

Daily Current Affairs





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The Hindu



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**PIB, PRS & Other
newspaper**



3

**The Indian
Express**



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Jansatta

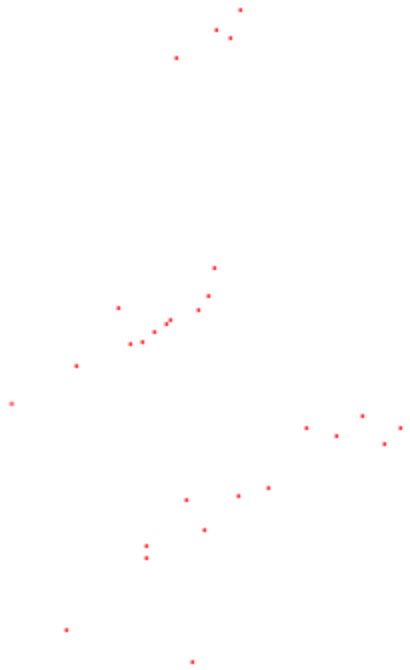


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**Financial
Express**



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PDF



10 MCQ QUIZ

KEEPINSPIRING.ME

“

**A friendship
that can end
never really
began.**

”

- Publilius Syrus -

LANDMARK RULING
Google need not sell Chrome, says U.S. judge
IMMIGRATION ACT
Sri Lankan Tamils get exemption
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DGCA PLAN
Airports may charge fee on wheelchair use
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DATA POINT
Less than 40% of disabled have mandated IDs
They are unable to access govt. schemes
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GETTING CLOSER
Djokovic overcomes Fritz, meets Alcaraz
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Two-rate GST to kick in on September 22

Govt. keeps slabs at 5% and 18%; introduces 'special' 40% rate for goods such as tobacco and luxury items | Individual life insurance policies, individual health policies will move to 0% slab from the earlier 18% | Move likely to reduce prices of daily-use goods, food items, life-saving medicines and cement

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, during its 56th meeting, decided to revamp the tax structure into a primarily two-rate system, as proposed by the Central government, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced on Wednesday.

Apart from the two rates of 5% and 18%, the new GST system would also include a 40% "special rate" on sin goods such as tobacco and luxury items such as large cars, yachts, and helicopters.

The decisions will come into effect from September 22 for most items, she said. Only tobacco and tobacco-related products will move to the new structure at a date to be specified by the Finance Minister.

The government also calculated that the net fiscal implication of the rate cuts, based on consumption

patterns in 2023-24, would be ₹48,000 crore. However, the officials clarified that the real implication would be known on the basis of current consumption, and that the rate rationalisation was expected to result in a buoyancy effect, and improved compliance.

"These reforms have been carried out with a focus on the common man," Ms. Sitharaman said. "Every tax levied on the common man has gone through a rigorous looking into, and in most cases, the rates have come down. Labour-intensive industries have been given good support. Farmers and agriculture will benefit from the decisions. Health-related sectors will also benefit."

She further said that common-use and middle-class items will see a reduction, with products such as hair oil, soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, bicycle, table and kitchen ware, and other household



Left to right: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaking to the media after the GST Council meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

articles being moved to 5% from either 18% or 12%.

No tax on Indian breads
The other items moving down to the 5% rate include namkeens, sauces, papad, instant noodles, chocolates, coffee, and butter. Twelve specified

bio-pesticides, bio-methanol, and labour-intensive items such as handicrafts, marble, travertine blocks, granite blocks, and intermediate leather goods would move from 12% to 5%. Notably, cement will move from 28% to 18%. The Finance Minister

further said that items such as ultra-high temperature milk, paneer, and all Indian bread, including rotis, chapatis, and parathas would see their tax rate fall to 0% from the earlier 5%.

On insurance services, individual life insurance policies and individual

health policies will move to 0% from 18%.

A total of 33 life-saving drugs and medicines will move from 12% to 0%, while spectacles to correct vision would move from 28% to 5%. The tax on electronic waste has been retained at 5%.

"The long-pending inverted duty structure is being rectified for the handmade textile sector" by reducing the GST rate on manmade fibre from 18% to 5% and manmade yarn from 12% to 5%, Ms. Sitharaman said. "That will take care of every anomaly due to duty inversion in this sector."

Once the Centre discharges the loans it had borrowed to compensate States, these tobacco and tobacco-related items will move to the 40% slab. Ms. Sitharaman said the loan would likely be repaid within this calendar year.

