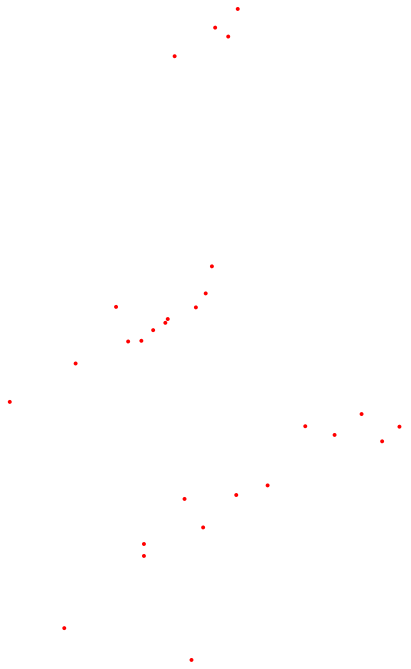


Daily Current Affairs





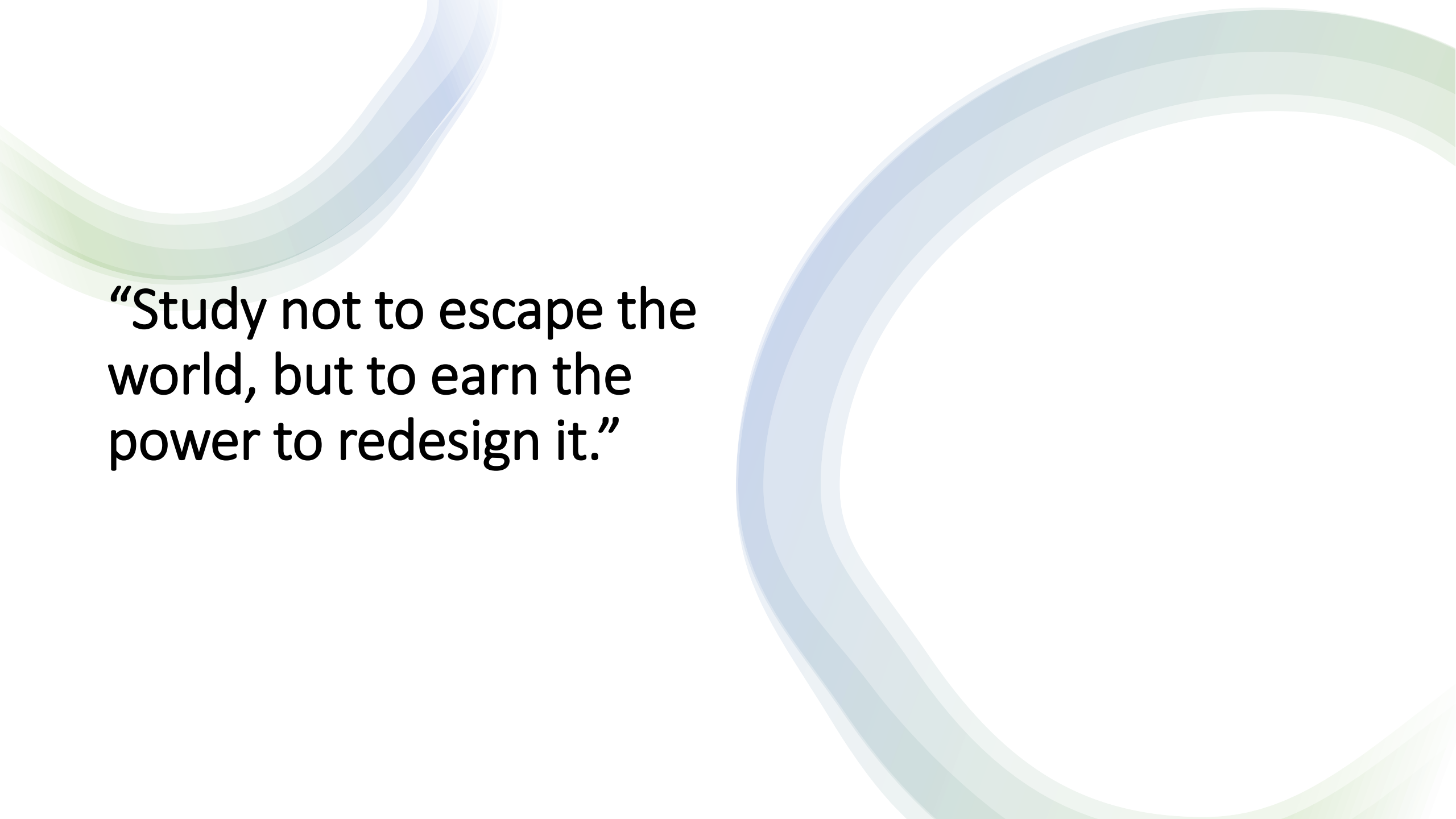
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PDF



10 MCQ QUIZ

The background features abstract, flowing lines in shades of green and blue. On the left, a green line curves upwards and then downwards. On the right, a blue line forms a large, open circular shape. The lines have a soft, blurred appearance, creating a sense of movement and depth.

“Study not to escape the world, but to earn the power to redesign it.”

Regional

ALL-TIME LOW
Rupee goes past ₹90 against the U.S. dollar
BUSINESS » PAGE 12

U.S. pauses immigration requests from 19 countries
WORLD » PAGE 14

INDIA bloc rock-solid in Jharkhand: Cong.
STATES » PAGE 2

Climate is breaching wall of urban metrics
Extreme events expose gaps in 'modern' metros
EDITORIAL » PAGE 5

CONFIDENT AUSTRALIA looks to double lead
SPORT » PAGE 16

INSIDE



Cigarette levy will be shared with States: FM

NEW DELHI
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday clarified that the tax hike she was proposing on cigarettes was not a cut but an excise duty, which would be part of divisible pool of taxes shared with the States. » PAGE 12



'No compromise' yet on territory in Ukraine talks

MOSCOW
High-stakes U.S.-Russia talks on ending the war in Ukraine failed to yield a breakthrough on Tuesday, as the Kremlin said "no compromise" had been found yet on the question of territory. » PAGE 14

Opposition seeks scrapping of new labour codes

NEW DELHI
Senior Opposition leaders, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and leader Rahul Gandhi, staged a protest in the Parliament House complex on Wednesday, demanding the scrapping of the newly implemented labour codes. » PAGE 5

Prajwal's plea to suspend sentence is rejected by HC

BENGALURU
The High Court of Karnataka on Wednesday refused to suspend the sentence of imprisonment for the remainder of life imposed on former MP Prajwal Reddy for the trial court while convicting him in one of the four rape cases. » PAGE 2



SC flags issues in payouts for acid attack survivors

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed to look into a plea that acid attack survivors, mostly young women, have neither been paid in full the minimum ₹3 lakh in compensation nor provided free critical care by private hospitals. » PAGE 8

Govt. withdraws order on Sanchar Saathi app

Order to handset makers recalled after outcry over installing intrusive app without consent

DoT claims a spike in downloads means there was 'no need' now to pre-load the app on new devices

The app direction was one of at least three issued after the DoT gave itself new powers

ARUN DEEB
NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Wednesday walked back its direction to phone manufacturers ordering them to install a government app starting next year.

The reversal came a controversial episode, in which the government had downplayed the nature of the mandate before committing to withdraw it altogether, arguing that a recent spike in downloads of Sanchar Saathi app meant that there was "no need" for smartphone manufacturers to pre-load the app on their devices.

"The number of users has been increasing rapidly, and the mandate to install the app was meant to accelerate this process and

make the app available to less aware citizens easily," the DoT said.

DoT's three directions
The original direction was one of at least three issued after the DoT gave itself new powers to regulate telecommunications. Identifier User Entities (IUE), a concept the department created to allow it to issue such orders to any entity that used phone numbers, not just telecom operators.

The order, not shared publicly but leaked by one or more recipients, who were not expecting it, sparked immediate uproar as Internet users, civil society and the Opposition asked immediate upshot of a government app being placed on phones of Indians without their knowledge.

Responding to Congress

Rollback after backlash

Following criticism, the Department of Telecom withdrew order to mandatorily pre-install Sanchar Saathi app on mobile phones.



Still, Mr. Scindia said, "This app's success is premised on public support. If, based on feedback, we have to change the order, we are ready to do that."

