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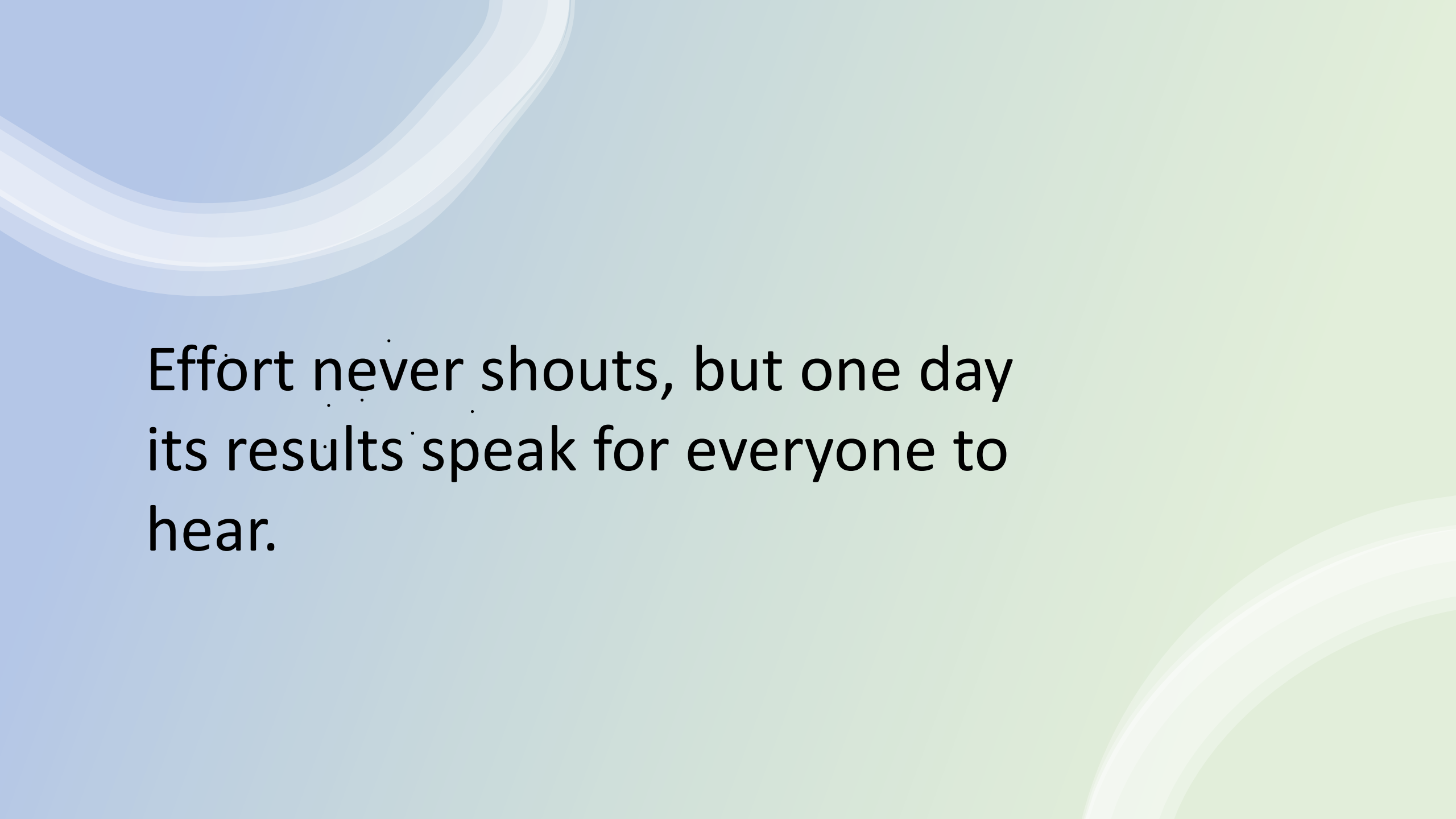


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IN BRIEF



Cocaine worth 21,150 crore seized at Gujarat's border

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS), in coordination with the Indian Coast Guard, seized approximately 100 kg cocaine valued at nearly ₹ 20,000 crore from a cargo vessel anchored off Mundra port and detained three foreign nationals allegedly linked to an international drug trafficking syndicate. According to Director General of Police K.L.N. Rao, the cargo vessel was intercepted on May 26 evening. Investigators said the narcotics had travelled across multiple international transit points, including Latin America, Mexico, the United States and Karachi, before reaching the Gujarat coast.

Doctors demand end to delay in NEET-SS counselling

Doctors have appealed for urgent intervention by the Union Health Ministry into the ongoing and indefinite delay in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (super speciality) (NEET-SS) counselling, which had resulted in a socio-economic crisis for the aspirants. The Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), in a letter to the Ministry, said that thousands of highly qualified aspirants across the country were suffering due to the unprecedented delay in the NEET-SS admission process. Calling the current crisis a systemic failure, the group said the results for the NEET-SS examination had been announced in January 2023.

Centre seeks transfer of Transgender Act cases to SC

The Centre urged the Supreme Court on Wednesday to transfer petitions challenging the constitutionality of the Transgender Protection (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2023 from about four different High Courts to the apex court. The Supreme Court is already seized of several petitions challenging the 2023 Act, but it is only partially working during June. The petitions in the SC have withdrawn the controversial 2023 law of removing the right to self-identity. The 2023 Act requires the government-appointed medical board's favourable recommendation for a District Magistrate to certify someone as a transgender.

NCW calls for legislation to codify Muslim personal law

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has submitted a report on the rights of Muslim women in India to key central Ministers. The report recommends a comprehensive legislation to codify Muslim personal law related to marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody, and inheritance, strengthening provisions for maintenance during and after marriage, and mandatory registration of marriages. It also sought the establishment of gender-sensitive dispute resolution mechanisms with adequate representation for women and accountability to chief courts, expansion of legal aid systems, helplines, and targeted awareness campaigns.

Health expenses dip as govt. spend rises

The out-of-pocket expenditure as a share of the total health expenditure has been calculated as 43.4% in 2022-23, as against 64.2% in 2013-14. The Ministry credits the results to operationalisation of Ayushman wellness centres; the share of private health insurance has also increased, report says

Hindu Shalan Paragandam NEW DELHI

Concurrent with the increase in government health expenditure, the out-of-pocket expenditure (OoPE) share in total health expenditure has declined by 21%, from 64.2% in 2013-14 till date, noted the National Health Accounts (NHA) estimates for India 2022-23, released by the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday.

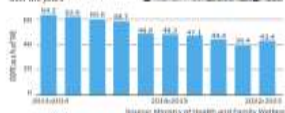
The OoPE as a share of the total health expenditure has been calculated as 43.4% in 2022-23, as against 64.2% in 2013-14. "This declining trend of OoPE indicates the improved access to health services, leading to reduced financial burden on the households," said a senior Health Ministry official.

He added that this is also the impact of operationalisation of more than 1.6 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandir wellness centres across the country, providing preventive and curative healthcare services closer to the community. These centres provide free services across 12 expanded packages, including reproductive and child health, communicable/non-communicable diseases, free diagnostic/clinical services, teleconsultations, and preventive care through wellness sessions.

"These measures have reduced the episodes of sickness. On a depth analysis, it has been observed that the purchase of pharmaceuticals, including health supplements, vitamins, proteins and other supplements (from wellness centres), is the main driver of OoPE in the sector," the Ministry said. "The NHA 2022-23 is the first report on health expenditure estimates prepared by the National

A medical shift

The chart shows India's relative share of out-of-pocket expenditure (OoPE) in total health expenditure (THe) over the years.



Health Accounts Technical Secretariat (NHATS), National Health Systems Research Centre, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, using the System of Health Accounts (SHA) framework.

The main reasons of OoPE in current estimates is purchase of pharmaceuticals and supplements from retail centres.

The report indicates an increase in the share of government health expenditure in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It has risen from 1.9% in 2013-14 to 4.4% in 2022-23. Similarly, health expenditure's share in general government expenditure has increased from 3.78% to 4.98% over the same period.

In per capita terms, government health expenditure has increased nearly 2.7 times, from ₹1,043 to ₹2,786, between 2013-14 and 2022-23.

To address the emergency COVID pandemic situation, the government increased the health expenditure significantly to 1.84% of GDP in 2020-21 towards managing the pandemic situation given three additional spending by the government as a one-time measure. OoPE as a percentage of total health expenditure during that period also declined to 39.8%.

