Synonyms: reckless, careless, daring

Usage: *She made a foolhardy decision without thinking.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/foolhardy

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /fu:lha:di/

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