Third order
'This is the third such order that was issued after the Department of Telecommunications notified an amendment to the Tele-

com Cyber security rules, 2024 last month.

Another order requires platform like WhatsApp to restrict accounts from operating on their platform if the device being used to access the service doesn't contain the registered SIM card.

That order also mandated that services like WhatsApp Web would have to

be logged out every six hours, as opposed to staying signed in perpetually.

Yet another order, which has not been previously reported, was issued to major messaging and social media platforms, requiring them to integrate the DoT's Financial Fraud Risk Indicator and a blacklist of suspended mobile numbers into their databases, and "immediately deactivate" their accounts on these platforms.

The orders came from the DoT's seven-person strong AI and Digital Intelligence Unit, which deals with issues ranging from SIM security, "illegal telecom disruptions," and coordinating with the Reserve Bank of India on issues of financial fraud.

In its December 1 order,

the Department of Telecommunications said, "In order to safeguard the citizens from buying the non-genuine handsets, enable easy reporting of suspected misuse of telecom resources..."

...the DoT has issued Directions (to) Ensure that the Sanchar Saathi mobile application is pre-installed on all mobile handsets manufactured or imported for use in India."

Six lakh downloads
In the latest statement withdrawing the order, the Department said, "Just in last one day, 6 lakh citizens have registered for downloading the App which is a like seen, success in its uptake..."

Red carpet welcome



White knight: An egret passes in a pond overflowing with water lily blooms in Goudharbi on Wednesday. BY SU KUMAR

12 Maoists and three jawans killed in heavy exchange of fire in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur

Shubhanshu Shukla
RAIPUR

At least 12 Maoists were killed in an anti-Naxal operation in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur on Wednesday, according to the police. Three security personnel were killed while two sustained injuries in the exchange of fire that continued till evening.

NGP (Naxal Name) P. Sundarrao says arms, ammunition have been seized from the spot

Reserve Guards (DRG) of Danwada and Bijapur districts, the Special Task Force, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action of Go-MRA. The encounter exchange of fire started around 9 a.m., Mr. Yadav said, describing the action as "decisive and aggressive".

Inspector General of Police (Bijapur) R. Sundarrao said that, at 5 p.m., the bodies of 12 Maoists had been recovered from the site.

"R.L.R. rifles, 303 rifles, and other arms and ammunition have also been seized from the spot. The identities of the dead Maoists are yet to be established," he said.

Deported pregnant woman to be brought back

The Union government on Wednesday agreed to bring back a pregnant woman and her eight-year-old son deported to Bangladesh on solely "humanitarian grounds" following an intervention by the Supreme Court.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The court directed the chief medical officer of Hrudayan to arrange for the medical care of the pregnant woman.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 4

Airports witness chaos as IndiGo cancels at least 200 flights due to skewed roster

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

IndiGo passengers faced chaos on Wednesday as the airline cancelled at least 200 flights and delayed several others by up to 12 hours, triggered by skewed pilot scheduling and cabin crew no-shows in Mumbai, prompting an official apology. The tipping point was reached following weeks of delays.

There was discontent against the airline at Delhi airport as passengers gathered at the boarding gate to protest a six-hour delay of a flight to Rajkot. The flight was scheduled to take off at 8.40 a.m. and finally departed at 11.30 a.m. There were similar scenes at other airports such as Mumbai.

While passengers were forced to return after waiting for five to eight hours, for instance, the Mumbai to Patna flight scheduled to depart at 11.45 a.m. was delayed multiple times with the latest update suggesting an 8 p.m. departure.

In Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport, 62 IndiGo flights were cancelled for the second consecutive day. As many as 31 IndiGo flights were cancelled in Hyderabad, in Delhi, 37 flights were cancelled.

'Poor planning'
The crisis in pilot availability, blamed by its pilots on poor planning, is an issue that has been plaguing the airline for some time. It has been appealing to them for the government to take steps to cancel sick leave and the management has even offered to pay 1.5 times the salary to those who forego their privilege leave. But this has not helped matters and the airline was forced



Passengers in Mumbai were put to great hardship with massive delays of up to 12 hours, across, nationwide.

Last-minute ticket fare goes up to ₹1.3 lakh

Shubhanshu Kumar Singh
HYDERABAD

A last-minute Air India ticket from Hyderabad to Bhopal touched ₹1.3 lakh on Wednesday as widespread IndiGo cancellations at Hyderabad airport pushed passengers towards the few flights still operating on schedule and drove fares sharply upward.

The high fare appeared on a late-night Air India service routed through

Mumbai and Delhi. The journey, which was scheduled to take about nine hours and arrive in Bhopal on Thursday morning, was listed at ₹1.03 lakh fare for economy, slightly higher for premium economy, and ₹1.3 lakh for a business class seat. The airline's website also showed that only one seat was left at this fare.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 2

to cancel 200 flights on Wednesday and 140 flights on Tuesday, pilots were informed.

The crisis was triggered by the full implementation of the new and strict norms for pilots from November 1, which was delayed by the government's decision to help airlines plan their crew requirement as they had warned of widespread flight cancellations.

This had a "compounding impact on our operations" in a way the airline had not anticipated, IndiGo said.

Govt. withdraws order on Sanchar Saathi app

Order to handset makers recalled after outcry over installing; intrusive app without consent

DoT claims a spike in downloads means there was 'no need' now to preload the app on new devices

The app direction was one of at least three issued after the DoT gave itself new powers

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

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Responding to Congress

Rollback after backlash

Following criticism, the Department of Telecom withdraws order to mandatorily pre-install Sanchar Saathi app in mobile phones

DoT's statements

Dec. 1: In order to safeguard the citizens from buying the non-genuine handsets, enable easy reporting of suspected misuse of telecom resources ... ensure that the Sanchar Saathi mobile application is pre-installed

Dec. 3: Just in last one day, 6 lakh citizens have registered for downloading the App which is a 10x increase in its uptake ... Given its increasing acceptance, govt. has decided not to make the pre-installation mandatory for mobile manufacturers



Member of Parliament Deepinder Singh Hooda in Parliament, BJP leader and Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia defended the app, saying that "1.5 crore fraudulent mobile connections were disconnected, 26 lakh lost phones were traced ... we have only taken steps to make the app available to everyone".

Still, Mr. Scindia said, "This app's success is premised on public support; if, based on feedback, we have to change the order, we are ready to do that."

Third order

This is the third such order that was issued after the Department of Telecommunications notified an amendment to the Tele-



This app's success is premised on public support; if, based on feedback, we have to change the order, we are ready to do that

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA
Communications Minister

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The orders come from the DoT's seven-person-strong AI and Digital Intelligence Unit, which deals with issues ranging from SIM security, "illegal telecom set-ups," and coordinating with the Reserve Bank of India on issues of financial fraud.

In its December 1 order,

the Department of Telecommunications said, "In order to safeguard the citizens from buying the non-genuine handsets, enable easy reporting of suspected misuse of telecom resources ... the DoT has issued Directions [to] Ensure that the Sanchar Saathi mobile application is pre-installed on all mobile handsets manufactured or imported for use in India."

Six lakh downloads

In the latest statement withdrawing the order, the Department said, "Just in last one day, 6 lakh citizens have registered for downloading the App which is a 10x increase in its uptake ... Given Sanchar Saathi's increasing acceptance, Government has decided not to make the pre-installation mandatory for mobile manufacturers."



A. Context

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) **withdrew its order** asking all smartphone manufacturers to **mandatorily pre-install Sanchar Saathi app** from 2024.
 - Order triggered public criticism due to **privacy concerns** and **lack of consent**.
-

B. Why Did DoT Withdraw the Order?

1. Spike in Organic Downloads

- DoT said **6 lakh downloads in a single day** after media attention.
- Claimed this surge shows **"no need" to force pre-installation**.

2. Public Backlash

- Civil society, opposition, internet users strongly opposed:
 - Pre-installation = **intrusive**
 - App installed on **every Indian's phone without consent**
- Led to immediate roll-back.

C. About Sanchar Saathi App

- Helps users:
 - Identify **fraudulent phone connections**.
 - Report **stolen/lost phones**.
 - Check **connections issued using one's Aadhaar**.
 - Part of DoT's **AI & Digital Intelligence Unit (AI & DIU)**.
-

D. DoT's Three Controversial Directions (New Regulatory Powers)

1. Mandatory Pre-installation of Sanchar Saathi

✓ Withdrawn.