Inter-temporal comparisons also reveal a positive trend in the growth of social security expenditure. Spending here increased substantially from 6% in 2013-14 to 9.5% in 2022-23.

The share of private health insurance has also increased, from 3.4% to 9.2%, clearly indicating the proved health seeking behaviour due to awareness.

Critical sectors must have quantum-safe encryption: task force

Amish Ranjan NEW DELHI

A task force constituted by the Department of Science & Technology (DST) has recommended that India's critical sectors - government, defence, power, telecom, transport, and banking and finance - begin a phased switch to post-quantum cryptography (PQC), warning that the encryption now protecting the country's most sensitive data could one day be broken by quantum computers.

Failure to act within the current window, the report warns, "may result in irreversible compromise of confidential data, erosion of trust in digital governance, exposure of financial systems, and forced emergency migration into the crisis conditions".

PQC refers to a new generation of encryption algorithms designed to run on ordinary computers, but engineered to withstand attacks from future quantum machines, which are expected to be able to crack the public-key cryptography that today secures everything from e-banking transactions to government communication. Quantum computers, unconstrained by the binary logic underlying conventional computers,

Heatwave grips central and northwest India as monsoon stays offshore

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Large swathes of central and northwestern India remained in the grip of a punishing heatwave on Wednesday, with the southwest monsoon yet to make landfall over Kerala - its customary point of entry into the subcontinent.

Bandra in Uttar Pradesh recorded the nation's highest temperature with the mercury touching 47.4 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Maximum temperatures ranged between 40 degrees Celsius and 47 degrees Celsius over Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Vidharba (Maharashtra), and between 40 degrees Celsius and 45 degrees Celsius across most of the rest of the country, barring Northeast India, the western Himalayas, the west coast and interior Tamil Nadu.

The IMD said heatwaves to severe heatwave conditions had prevailed in isolated pockets over eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Rajasthan. Heatwave conditions were also recorded over parts of eastern Madhya Pradesh, southern Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, western Madhya Pradesh, Vidharba and Chhattisgarh. The weather official said such conditions were likely to continue over mid-May, as the equatorial Pacific was rapidly transitioning into El Niño conditions.

PM's appeal Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged high-citizens to stay hydrated, carry water while stepping out and remain alert to signs of heat exhaustion and extreme fatigue. He



With temperatures crossing 47C in several States, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed people to stay hydrated. (S. K. MOH)

stated that children, the elderly and outdoor workers were especially vulnerable, and appealed to people to keep bowls of water outside homes and shops for birds and animals. The IMD said heatwaves to severe heatwave conditions had prevailed in isolated pockets over eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Rajasthan. Heatwave conditions were also recorded over parts of eastern Madhya Pradesh, southern Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, western Madhya Pradesh, Vidharba and Chhattisgarh. The weather official said such conditions were likely to continue over mid-May, as the equatorial Pacific was rapidly transitioning into El Niño conditions.

SC allows Manipur to appoint DGP from outside State cadre

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed a Manipur government plea to appoint its Director General of Police (DGP) from outside the State cadre.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant passed the order on an application moved by the State government which suggested the post holders of ethnic and civil unrest in the State.

The government said there was a need for a "competent" senior officer to head the State Police. "The difficulties we find as Central government is that, from among the eligible candidates, we are not able to find the person of that competence," Solicitor General Tushar Mohita submitted.

The incumbent in office, Rajy Singh, an IPS officer from the Tripura cadre, was appointed Director General of Police in Manipur in June 2022 and his tenure is set to expire on May 31, 2026.

The application is allowed. The State of Manipur is permitted to appoint the Deputy Inspector General of Police from outside Manipur Cadre, if the court recorded in the order.

WORD CROSSWORD 14805

A crossword puzzle grid with numbers indicating starting points for words. The grid is 15x15 cells.

- Across: 7. Peruvian pea being exposed as world's biggest pseudotsuga (10); 8. Modern about pizza (10); 9. American cable car supports for a Mexican resort (6); 11. Planet without active atmosphere, goes around our star (8); 13. Unhappy pair, profess love, left suspended, held and put out again (12); 14. One going into club to have (6); 17. German justice, occasionally hard for their neighbours (8); 18. Was suspended always (4); 19. A victory for new system? Had it retrospect for a famous Italian (10-letter) (11); 20. Jim greets last at the end of (6); 21. Needs air conditioning for what is left for driver on Indian roads (6); 23. Fabricator quoted 20% for a collection of poems (7); 24. Piano term describing creativity (7); 25. Great animal food for new books (8); 26. Raise pitch (4-2); 27. K&J follows with purpose (6); 28. King throughout Europe? Cuban revolutionary versus Soviet leader (10); 29. Low reading about Biden (6); 30. Use America later (8); 31. No Christian concerned in an ancient Greek City (11); 32. S. Sheldis by capturing ordinary day America, one missed originally (4-4); 34. F'd a dinner organised for someone the Princess Vicky? (10); 35. Bigly MP? A dumbarian? Stuff's acquisition (8); 36. Rubens' result (6); 37. Bull's search for leading (5); 38. Friends quietly missing down two places to a mountain range (6).

SUDOKU

A 9x9 Sudoku puzzle grid with some numbers filled in. The grid is 9x9 cells.

- Difficulty Rating: ★★★★★ (5/5)
- Relative to previous puzzle: 100%
- Relative to average puzzle: 100%

FAITH

Convincing arguments Sri Vallabha Pandian was one of the Pandya kings who ruled over Madurai. One night, when the king went round his capital city, he noticed a man lying on the porch of a house. He didn't look like a citizen of the Pandya kingdom. The man told the king that he was from Kant and was on his way to Rameswaram. Since the man was a scholar, the king asked him to give some advice. The man said, "Since it takes four months, work hard during the remaining eight months. Save for your old age when you are young. Do what you must now for liberation." The king asked his spiritual adviser Jeeva Namdi what the man's words meant, and V.S. Karanankarathar in a discussion. Jeeva Namdi suggested that a prior to an announced to anyone who could satisfactorily answer the king's questions. A bag of gold coins was tied to a pole. If the bag dropped from the pole when a person finished his answers, then he was to be considered the one who had given the right answer. Vishnuachitta in Srivilliputhur was serving Lord Venkateswara by making garlands for him. When the people of his town urged him to go and win the gold, he hesitated. But the Lord appeared to his dream and ordered him to go to the Pandya court. When Vishnuachitta spoke in the Pandya court, the Venkateswara asked him to quiet them. He even argued on the basis of that which he had not studied, because the Lord was with him. Through convincing arguments, Vishnuachitta established that the only One who could grant moksha was Lord Venkateswara. When he did this, the bag of gold dropped down. Vishnuachitta was honoured by the king and came to be known as Peruvallabha.

Health expenses dip as govt. spend rises

The out-of-pocket expenditure as a share of the total health expenditure has been calculated as 43.4% in 2022-23, as against 64.2% in 2013-14; the Ministry credits the results to operationalisation of Ayushman wellness centres; the share of private health insurance has also increased, report says

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

Concurrent with the increase in government health expenditure, the out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) share in total health expenditure has declined by 21%, from 2013-14 till date, noted the National Health Accounts (NHA) estimates for India 2022-23, released by the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday.

The OOPE as a share of the total health expenditure has been calculated as 43.4% in 2022-23, as against 64.2% in 2013-14.

"This declining trend of OOPE indicates the improved access to health services, leading to reduced financial burden on the households," said a senior Health Ministry official.

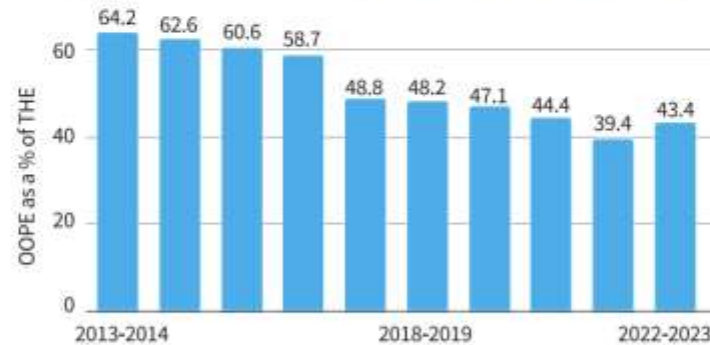
He added that this is also the impact of operationalisation of more than 1.8 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandir wellness centres across the country, providing preventive and curative healthcare services closer to the community.

