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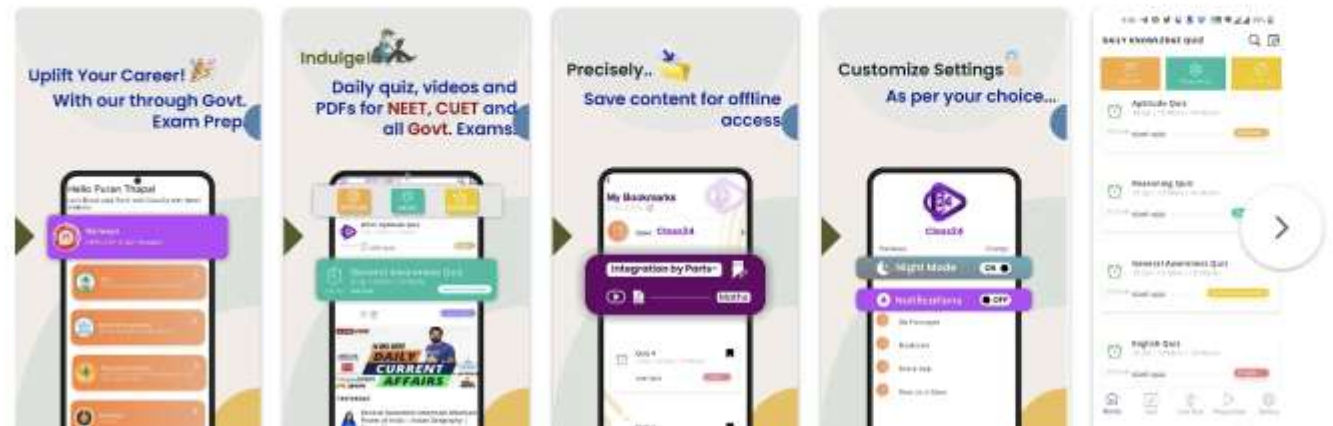
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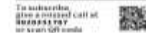


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Nihangs, Punjab residents oppose IIP, entry tax
Punjab's residents along the border with the hill State, Nihangs, truck operators, and drivers have united under Sangharsh Morcha to make their voices heard against the tax. ■ PAGE 2

About 6 crore names deleted in first year of SIIK
The special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which has so far led to the deletion of nearly six crore votes and triggered acrimony between the opposition and the Election Commission of India, has completed one year, as the exercise continues in 19 states, Union Territories. ■ PAGE 4

'Ruki-Zo Council's regret for killings is not enough'
An apex Naga students' body in Manipur on Friday said the 'so-called apology' issued by the Ruki-Zo Council on the killing of six Naga civilians was unacceptable. The All Naga Students' Association, Manipur, criticised the apex Ruki-Zo body for using a derogatory term while referring to the six slain people. ■ PAGE 4

'Students studying in CBSE Classes 7 to 9 can keep learning two foreign languages for now'
Students studying in Classes 7, 8 and 9 in Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) affiliated schools can continue learning foreign languages under the three-language policy until Class 10, sources in the Ministry of Education stated on Friday.

All eight accused in Ram Temple fund case sent to judicial custody

Around 780 lakh recovered from those arrested, says prosecution officer, close aides of the temple trust chief, Champat Rai, among those held. VHP denies reports of the chief resigning; bigwigs of the alleged scam protected, says Opposition in U.P.

MAYANK KUMAR
LUCKNOW

The eight people named as the accused in a fund-raising case regarding the alleged embezzlement of donations received at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya have been arrested and sent to judicial custody until Monday.

The eight accused will be produced before the Special Court dealing with corruption-related matters on Monday. A total of 779.80 lakh has been recovered from them, prosecution officer R.C. Verma told journalists outside the court in Ayodhya on Friday, where heavy police security was deployed.

The accused include close aides of Champat Rai, general secretary of the



Champat Rai, chief of the temple trust, during the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya in January 2023. Source: Saana

Shri Ram Jansambhavan Trust, who is said to have resigned from the post. However, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) social media head, Rakesh Pandey, denied such reports as fake news. The accused — Lakshmi Mishra, Anandulal Mishra, Manish Yadav, Ramasankar Yadav alias Tenu, Sub-

Cong. demands SC-monitored investigation

NEW DELHI The Congress on Friday demanded a Supreme Court-monitored investigation into the allegations of the embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya and called for immediate disbandment of the current temple trust. ■ PAGE 4

Uttar Pradesh Opposition parties claimed that, while the FIR accused trust employees, the trust bigwigs behind the alleged scam, such as Champat Rai, fellow SIKR trustee Anil Mishra, and temple construction in-charge Gopal Rao — have been protected by the BJP.

The FIR was registered on Thursday, after a preliminary investigation by a Special Investigation Team

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Govt. releases names of 6 personnel killed in Operation Sindoor

In the first official disclosure of military casualties from Operation Sindoor, the Centre on Friday published the names of six armed forces personnel who laid down their lives during the cross-border operation in May 2022.

The names of the six personnel, five from the Indian Army and one from the Indian Air Force, have been included in the Roll of Honour on the National War Memorial website. The names, personal son Rohan Major Pawan Kumar of Headquarters 10 Infantry Brigade, Rifleman Raju Kumar, Vik Chakra, of 4 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry; Lance Naik Jitendra Kumar of 5 Rifle Regiment; Agaveer Moud Ahmadani of 8th Light Regiment; Havildar Sandeep Kumar Singh of 237 Field Workshop Company; and

Sergeant Surendra Kumar, Vayu Medal, of 39 Wing. The names of the six men were released with the annual list of troops killed during various military operations in 2022. Their names will be inscribed on the Tyag Chakra (Circle of Sacrifice) at the National War Memorial in New Delhi.

CO-OP, BLADE DELAY ■ PAGE 4

Iran reasserts its right to control shipping in Strait of Hormuz after vessel hit

Iran reasserted its right on Friday to control shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and issued Gulf states against siding with the U.S. in a day after an oil tank on a ship near Oman highlighted the fragility of a preliminary deal to ease the Iran war.

Iran was responding to what it called an "interventionist, irresponsible and provocative" joint statement by the U.S. and its Gulf allies that rejected Iran's insistence that it could charge tolls on vessels transiting the Gulf. "Safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz cannot be guaranteed under ambiguous arrangements, partial bans or conditional passage" that does not take Iran's role as a coastal state into account, Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Ghaiforabadi said on X.

Underlining the risks facing shipping, Iranian state TV later reported that three foreign tankers attempting what it called "unilateral fuel passage" of the strait were turned back after being hit by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Friday by saying the U.S. military presence in the Gulf was the source of regional insecurity and division, and that the strait should be governed by Iran and Oman in line with the terms of the interim deal.

"We warn against the continuation of hostile and interventionist policies in the region," it said.

Tehran took a defensive tone of the waterway after U.S. warships struck an Iranian oil tanker on Friday, triggered the war, disrupting oil flows and cutting global energy markets and the wider economy.

All-India Maritime, top adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader, issued a warning to Washington's Gulf allies.

"The stability of the Persian Gulf Arab states is jeopardised by Iran's century-old mismanagement of the Strait of Hormuz... their strategic survival is at the

mercy of Tehran's tolerance," Mr. Velayati said.

Tehran's Foreign Ministry said earlier on Friday its Singapore-flagged ship Ever Lovedly had been hit close to Oman on Thursday by an "unknown object" while on a route recommended by the British navy agency UKMTO.

No one hurt Nobody was hurt in the incident and the ship later resumed its journey out of the strait. Two U.S. officials told Reuters that Iran had fired on the ship; Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Authority said it managed to avert the incident.

Tehran said the passage through unmonitored routes would be "the responsibility of the owner, operator, and vessel commander".

There was an immediate comment from the U.S. government. U.S. President Donald Trump warned this month that if Iran did not honour the interim deal, including reopening the strait, the U.S. would "go back to bombing the Islamic Republic."

Training time



Police personnel being trained for rescue and relief operations at Sangheri lake in Vidhaya, Yamhli, on Friday. The three-day programme is being held by the Yamhli Health Command Training School for 25 personnel. C. VIKRAMARAO

'Students studying in CBSE Classes 7 to 9 can keep learning two foreign languages for now'

MALINI PAREEKHA
NEW DELHI

Students studying in Classes 7, 8 and 9 in Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) affiliated schools can continue learning foreign languages under the three-language policy until Class 10, sources in the Ministry of Education stated on Friday.

The clarification comes almost a month after the CBSE stated that students in Class 9 must study three languages, of which two should be native to India, from July in the 2025-27 academic year.