2. Messaging / Social Media Order (Not Previously Public)

- WhatsApp, Telegram & others told to:
 - Integrate **Financial Fraud Risk Indicator**.
 - Keep a **blacklist of suspended mobile numbers**.
 - **Deactivate accounts** linked to fraud.

3. SIM Security Order

- Required platforms to log-out users every 6 hours on sensitive accounts (for higher cyber-security).
-

Exam	Year	Actual Question (Verified)	Correct Answer
UPSC CSE Prelims	2023	<i>With reference to the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR), consider the following statements: 1. It helps in tracing stolen mobile phones. 2. It is implemented by the DoT. Which are correct?</i>	1 and 2 both
UPSC CSE Prelims	2022	<i>DPI (Digital Public Infrastructure) ecosystem includes which of the following? (Sanchar Saathi mentioned in explanations for telecom fraud prevention)</i>	Not directly asked but CEIR & telecom infra referenced
SSC CGL Tier-2 (GA)	2023	<i>Sanchar Saathi portal launched by DoT is used for which purpose?</i>	To check & block fraud mobile connections / lost phones
Banking (IBPS PO Mains)	2023	<i>Which government platform helps citizens block stolen mobile phones using IMEI?</i>	CEIR / Sanchar Saathi

- **Consider the following statements regarding Sanchar Saathi App:**

- It allows citizens to check all mobile connections issued on their Aadhaar.
- It is part of India's CEIR system under the Department of Telecommunications.
- It has now been made mandatory for pre-installation on all smartphones in India.

- **Which of the statements is/are correct?**

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



Malaria parasites corkscrew through skin while finding a way to the liver

Malaria sporozoites injected into the skin have to cover hundreds of micrometres to find a capillary that leads them to the liver. Geometric models had hinted that the distance across which a parasite makes a turn matches the radius of small blood vessels, making it easier to loop around them

Vandevan Mukundh

Helical paths are everywhere in the microscopic realm. Many bacteria and parasites don't simply swim or glide in straight lines. In three dimensions, they trace corkscrew-like tracks through their surroundings. Malaria parasites, for example, glide through soft 3D gels and, in the skin of a bitten host, on paths that look like stretched springs.

For any such organism, the main challenge is noise. Random bursts of energy from their environment and fluctuations in their own force-generating machinery constantly try to twist it off course. Classic work on *Escherichia coli* bacteria has shown that a bacterium can lose its orientation within about a second because of the rotational diffusion, i.e., collisions with surrounding molecules that slowly yet surely randomise its direction.

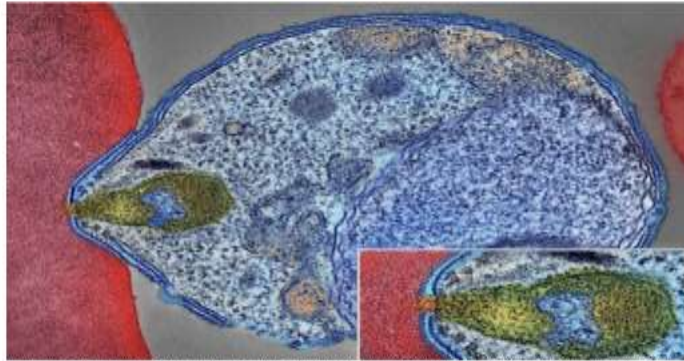
Yet malaria parasites and other similar microorganisms must stay roughly on track for tens of seconds or more if they're to find nutrients and — in the parasite's case — a blood vessel.

Do the twist
Earlier physical models typically described such microorganisms as self-propelled 'beads' buffeted by random noise. These models were mostly two-dimensional; sometimes they added a simple, constant torque to make the beads circle around. However, they didn't fully treat 3D helical motion in the presence of noise that had a memory, which is to say noise whose present value depends on its recent past. At the same time, geometry-based work on malaria parasites had shown how their curved, rod-like shape and flexibility helped them loop around obstacles and structures like blood vessels, but without describing how they could move that way in a noisy world.

A new study by Heidelberg University researchers may have bridged this gap. They observed malaria parasites gliding through synthetic hydrogels and then reconstructed their paths using a model, publishing their findings in *Nature Physics* on November 24.

"Our new investigations show that malaria parasites move almost exclusively on right-handed helices in 3D environments," Ulrich Schwarz, study co-author and head of the Physics of Complex Systems group at the Institute for Theoretical Physics, Heidelberg University, said in a release. From the data, the team found changes happening across two time scales: one at around 20s and another at around 100s. The 20s matched the duration of one helical turn and in that time the parasite's internal drive kept pushing it roughly the same way. The 100s was how long the axis of the helix continued to point in one direction.

When loops by better
Malaria sporozoites injected into human skin have to cover hundreds of micrometres to find a capillary that leads them to the liver. Older geometric models had already hinted that the optimal distance across which a parasite makes a turn roughly matches the radius of small blood vessels, making it easier to loop around them. The new work has added a complementary question to the puzzle: given the noisy nature of the parasite's



A coloured electron micrograph showing a malaria parasite (blue) attaching to a human red blood cell. The inset shows a detail of the attachment point at higher magnification. (IAS)

internal mechanism, can following a helical path actually help it travel further than a non-looping microorganism moving at the same speed?

The study team built a 3D mathematical model of a viral active particle, meaning a bead that tends to twist around in a fixed sense as it moves. The particle had a constant forward speed in its own frame of reference and an angular velocity that would, in the absence of noise, make it trace a perfect helix.

The work's novelty lay in how the team treated the rotational noise. Instead of adding white noise, the authors described the angular velocity with an Ornstein-Uhlenbeck (OU) process. Here, the noise is "pulled back" towards a preferred value with a certain relaxation time. This produced "coloured noise," i.e., not just white noise but noise that was partly predictable, mimicking the slowly varying internal processes within the parasite's body. This model's predictions of the bead's average position and its displacement matched those of the parasites moving through the hydrogel.

Radius and pitch
Importantly, the authors found that in a 3D space and for a reasonable level of noise, a bead moving along a helical path could move a larger distance over more time than a bead travelling straight at the same speed. That is, given enough time, the helix could be "straighter" than a straight line in terms of how far the microorganism travels out from its origin. This behaviour differed from what many previous models had predicted.

The best-fit parameters of the new model also indicated helical paths with a pitch (the distance between two consecutive turns of the helix) of about 13



Our new investigations show that malaria parasites move almost exclusively on right-handed helices in 3D environments
VANDDEVAN MUKUNDH
Institute for Theoretical Physics, Heidelberg University

micrometres and a radius of about 3 micrometres. Both values fell well within previously reported ranges for these parasites. The shapes of the paths simulated using these parameters also resembled the ones the authors actually measured.

Taken together, the results suggest helical motion isn't just a geometric quirk but a robust strategy for microorganisms like the malaria parasite to travel efficiently in noisy spaces. For a parasite whose internal "engine" fluctuates on the same time scale as its turn, its rotating path could also average out those fluctuations and keep the overall direction of motion more stable.

The conclusion fits with earlier work on sperm cells and algae, where researchers had found helical swimming could help the cells move reliably in the presence of chemical gradients, despite strong noise in curvature and torsion. The conclusion may also help explain why geometric models of malaria parasites that have emphasised the importance of their curved nature and pathways to help them stick to blood vessels of a comparable radius.

What goes around...
After a mosquito bite, only a small fraction of the sporozoites need to reach a

capillary for the infection to succeed. And evolution seems to have figured this best way to ensure each parasite covers more ground before losing direction, without also requiring precise control, is to have helical motion with "coloured" noise.

"We suspect that this chirality developed during evolution to allow the pathogen to switch between the different tissue compartments in the host body quickly and always in the same way,"

Beyond malaria, the model could apply to other microscopic swimmers such as certain algae and colonial choanoflagellates, whose helical paths and noisy propulsion scientists have already documented. The authors suggested the model could also inspire designs for artificial micro and nanobots in medicine, by engineering a controlled rotational component and appropriate internal time scales, engineers could build small devices that navigate complex tissues more effectively than simply moving in a straight line.