These centres provide free services across 12 expanded packages, including reproductive and child health, communicable/non-communicable diseases, free drugs/diagnostics services, teleconsultations, and preventive care through wellness sessions.

"These measures have reduced the episodes of sickness. On in-depth analysis, it has been observed that the purchase of pharmaceuticals, including health supplements, vitamins, protein and other supplements [from well-

A medical shift

The chart shows India's year-wise share of out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) in total health expenditure (THE) over the years



Source: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

ness centres], is the main driver of OOPE in the current estimates," the Ministry said.

The NHA 2022-23 is the 10th report on health expenditure estimates prepared by the National

Health Accounts Technical Secretariat (NHATS), National Health Systems Resource Centre, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, using the System of Health Accounts (2011) framework.

The part reasons of OOPE in current estimates is purchase of pharmaceuticals and supplements from govt. centres

The report indicates an increase in the share of government health expenditure in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It has risen from 1.15% in 2013-14 to 1.43% in 2022-23.

Similarly, health expenditure's share in general government expenditure has increased from 3.78% to 4.89% over the same period.

In per capita terms, government health expenditure has increased nearly 2.7 times, from ₹1,042 to ₹2,786 between 2013-14 and 2022-23.

To address the emergency COVID pandemic situation, the government increased the health expenditure significantly to 1.84% of GDP in 2021-22 towards managing the pandemic situation given these additional spending by the government as a one-time measure, OOPE as a percentage of total health expenditure during this period also declined to 39.4%.

Inter-temporal comparisons also reveal a positive trend in the growth of social security expenditure. Spending here increased substantially from 6% in 2013-14 to 9.9% in 2022-23.

The share of private health insurance has also increased, from 3.4% to 9.2%, clearly indicating improved health-seeking behaviour due to awareness.

Report Name	National Health Accounts (NHA) Estimates for India 2022–23
Released By	Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Main Finding	Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) reduced from 64.2% (2013-14) to 43.4% (2022-23)
Meaning of OOPE	Direct payment made by households for healthcare without insurance/government support
Reason for Decline	Increase in government health expenditure and Ayushman Arogya Mandir wellness centres
Government Health Expenditure (as % of GDP)	Increased from 1.15% (2013-14) to 1.43% (2022-23)
Peak Health Expenditure During COVID	1.84% of GDP in 2021-22
Share in General Government Expenditure	Increased from 3.78% to 4.89%
Per Capita Government Health Spending	Increased from ₹1,042 to ₹2,786 between 2013-14 and 2022-23
Social Security Expenditure in Health	Increased from 6% to 9.9%

Social Security Expenditure in Health

Increased from 6% to 9.9%

Private Health Insurance Share

Increased from 3.4% to 9.2%

Major Cause of OOPE Currently

Purchase of pharmaceuticals, supplements, vitamins, diagnostics

Ayushman Arogya Mandirs

More than 1.8 lakh centres operational

Services Provided

Preventive, curative, reproductive, child healthcare, teleconsultation, diagnostics

Framework Used

System of Health Accounts (2011) Framework

Technical Agency

National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC)

Year	OOPE Share (%)
2013-14	64.2
2014-15	62.6
2015-16	60.6
2016-17	58.7
2018-19	48.8
2019-20	48.2
2020-21	47.1
2021-22	39.4
2022-23	43.4

LOWEST PER CAPITA SPEND IN UP, HIGHEST IN PUDUCHERRY

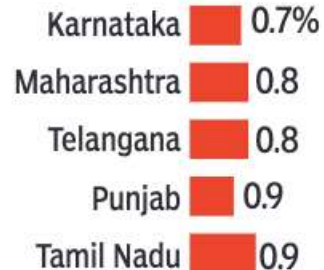
Small states lead public health spending

Highest health spending as % of GSDP



Richer states spend below 1%

% of GSDP spent on health



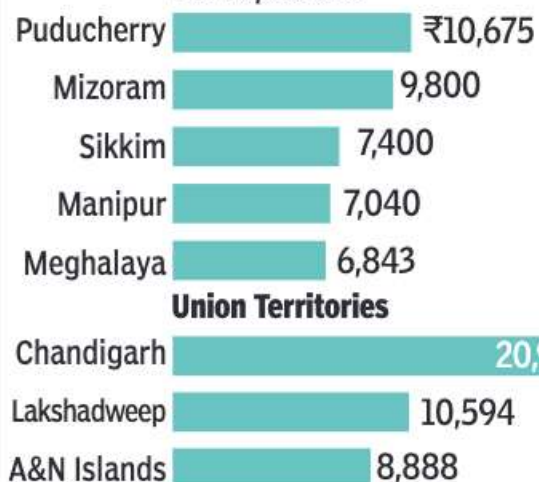
Highest total govt health spending

Total GHE



Highest per capita govt health spending

Per capita GHE



Lowest per capita spending among major states

Per capita GHE



States allocating highest share of govt expenditure to health

Health share in total govt spending

West Bengal
8.5%

Kerala
8.3%

Uttarakhand
8.2%

Topic	Important Facts
Ayushman Bharat Scheme Launch	2018
PM-JAY Full Form	Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
PM-JAY Coverage	₹5 lakh health insurance per family annually
Target Beneficiaries	Poor and vulnerable families
Ministry	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
National Health Policy	2017
NITI Aayog Health Index	Measures health performance of states
WHO Headquarters	Geneva, Switzerland
World Health Day	7 April
SDG Related to Health	SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being
India's Target Public Health Expenditure	2.5% of GDP (National Health Policy 2017)
Largest Health Insurance Scheme in India	Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY
First AIIMS in India	AIIMS New Delhi (1956)
National Family Health Survey (NFHS)	Conducted by Ministry of Health
Universal Health Coverage (UHC)	Access to quality health services without financial hardship



- Q. Consider the following statements regarding India's National Health Accounts (NHA) 2022-23:
- Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) increased compared to 2013-14.
- Government health expenditure as a percentage of GDP increased during the period 2013-14 to 2022-23.
- Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are linked with preventive and primary healthcare services.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Long and painful

The data for the charts were sourced from the World Health Organization's (WHO) World Health Statistics Reports for 2025 and 2026. The values for 2023 are approximate as per global health estimates for 2023 referred in the 2026 report



CHART 1: The healthy life expectancy (HALE), life expectancy (LE) and the gap between the two over the years and between genders

■ HALE ■ LE - HALE gap

The values above the bars indicate LE

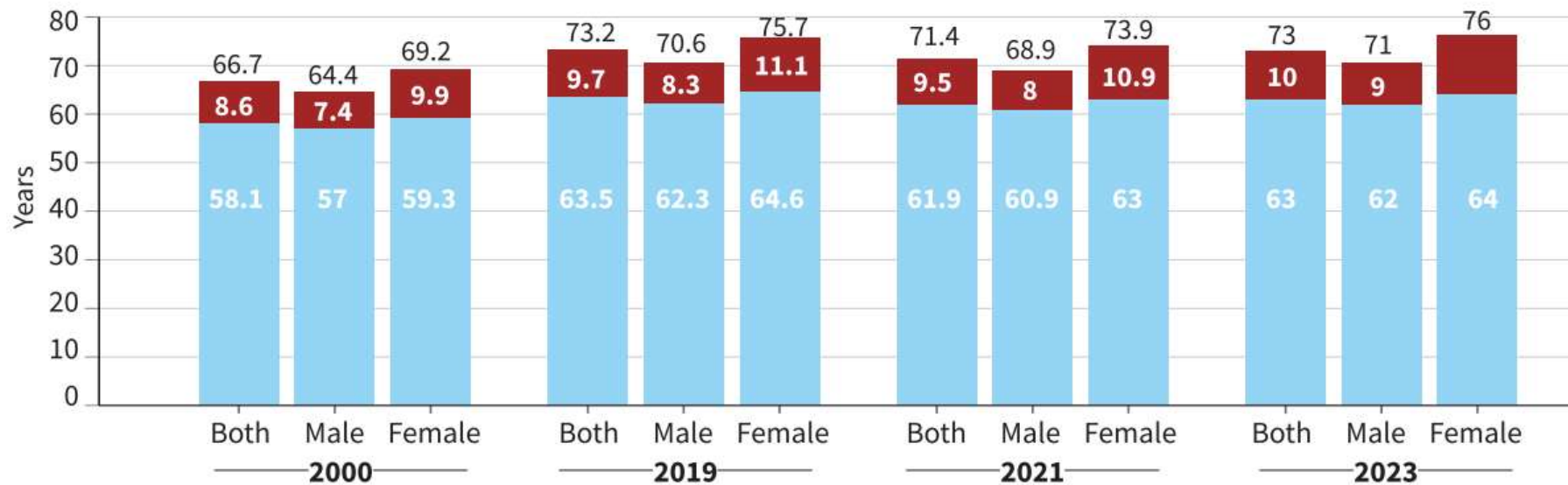


CHART 2: The chart shows the key mortality and morbidity conditions (as per 2019 data) that contribute positively and negatively to women's HALE over men