This led to CBSE schools instructing their students who had opted for foreign languages like French, German, Spanish and so on to switch to a native lan-

guage, in some they are already studying English.

Strong pushback There are at least six lakh students who study French and 1.5 lakh students who study German in all schools across India, spread across various grades, including CBSE

schools. An official spokesperson from the German Embassy confirmed that, from July in the 2025-27 academic year, students in touch with the Government of India over the issue.

Sources also stated that there had been a pushback by German and French Embassies against the

Centre's three-language formula which will gradually lead to phasing out of foreign language teaching from CBSE schools by 2025-27, if not sooner.

Sources have clarified that the three-language formula will apply to students covering Class 9 who will have to study three languages, two of which will be native to India.

The CBSE circular led to protests from parents, students and teachers, who had approached Supreme Court against the abrupt switch, arguing that students in Class 9 who have already studied a foreign language for the past three to four years will find it very difficult to suddenly switch their language option.

CBSE is expected to re-

verse its May 15 circular which had mandated a three-language formula under the National Education Policy to be applied to Class 11 students, the source added.

The clarification comes over a week after the Supreme Court refused to grant interim relief on petitions challenging the implementation of the board's three-language policy for Class 9 students in 2025-27.

It is expected that CBSE will withdraw the latest circular in light of the controversy and will direct schools to gradually implement the three-language policy over five consecutive academic years up to 2026-27, rather than rolling it out for all classes from 2025-27.

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All eight accused in Ram Temple fund case sent to judicial custody

Around ₹80 lakh recovered from those arrested, says prosecution officer; close aides of the temple trust chief, Champat Rai, among those held; VHP denies reports of the chief resigning; big-wigs of the alleged scam protected, says Opposition in U.P.

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The eight people named as the accused in a first information report (FIR) regarding the alleged embezzlement of donations received at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya have been arrested and sent to judicial custody until Monday.

“The eight accused will be produced before the Special Court dealing with corruption-related matters on Monday. A total of ₹79.85 lakh has been recovered from them,” prosecution officer K.C. Verma told journalists outside the court in Ayodhya on Friday, where heavy police security was deployed.

The accused include close aides of Champat Rai, general secretary of the



Champat Rai, chief of the temple trust, during the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya in January 2023. SANDEEP SAXENA

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, who is said to have resigned from the post. However, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) social media head, Rakesh Pandey, denied such reports as fake news.

The accused – Lavkush Mishra, Anukalp Mishra, Manish Yadav, Ramashankar Yadav alias Tinnu, Sub-

hash Srivastava, Avinash Shukla, Rama Shankar Mishra, and Karunesh Pandey – have been booked on charges including theft, criminal breach of trust, cheating, and criminal conspiracy. “At the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, devotees deposited money in the donation boxes. The money was allegedly sto-

Cong. demands SC-monitored investigation

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday demanded a Supreme Court-monitored investigation into the allegations of the embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya and called for immediate disbandment of the current temple trust. » **PAGE 4**

len by employees of the trust,” the prosecution officer said. As per the FIR, the accused were responsible for counting the cash and valuables donated by devotees at the temple.

The FIR was registered on Thursday, after a preliminary investigation by a Special Investigation Team.

Uttar Pradesh Opposition parties claimed that, while the FIR accused trust employees, the real big-wigs behind the alleged scam – such as Mr. Champat Rai, fellow SRJTK trustee Anil Mishra, and temple construction in-charge Gopal Rao – have been protected by the BJP.

“We will launch a campaign against this massive corruption and attempt to protect powerful people,” said U.P. Congress chief Ajay Rai.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath vowed to enforce accountability. “Tampering with people’s faith cannot be tolerated. As soon as the SIT report was received, action was initiated immediately,” he said.

AT THE CENTRE OF THE ROW
» **PAGE 4**

Topic

Details

Main Development

All **8 accused** named in the FIR have been arrested and sent to **judicial custody** until Monday.

Money Recovered

Around **₹79.85 lakh (≈₹80 lakh)** has reportedly been recovered from those arrested.

Allegation

Donations made by devotees at the Ram Temple were allegedly misappropriated instead of being deposited properly into the trust's accounts.

Who is Accused?

According to the report, the accused were employees or persons associated with the temple trust who handled donation cash and valuables.

Charges

Theft, criminal breach of trust, cheating, and criminal conspiracy.

Investigation

An FIR was registered after a preliminary inquiry by a **Special Investigation Team (SIT)**.

Point

FIR (First Information Report)

Judicial Custody

Police Custody vs Judicial Custody

SIT (Special Investigation Team)

Criminal Breach of Trust (IPC/BNS equivalent provisions)

Importance

Formal complaint that initiates a criminal investigation.

The accused are kept in jail under orders of a magistrate, not in police custody.

Police custody is for interrogation; judicial custody is detention under court supervision.

A specialized team formed to investigate complex or sensitive cases.

Misappropriation of property entrusted to a person.

Parameter	Police Custody	Judicial Custody
Meaning	Accused remains under the physical custody of the police for investigation and interrogation.	Accused is kept in jail under the custody of the court (Judicial Magistrate) .
Purpose	Investigation, interrogation, recovery of evidence, identification of co-accused, etc.	To ensure the accused is available for trial while preventing unnecessary police control.
Custody By	Police	Jail authorities under the supervision of the court
Authority Ordering Custody	Judicial Magistrate	Judicial Magistrate
Maximum Initial Period	Up to 15 days from the date of first remand (can be continuous or in parts).	After police custody, judicial custody may continue up to 60 or 90 days depending on the offence during investigation.
Interrogation	Police can interrogate the accused.	Police cannot interrogate without obtaining permission from the court.
Place of Detention	Police Station / Police Lock-up	Judicial Prison / Jail
Risk of Coercion	Comparatively higher (hence greater judicial safeguards).	Comparatively lower as the accused is under jail administration.
Access to Lawyer	Lawyer is allowed as per legal safeguards, though not throughout interrogation.	Accused has the right to consult a lawyer according to law.
Bail	Depends on the nature of the offence and the court's discretion.	Bail can be sought from the appropriate court.
Control Over Accused	Police	Court through jail authorities
Applicable Stage	Early stage of investigation	After police custody or directly if police custody is not required

Arrest



Produced before Magistrate within 24 hours



└─▶ Police Custody (Maximum 15 days)



└─▶ Judicial Custody (Jail)



Investigation Continues



Charge Sheet Filed



Trial → Acquittal / Conviction

Provision

Details

Article 22(2)

Every arrested person must be produced before the nearest Magistrate within **24 hours** of arrest (excluding travel time).

Section 57, BNSS 2023 (*earlier Section 57, CrPC 1973*)

Police cannot detain an arrested person beyond **24 hours** without Magistrate's authorization.

Section 187, BNSS 2023 (*earlier Section 167, CrPC*)

Magistrate may authorize **police custody** or **judicial custody** during investigation.

Article 21

Protection of life and personal liberty; custodial rights flow from this constitutional guarantee.

Parameter	Details
Temple Name	Ram Mandir
Trust Managing Temple	Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra
Trust Formed	5 February 2020
Foundation Ceremony	5 August 2020
Pran Pratishtha	22 January 2024
Temple Location	Ayodhya
Construction Contractor	Larsen & Toubro
Project Management Consultant	Tata Consulting Engineers

Particular	Amount (Approx.)	Remarks
Total Donations Received (2020–2025)	₹3,000+ crore	Public donations from India and abroad. (Akashvani News)
Estimated Final Construction Cost	₹1,800–1,900 crore	Includes the main temple and associated works. (The Times of India)
Construction Cost Already Paid (early 2026)	₹1,600 crore+	Including GST. (The Times of India)
Funds Remaining (invested)	~₹2,100 crore	Kept largely as fixed deposits after construction spending. (Hindustan Times)
Interest Earned (Apr 2025–Feb 2026)	₹138.03 crore	From bank fixed deposits. (Hindustan Times)
Total Income (11 months)	₹220.81 crore	Donations + interest. (Hindustan Times)

Source	Amount
Donation Boxes (Hundi)	₹54.79 crore
Cash Counters	₹18.88 crore
Online Donations	₹8.33 crore
Foreign Donations (FCRA)	₹0.78 crore
Total Donations	₹82.78 crore (Hindustan Times)

Agency

Role

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth
Kshetra

Owner & Management

Larsen & Toubro

EPC Construction

Tata Consulting Engineers

Project Management

Design Associates Inc.

Design Support

Central Building Research Institute

Structural & technical support

'Students studying in CBSE Classes 7 to 9 can keep learning two foreign languages for now'

Maitri Porecha

NEW DELHI

Students studying in Classes 7, 8 and 9 in Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) affiliated schools can continue learning foreign languages under the three-language policy until Class 10, sources in the Ministry of Education stated on Friday.