A 2014 study by some members of the authors' team found the new study treated the sporozoites as flexible rods interacting with obstacles. Subsequent models linked the sporozoite's shape with their ability to glide across certain surfaces. The new model seems to have added missing ingredients: internal "coloured" noise. What next? The authors concluded their paper saying they'd like to connect the timing of internal fluctuations to how organisms move, and then understand how these connections are shaped by where they live and how evolution has honed them.

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The Zhongguo-3 rocket takes off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre, in China, on December 3, 2023. (Reuters)

Chinese firm's reusable rocket fails to complete landing test

REUTERS

The maiden test of LandSpace's next-generation Zhongguo-3 rocket ended in failure on Wednesday, dashing the Chinese firm's hopes of becoming the third company, after Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin, to successfully test a reusable spacecraft.

The rocket was not able to complete a controlled landing following an initial launch, state news agency Xinhua reported.

"An abnormal combustion event occurred during the process, preventing a soft landing on the recovery pad," Xinhua said. "The recovery test failed, and the specific cause is still under further analysis and investigation."

Zhongguo-3's failed landing attempt highlights the difficulty of developing a rocket that can be recovered and reused after being launched into orbit. LandSpace said in a statement that it would use data collected during the flight to optimise its rocket recovery.

China's first domestically developed reusable orbital rocket, if successfully brought to market, would accelerate

In October, Musk praised Zhongguo-3's design, saying on X that the Chinese rocket could even beat Falcon 9

Beijing's growth in space, allowing for a quicker cadence of missions and lower launch costs as the nation pushes to deploy large satellite constellations to rival SpaceX's Starlink.

"As low-orbit constellation deployment accelerates, Zhongguo-3 will continue to progress from recovery demonstrations in routine reuse and toward airline-style operational cadence, contributing to China's space power objectives,"

LandSpace said. SpaceX pioneered commercial rocket reusability about a decade ago with its workhorse Falcon 9, disrupting an established U.S. launch industry that relied primarily on expendable boosters that are discarded in the ocean or remain in space after their mission.

The reusable Falcon 9 core stage allowed SpaceX to launch its Starlink satellites in 2015, faster than its rivals, becoming the world's largest operator. model seems to have added missing ingredients: internal "coloured" noise.

What next? The authors concluded their paper saying they'd like to connect the timing of internal fluctuations to how organisms move, and then understand how these connections are shaped by where they live and how evolution has honed them.

LandSpace said on Wednesday that once mature, Zhongguo-3 can be reused at least 20 times and carry a payload of multiple satellites weighing 10 tonnes.

But the gap is still wide, and there is no guarantee that LandSpace will catch up. SpaceX had its first successful Falcon booster landing in 2015 after two failed attempts. Much of the global rocket industry has since gradually sought to mimic the company's reusability model.

Nevertheless, Zhongguo-3's maiden flight puts LandSpace ahead of domestic rivals like Space, Galactic Energy and Deep Blue Aerospace, which are working on smaller or less mature systems. And it marks the first time that a Chinese firm has come close to a Falcon 9-class reusable vehicle.

Reusable rockets require complex, high-energy manoeuvres, and so far, only SpaceX has carried them out routinely. After stage separation, the booster has to turn around in space, fire its engines to slow down, survive a supersonic fall through hot air and then restart its engines just seconds before reaching water or a landing pad.

Small mistakes in the rocket's angle or engine timing can make the booster spin out of control, miss the landing site or burn up on the way down.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

What makes the pen mightier?

Vandevan Mukundh

QUESTION 1

This historical ink was made by boiling soot from burned bamboo, giving it a warm brown, transparent pigment that faded faster than carbon black in old drawings. Name this ink, which architects and artists once favoured (but especially Renaissance) for its light-sensitive nature.

QUESTION 2

The first half of the name of this classic ink, long used in comics, is linked to the country that traded it with China. It's a black ink in which carbon particles are suspended in water, sometimes with shikite, so the ink is waterproof once it dries on paper. Name the ink.

QUESTION 3

In East Asian calligraphy, practitioners

are known to grind a solid stick of soot and animal glue with water on a stone, adjusting how much pigment dissolves in control of the ink's darkness. This ink is known by its Japanese name and is sold as sticks rather than as liquid. Name it.

QUESTION 4

By the 18thc, chemists were turning coal-tar benzene into vivid purple and red dyes whose molecules imparted bright colours to writing tools. What's the family of dyes called that transformed 19th-century ink colour? Hint: the answer is also what the 'K' in the chemical company 'BASF' stands for.

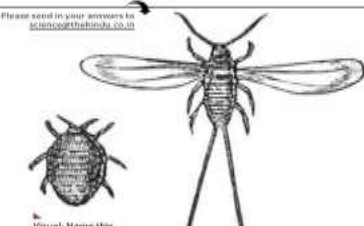
QUESTION 5

Artists once extracted brown pigment from cuttlefish, then diluted it to create soft, reddish-brown tones that were unique until the advent of the first

photographic processes. Name this pigment that gives drawings and photos a characteristic reddish-brown and which shares its name with a genus of cephalopods.

Answers to December 3 quiz

1. Effect where surface colours vary based on angle of view: **Anisotropism**
2. Effect named for Adriaen van Nieuland: **Leiden effect**
3. Effect where thin, internal layers produce light flashes: **Anisotropy**
4. 'Play of colours' over a milky background, as in opal: **Anisotropy**
5. Inference from white as the reflected light: **Anisotropy**



Visual: Name this insect. The natural dye carmine is derived from an acid it secretes to protect itself. DREDDY PUBLIC DOMAIN

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to: science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'



The Zhongguo-3 rocket takes off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in China, on December 1, 2020. (Xinhua)

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But the gap is still wide, and there is no guarantee that LandSpace will catch up. SpaceX had its first successful Falcon heavier landing in 2015 after two failed attempts. Much of the global rocket industry has since gradually sought to mirror the company's reusability model.

Nevertheless, Zhongguo-3's maiden flight puts LandSpace ahead of domestic rivals like Shuang, Galactic Energy and Deep Blue Aerospace, which are working on smaller or less mature systems. And it marks the first time that a Chinese firm has come close to a Falcon 9-class reusable vehicle.

Reusable rockets require complex, high-energy manoeuvres, and so far, only SpaceX has carried them out routinely. After stage separation, the booster has to turn around in space, fire its engines to slow down, survive a supersonic fall through hot air and then restart its engines just seconds before reaching water or a landing pad.

Small mistakes in the rocket's angle or engine timing can make the booster spin out of control, ruin the landing site or burn up on the way down.



- China's private firm **LandSpace** tested its next-gen reusable rocket **Zhuque-3**.
 - The rocket **failed to complete a soft landing test** after launch.
 - Xinhua reported an **"abnormal combustion event"** during descent prevented soft landing.
-

B. Why the Failure Matters

1. China's Race for Reusable Rockets

- China wants to match **SpaceX's Falcon 9** and **Blue Origin's New Shepard**.
- Zhuque-3 is intended to be:
 - **Reusable**
 - **Cost-efficient**
 - **Suitable for mass satellite deployment** (especially mega-constellations).

2. Strategic Importance

- China is pushing for:
 - **Low-cost launch cadence**
 - **Own satellite constellations** to rival **Starlink**.
- Reusable rockets are essential to achieve lower launch costs.

D. Significance of Zhuque-3

1. Technical

- Uses **methane + liquid oxygen (methalox)** — similar to SpaceX Starship engines.
- Capable of **20+ reuses**, according to LandSpace.
- Expected to carry **multiple satellites** simultaneously.

2. Performance Compared to SpaceX

- In October, **Elon Musk praised** the design, saying it **might beat Falcon 9**.
 - If operational, Zhuque-3 would be China's **first serious challenger** to Falcon-class reusable rockets.
-

E. China's Private Space Industry Push

- China encourages private firms like:
 - iSpace
 - Galactic Energy
 - Deep Blue Aerospace
- Focus: smaller, reusable rockets + rapid launch cadence.