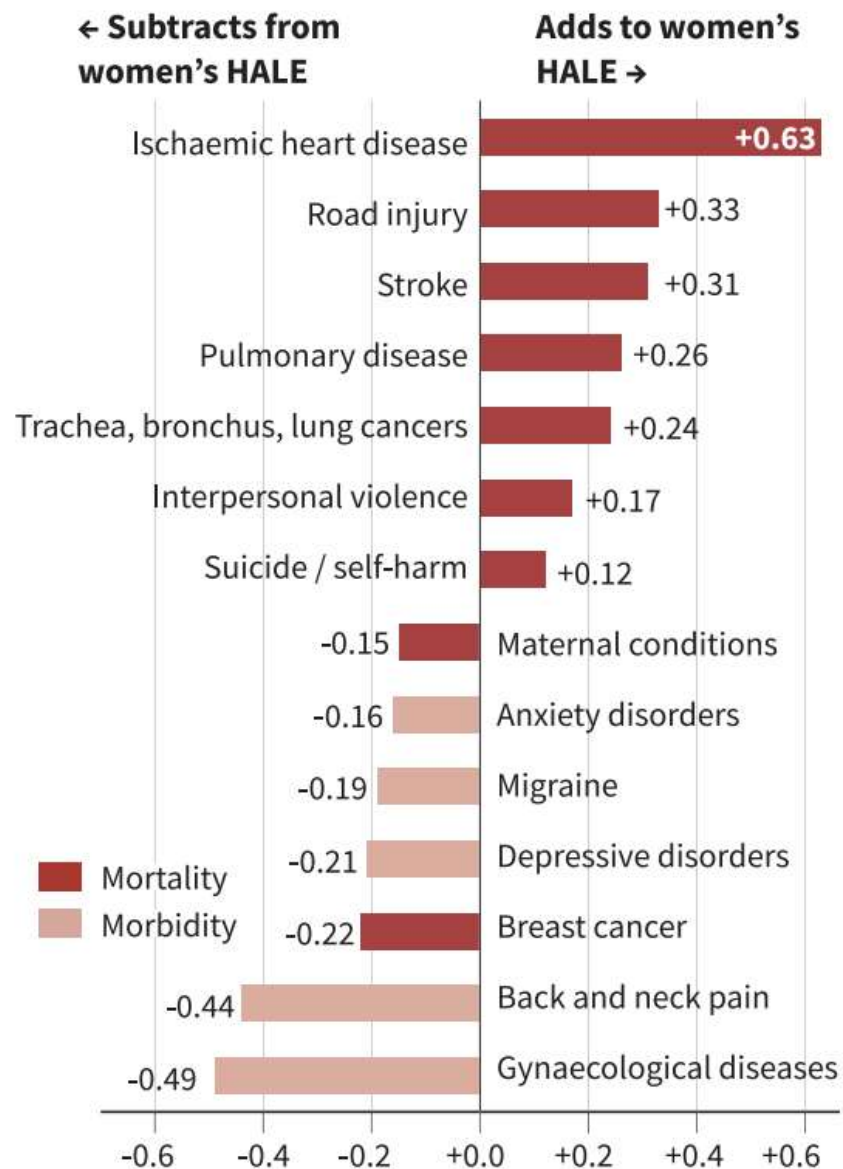


CHART 3: The chart shows the difference between the HALE of men and women in different global regions as defined by the World Health Organization

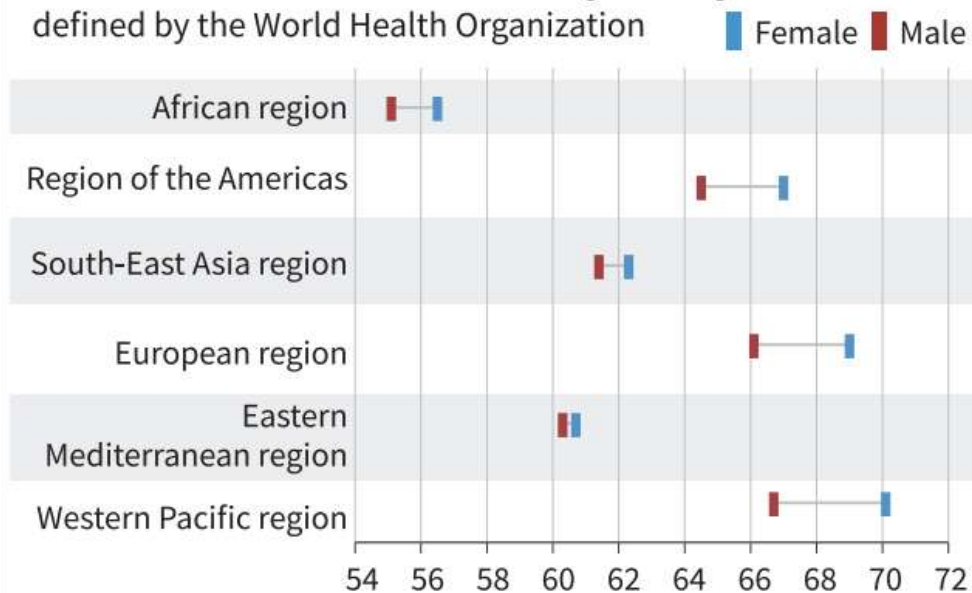
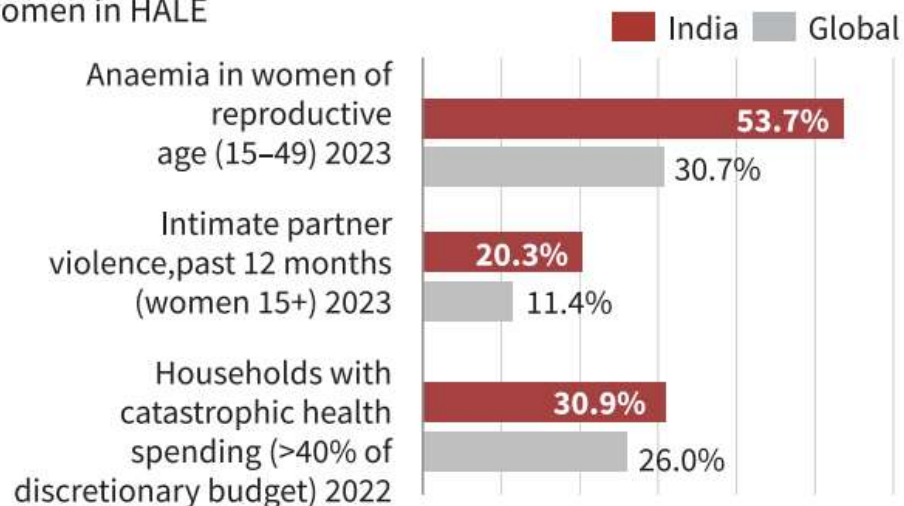


CHART 4: The chart shows three of the key indicators, where India lags behind, contributing to the gap between men and women in HALE



GST 'SUPPLY' NETWIDE ENOUGH TO INCLUDE BETTING: APEX COURT

SC upholds 28% GST levy on online gaming firms

● 'Retrospective liability too high amid ban on money games'

KULDEEP SINGH
New Delhi, May 27

IN A JUDGMENT with profound implications for the gaming industry, the Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld the constitutional validity of the Centre's retrospective levy of 28% Goods and Services Tax (GST) on the full face value of bets placed on online gaming platforms, instead of gross gaming revenue alone.

A bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan ruled that online gaming activities involving monetary stakes give rise to actionable claims and constitute taxable supplies under the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017. The court held that the essential character of betting and gambling depends on the existence of stakes placed on uncertain future contingencies, and not exclusively on whether the underlying activity is a game of skill or chance.

According to many tax experts and analysts, the ruling would revive huge tax demands like a ₹21,000 crore notice on Gameskraft; industry-wide past tax liabilities validated by the judgment could total ₹2.5 lakh crore, including interest and penalty. They said it also implies that gaming companies will pay GST at 40% starting in September 2025.

However, they added that

GAMING TAX SHOCK

■ SC says stake-based online games create 'actionable claims' taxable under GST

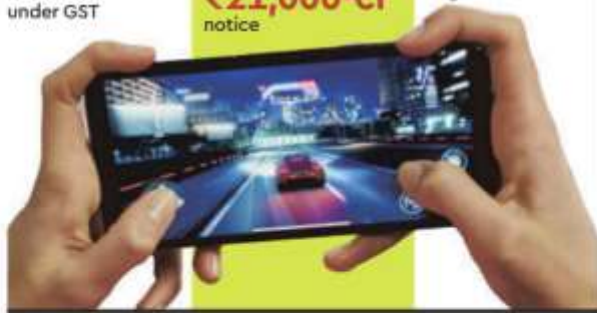
■ Verdict revives massive tax disputes, including Gameskraft's ₹21,000-cr notice

■ Tax experts say gaming firms will find it difficult to clear huge tax arrears

■ Judges reject industry claims that gaming platforms merely act as intermediaries between players.

■ Ruling also strengthens states' powers to regulate or ban online money gaming in public interest

■ Tax experts say the ruling blurs the legal divide between skill gaming and gambling



gaming firms would find it difficult to clear these huge tax arrears given the complete ban on online money games that took effect on May 1. The companies might only resort to litigation, some of them said, adding that the details of the judgement would hold the key.

Even where the underlying activities involve substantial elements of skill, once participation is conditioned upon staking money or money's worth on uncertain outcomes, the resulting transactions acquire the character of betting and gambling within the framework of the GST legislation," the bench observed.

The apex court clarified that the concept of "supply" under GST is broad enough to cover organised betting and gambling arrangements where participants acquire contingent beneficial interests. These interests qualify as actionable

claims under the Transfer of Property Act, 1882, making the entire amount paid for participation taxable without deductions for prize pools, winnings, or payouts. It also rejected the industry's contention that platforms function merely as intermediaries.

The ruling came in a batch of petitions transferred from multiple high courts, including challenges by Delta Corp, Gameskraft Technologies, Head Digital Works, Play Games 24x7, and the E-Gaming Federation of India. The court vacated its stay on proceedings related to show-cause notices issued by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) and set aside the Karnataka High Court's order quashing a ₹21,000 crore notice against Gameskraft. Total disputed demands are estimated at over ₹1.12 lakh crore, with sector-wide exposure reportedly

exceeding ₹2.5 lakh crore.

The Supreme Court delivered two distinct judgments. The first upheld state laws from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala that restrict or prohibit online gaming. It distinguished "betting" from "gambling" while affirming states' legislative powers to regulate such activities in the larger public interest. The second GST judgment flows directly from this classification of stake-based gaming as betting and gambling.

Manoj Mishra, partner and tax controversy management leader, Grant Thornton Bharat, said: "The industry's core argument was never merely about the tax rate, but about legal characterisation—whether skill-based gaming played for stakes can be equated with betting and gambling despite decades of jurisprudence drawing a bright line between the two."

Main Issue	Whether online real-money gaming should attract GST on full face value of bets
Supreme Court Verdict	Upheld constitutional validity of 28% GST levy
GST Basis	Tax on full value of bets/entry amount, not only Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR)
Relevant Law	Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) Act, 2017
Court's Observation	Betting and gambling involving monetary stakes are "actionable claims"
Meaning of Actionable Claim	A claim to a debt or beneficial interest recognized by law
Legal Basis Mentioned	Transfer of Property Act, 1882
Court Clarification	"Supply" under GST is broad enough to include betting and gambling
Impact on Industry	Huge tax liabilities and revival of old tax notices
Gameskraft Tax Notice	Around ₹21,000 crore
Estimated Sector-Wide Exposure	More than ₹1.12 lakh crore
Industry Argument Rejected	Platforms are not merely intermediaries between players

Industry Argument Rejected

Platforms are not merely intermediaries between players

Important Interpretation

Even skill-based games become taxable if played with monetary stakes

State Powers

States can regulate or ban online betting/gaming in public interest

Retrospective Taxation

Court upheld retrospective GST levy provisions

Tax Experts' Concern

Distinction between gaming and gambling becomes blurred

GST Rate on Online Gaming

28%

Effective Ban Mentioned

Ban on online money games effective from May 1 (mentioned by experts)

Topic	Explanation
Actionable Claim	Claim recognized by civil courts for debt/beneficial interest
Article Related to Trade	Article 19(1)(g) – Right to profession/business
Reasonable Restrictions	Article 19(6) allows state restrictions in public interest
Betting & Gambling	Traditionally considered res extra commercium (outside protected trade)
GST Council	Constitutional body under Article 279A
GST Introduced	101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016
GST Launch Date	1 July 2017
Indirect Tax	Tax collected by intermediary from consumers
CGST	Central Goods and Services Tax
SGST	State Goods and Services Tax
IGST	Integrated GST on inter-state trade

Topic	Facts
GST Council Chairman	Union Finance Minister
Constitutional Article	Article 279A
First GST Council Meeting	September 2016
Highest GST Slab	28%
GST Network (GSTN)	IT backbone for GST system
Destination-Based Tax	GST is levied where goods/services are consumed
Compensation Cess	Additional cess for revenue compensation to states
Countries with GST/VAT	India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand etc.

More Girls At Birth Than Before, But Still Too Few

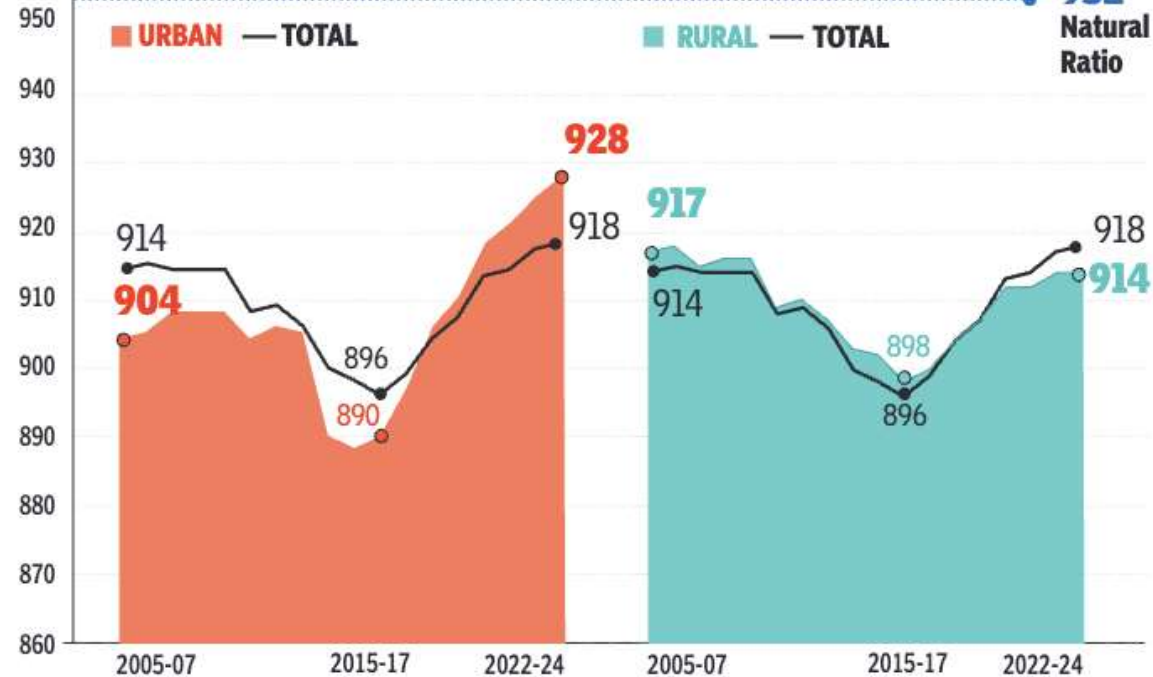
At 918 girls per 1,000 boys, India's sex ratio at birth is up from its 2015-17 low – but remains well below the WHO observed natural ratio of 952 girls for 1,000 boys

Rema.Nagarajan
@timesofindia.com

India's sex ratio at birth (SRB) has improved from its recent low, but not by much. The latest SRS 2024 data put it at 918 girls per 1,000 boys for 2022-24, up from the low of 896 in 2015-17, still far below the biologically expected level. WHO data reports sex ratio at birth as male births per female births; the commonly observed natural level is about 105 boys for every 100 girls, which translates to roughly 952 girls per 1,000 boys. A slight excess of boys at birth is normal because male infants are biologically more vulnerable, so nature appears to build in a small cushion.