The clarification comes over a month after CBSE stated that students in Class 9 must study three languages, of which two should be native to India, from July 1 in the 2026-27 academic year.

This led to CBSE schools instructing their students who had opted for foreign languages like French, German, Spanish and so on to switch to a native lan-



The CBSE is expected to reverse its May 15 circular which had mandated at least two Indian languages for Class 9 students. PTI

guage, in case they are already studying English.

Strong pushback

There are at least six lakh students who study French and 1.5 lakh students who study German in all schools across India spread across various grades, including CBSE

schools. An official spokesperson from the German Embassy confirmed that the diplomatic mission is in touch with the Government of India over the issue.

Sources also stated that there had been a pushback by German and French Embassies against the

Centre's three-language formula which will gradually lead to phasing out of foreign language teaching from CBSE schools by 2030-31, if not sooner.

Sources have clarified that the three-language formula will apply to students entering Class 6 who will have to study three languages, two of which will be native to India.

The CBSE circular led to protests from parents, students and teachers, who had approached Supreme Court against the abrupt switch, arguing that students in Class 9 who have already studied a foreign language for the past three to four years will find it very difficult to suddenly switch their language option.

CBSE is expected to re-

verse its May 15 circular which had mandated a three-language formula under the National Education Policy to be applied to Class 9 students, the sources added.

The clarification comes over a week after the Supreme Court refused to grant interim relief on petitions challenging the implementation of the board's three-language policy for Class 9 students in 2026-27.

It is expected that CBSE will withdraw the latest circular in light of the controversy and will direct schools to gradually implement the three-language policy over five consecutive academic years up to 2030-31, rather than rolling it out for all classes from 2026-27.

Topic	Details
Main Development	CBSE has clarified that students currently studying in Classes 7, 8 and 9 can continue learning foreign languages (such as French, German, Spanish, etc.) under the existing system until Class 10 .
Reason for Clarification	The earlier May 15 CBSE circular created confusion by requiring Class 9 students to study three languages , including two Indian languages if English was already one language.
Current Position	Existing students will not be forced to change their foreign language midway.
Future Implementation	The three-language policy will be implemented gradually , beginning with students entering Class 6 , and will be phased in over five academic years (up to 2030–31) .
Expected Action	CBSE is expected to withdraw or revise its earlier May 15 circular.

Component

Explanation

Total Languages

3 Languages

English

Can be one of the three

Indian Languages

At least **two** should be Indian languages (as per the phased implementation under NEP)

Foreign Language

May continue during the transition, but its long-term role will reduce as the policy is implemented.

Why Did CBSE Change Its Position?

Reason	Explanation
Student Concerns	Many students had studied French/German/Spanish for 3–4 years and changing suddenly would be unfair.
Parent & Teacher Opposition	Schools and parents objected to the abrupt transition.
Supreme Court Petition	The policy was challenged before the Supreme Court, though interim relief was not granted.
Diplomatic Concerns	German and French embassies reportedly raised concerns with the Government regarding the impact on foreign language education.

Key Numbers Mentioned

Data	Figure
Students studying French	Around 6 lakh
Students studying German	Around 1.5 lakh
Implementation period	2026–27 to 2030–31
Classes currently allowed to continue	7, 8 & 9 (until Class 10)

Date

15 May 2026

Following Weeks

Supreme Court

Latest Clarification

Event

CBSE issued circular implementing the new language policy for Class 9.

Widespread protests by schools, parents and students.

Petitions filed challenging implementation.

Existing students can continue foreign languages; implementation will be gradual.

Year

Development

1968 National Policy on Education

First introduced the Three-Language Formula.

1986 NPE

Continued the policy with modifications.

NEP 2020

Retained the formula but emphasized flexibility and no compulsory imposition of any language.

CBSE 2026

Gradual implementation beginning from Class 6, with transition till **2030–31**.

Iran reasserts its right to control shipping in Strait of Hormuz after vessel hit

Reuters
DUBAI/LONDON

Tehran reasserted its right on Friday to control shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and warned Gulf states against siding with the U.S., a day after an attack on a ship near Oman highlighted the fragility of a preliminary deal to end the Iran war.

Iran was responding to what it called an "interventionist, irresponsible and provocative" joint statement by the U.S. and six Gulf states that rejected Iran's insistence that it could charge tolls on vessels transiting the strait.

"Safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz cannot be guaranteed under ambiguous arrangements, parallel routes or decision-making that does not take Iran's role as a coastal state into account," Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said on X.

Underlining the risks facing shipping, Iranian state TV later reported that three foreign tankers attempting what it called an "unauthorised passage" of the strait were turned back after a warning from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Rubio in the Gulf

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio – wrapping up a tour of the Gulf to reassure nervous regional allies about the interim pact – told presspersons on Thursday that if Iran threatened or blocked ships in the strait, "we're going to have a problem".

In their joint statement, Mr. Rubio and the GCC called for "free, uncondi-



Perilous passage: Vessels at the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Musandam, Oman, on Friday. REUTERS

tional, and unrestricted navigation" in the strait without tolls or "attempts to assert control", and said a lasting peace must address Iran's ballistic missiles, drones and support for proxy groups.

Iran's Foreign Ministry responded on Friday by saying the U.S. military presence in the Gulf was the source of regional insecurity and division, and that the strait should be governed by Iran and Oman in line with the terms of the interim deal.

"We warn against the continuation of hostile and interventionist policies in the region," it said.

Tehran took effective control of the waterway after U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 triggered the war, disrupting oil flows and rattling global energy markets and the wider economy.

Ali Akbar Velayati, top adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader, issued a warning to Washington's Gulf allies.

"The stability of the Persian Gulf Arab states is indebted to Iran's century-long management of the Strait of Hormuz... their strategic survival is at the

mercy of Tehran's tolerance," Mr. Velayati said.

Taiwan's Evergreen Marine said earlier on Friday its Singapore-flagged ship Ever Lovely had been hit close to Oman on Thursday by an "unknown object" while on a route recommended by the British navy agency UKMTO.

No one hurt

Nobody was hurt in the incident and the ship later resumed its journey out of the strait. Two U.S. officials told Reuters that Iran had fired on the ship. Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Authority – established by Tehran to manage requests for ships to travel through the strait – said passage through unauthorised routes would be "the responsibility of the owner, operator, and vessel commander".

There was no immediate comment from the U.S. government.

U.S. President Donald Trump warned this month that if Iran did not honour the interim deal, including reopening the strait, the U.S. would probably go back to bombing the Islamic Republic.

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Topic

Details

Main Development

Iran has reaffirmed its authority over shipping in the **Strait of Hormuz** following an incident involving a commercial vessel near Oman.

Trigger

A ship sailing under the **Liberian flag** was reportedly hit by an unidentified object near Oman.

Iran's Stand

Iran warned that ships using routes it considers "unauthorised" do so at their own risk and insisted that navigation should respect its role as a coastal state.

Regional Response

The U.S. and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries rejected Iran's assertion that it can impose restrictions or collect tolls from ships passing through the strait.

Immediate Impact

No casualties were reported, and the vessel later resumed its journey.





Country/Region

China

India

Japan

South Korea

European Union

Gulf Countries

Dependence

Very High

High

Very High

Very High

Significant

Major export route



Aspect

Significance

Crude Oil Imports

A significant share of India's crude oil imports passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

LNG Imports

Qatar's LNG exports to India largely transit this route.

Energy Prices

Any disruption can increase India's import bill and fuel inflation.

Indian Diaspora

Millions of Indians live and work in Gulf countries connected by this maritime route.

Andhra Pradesh plans re-auction of Ramagiri gold blocks

Sambasiva Rao M.
AHABABAVI

The Andhra Pradesh government is preparing to re-auction the Ramagiri North and Ramagiri South Gold Blocks in Anaparthi taluqa (now district of Rayachoti) region, with a notice inviting tender.

The two gold-bearing blocks, located in Ramagiri taluqa, cover a total area of 2,000 hectares, comprising 1,000 hectares each in the Ramagiri North and Ramagiri South sectors.

The blocks are being offered under a composite license and have been allocated up to the G4 reconnaissance level by Mineral Exploration, Research and Innovation Trust.

The Ramagiri Gold Field has been mined since ancient times, with modern operations from 1925 to 1929 by firms managed by John Taylor and Sons of London.

Geological experts regard the Ramagiri Golden Stone Belt as one of the significant gold-bearing belts of the Eastern Ghats region.