Exam	Year	Actual Question (Verified)	Correct Answer
UPSC Prelims	2023	<i>With reference to private space companies, consider the following: SpaceX, Blue Origin, and OneWeb. Which ones are engaged in reusable launch vehicle development?</i>	SpaceX & Blue Origin
UPSC Prelims	2023	<i>What is the advantage of using methane as a rocket fuel? (Asked in context of Starship, applicable to Zhuque-3)</i>	Cleaner combustion, reusable-friendly, higher efficiency
SSC CGL (GA)	2023	<i>Which country's private company launched the 'Zhuque-2', the world's first methane rocket to reach orbit?</i>	China (LandSpace)
CDS 2024	2024	<i>Falcon 9 is known for which breakthrough technology?</i>	Reusable first stage landing

Q. With reference to China's reusable rocket Zhuque-3, consider the following statements:

1. Zhuque-3 uses methane as a rocket fuel, similar to SpaceX's Starship.
2. It successfully completed its first soft landing test in December 2025.
3. The rocket is being developed by China's private firm LandSpace.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Smaller districts, bigger questions

The latest announcement has reignited a state-wide debate: is rapid territorial decentralisation driving meaningful governance reform, or is it merely adding layers to political cartography? Critics argue that the restructuring lacks coherence and appears politically motivated, fragmenting Assembly segments across two or three districts, shrinking district sizes, and distorting

Announcing the 2025 expansion, Mr. Naidu said the restructuring would empower

Ultimately, the success of Andhra's restructuring will depend on whether public commitment is matched by administrative capacity, realistic financial planning, adequate staffing, transparent digital systems, and stakeholder participation. If these foundations are established, smaller districts could enhance service delivery, improve responsiveness, and strengthen participatory governance.

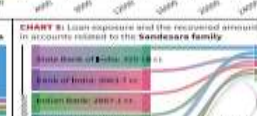
Just nine Fugitive Economic Offenders owed ₹58,000 crore, of which ₹19,000 crore was recovered

Charts 4, 5, and 6 detail the loan exposure and recovered amount for the top offenders. SBI led in exposure to Malhiya, whereas PNB bore the brunt of Modi's defaults. For the Sandesara family, the exposure was shared among multiple banks.

The data for the charts were sourced from Parliament Questions and Answers.



Bank Type	Percentage (%)
Bank of Baroda	10
Laxmi Bank	5
JCO Bank	5
Indian Overseas Bank	5
Others	75

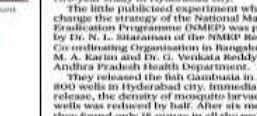


The recovery rate of other banks' assets at 50%

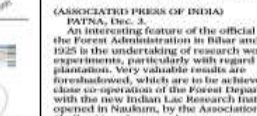
50% recovered

[illegible]

The recovery rate of all banks involved the at 27.2% postnegative



The cost of controlling malaria by keeping wells breeding-free was only ₹15 a month.



The recovery rate of oil banks involved in a putting get

Bank of America

Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

NEW DELHI, Dec. 3: A three-inch long fish may hold the key to the problem of controlling malaria which has come back with a vengeance.

Called "Gambusia Affinis Halbrooki", it is a voracious eater of the larvae of anopheles stephensi, the mosquito which spreads malaria in towns and cities.

The possibility of using this fish to control malaria has been successfully demonstrated in a two-year study in the coastal city.

The cost of controlling malaria by keeping the wells breeding-free was only €15 a month.

2. A SOURCE OF THE INFORMATION CONCERNING THE...

An interesting feature of the official report on the Forest Administration in Bihar and Orissa in 1978 is the consideration of the Deopur and other experiments, particularly with regard to lac plantations. Very valuable results are furnished, which are to be achieved by the Government of Bihar in the near future in treatment with the new Indian Lac Research Institute, opened in Nauburni, by the Association of Scientific Manufacturers. The Deopur area has been made with lac nurseries in Singhbhum and Palamau district, and, since the conclusion of the year under review, the Government have started a series of experiments in the Deopur area for the establishment of eight lac plantations, of 700 acres each, to be ignored in the more important lac districts. The Deopur area, which is involved in the scheme, is about 690,000.

Fugitive Economic Offenders: Rs 58,082 Crore Blow to Banks

TOTAL AMOUNT OWED

₹ **Rs 58,082 crore**

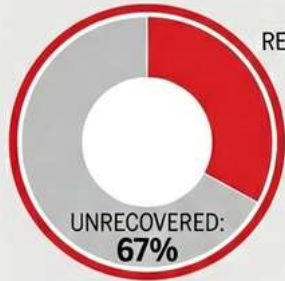


• Principal:
Rs 26,645 crore



• Interest:
Rs 31,437 crore

RECOVERY STATUS



RECOVERED:
33%

• Recovered:
Rs 19,187 crore



• Unrecovered:
Rs 38,895 crore



33% Recovery rate

TOP OFFENDERS



• **Vijay Mallya** –
Rs 11,960 crore
(SBI exposure)



• **Nirav Modi** –
Rs 6,799 crore
(PNB fraud)



• **Sandesara Group** –
multiple accounts over
Rs 900–1,300 crore

KEY STATS



• **15** declared fugitive economic offenders



• **9** linked to major PSU bank frauds



• **Only 2 One-Time Settlements** approved
(Indian Bank & SBI)



GOVERNMENT POSITION



• **No new policy proposed** to stop
offenders from fleeing the country



- **Who Are Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEOs)?**
- FEOs: Individuals who flee India to avoid criminal prosecution in cases involving **₹100 crore+ fraud**.
- Declared under **Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA), 2018**.
- As of Oct 31, 2025 → **15 individuals declared FEOs**.
-

FEO	Major Case	Bank Exposure	Recovery (%)
Vijay Mallya	Kingfisher	~₹10,814 crore	56%
Sandesara Family (Sterling Biotech)	Bank fraud	~₹22,000+ crore	17%
Nirav Modi	PNB Fraud	~₹11,000 crore	7%
Others	Various	Lower amounts	Minimal

Topic	Exam-Focused Fact
FEO Act, 2018	Allows property confiscation without conviction if the offender has left India.
ED's Role	Attaches properties under PMLA, 2002 .
Bank NPAs	FEOs account for some of India's largest NPAs .
Global Comparison	Similar actions under US FATCA , UK POCA .
Why Interest is High	Many cases date back 10–15 years; compounding increases liability.
India's biggest bank fraud	PNB–Nirav Modi scam (~₹14,000 crore).
Mallya's case	First successful extradition clearance by UK court (process still ongoing).

Exam	Year	Actual Verified Question	Correct Answer
UPSC Prelims	2023	<i>With reference to the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018, which of the following statements are correct? (about threshold ₹100 crore, property confiscation)</i>	Correct statements: ≥ ₹100 Cr + Confiscation allowed
UPSC Prelims	2023	<i>Which of the following agencies can attach properties under the PMLA, 2002?</i>	Enforcement Directorate (ED)
UPSC Prelims	2022	<i>In the context of financial frauds, what is the role of Interpol Red Notice?</i>	International arrest request
SSC CGL GA	2023	<i>Who is associated with the PNB scam involving fraudulent LoUs?</i>	Nirav Modi
Banking (IBPS PO Mains)	2023	<i>What is NPA? What is recovery rate in India according to recent reports?</i>	NPA = unpaid >90 days; recovery ~30%

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Fugitive Economic Offenders in India:

1. A person can be declared an FEO only if the alleged fraud is above ₹100 crore.
2. Once declared FEO, the government can confiscate domestic and overseas properties without conviction.
3. In India, the overall recovery rate from FEOs currently stands above 70%.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

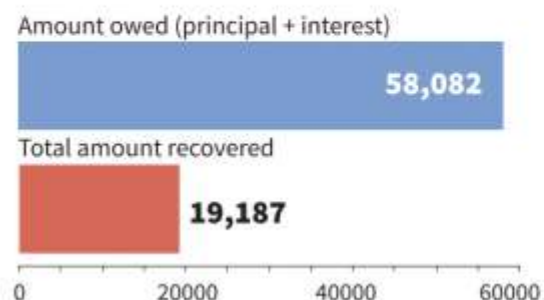
- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Amounts owed by and recovered from fugitives

The data for the charts were sourced from Parliament Questions and Answers



CHART 1: Amount owed and recovered by Indian banks from select FEOs. Figures in ₹crore



This analysis includes the two fugitive economic offenders who have negotiated loan settlement under One Time Settlement (OTS).