**CITIES NOW REPORT
BETTER RATIO**

**VILLAGES NO LONGER
HAVE THE EDGE**



SRB should not be confused

In Some States Urban Areas Doing Better

SRB should not be confused with overall sex ratio or child sex ratio. SRB measures births in a recent period; child sex ratio reflects both births and survival among children; overall sex ratio reflects the entire population. Also, SRS is sample-based, so the safest reading is not tiny year-to-year movement, especially in smaller states/UTs, but broad three-year averages and longer trends.

The worrying message from the data is this: India has improved from its worst point, but after nearly two decades, the national SRB is only four points better than 2005-07, and the rural number is actually worse. Urban India, once seen as more prone to sex selection, now reports a better SRB than rural India. So, India's missing girls problem has eased a bit but not ended. With falling fertility rates and smaller families, some states may see a rise in 'son-only' families.



WORSE THAN 20 YEARS AGO

Although India's SRB has improved since the 2015-17 low, several states still have a worse birth sex ratio than they did in 2005-07. Bihar has fallen from 940 to 896, Odisha from 952 to 921, West Bengal from 964 to 933, Madhya Pradesh from 935 to 919, Tamil Nadu from 950 to 936, and Assam from 950 to 946. The key point: recovery from the recent bottom does not mean the long-term damage has been repaired

In Some States, Urban Areas Doing Better...

SRB in 2022-24	Total	Rural	Urban	Gap*
Uttar Pradesh	916	902	967	65
Madhya Pradesh	919	912	946	34
Assam	946	943	971	28
Andhra Pradesh	946	940	959	19
Rajasthan	917	913	931	18
Tamil Nadu	936	926	944	18
Punjab	910	903	920	17
Bihar	896	895	910	15
West Bengal	933	930	942	12
Haryana	885	882	891	9
Jammu	924	923	930	7
Telangana	917	915	920	5

...Though Reverse Is True In Some States

Uttarakhand	872	872	870	-2
Kerala	974	976	972	-4
Gujarat	905	908	901	-7
Odisha	921	922	913	-9
Karnataka	932	936	926	-10
Himachal	956	956	944	-12
Jharkhand	927	931	913	-18
Maharashtra	899	910	885	-25
Chhattisgarh	978	990	925	-65
Delhi	876	974	874	-100

SRB = Girls born per 1,000 boys

*Between rural and urban SRB

GENEVA

UN rights chief Volker Turk slams 'dangerous escalation' in Ukraine



The United Nations rights chief Volker Turk warned on Thursday against a "dangerous escalation" in Ukraine, and urged the parties to return to negotiations.

NABABEYA

Netanyahu's aide to be charged with leaking secret information



Netanyahu's attorney general's office on Thursday said it would file criminal prosecution for leaking secret information to a German newspaper.

WASHINGTON

U.S. reimposes sanctions on UN expert on Palestinian territories



The United States on Wednesday reimposed sanctions on Francesco Saverio, a UN expert on the Palestinian territories who has frequently criticized the actions of Israeli settlements.

BEIJING

China to send delegation of army scholars to key defence summit



China said on Thursday it will send a delegation of scholars from its army's study institutions to attend the 14th summit on security issues in Singapore.

Israel strikes Beirut suburb ahead of talks; 14 killed in attack in south

Among those killed were five women and children and a Lebanese soldier; an IDF soldier was killed in a Hezbollah drone attack in northern Israel. Lebanese and Israeli officials are set to hold their first security talks on Friday in Washington DC.

Associated Press

Israel's air force carried out an air strike on a residential suburb of the capital, Beirut, on Thursday afternoon. The Israeli military said, further striking a fragile ceasefire day ahead of crucial negotiations in Washington.



Rescue workers inspect the damage at the site of an Israeli strike in Tyre, southern Lebanon, on Thursday.

on April 17. This was the first attack close to the Lebanese capital since May 6, when an Israeli strike killed a military official with Hezbollah's elite Hezbollah unit in another southern Beirut suburb. Hezbollah and Israeli military officials are set to hold their first security talks on Friday in the U.S. capital.

Trump threatens to blow up Oman amid Hormuz talks

Reuters

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened to blow up Oman if it did not agree to a deal to end the war in the Gulf, in a sign that any potential agreement would be difficult.



Donald Trump

Mr. Trump said on single country would have control over the territory, and appeared to threaten Oman, a country with which the United States has longstanding military relations. "Nobody's going to control the strait," Mr. Trump said at a Cabinet meeting attended by press persons.

Germany, Netherlands to set up NATO Baltic command centre

Germany and the Netherlands will set up a joint regional headquarters in the Baltic this year to coordinate NATO's eastern flank and help deter Russia, Berlin said on Thursday.

Sacred tradition



Devotion: Hindu pilgrims pray at the site of a Hindu temple in Varanasi, India, during a religious festival.

Yemen's ex-President Hadi, who exiled to Saudi Arabia, dies

Associated Press

Yemen's former President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who fled his home after Houthis seized and spent his final years in Saudi Arabia, has died, the Yemeni presidency said on Thursday.



Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi

Three days of mourning, with lowered flags and condolence books, was declared to commemorate Hadi, who oversaw a turbulent period when the Houthis seized large swaths of Yemen, triggering a devastating civil war.

China vows to support Cuba against 'all forms of power politics, bullying'

Associated Press

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi vowed to support Havana and combat "power politics and bullying" during talks with his Cuban counterpart on Wednesday.



Beijing's Foreign Minister Wang Yi speaks to reporters after a meeting with Cuban Foreign Minister Rodriguez.

regions and independence of all nations, and to oppose all forms of power politics and bullying," he added. In an apparent reference to the U.S., the Trump administration cut off Cuba's supply of oil from Havana's ally Venezuela after it ousted Nicolas Maduro in a coup in January.

Fire rips through dormitory at a girls' school in Kenya, killing 16, injuring 79

Associated Press

A fire ripped through a dormitory in a girls' boarding school in central Kenya on Thursday, killing at least 16 students, a government official said, in the latest such incident to afflict the East African nation.



A view from atop of a Kenyan fire service at St. Joseph's school after a fire at the boarding school on Thursday.

area were still waiting to receive their children were not among the victims of the fire. Elizabeth Mutitu, a teacher at the school, said she was relieved to see her daughters but expressed concern because one of the girls watched her friend perish while trying to jump out of a window.

Germany, Netherlands to set up NATO Baltic command centre

Agence France-Presse

BERLIN

Germany and the Netherlands will set up a joint tactical headquarters in the Baltics this year to command forces on NATO's eastern flank and help deter Russia, Berlin said on Thursday.

The joint German-Dutch command centre known as IGNC will "assume a command role on NATO's eastern flank, specifically in the region Estonia and Latvia" in coming months, the German Defence Ministry said in a statement.

"The deployment of an additional tactical headquarters to the region strengthens the cohesion

of NATO and supports the deterrence of Russia," it said.

IGNC is a command centre that can control up to 50,000 troops if needed.

Its tasks include planning and running military exercises, planning for possible conflict and leading forces if a war breaks out.

The unit, the German-Netherlands Corps, is headquartered in Muenster, Germany, and deploys from there for NATO missions when required.

Currently, NATO forces in the Baltic region come under the command of a single headquarters in the Polish city of Szczecin.

Europe heat will abate soon, but El Niño looms



AMITABH SINHA

LARGE PARTS of western and central Europe are in the grip of an extraordinary heatwave phase, with many places registering temperatures 10 to 15 degrees Celsius higher than normal. Both the UK and France have recorded their highest ever temperature for May. Other countries, including Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Spain, have also been reporting unusually high temperatures.