The Hindu Group named 'Champion Publisher' of 2026

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Hindu Group has been named the 'Champion Publisher of the Year 2026' by the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IPRA), earning the title for the third time. The group topped the list with seven awards at the WAN-IPRA Digital Media Awards South Asia 2026.

The title is awarded to the publisher showcasing the highest number of wins at the annual awards, which recognise outstanding digital projects demonstrating innovation, audience engagement, journalistic excellence, and the effective use of technology.

The Hindu won a gold trophy for 'Best HR in the World' award, 'Best AI-driven News Product', 'Best of Chemical' for 'Best Marketing Campaign for News Brand', 'The Hindu



The Hindu Group members pose with their awards alongside other winners at the WAN-IPRA event in New Delhi. BY SCOUT24

site or App Relaunch', 'It also secured a silver for 'Written by Journalist', and 'Best in Counterintelligence'. Additionally, the publication took home three bronze awards: 'News of Chemical' for 'Best Marketing Campaign for News Brand', 'The Hindu

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India 2026 Conference in Delhi on Thursday.

"Our goal has always been to strive for the highest standards of journalistic excellence and ethics. It is heartening to receive recognition for that work. Winning this honour for the third time shows that every member of The Hindu Group is doing something right," Mr. Namaswami said.

WAN-IPRA is the world's largest international news media organisation, representing 3,000 news publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs, along with 40 publisher associations representing 18,000 publications across 120 countries.

The Digital Media Awards South Asia 2026 comprised 12 categories, with entries judged by digital media experts, editors, and industry leaders.

India's eastern borders affected by flow of opium from Myanmar: NCB

Neighbouring country emerges as alternative global opium source after ban on drugs in Afghanistan, says bureau, India's eastern borders through Manipur corridor are the most direct and porous entry point for this expanding production base

Shikha Bhat
NEW DELHI

Following the 2022 Taliban-imposed ban on drugs in Afghanistan, Myanmar has emerged as an alternative source of global opium supply and the consequences are already visible along India's eastern borders, through the Manipur corridor, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) said in its 2026 annual report.

The report, released on Friday by Home Minister Amit Shah, highlighted the fact that the movement of drugs from Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore is becoming the sharpest frontier exposure due to the enhanced production of drugs in Myanmar.

Porous border Myanmar border mechanisms, including the Frontier Movement Region (FMR) along the India-Myanmar border, have created conditions under which these states have transformed from peripheral transit zones to active staging grounds for distribution of narcotics into the Indian hinterland.



Illegal trader Myanmar's illicit opium production expanded by approximately 60% between 2022 and 2023, as

Myanmar's illicit opium cultivation expanded by approximately 80% between 2022 and 2023, according to the NCB report, with the area under poppy cultivation at 48,200 hectares.

India's eastern borders through the Manipur corridor are the most direct and porous entry point for this expanding production base, the report said.



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kg across the country. The other States where such recoveries were reported are Manipur (325 kg), Delhi (454 kg), Gujarat (308 kg) and Karnataka (664 kg).

Drugs-based trafficking from Myanmar has increased over the past five years, particularly into Punjab.

In 2025, there were 305 such cases, resulting in the seizure of 408 kg of narcotics, a 96% increase in quantity over 2024. Punjab alone accounted for 298 such cases and 461 kg seized, primarily heroin (649.754 kg and methamphetamine 10.818 kg). Overall, Punjab accounted for 98% of total seizures, which amounted to 3,507

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Amendments to anti-drug law will address emerging challenges, says Amit Shah

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday that the Department of Revenue would amend the Narcotic, Drug and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and asked States to submit suggestions to address existing loopholes.

The NDPS Act and Rules will be updated to address emerging challenges in regulatory gaps while professionalising the enforcement approach towards persons consuming drugs or suffering from addiction, according to the Union Minister. The entire process of identifying persons involved in crime, freezing them, seizing them, and ensuring they do not return to the street will be made evidence-based, and equipped with modern technology, the Minister said.

Regarding the vision document, he said that the next three years will decide "whether addiction will remain one of our worst social ills". The document provides a three-pronged national strategy to substantially dismantle the narcotics drug



Home Minister Amit Shah releases the vision document on narcotics control during the 10th apex-level meeting of the NCB. BY SCOUT24

ecosystem through coordinated action against trafficking, abuse, illicit finance and organised criminal networks. More than 40 Ministries, Central agencies, State governments, district administrations, educational institutions, civil society organisations and citizens will work together under a common national framework against drugs. Enforcement efforts will shift from targeting individual carters to identifying and dismantling complete drug trafficking networks, the document stated.

He said that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was working towards establishing exclusive NDPS courts to ensure speedy convictions in major cases. The entire process of identifying persons involved in crime, freezing them, seizing them, and ensuring they do not return to the street will be made evidence-based, and equipped with modern technology, the Minister said.

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Licence of pharma firm cancelled over Kota deaths

Pravin Trivedi of India
KOTA

The World Health Organisation has sought information from the Central government on the alleged supply of spurious oxytocin injections to government hospitals in Kota, leading to the deaths of two women following Caesarean deliveries in May.

The manufacturing licences of units of Jackson Laboratories in Punjab and Hinanadi Pradesh were cancelled following joint inspections by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation and the respective State drug regulators. Senior officials in the Union Health Ministry said the Centre has sought a detailed report from the Rajasthan government.

The action comes amid an investigation into the deaths of postpartum women and newborn infants at some hospitals in Kota.

Four Odisha officials suspended for errors in school textbooks

Natvaraj Kumar
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Friday placed four senior officials including former director of State Council of Education, Research and Training (SCERT) Manoj Padhi under suspension and took disciplinary action against six persons holding them responsible for over 2,000 mistakes in textbooks being taught in classes 1 to 8.

The action was taken following the submission of an inquiry report by a committee constituted under the chairmanship of the Development Commissioner to examine errors in school textbooks. The committee pointed out errors totalling over 2,000 in textbooks printed for the 2025-27 academic year, the government announced. It also directed the suspension of four officials and the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against six others.

No decision on low-alcohol drinks yet: Kerala Minister

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The decision on selling low-alcohol beverages in Kerala will be based solely on the liquor policy, which is yet to be prepared. External Minister M. Liju said.

Addressing a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday, he said that the Budget proposal for tax cuts on low-alcohol beverages was under consideration. This future possibility is not a decision to be implemented immediately.

As per the information available to me, only after the government comes out with a comprehensive liquor policy will a final decision on the sales of low-alcohol beverages be taken," he said.

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Drugs on credit is pushing substance abuse in Manipur: CM

The Hindu Bureau
IMPHAL

Drug traffickers not only changed their routes in Manipur after the ethnic crisis began in May 2023 but they also adopted a credit policy to push consumption during troubled times, Chief Minister Nungshiething Ching said.

Addressing an event organised by the State's Narcotics Control Department to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, he said, many youth in Manipur start using heroin and other drugs in the 1970s.

"At that time, heroin was extremely expensive, and it was largely affordable only to the children from rich families. But things have changed now," he said.

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India's eastern borders affected by flow of opium from Myanmar: NCB

Neighbouring country emerges as alternative global opium source after ban on drugs in Afghanistan, says bureau; India's eastern borders through Manipur corridor are the most direct and porous entry point for this expanding production base

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Following the 2022 Taliban-imposed ban on drugs in Afghanistan, Myanmar has emerged as an alternative source of global opium supply and the consequences are already visible along India's eastern borders, through the Manipur corridor, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) said in its 2026 annual report.

The report, released on Friday by Home Minister Amit Shah, highlighted the fact that the northeastern States of Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland are bearing the sharpest frontline exposure due to the enhanced production of drugs in Myanmar.

Porous border

Porous border mechanisms, including the Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the India-Myanmar border, have created conditions under which these States have transitioned from peripheral transit zones to active staging grounds for distribution of narcotics into the Indian hinterland.



Illegal trade: Myanmar's illicit opium cultivation expanded by approximately 56% between 2021 and 2023. AP

Myanmar's illicit opium cultivation expanded by approximately 56% between 2021 and 2023, according to the NCB report, with the area under poppy cultivation reaching 45,200 hectares.

India's eastern borders through the Manipur corridor are the most direct and porous entry point for this expanding production base, the report said.

"Myanmar's Golden Triangle has expanded as both an opiate supplier and a dominant methamphetamine (Yaba tablets) hub. The convergence, primarily in areas controlled by ethnic armed groups in Shan State, has created a poly-drug production. The Manipur corridor, through

which India's National Highway no. 102 passes, is the primary land entry point for both heroin and methamphetamine tablets," it said.

The second major trafficking corridor enters India through Champhai in Mizoram, which shares close proximity with Myanmar's Chin State.