In the graphs, members of the Sandesara family refers to amount borrowed by/recovered from Nitin J. Sandesara, Chetan J. Sandesara, and Dipti C. Sandesara as mentioned in the parliament document

**In chart 2, others include Bank of Maharashtra, Punjab and Sind Bank, and Central Bank of India*

CHART 2: Amount owed to the banks and amount recovered. Figures in ₹crore

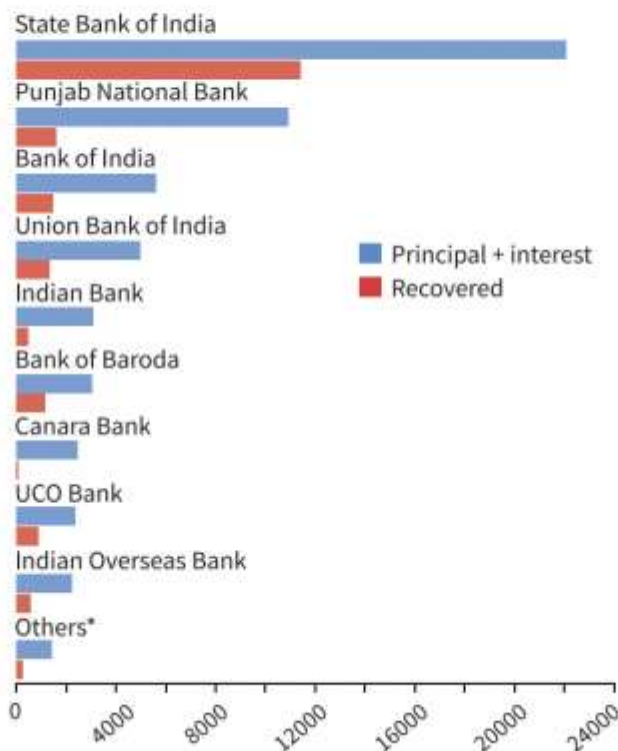


CHART 3: Amount owed by the offenders and amount recovered. Figures in ₹crore

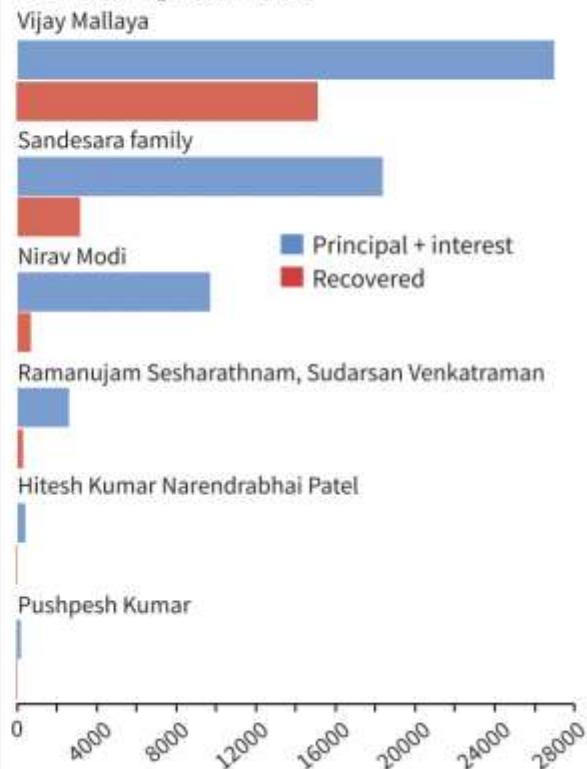


CHART 4: Loan exposure of various banks and the recovered amount in accounts related to **Vijay Mallya**

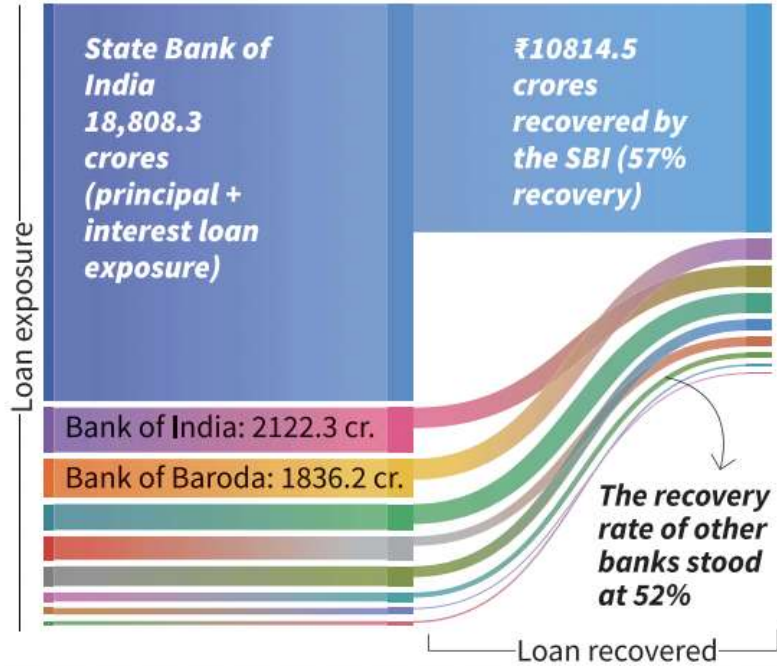


CHART 5: Loan exposure and the recovered amount in accounts related to the **Sandesara family**

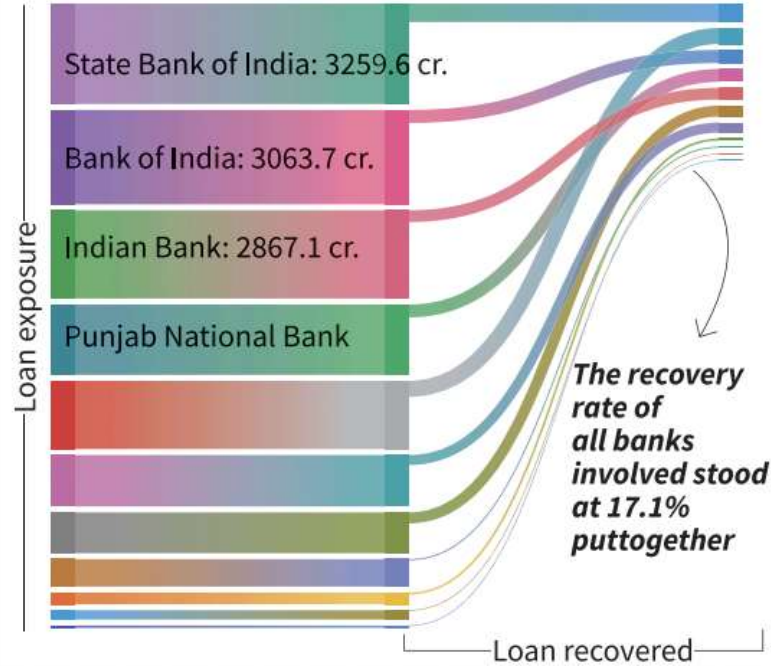
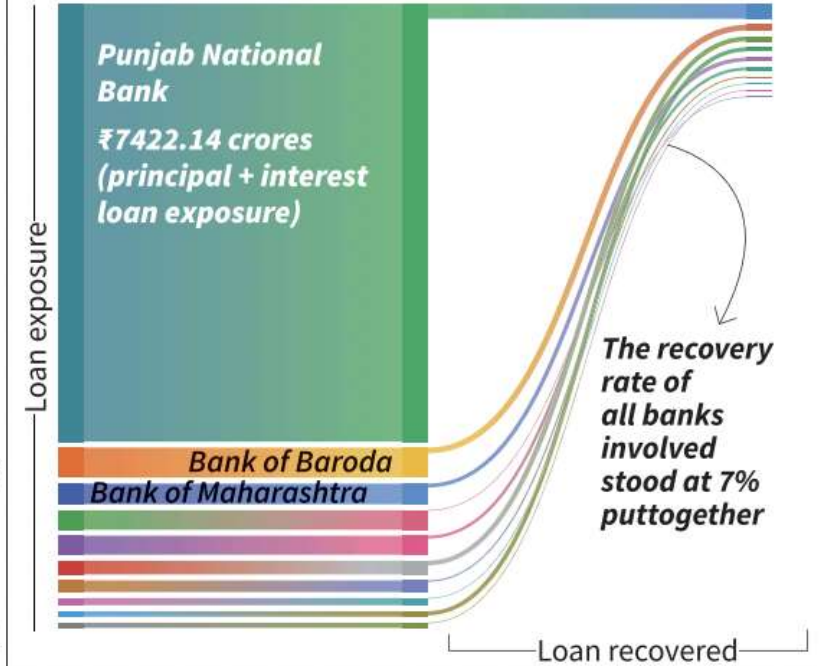


CHART 6: Loan exposure and the recovered amount in accounts related **Nirav Modi**



Re crosses 90-mark against dollar on uncertainty in deal with US, FPI outflow

Not losing sleep, fall not impacting inflation or exports, says CEA

Hitesh Vyas

Mumbai, December 3

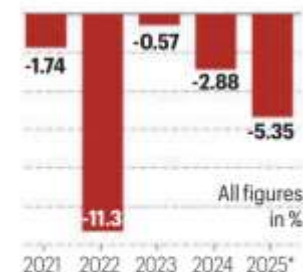
THE RUPEE continued its fall on Wednesday, breaching the 90-mark against the US dollar for the first time, weighed down by persistent equity selling by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), uncertainty around the India-US trade deal and higher importer demand for the American currency.