The special rate of 40% will apply only on particular sin and super-luxury

goods such as pan masala, cigarettes, gutka, chewable tobacco, zarda, unmanufactured tobacco and bidi, as well as goods including aerated water, caffeinated beverages, mid-size or large cars, motorcycles of engines exceeding 350 cc, helicopters and airplanes for personal use, and yachts or other vessels for private use.

Ms. Sitharaman further explained that the GST rate on pan masala, gutka, cigarettes, chewable and unmanufactured tobacco, and bidi would remain at 28%, in addition to a compensation cess, as currently in place.

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INSIDE



China's might on show for Russia, N. Korea leaders

BEIJING
Beijing on Wednesday marked the 80th anniversary of its victory in the Second World War, with a military parade presided over by Russian President Vladimir Putin, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and others at Tiananmen Square. > PAGE 14

21,000 children disabled in Gaza conflict: UN panel

GENEVA
At least 21,000 children in Gaza have been disabled and 40,500 have suffered "new war-related injuries" since the war between Israel and Hamas began on October 2023, a UN panel said on Wednesday. > PAGE 14

Relentless rain, flooding claim dozens of lives, cause huge property loss across North India

The Hindu Bureau
DELHI/CHANDIGARH/ SRINAGAR/KASHMIR

Heavy rain and floods continued to batter States in northern India on Wednesday, causing severe damage to life and property.

In Himachal Pradesh, 11 people died in the past 24 hours during which rain triggered landslides in Punjab, the swollen Sutlej, Beas and Ravi rivers caused widespread devastation with the State government pegging the death toll in recent rain-related incidents to 37.

In Jammu & Kashmir, two people were killed.



New course: Floodwater enters homes along the banks of the swollen Doodh Ganga river in Dangepora Wathpora of Budgam district in central Kashmir on Wednesday. IANS/NSA

FULL REPORT
> PAGE 4

Foreign firms halted India projects worth ₹2 lakh crore

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

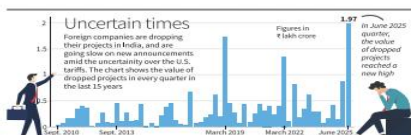
Tariff-related uncertainty pushed foreign companies to pull the plug on nearly ₹2 lakh crore worth of projects in India in the first quarter of this financially year, more than 1,200% higher than the corresponding quarter last year.

An analysis by The Hindu of data from the Credit for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) shows that foreign private companies dropped projects worth 1,97 lakh crore in Q1 of 2025-26, the highest amount since at least 2010, the earliest date for which there is data, and 370% higher than the long-term quarterly average.

The CMIE data further

breaks up the dropped projects into those that have been abandoned entirely, shelved temporarily, stalled, or for which information is not available on why it was dropped. Given the recency of the data, the bulk of the dropped projects fall under the "lack of information" category.

Tariff woes
According to the economists, however, the reason is clear: tariff-related uncertainty. The period between April and June saw a lot of missed deadlines in terms of a 'mini trade deal' being announced between India and the United States, which was supposed to address the issue of reciprocal tariffs imposed by the



United States on Indian imports. "This is very largely the impact of tariff uncertainty," D.K. Srivastava, Chief Policy Advisor at EY India, told The Hindu.

"Whether this will carry on will depend on whether these companies are from the United States or elsewhere. Mostly, if the investment was from U.S. companies, they would have dropped it. Apart from the tariffs, the U.S. President is also keen for these companies to move their investments back to the U.S."

Mr. Srivastava, however, was confident that a large part of these investments would return once there was greater clarity on the tariffs.

New projects
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The ratio of dropped projects to new project announcements — a rough metric of investment mood — surged to a value of 8.8 in Q1 of this year. The higher the figure, the more pessimistic the investors. This was the highest since 2010.

The value of new projects announced by foreign companies in India in Q1 of 2025-26 stood at ₹22,491 crore. While this was nearly 50% higher than Q1 of last year, this is likely because the April-June 2024 quarter saw an overall investment slowdown due to last year's general election.

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KCR daughter Kavitha quits as BRS MLC

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

A day after the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leadership suspended MLC Kavitha from the party, she announced that she was resigning as MLC and also from the primary membership of the party.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, Ms. Kavitha said it was due to pressure from party leaders T. Harish Rao and J. Santosh Kumar that party supreme and her father K. Chandrababbar Rao was forced to take the harsh decision against her. She also clarified that she was not joining any other party.

FULL REPORT
> PAGE 3

Governors must act 'forthwith' on Bills, States argue in SC



Krishnakumar Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

States ruled by non-BJP parties argued in the Supreme Court on Wednesday that even a three-month deadline given in the Tamil Nadu Governor case judgment may be too long, and State Bills presented to Governors must be assented to by these "timely heads" forthwith.