Drugs are smuggled through unfenced and porous stretches of the border and routed towards Silchar in Assam's Barak Valley through Aizawl and adjoining road networks, the report added.

In 2025, Mizoram accounted for 1,477 kg of seized amphetamine-type stimulants, out of total seizures amounting to 3,485

kg across the country. The other States where such recoveries were reported are Manipur (535 kg), Delhi (454 kg), Gujarat (308 kg) and Karnataka (164 kg).

Drone-based trafficking

On the other side of the country, despite the Taliban's 2022 crackdown, which reduced Afghan opium production by 93% from its peak, around 13,200 tonnes of pre-ban narcotics are sustaining the trafficking pipelines and making their way into India through the western border.

The NCB said that drone-based drug trafficking from across the Pakistan border has seen a five-fold increase over the past five years, particularly into Punjab.

In 2025, there were 305 such cases, resulting in the seizure of 468 kg of narcotics, a 96% increase in quantity over 2024. Punjab alone accounted for 298 such cases and 461 kg seized, primarily heroin (449.751 kg) and methamphetamine (9.018 kg). Overall, Punjab accounted for 58% of total seizures, which amounted to 3,567

kg across the country.

"The scale of this threat is underscored by the growth trajectory: from just 3 incidents in 2021, incidents surged to 35 in 2022, 28 in 2023, before accelerating sharply to 178 incidents in 2024 and 305 incidents in 2025, a 100-fold increase in incident count over five years," the report said.

This exponential rise reflects the growing operational maturity of trafficking networks using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to circumvent traditional border controls, the NCB said. Additional incidents were reported in Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir.

"The South Asian arm [of the drug trade via Afghanistan] flows through Pakistan into India via both the land frontier in Punjab and Rajasthan, and the maritime frontier along the Gujarat and Maharashtra coastlines, the latter a route of increasing concern given its use of fishing vessels and coastal craft that operate below the detection threshold of standard maritime surveillance," the NCB said.



Topic

Main Development

Reason

Most Affected Indian Region

Report Released By

Released By

Details

The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** has warned that **Myanmar has emerged as a major global source of illicit opium**, increasing drug trafficking into India's northeastern states.

After the **Taliban banned opium cultivation in Afghanistan (2022)**, production shifted significantly towards Myanmar.

Manipur corridor and other northeastern states due to porous borders.

Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Annual Report 2026.

Union Home Minister **Amit Shah**.









SHADOWS OF THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE



INDIA

MANIPUR

MIZORAM

MYANMAR

Laos

Thailand

Reason	Explanation
Afghanistan Ban (2022)	Taliban's crackdown reduced Afghan opium production by about 93% .
Shift in Global Supply	Drug syndicates increasingly shifted cultivation to Myanmar.
Civil Conflict	Instability in Myanmar allows illegal cultivation and trafficking.
Golden Triangle	Myanmar remains part of one of the world's largest narcotics-producing regions.

Key Findings of the NCB Report

Indicator	Details
Growth in Myanmar's Opium Cultivation	Increased by 56% between 2021 and 2023 .
Area under Poppy Cultivation	Around 45,200 hectares .
Major Entry Route	Manipur Corridor .
Second Entry Route	Champhai (Mizoram) bordering Myanmar's Chin State.
Major Drugs	Heroin, Methamphetamine (Yaba tablets), Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS).

Why India's Northeast is Vulnerable

State	Reason
Manipur	Most direct and porous land corridor.
Mizoram	Shares border with Myanmar's Chin State.
Nagaland	Long international border.
Assam	Transit route through Barak Valley.

Factors Increasing Trafficking

- **Free Movement Regime (FMR)** along the India–Myanmar border (currently under review/restrictions).
- Dense forests and difficult terrain.
- Presence of armed ethnic groups.
- Weak surveillance in remote border areas.

Indicator	Figure
Drone-based trafficking cases	305
Total narcotics seized	468 kg
Punjab cases	298
Heroin seized in Punjab	449.751 kg
Methamphetamine seized	9.018 kg

Drug Seizures in Northeast (2025)

State	Quantity Seized
Mizoram	1,477 kg
Manipur	535 kg
Delhi	454 kg
Gujarat	308 kg
Karnataka	164 kg

IN BRIEF

Kolkata warehouse collapse toll hits 16; search continues

With five more workers reported dead in Kolkata's Taratala warehouse collapse, the toll has increased to 16 on Friday. Three persons were taken out from the accident site on Friday morning and were declared dead at the hospital. Two workers succumbed to injuries at a State-run health facility over the past 24 hours. According to the police, 33 people have been rescued from the accident site, of which 10 workers have died, and 17 are being administered treatment in the State-run health facility. Rescue operations are being carried out at the site by NDRF personnel.

Pune fort murder: CM assures speedy justice to victim's kin

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on Friday assured the family of Eshan Agarwal, who was allegedly pushed to death from Lohagad Fort by his fiancée and her lover, that the government would ensure strict punishment to those responsible and spare no effort in securing justice. Mr. Fadnis also assured the Agarwal family's demand to try the case in a fast-track court. Eshan's father, Vishal Agarwal, met the Chief Minister in Pune and sought justice for his son. Eshan's fiancée Smita Gupta (20) and her lover Chetan Chaudhary (22) are accused of pushing Eshan off a cliff at Lohagad Fort, located in Marol taluka of Pune district, on June 18.

CM, L-G join Muharram processions in Kashmir

The Hindu Bureau
BHEENAI

Muharram processions were held across the Kashmir Valley on Friday to mark Ashura. The solemn day commemorates the martyrdom of Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, who was killed in the Battle of Karbala in the 7th century. In Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah joined the mourners. Leaders of Opposition parties also joined the processions. The mourners assembled early in the morning at Srinagar's Gulshan Bagh and took part in the processions leading up to Zafidial in the old city. The mourners marched through the streets as they wailed and performed chest beating in a show of grief.

Govt. asks hospitals to publish post-transplant survival data

Data being collected to reveal success rate of transplant surgeries in various hospitals and ensure patients make informed choices; registered hospitals must display the data on their homepage

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry has asked the State governments to direct registered transplant hospitals to reveal post-transplant survival data and publish the same on their respective websites.

The data are being collected for the first time on such a scale to reveal the success rate of transplant surgeries, especially kidney, lung and heart transplants, and lifespan of those who receive the organs. The results are expected to enable patients requiring transplant to take a decision on make a choice. The hospitals are asked to strictly adhere to informed consent requirements and ensure that all relevant information regarding transplant procedures, risks, and outcomes is adequately disclosed to patients and their families.

In a note to the Health Secretary of the States and Union Territories, the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation



Registered transplant hospitals have been told to display the crucial data on the home page of their websites. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

NOTTO, which functions under the Directorate-General of Health Services, referred to a letter written by Dakshina Kannada MP Brinjankkavil Suresh Kumar to enhance transparency and accountability of kidney transplantation outcomes. The MP had emphasised the need for tracking long-term transplant survival data, including graft survival, complications, and mortality, as well as disclosure of post-transplant survival data by hospitals and strict adherence to informed consent and patient confidentiality protocols.

The NOTTO maintains the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Registry, which includes details of any donor and recipient. Its Director, Anil Kumar, said in the note that regular and comprehensive reporting of post-transplant data, three years and five years, will be difficult to collate as there is no mechanism for such a follow-up, he said. "Deaths post-transplant happen due to a variety of reasons such as age, comorbidities and other risk factors. Even if post-survival data are shared by hospitals due to a variety of reasons such as age, comorbidities and other risk factors, it will be challenging to authenticate the veracity of the claims," he said.

The data hospitals have been told to publish have been held on June 28, 2012, in Varanasi during the present-day Telangana. The exhibits will highlight his leadership during a critical phase in India's history and his role in introducing the landmark economic reforms of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation that transformed the nation's economic landscape. The exhibition will explore Rao's multi-faceted personality as a scholar, freedom fighter, reformer, and visionary statesman. Visitors will gain insights into his contributions to governance, diplomacy, economic transformation, and nation-building, as well as his intellectual and literary pursuits.

Exhibition to pay tribute to legacy of Narasimha Rao

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister's Museum and Library (PMMML) will celebrate the 20th birth anniversary of the former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao on Saturday with an exhibition showcasing a collection of rare photographs, official documents, speeches, correspondence and archival material tracing his journey in public life. As a part of its regular activities, the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya (Prime Minister's Museum and Library) in New Delhi showcases the lives, vision and contributions of Prime Ministers since Independence. Rao started celebrating his birth anniversaries.

The exhibition, through photographs and audiovisual presentations, will provide visitors a deeper understanding of the life, vision and legacy of Rao. It aims to celebrate the era during legacy of the statesman often remembered as the architect of modern, globalised India, a senior proponent of the culture industry said. The exhibition will be open to visitors from June 27 at the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya.