The rupee ended at an all-time low of 90.19 against the dollar, after opening at 89.96, against the previous close of 89.97. The currency hit a record low of 90.30 during intraday trading. In New Delhi, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran downplayed the fall, saying: "I am not losing sleep over it."

"It (rupee) will come back next year. Right now, it is not impacting inflation or exports," he told reporters on the sidelines of the Confederation of Indian Industry's India Edge summit.

So far in the current calendar year (January 1 to December 3, 2025), the currency has fallen by around 5.35 per cent compared to 2.88 per cent depreciation in 2024 and 0.57 per cent in 2023. It weakened sharply by

• Rupee depreciation



* UP TO DECEMBER 3, 2025

E. What's driving the slide [PAGE 15](#)

11.3 per cent in 2022, after a 1.74 per cent decline in 2021.

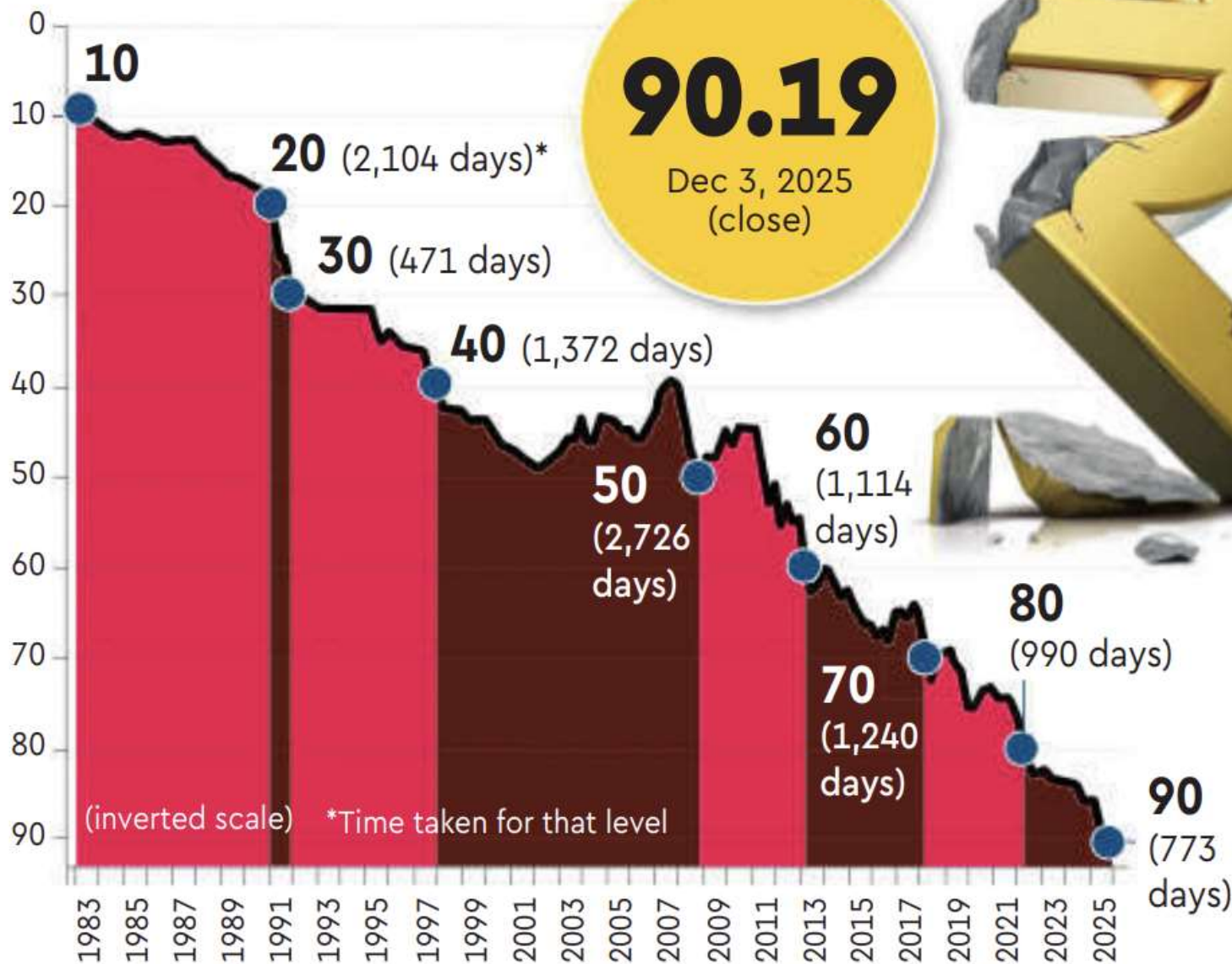
Wednesday's fall in the currency was fuelled by the growing uncertainty around the Indo-US trade deal, which has supported the US dollar and created caution in emerging market (EM) currencies, including the rupee, said Anindya Banerjee, Head Commodity and Currency, Kotak Securities.

The rupee came under

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

10 TO 90 IN 42 YEARS

Rupee vs dollar

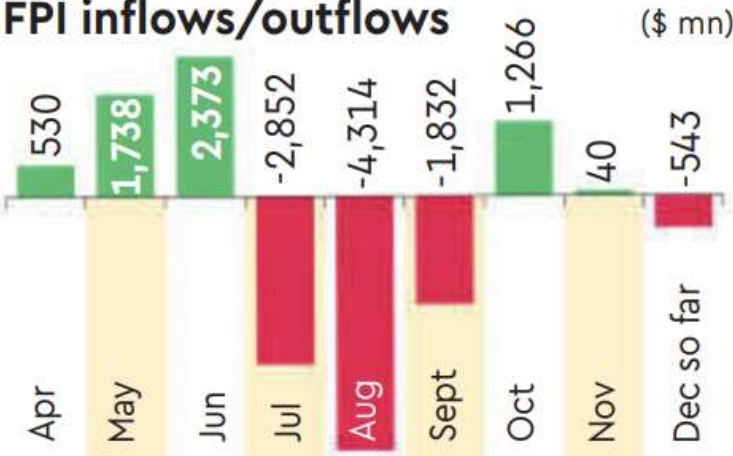


Merchandise trade

Exports Imports (% chg y-o-y)



FPI inflows/outflows





RUPEE SLIDES PAST 90 AMID DELAYED INDIA-US TRADE DEAL, CONTINUED FPI OUTFLOWS; MARKETS AWAIT RBI POLICY SIGNAL

A. Key Headline

- Indian Rupee (INR) **breaches 90 per USD** for the first time (Dec 3, 2025).
 - Day low: ₹90.30
 - Closing: ₹90.19.
-

B. Major Reasons for Rupee Depreciation

1. Large-scale FPI Outflows

- FPIs sold:
 - ₹1.52 lakh crore in 2025 (till Dec 3).
 - ₹8,369 crore sold in the first three days of December.

2. Uncertainty around Indo-US Trade Deal

- Lack of clarity created **risk-off behaviour** in EM currencies.
- USD strengthened as safe haven.

3. Higher Import Demand

- Heavy demand from **oil, metals, electronics** importers.
- Importers absorbed dollar liquidity → rupee weakened.

4. Leveraged Trader Activity

- Above the 90-mark, **stop-loss triggers** fired.
- Option sellers/leveraged traders rushed to hedge → rupee slid more.