A warm spell in May is not entirely unusual for western Europe, but the average temperatures during this time usually hover around 20-22 degrees Celsius. This week, however, several places have seen temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius — unprecedented for this month.

The prevailing heatwave has brought back uncomfortable memories of the unprecedented summers of 2022 and 2023 when temperatures in excess of 40 degrees Celsius were recorded at many places in Europe. A large-scale drought in 2022, the worst in living memory, and the record-breaking temperatures in both years resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people.

Things are not that bad right now, but this is just the month of May. The core summer months in Europe happen to be June and July, and it was in these months that most of the record-breaking temperatures in 2022 and 2023 were reached.

Incidentally, the extreme European heat of 2022 coincided with a very strong La Niña phase in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, which tends to have a cooling impact on the planet. This year, an opposite phenomenon, a strong El Niño, which has a warming effect, is taking shape.

El Niño and La Niña are two distinct phases of a large ocean-atmosphere interaction over the Pacific region that influence weather patterns worldwide.

The 'heat dome' effect

The unusual heat in Europe right now is being attributed to the formation of a "heat dome" that is preventing warm air near the ground from rising and dissipating. This is leading to an increase in surface temperatures. 'Heat dome' is just a fancy way to de-



People seek relief from the heat at a beach in England's Brighton town. AP

scribe how heatwaves normally occur. Heatwaves anywhere, including over India, are caused by the emergence of high-pressure air systems in the mid-troposphere, about 7-10 km above Earth's surface, that trap the heated surface air near the ground. They push down the air and compress it, increasing the temperature in the process.

This same system also prevents cloud formation and precipitation. Local influences can then amplify or weaken this phenomenon. For example, the heat dome effect over India often gets aggravated by the presence of dry soil, the "urban heat island effect" and the movement of hot air blowing from the deserts in the west. The urban heat island effect is a phenomenon where urban areas record higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas because their concrete traps heat during the day and radiates it at night.

The formation of a heat dome is not an unusual phenomenon in European summers. This year, however, it has happened a little early, resulting in an extremely warm May — possibly the warmest May in several places.

Interestingly, around the start of this month, Europe was experiencing below-normal temperatures. This rapid, extreme fluctuation in weather — hot and cold, wet and dry — is sometimes described as "climate whiplash", something that is becom-

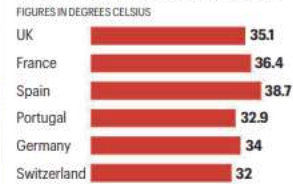
What Europe is experiencing

'Heat dome': High-pressure air systems trap warm air near the ground and increase surface temperatures.

'Climate whiplash': A rapid, extreme fluctuation in weather.

El Niño, the unusual warming of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, could be among the strongest ever this year. It could affect the Indian monsoon

• Highest temperatures recorded in Europe this week



COMPILED FROM RESPECTIVE NATIONAL WEATHER AGENCIES

about its peak strength," it said in a bulletin earlier this month.

"The strongest El Niño events in the historical record are characterized by significant ocean-atmosphere coupling through the summer, and it remains to be seen whether this occurs in 2026," it said, adding that there was only a one-third chance that the emerging El Niño would be a very strong one. In any case, a stronger El Niño does not necessarily mean stronger all-round impacts, it said. "Stronger El Niño events do not ensure strong impacts; they can only make certain impacts more likely," it said, emphasising that the relationship between the occurrence of the ocean warming phenomenon and its impact was probabilistic and not deterministic.

Less rain, more heat

Still, the emergence of El Niño is a worrisome development for India. It is expected to affect the monsoon and push the mercury higher. It is because of the emerging El Niño that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast below-normal rainfall for the upcoming June-September monsoon season.

There is no one-to-one correlation between the occurrence of an El Niño and suppressed monsoon rainfall over India. Past records, however, show that monsoon rainfall has remained below normal during an El Niño year in 70% of the instances. This year, the phenomenon is expected to fully mature by July. So, the IMD is expecting that August and September rainfall will be badly affected.

Similarly, there is a strong link between the occurrence of El Niño and the frequency and severity of heatwaves in India. In general, there is a greater chance of prolonged and severe heatwaves occurring in India during an El Niño phase.

ing increasingly common because of climate change.

The extreme heat over Europe is expected to abate soon. Most forecasts suggest that the heat dome would dissipate by the weekend, and that temperatures would return close to their normal range within a few days.

Strong El Niño

But another threat is looming, not just for Europe but many other parts of the world including India.

An El Niño phase is emerging in the equatorial Pacific Ocean which is expected to persist through the rest of the year, possibly crossing over to the next year as well.

El Niño refers to an unusual warming of the surface waters of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, off the coast of north-western coast of South America. It is known to have a warming effect over the planet. Multiple forecasts have suggested that this El Niño could develop into one of the strongest ever.

The Climate Prediction Centre of the US's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, one of the world's most authoritative agencies tracking the Pacific Ocean, however, says it is too early to make any reliable prediction about its strength.

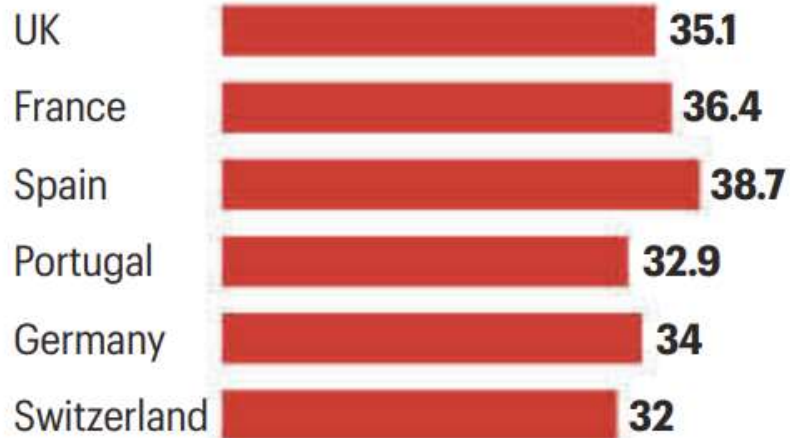
"While confidence in the occurrence of El Niño has increased since last month (April), there is still substantial uncertainty

El Niño, the unusual warming of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, could be among the strongest ever this year. It could affect the Indian monsoon



• **Highest temperatures recorded in Europe this week**

FIGURES IN DEGREES CELSIUS



COMPILED FROM RESPECTIVE NATIONAL WEATHER AGENCIES



Feature

El Niño

La Niña

Meaning

Abnormal warming of
Pacific waters

Abnormal cooling of
Pacific waters

Ocean Region

Central & Eastern
Equatorial Pacific

Same region

Indian Monsoon

Generally weak

Generally strong

Rainfall in India

Below normal

Above normal

Heatwaves in India

More frequent

Less frequent

Drought Risk

High

Lower

Flood Risk

Lower

Higher





Impact Area

Southwest Monsoon

Agriculture

Reservoir Levels

Food Inflation

Hydropower

Heatwaves

Water Scarcity

Likely Effect

Reduced rainfall

Lower crop productivity

Reduced recharge

May increase

Lower generation potential

More severe and frequent

Higher risk



Ranveer Singh-Farhan Akhtar row: How Bollywood treats contracts, exits

Rishika Singh

New Delhi, May 28

THE FEDERATION of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) has called upon its members to not work with actor Ranveer Singh amid his dispute with Farhan Akhtar, the producer and director of *Don 3*.

Many have criticised the directive as beyond FWICE's remit. B N Tiwari, the president of FWICE, told *The Indian Express*: "The federation never wants to go against a particular individual, this is more a message than an outright ban."

Don 3 was announced in 2023 with a teaser featuring Singh. Its fate is now uncertain, with Singh leaving the project a few months ago reportedly due to delays and the lack of a final script. Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, co-founders of the production house Excel Entertainment, are said to have sought around Rs 45 crore from the actor for losses, which he reportedly refused to pay.

Singh's representatives have stated that he did not wish to publicly speak on the

matter and declined to comment when approached by *The Indian Express*. Akhtar, too, did not respond to a request for comment.

What is FWICE?