Late Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. IAS PRAKASH

TH CROSSWORD 14831
(set by Satej)

A crossword puzzle grid with some letters filled in. The grid is 15x15. Filled letters include: Row 1: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 2: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 3: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 4: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 5: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 6: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 7: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 8: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 9: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 10: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 11: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 12: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 13: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 14: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 15: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G.

- ACROSS**
7 Pulling out nose from friendly resident (6)
8 Unmarried woman turns mellow with husband (8)
9 Joke outside hospital rooms maybe to get call component (10)
10 Reverend hiding? Always (8)

TH CROSSWORD 14831
(set by Satej)

A crossword puzzle grid with some letters filled in. The grid is 15x15. Filled letters include: Row 1: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 2: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 3: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 4: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 5: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 6: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 7: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 8: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 9: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 10: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 11: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 12: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 13: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 14: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G. Row 15: 1: S, 2: P, 3: R, 4: I, 5: N, 6: G, 7: I, 8: N, 9: G, 10: I, 11: N, 12: G, 13: I, 14: N, 15: G.

- DOWN**
1 Song from soldier near barbers (6)
2 Woman with drunk rep leaving beer parlour, collapsed (8)
3 Tennis company into manufacturing (8)
4 Government under stall, fresh invite to surrender (8, 2)
5 Republican occupying property in state (8)
6 Message group about member noting suitably (8)
7 Get over ideas perhaps for CD, say (7, 8)
8 Get of carpeting changed, nothing new (8, 9)
9 Liberal, a colport without home causing tears (8)
10 Mink clear-headed fish basking English (8)
11 Mosaic outside ding, painted grey (2, 4)
12 Promise of ultimately top school with advantage (8)
13 Fish eating doctor in plain (6)

NFSA amendments: 7 kg of foodgrains for a person, and maximum 35 kg for a household

EXPLAINER

A.M. Ramesh
NEW DELHI

The story so far: The Union Food and Public Distribution Department on Wednesday published a draft of the proposed amendments to the National Food Security Act (NFSA). The draft is uploaded on the department's website. The public can comment on the amendments till July 13.

The amendment: A new provision in Section 3 of the National Food Security Act, 2013, proposes that every person belonging to households covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) shall be entitled to 7 kg of foodgrains every month to a maximum of 35 kg per household. For AAY cardholders, the allocation will be free of any

charges. Earlier, it was 35 kg per AAY household, irrespective of the number of members in the household.

Reason: The reason the Union government has given in the notice, along with the draft amendment, is that the existing household-based entitlement under the AAY, though intended as a protective measure for the most vulnerable families, results in significant inequities, depending upon the size of the household.

"Smaller families receive a lower per-capita entitlement, whereas larger households receive a lower per-capita entitlement, which may further be the entitlement available to priority households," the notice adds. The government maintains that the aim and purpose are to remove "intra-category inequities,



Artisans have demanded allocation of 7 kg per person. PHOTO: ISTOCK

allocation of 35 kg per AAY household must continue. They argue that if the government wants to base the allocation on the recommendations of the Indian Council of Medical Research, then the pulses and oilseed oil must also be provided. "The amendment would bring the poor down to buy essentials at the market rate, so the government must provide pulses or cooking oil free," Mr. Talwar added.

SUDOKU

A 9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers filled in. The grid is 9x9. Filled numbers include: Row 1: 3, 1, 8, 7, 4. Row 2: 9, 6. Row 3: 6, 9, 5, 6, 2, 9. Row 4: 1, 3, 4, 7, 1, 7, 9. Row 5: 1, 6. Row 6: 5, 2, 9, 6, 7. Row 7: 4, 9, 7, 8, 6, 3, 1, 4, 2. Row 8: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 4, 1, 6, 5. Row 9: 4, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 1, 9, 7.

A 9x9 grid for a puzzle titled "Solutions to yesterday's Sudoku". The grid contains numbers and some empty cells. The numbers include: Row 1: 4, 9, 7, 8, 6, 3, 1, 4, 2. Row 2: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 4, 1, 6, 5. Row 3: 4, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 1, 9, 7. Row 4: 1, 3, 4, 7, 1, 7, 9. Row 5: 1, 6. Row 6: 5, 2, 9, 6, 7. Row 7: 4, 9, 7, 8, 6, 3, 1, 4, 2. Row 8: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 4, 1, 6, 5. Row 9: 4, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 1, 9, 7.

FAITH
Mystique of Vettudaiyal

The power of a local deity is a subliminal reality when it comes to faith. Local legends hold a powerful sway over communities that are large in number but outside the elitist spectrum. Spiritual speakers acknowledge this frequency and in fact attribute the local deity, a folk, as a legendary manifestation of Ambal, Thayar, Varahi, Parvati, etc., and of Shiva, and Vishnu as Ayyappa, Kartikeyaswami, etc. To the faithful, they are simply their everyday protectors. The Vettudaiyal temple in Arinjankudal village of Tamil Nadu's Sivagangai district boasts of one such legend. Udayaiyal, a 12-year-old girl, herding cattle was martyred when confronted by British mercenaries. The local king, Marthti Vaduganatha Udayaiyal, was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. He was ambushed by the same mercenaries, since he refused to bow to the British who were attempting to colonise the region and remained patriotic. After the king's death, his wife Veda Nachiyar carried forward his political legacy. On one occasion when she was chased by the mercenaries, the legendary queen took shelter off a fork of a road and the pursuers sought to know her whereabouts from the young Udayaiyal herding cattle there. Udayaiyal refused to divulge any information and was martyred. Veda Nachiyar built a shrine for the girl eight years later. By then the girl, Vettudaiyal (vettu = udder) - a strike on the cow who possesses every thing) had become a legend, a protector of the masses. The legend grew over the centuries and to this day, people continue to appeal to her for grace, for resolution of their problems and for everyday protection.

NFSA amendments: 7 kg of foodgrains for a person, and maximum 35 kg for a household

EXPLAINER

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

The story so far: The Union Food and Public Distribution Department on Wednesday published a draft of the proposed amendments to the National Food Security Act (NFSA). The draft is uploaded on the department's website. The public can comment on the amendments till July 13.

The amendment

A new provision in Section 3 of the National Food Security Act, 2013, proposes that every person belonging to households covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) shall be entitled to 7 kg of foodgrains every month to a maximum of 35 kg per household. For AAY cardholders, this allocation will be free of any

charges. Earlier, it was 35 kg per AAY household, irrespective of the number of members in the household.

Reason

The reason the Union government has given in the notice, along with the draft amendment, is that the existing household-based entitlement under the AAY, though intended as a protective measure for the most vulnerable families, results in significant inequities depending upon the size of the household.

"Smaller households receive a higher per-capita entitlement, whereas larger households receive a lower per-capita entitlement, which may fall below the entitlement available to priority households," the notice adds. The government maintains that the aim and purpose are to remove "intra-category inequities,



Activists have demanded allocation of 14 kg per person.

provide for more rational foodgrain allocation and better align entitlements with nutritional requirements."

Criticism

Certain non-BJP-ruled States and activists of the Right to Food Campaign have voiced concerns over the amendment. Kerala Food Minister Anoop Jacob told presspersons that the State government would write to the Union government against the proposed amendment. He said the

allocation of 35 kg per AAY household must continue. The removal of this would result in decreased allocation to States such as Kerala, he added.

Anuradha Talwar, an office-bearer of the Right to Food Campaign, said the amendment would bring a "North-South divide" in foodgrain allocation. She said families in the South had fewer people than those in North India and smaller families would get less allocations. "Also the number of AAY families has not been revised as the Census was delayed. A large section of the population, who must come under AAY, are not getting the benefits of the Food Security Act despite the increase in population," she said, adding that instead of increasing the allocation, the government is decreasing it.

Another issue is that the activists have been de-

manding allocation of 14 kg per person. They argue that if the government wants to base the allocation on the recommendations of the Indian Council of Medical Research, then pulses and edible oil must also be provided. "The poorest of the poor doesn't have market access to buy essentials at the market rate. So the government must provide pulses or cooking oil for them," Ms. Talwar added.

The next step

After considering the comments from the public, the government is likely to place a fresh draft before the State governments and other departments. After that, a final draft will be brought to Parliament. Since the matter is politically sensitive, the government is likely to take careful steps as elections to States such as Uttar Pradesh are round the corner.

Topic

Details

Main Development

The Union Government has released a **draft amendment** to the **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** for public consultation.