G. Impact on Economy

Positive

- Good for exporters if demand remains intact.
- REER suggests rupee needs **2–3% depreciation yearly** to maintain competitiveness.

Negative

- Higher import bill (oil, electronics).
 - Hedging costs rise for corporates.
 - Increases short-term volatility.
-

H. Experts' Views

- Rupee could bottom out at **91–93**.
- Market expects RBI policy cues on further moves.
- Analysts believe rupee is **oversold** and must reclaim **₹89.80** to stabilise.

Exam	Year	Actual Question	Correct Answer
UPSC Prelims	2023	<i>With reference to the exchange rate, what is meant by “managed float”?</i>	RBI intervenes to reduce volatility but doesn't fix rate.
UPSC Prelims	2023	<i>Which factors can cause rupee depreciation? (Options included FPI outflows, high imports, strong dollar)</i>	All correct.
UPSC Prelims	2022	<i>What is Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER)?</i>	Weighted average of a country's currency relative to basket → inflation-adjusted.
SSC CGL (GA)	2023	<i>FPI outflows generally lead to what effect on rupee?</i>	Rupee depreciation.
IBPS PO Mains GK	2023	<i>What happens when crude oil prices rise for India?</i>	Trade deficit widens → INR weakens.

Q. Consider the following statements about the recent depreciation of the Indian Rupee:

1. The RBI is targeting a fixed exchange rate band of 88–90 per USD.
2. One major reason for the rupee crossing 90 per USD is heavy FPI selling in Indian equity markets.
3. Depreciation is expected to boost exports without worsening the import bill.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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



New data presented in Parliament shows 34% (33.54%) of Indian children under 5 years are stunted.

- New data presented in Parliament shows **34% (33.54%) of Indian children under 5 years are stunted.**
 - Data is from **Poshan Tracker**, covering children enrolled in **Anganwadi centres** under ICDS.
-

B. What Do the Latest Numbers Show?

(Assessment based on **6.44 crore** children measured)

Indicator	Prevalence (%)	Meaning
Stunted	33.54%	Low height-for-age → chronic malnutrition
Underweight	14.41%	Low weight-for-age
Wasted	5.03%	Low weight-for-height → acute malnutrition

Key Observation:

- These numbers highlight **persistent malnutrition** despite improvements.

C. Comparison with NFHS-5 (2019–21)

NFHS-5 figures (for under-5):

Indicator	NFHS-5 (%)	Current (%)	Trend
Stunting	35.5%	33.54%	↓ Improving
Underweight	32.1%	14.41%	↓ Sharp decline*
Wasting	19.3%	5.03%	↓ Significant fall*

*Officials suggest differences could be due to **updatation in measurement systems + real improvement** but requires further validation.

D. Why This Data Matters?

1. Poshan Tracker = Real-time monitoring

- Unlike NFHS, which is decadal/periodic, Poshan Tracker gives **continuous** updates.

2. India's Nutrition Challenge is Structural

Main drivers of stunting:

- Poor maternal nutrition
- Low birth weight
- Poor sanitation (diarrhoea cycle)
- Poverty & food insecurity
- Inadequate breastfeeding practices

3. Targeted Programmes Impacting Numbers

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (2018)
- Saksham Anganwadi & POSHAN 2.0
- Anaemia Mukht Bharat
- PM Matru Vandana Yojana

E. International Comparison

Country	Stunting (%) (approx WHO)
India	33–35% (high)
Bangladesh	28%
Nepal	31%
China	5–6%
Sub-Saharan Africa avg	35–40%

India still faces one of the **highest global burdens** of child stunting.

Topic

Key Facts

Stunting

Sign of *chronic* malnutrition; irreversible after age 2.

Wasting

Shows *acute* short-term malnutrition.

Underweight

Composite indicator of chronic + acute malnutrition.

Poshan Tracker

Digital platform under MWCD; monitors growth of **8 crore children**.

Anthropometric standards

Based on WHO Child Growth Standards (2006).

UN SDG Target 2.2

“End all forms of malnutrition” by 2030.

India’s worst-performing states (NFHS-5)

Bihar, Meghalaya, Jharkhand (highest stunting).

Best states

Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu.

Key Government Mission

Saksham Anganwadi & POSHAN 2.0 (merged ICDS + POSHAN 1.0).

Exam	Year	Verified Question	Correct Answer
UPSC Prelims	2023	Which of the following indicators are used to measure child malnutrition? (Stunting, Wasting, Underweight)	All three
UPSC Prelims	2023	POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to reduce stunting in India to what level?	25% by 2022 (not achieved)
UPSC Prelims	2022	What does stunting indicate?	Chronic undernutrition
SSC CGL (GA)	2023	NFHS report deals with which of the following?	Health & Nutrition Indicators
IBPS PO Mains	2023	What is wasting in children?	Low weight-for-height

Q. With reference to recent nutrition data from the Poshan Tracker, consider the following statements:

1. Over one-third of Indian children under five are stunted.
2. The prevalence of wasting reported by Poshan Tracker is higher than that reported by NFHS-5.
3. Poshan Tracker provides real-time anthropometric data for children enrolled in Anganwadi centres.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

The background features decorative curved lines in shades of blue and green, sweeping across the top and bottom corners of the slide.

RBI has again classified SBI, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank as India's safest and most systemically important banks.

- RBI has again classified **SBI, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank** as **India's safest and most systemically important banks**.
 - These are designated as **D-SIBs** — Domestic Systemically Important Banks.
-

B. What Are D-SIBs?

- Banks whose **failure can trigger severe economic disruption**.
- They have:
 - Large **asset size**
 - Wide **customer reach**
 - High **interconnectedness** with the financial system

RBI's Logic Behind D-SIBs

- These banks are considered **"Too Big to Fail"**.
- If they collapse → could cause nationwide financial instability.

C. Why These Three Banks?

1. State Bank of India (SBI)

- India's largest bank
- Massive branch network + deposit base
- High systemic importance

2. HDFC Bank

- Largest private-sector lender
- Very strong retail franchise
- Low NPAs, high capital adequacy

3. ICICI Bank

- Major corporate lender
- Strong balance sheet
- High market interconnectedness

RBI reaffirmed all three for **2025**, indicating **no change** in the D-SIB list.



Component

Requirement



CET1

+0.2% to 0.8% extra

Capital Conservation Buffer

2.5%

Total CRAR for banks

India: 9% (Basel: 8%)



D. Capital Requirements for D-SIBs

- RBI imposes **extra capital buffers** beyond Basel III norms.
 - These banks must maintain additional **Common Equity Tier-1 (CET1)** capital called the **D-SIB buffer**.
 - Purpose:
 - Improve ability to absorb losses
 - Reduce probability of failure
 - Enhance depositor & systemic protection
-

E. Global Comparison

- D-SIBs in India \approx **Global SIBs (G-SIBs)** identified by the **Financial Stability Board (FSB)**.

Examples:

- JPMorgan Chase, Citi, HSBC, BNP Paribas (G-SIBs)
-

F. Why It Matters

- Ensures **financial stability**
 - Builds trust among depositors
 - Signals regulatory confidence
 - Encourages conservative risk-taking
 - Protects economy from **domino-effect failures**
-

Exam	Year	Actual Verified Question	Correct Answer
UPSC Prelims	2023	<i>What is a systematically important bank?</i>	A bank whose failure threatens overall financial stability
UPSC Prelims	2023	<i>Which banks in India are classified as D-SIBs?</i>	SBI, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank
UPSC Prelims	2022	<i>What is CET1 capital?</i>	Core equity capital held by a bank
SSC CGL	2023	<i>RBI imposes additional capital buffer on which type of banks?</i>	D-SIBs
IBPS PO Mains	2023	<i>What is meant by “Too Big to Fail”?</i>	Large financial institution whose failure causes systemic crisis

Q. Consider the following statements about Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs):

1. RBI imposes an additional Common Equity Tier-1 (CET1) buffer on D-SIBs.
2. Only public-sector banks can be designated as D-SIBs in India.
3. The failure of a D-SIB can trigger large-scale financial instability.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Word of the day

Schadenfreude:

delight in another person's misfortune

Usage: *His business thrives on schadenfreude.*

Pronunciation:

newsth.live/schadenfreudepro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /ˈʃaː.dən.fʁɔɪ.də/, /ˈʃaː.dən.fʁɔɪd/





Thank you 😊