FWICE is a 70-year-old trade union comprising 38 craft associations with more than 5 lakh members. To become a FWICE member, a film industry worker first joins any of the 38 associations based on their respective profession, such as the Cine and TV Artists Association and the Indian Film & Television Directors' Association (IFTDA). These bodies hold elections for posts such as president, who can join the FWICE General Council.

Tiwari, who has worked as a sound engineer for over 50 years, outlined its functions: "We manage the disputes or problems that come our way, but generally, we work to push for cinema workers' rights, to see if these rights are being curtailed."

In case of a dispute, members first approach their respective associations. If there's no resolution, they can turn to



Ranveer Singh has dropped out of 'Don 3'.

FWICE. "Akhtar went to IFTDA, but the issue wasn't solved there, so he came to the federation, which is the mother body. Its decision must be abided by," Tiwari claimed.

However, FWICE is not authorised to ban any individual. Tiwari said the move was intended to compel the parties involved to act, rather than permanently bar anyone. Singh reportedly did not respond

to calls from FWICE, allegedly saying the matter did not fall under its jurisdiction. "He is a superstar. I want to support him, but for both parties to reach an agreement, we have to do something," Tiwari said.

When has FWICE acted in the past?

Most recently, FWICE objected to actor Diljit Dosanjh's inclusion in *Border 2* (2026) for having starred in a film featuring Pakistani actor Hania Aamir after Operation Sindoor. The film's shooting had begun before the Pahalgam attack. "T-Series (the producers of *Border 2*) apologised to us, they said the film is about to be completed, if you don't support us, we will face significant losses. So, we do consider the producer's argument as well," Tiwari said.

How are such disputes resolved?

Namrata Pahwa, a Delhi-based advocate who has worked with film and media clients for over a decade, told *The Indian Express* that a lot depends on the contract in question. "Before a contract is signed, it

goes through many iterations over months. All negotiations should hopefully finish before executing the agreement, on remuneration, responsibilities, etc," she said.

In the absence of specific obligations upon termination, "There are default charges actors would have to pay, which are about five times the amount one would have made from the agreement," Pahwa said. Or, they must refund payment with interest.

For a long time, contracts were not essential to an industry where personal relationships and informal ties influence work. But in the last five to six years, after the Covid-19 pandemic and with the rise of OTT platforms, they are becoming the norm.

Payments to actors are made in various stages, given that film production is a long, capital-intensive process with many moving parts. It includes pre-production (planning, budgeting, casting), the actual filming, and post-production (dubbing, marketing, promotions), each step involving numerous tasks. Fees are paid in "tranches", linked to different stages of

completion (say 10% or 50% of the project).

An actor who has worked on several feature films and OTT productions told *The Indian Express* on the condition of anonymity that actors who aren't A-listers often have little power. "Once a contract is finalised, it all works based on goodwill, and you have to engage in soft negotiations if something comes up... For an average actor, leaving a project due to a disagreement might be turned against you... The OTTs make contracts that are very hard lettered," he said.

Pahwa said: "With a big production, it's not just your time or energy involved. Incredible costs are borne since every stage involves a lot of money. So, if an actor suddenly wants to leave, it shouldn't be allowed, save for a legitimate breach of contract from the production side."

Alternatives such as mediation and arbitration (a more formal process) are explored before moving on to litigation, and even then, issues are generally settled out of court. Unions and associations can only advise and mediate, she said.



Topic

News

Organization in Focus

FWICE Stand

Issue

Legal Question

Industry Concern

Resolution Methods

Key Observation

Key Points for Exam

Dispute between actor Ranveer Singh and producer-director Farhan Akhtar regarding *Don 3*

FWICE (Federation of Western India Cine Employees)

Asked members not to work with Ranveer Singh during dispute


Alleged contractual disagreement related to *Don 3*

How contracts, exits, compensation, and dispute resolution work in the film industry

Increasing importance of formal contracts in OTT and film productions

Negotiation, mediation, arbitration, litigation

Contracts increasingly govern remuneration, obligations, timelines, and termination clauses



Particular

Full Form

Nature

Age

Membership

Constituent Bodies

Role

Functions

Jurisdiction

Details

Federation of Western India Cine Employees

Trade Union Federation

Around 70 years old

More than 5 lakh members

38 craft associations

Protect rights of cinema and television workers

Mediation, dispute resolution, workers' welfare

Film, television and entertainment industry

Term	Meaning
Contract	Legally enforceable agreement between parties
Breach of Contract	Failure to perform contractual obligations
Compensation	Monetary payment for losses due to breach
Termination Clause	Conditions under which a contract can end
Arbitration	Private dispute resolution outside courts
Mediation	Neutral third party helps settlement
Litigation	Court-based dispute resolution
Damages	Financial compensation awarded for breach

Topic	Important Facts
Enacted	1872
Objective	Governs contracts in India
Valid Contract	Offer + Acceptance + Consideration + Free Consent + Lawful Object
Void Contract	Not enforceable by law
Voidable Contract	Can be cancelled by one party
Quasi Contract	Obligation imposed by law even without agreement
Breach Remedies	Damages, specific performance, injunction

Organization

FWICE

IFATDA

Cine & TV Artistes Association
(CINTAA)

AICWA

FICCI Media & Entertainment
Committee

Purpose

Film and television workers

Indian Film & Television
Directors' Association

Actors' welfare body

All Indian Cine Workers
Association

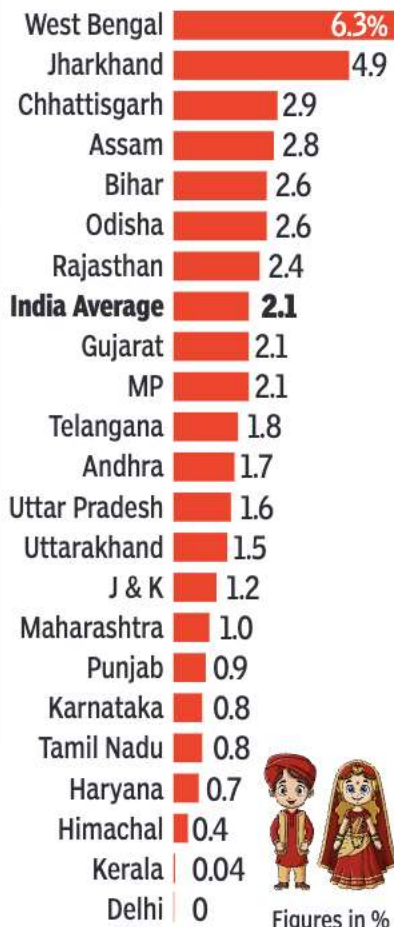
Industry policy support

Child marriage persists despite nat'l decline, WB tops list: Data

Anuja Jaiswal
@timesofindia.com

NO CASES REPORTED FROM DELHI

Girls married before 18 YEARS



New Delhi: Child marriage persists in several Indian states despite years of campaigns promoting girls' education and delayed marriage, with West Bengal and Jharkhand reporting the country's highest share of girls marrying before the legal age of 18 years, according to the latest Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2024.

The report — released by the Registrar General of India — showed that while most women in India now marry after 21 years, there are pockets in parts of eastern and central India where early marriage remains entrenched. Nationally, 2.1% of women who got married in 2024 were below 18 years of age, while 24.5% married between 18 and 20 years. Nearly three-fourths — 73.5% — married at 21 years or above. Overall, more than one in four women in India still got married before the age of 21 in 2024.

Bengal recorded the count-

ry's highest proportion of girls marrying before 18 years at 6.3%, followed by Jharkhand at 4.9%. Chhattisgarh was also identified among states where a considerable proportion of girls (2.9%) continue to marry before adulthood. In rural India, 2.4% of girls married before turning 18, compared to 1.1% in urban areas.

Among rural regions, Bengal reported the highest share of child marriages at 5.9%, followed by Jharkhand (5.8%). Bengal was also at the top for child marriages in urban areas at 7.6%, far above the urban national average of 1.1%. Delhi reported zero child marriage in the survey, while Kerala recorded one of the lowest rates at 0.04%. Haryana and Himachal also reported very low figures. The report showed the average age of marriage for women in India now stood at 23.1 years. Public health experts say early marriage is closely linked with school dropout, early pregnancy, higher maternal health risks and lower workforce participation among women.

Word of the day

Galumph:

move around heavily and clumsily

Synonyms: stomp, stumble, trudge

Usage: *She galumphed into the room carrying too many bags.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/galumph

International Phonetic Alphabet: /gəlʌmf/

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