Major Proposal

Every beneficiary under the **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** would receive **7 kg of foodgrains per person per month**, subject to a **maximum of 35 kg per household**.

Current Status

Draft amendment; public comments invited before final approval.

Public Consultation Deadline

13 July (as mentioned in the report).

Existing Provision

Every **AAY household** receives **35 kg/month**, irrespective of family size.

Household-based entitlement



Free of cost

Proposed Amendment

Every eligible **person** receives **7 kg/month**, with a **maximum of 35 kg per household**.

Person-based entitlement (with a household cap)

Continues to remain free of cost



Family Size	Existing System	Proposed System
2 members	35 kg	14 kg (7 × 2)
3 members	35 kg	21 kg
4 members	35 kg	28 kg
5 members	35 kg	35 kg
6 members	35 kg	35 kg (maximum cap)

Why is the Government Proposing This Change?

Government's Reason	Explanation
Reduce inequity	Smaller households currently receive a much higher quantity per person than larger households.
Rational allocation	Shift towards a per-person entitlement aligned with nutritional needs.
Better targeting	Ensure more equitable distribution among beneficiaries.

Concerns Raised

Stakeholder	Concern
Kerala Government	Large reduction in foodgrain allocation to states with many small AAY households.
Right to Food Campaign	Could create a North–South divide , as southern states generally have smaller family sizes.
Activists	The number of AAY families has not been revised due to the delayed Census, excluding many deserving households.
Nutrition Experts	Demand inclusion of pulses and edible oil , not just cereals, to improve nutritional security.

Possible Impact

Families That May Receive Less

Household Size

Impact

1–4 members

Allocation may reduce compared with the present system.

Families Unaffected

Household Size

Impact

5 or more members

Continue receiving **35 kg/month** (maximum limit).

Feature

Year Enacted

Objective

Implementing Ministry

Coverage

Legal Right

Details

2013

Provide legal entitlement to subsidised foodgrains to eligible households.

Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Food & Public Distribution).

Up to **75% of the rural** and **50% of the urban** population (based on Census 2011).

Makes access to subsidised foodgrains a statutory entitlement for eligible beneficiaries.

Beneficiary Categories under NFSA

Category	Entitlement
Priority Households (PHH)	5 kg foodgrains per person per month.
Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)	Presently 35 kg per household per month; draft proposes 7 kg per person, capped at 35 kg per household.

About Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)

Feature	Details
Launch Year	2000
Launched By	Government of India
Objective	Provide highly subsidised foodgrains to the poorest of the poor households.
Target Group	Economically most vulnerable families identified by States/UTs.

IIT Bombay announces its first-ever overseas sub-campus in US

Pallavi Smart

Mumbai, June 26

THE INDIAN Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay on Friday announced its first ever sub-campus outside India, in the US, which will be in collaboration with the State University of New York (SUNY) at Old Westbury.

Marking its first expansion outside of India, the premier technology institute plans to set-up the engineering education wing for US-based public university which has been offering various courses in streams such as Arts, Science, Business etc.

Beginning with offering certificate courses from 2027, the institute plans to develop full-fledged degree programmes in future, which would be open for the global student population, including those in US and India.

"Through a Letter of Intent (LoI) signed by Director of IIT Bombay Prof Shireesh Kedare and the President of SUNY Old Westbury Dr Timothy E Sams, the two institutions have agreed to partner in the development of new educational and research opportunities that would be offered on the Long Island, New York, campus," stated the media release issued by the institute.

It added apart from work towards creating new academic offerings at all levels in science and engineering that will be focused on emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, this association involves developing plans for collaborative research activities.

Speaking about the develop-

ment, in a virtual press conference Prof Kedare said that this is a major milestone for the institute. He said it is different from various existing joint-degrees and exchange programmes, "With collaboration we will offer our courses on US land," he said.

IIT Bombay will focus on areas such as AI, sustainability and clean technology to offer courses at this sub-campus. "These will be certificate courses which can begin from 2027. Whereas complete programmes will start in due course," said Prof Kedare, highlighting that admission to courses offered at the sub-campus will not be through JEE-Advanced.

Responding to questions on why the institute chose to launch its overseas academic offering through a collaboration instead of establishing an independent campus, Prof. Kedare said, "Setting up an entirely new campus would have required us to acquire land and obtain various approvals. By partnering with an existing university in the US, we can avoid formalities and concentrate on developing courses and academic programmes."

SUNY Old Westbury President Timothy Sams said, "IIT Bombay is recognised as a world-class institution. We are excited to establish a direct partnership that advances teaching, innovation... and engineering with the goal of creating a robust IIT Bombay presence on our campus, preparing the next generation of leaders who will fuel success across the world."

Topic

Details

Main Development

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay has announced its **first overseas sub-campus** in the **United States**.

Partner Institution

State University of New York at Old Westbury

Location

Old Westbury, New York (Long Island).

Significance

First time IIT Bombay is establishing an academic campus outside India.

Initial Launch

Certificate courses from 2027.

Future Plan

Expansion into **full-fledged degree programmes** for global students.

Feature

Details

Mode

Collaborative sub-campus with SUNY Old Westbury (not an independent IIT campus).

Courses Initially

Certificate programmes.

Future Courses

Undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes.

Major Focus Areas

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Sustainability, Clean Technology, Engineering.

Research

Joint research projects and innovation initiatives.

Student Base

Open to students from the **US, India and other countries.**

Why a Collaborative Campus Instead of an Independent Campus?

Reason	Explanation
Faster Implementation	Avoids lengthy approvals and land acquisition.
Lower Cost	Uses existing university infrastructure.
Academic Collaboration	Enables joint teaching, research and faculty exchange.
Global Recognition	Strengthens IIT Bombay's international presence.

What IIT Bombay Said

Official	Statement
Prof. Shireesh Kedare (Director, IIT Bombay)	Called it a major milestone for IIT Bombay's global expansion.
Prof. Timothy E. Sams (President, SUNY Old Westbury)	Described the partnership as an opportunity to strengthen education, innovation and engineering collaboration.

Feature

Details

Full Name

State University of New York at Old Westbury

System

State University of New York (SUNY)

Location

Old Westbury, Long Island, New York, USA

Type

Public University

Academic Fields

Arts, Science, Business, Education and Technology

TEL AVIV, BEIRUT HAD BEEN DISCUSSING POTENTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON

Israel, Lebanon sign framework peace deal after US-brokered talks

Talks aim to end fighting between Israel, Hezbollah

Reuters
Jerusalem, Beirut,
Washington, June 26

ISRAEL AND Lebanon signed a framework agreement in Washington on Friday following several days of talks to secure an end to fighting between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah militants. Lebanese Ambassador Nada Moawad and her Israeli counterpart Yechiel Leiter signed the trilateral document with the US at the State Department in Washington.

"Today we've taken the first step in what will be a difficult journey, without a doubt, but an important and an essential and a necessary one," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said before the agreement was inked.

The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah broke out when the armed group fired at Israel on March 2, days after the US and Israel attacked Iran.

The Hezbollah attacks triggered Israeli air and ground attacks that have killed more than



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, State Department Counselor Daniel Holler, Israeli Ambassador Yechiel Leiter and Lebanese Ambassador Nada Hamadeh sign a framework deal in Washington, on Friday. REUTERS

4,000 people in Lebanon and displaced more than a million.

The officials did not provide details of the framework deal and did not say how its terms would differ from those included in an April 16 ceasefire deal that preceded several rounds of US-brokered Israel-Lebanon talks.

"The trilateral framework we signed today is a first step on the road to restoring Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity,

securing a permanent and final cessation of hostilities, enabling our people to go back to their land, and allowing all Lebanese to live in peace, security, and prosperity," Moawad said.

Leiter praised Moawad for negotiating like a "lioness."

"In this performance-based trilateral framework agreement, Iran is out, Hezbollah is out, and the road to peace between Israel and Lebanon is in," he said.

They did not take questions

from reporters.

Israel's death toll from this round of hostilities with Hezbollah includes at least 32 soldiers and four Israeli civilians. Hezbollah does not release figures on its war dead. Reuters reported on May 4 that several thousand Hezbollah fighters had been killed in the war.

The talks in Washington have included discussions on a proposal for Israeli forces to hand some of the territory they

occupied in southern Lebanon to Lebanon's military.

A State Department official told Reuters on Thursday that Israel had agreed to pull back from some of that territory, something Israeli and Lebanese officials denied.

Before the talks resumed this week, Israel and Hezbollah agreed to halt fire even as Israel kept troops in occupied southern Lebanon -- territory it describes as a "buffer zone" aimed at thwarting Hezbollah attacks on northern Israel.

Violence has persisted since the ceasefire, with Israel saying on Friday its troops had struck and killed what the military described as seven Hezbollah members who were operating near the territory it is occupying. Reuters could not confirm this.

Israeli forces dropped leaflets over the southern Lebanese town of Mansouri on Friday ordering residents to leave, Lebanese state media reported, the first such order issued since the latest ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah took effect.

A senior Lebanese military official said Israel had recently added Mansouri to its occupation zone. The official said Lebanese farmers had continued to enter and leave the town, but had not been living there.

Topic

Details

Main Development

Israel and Lebanon signed a **framework peace agreement** in Washington, D.C. after U.S.-mediated negotiations.

Mediator

United States

Objective

To move towards ending hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah.

Agreement Type

Framework agreement (broad roadmap), not a final peace treaty.

Venue

U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C.

Objective

Explanation

Permanent Ceasefire

Lay the foundation for ending armed conflict.

Restoration of Stability

Improve peace and security along the Israel–Lebanon border.

Territorial Discussions

Address issues related to Israeli military presence in southern Lebanon.

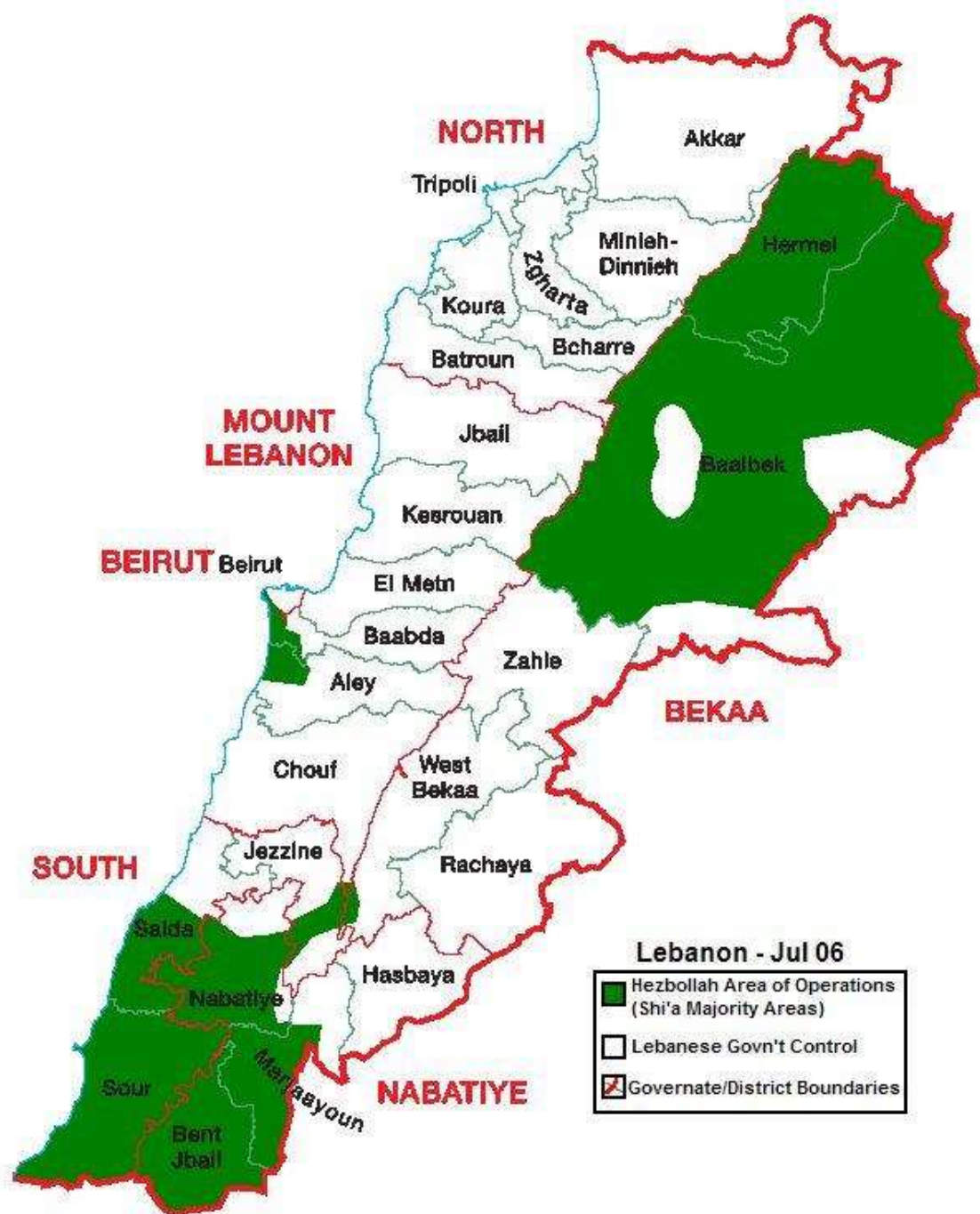
Civilian Return

Facilitate the return of displaced populations.

Further Negotiations

Serve as the basis for future detailed agreements.





NORTH

Akkar

Tripoli

Minieh-Dinnieh

Hermel

Koura

Zgharta

Bcharre

Batroun

Jbail

Baalbek

MOUNT LEBANON

Kesrouan

BEIRUT Beirut

El Metn

Baabda

Zahle

BEKAA

Aley

Chouf

West Bekaa

SOUTH

Jezzine

Rachaya

Saida

Nabatiye

Hasbaya

NABATIYE

Sour

Bent Jbail

Marjayoun



Feature

Details

Nature

Trilateral framework involving Israel, Lebanon and the United States.

Purpose

Roadmap towards a lasting peace agreement.

Military Aspect

Includes discussions on Israeli withdrawals from parts of southern Lebanon, though implementation details remain under negotiation.

Political Aspect

Encourages continued diplomatic engagement instead of military escalation.

Significance

Explanation

Regional Stability

Could reduce tensions in the Middle East.

Energy Security

Lower conflict risk may improve stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and global energy markets.


Global Diplomacy

Highlights the continuing role of U.S. mediation in regional conflicts.

Humanitarian Relief

Could enable displaced civilians to return home if the agreement is successfully implemented.

About Hezbollah

Feature	Details	
Founded	1982	
Headquarters	Beirut	
Support Base	Primarily Lebanon's Shia community.	
Backed By	Iran (political, financial and military support, according to many international assessments).	
Role	Political party, social organisation and armed group.	
Designation	Several countries classify all or part of Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, while others distinguish between its military and political wings.	

Key Geographic Facts

Feature	Details
Israel–Lebanon Border	Separated largely by the Blue Line , monitored by the United Nations.
Southern Lebanon	Main area of Hezbollah's influence and frequent cross-border tensions.
Mediterranean Coast	Both Israel and Lebanon have coastlines on the Eastern Mediterranean.

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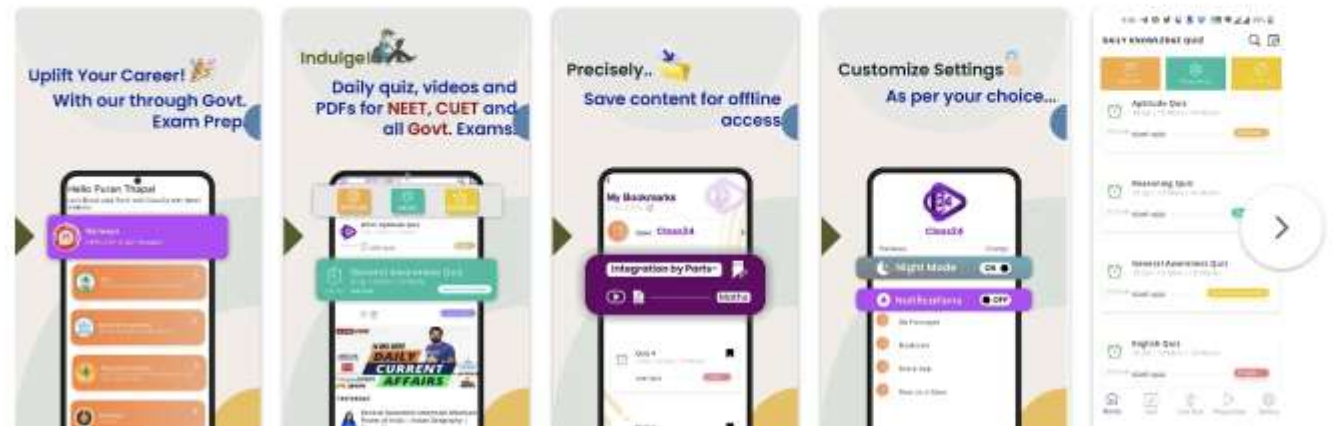
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