West Bengal, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh said the will of the people, which the proposed laws manifest, cannot be sacrificed on the altar of the whims and fancies of Governors. They said sitting over Bills was a quiet disguise for denying assent, but without necessarily having to return the proposed laws to the legislature for reconsideration.

Appearing before a five-judge Presidential Reference Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for West Bengal, said Article 200 required the Governor to return a Bill to a State Legislature "as soon as possible" in case he disagreed with it. Mr. Sibal interpreted "as soon as possible" to mean "forthwith or immediately."

"Forthwith" must apply to Governors and President, who is actually the Union government, while dealing with grant of assent. Bills cannot wait," he submitted. The Governor had no business questioning the constitutionality of Bills. He was bound to grant assent if the legislature re-passed them. Later, once the Bills are notified as laws, citizens could test their constitutionality in court, the senior lawyer said.

Two-rate GST to kick in on September 22

Govt. keeps slabs at 5% and 18%; introduces 'special' 40% rate for goods such as tobacco and luxury items

Individual life insurance policies, individual health policies will move to 0% slab from the earlier 18%

Move likely to reduce prices of daily-use goods, food items, life-saving medicines and cement

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tion patterns in 2023-24, would be ₹48,000 crore. However, the officials clarified that the real implication would be known on the basis of current consumption, and that the rate rationalisation was expected to result in a buoyancy effect, and improved compliance.

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She further said that common-use and middle-class items will see a reduction, with products such as hair oil, soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, bicycle, table and kitchen ware, and other household



List is out: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaking to the media after the GST Council meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

articles being moved to 5% from either 18% or 12%.

No tax on Indian breads

The other items moving down to the 5% rate include namkeens, sauces, pasta, instant noodles, chocolates, coffee, and butter. Twelve specified

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"The long-pending inverted duty structure is being rectified for the man-made textile sector by reducing the GST rate on manmade fibre from 18% to 5% and manmade yarn from 12% to 5%," Ms. Sitharaman said. "That will take care of every anomaly due to duty inversion in this sector."

Inversion rectified

The inverted duty structure regarding fertilizers will also be rectified, with the duty on sulphuric acid, nitric acid and ammonia being reduced from 18% to 5%.

The special rate of 40% will apply only on particular sin and super-luxury

goods such as pan masala, cigarettes, gutka, chewable tobacco, zarda, unmanufactured tobacco and bidi, as well as goods including aerated water, caffeinated beverages, mid-size or large cars, motorcycles of engines exceeding 350 cc, helicopters and airplanes for personal use, and yachts or other vessels for private use.

Ms. Sitharaman further explained that the GST rate on pan masala, gutka, cigarettes, chewable and unmanufactured tobacco, and bidi would remain at 28%, in addition to a compensation cess, as currently in place.

Once the Centre discharges the loans it had borrowed to compensate States, these tobacco and tobacco-related items will move to the 40% slab. Ms. Sitharaman said the loan would likely be repaid within this calendar year.

KEY REDUCTIONS

» PAGE 4

- GST Council (56th meeting) approved **revamp of GST slabs**:
 - **5% slab** (essential goods, medicines, food items, textiles).
 - **18% slab** (standard rate for most goods/services).
 - **40% 'special' slab** (tobacco, luxury goods like yachts, helicopters).
 - **Exemptions**:
 - Life & health insurance: moved from **18% → 0%**.
 - 33 life-saving medicines: **12% → 0%**.
 - Cement: **28% → 18%**.
 - Spectacles: **28% → 5%**.
 - Manmade fibre & yarn: **18%/12% → 5%**.
-

- **Economic Implications**

- Expected **annual revenue effect**: ₹48,000 crore (based on 2023-24 consumption).
- Aim: **tax buoyancy** (higher compliance + higher revenue).
- Relief to **middle-class & farmers** through cheaper essential goods.
- Correction of **inverted duty structure**:
 - Fertilizers: sulphuric acid, nitric acid **18% → 5%**.
 - Textile sector anomalies resolved.

- **GST launch (2017):**
 - Replaced multiple indirect taxes (excise, VAT, service tax).
 - Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016 empowered GST.
 - Article **279A**: GST Council created (federal body of Union & States).
- **Pre-GST tax regime:**
 - Highly fragmented; cascading effect.
 - States had autonomy on VAT but led to **tax inefficiencies**.
- GST aimed to create a **“One Nation, One Tax”** framework.



GST is a **cooperative federalism model**:

- Centre + States share decision-making in GST Council.

Past debates:

- States feared **loss of revenue**; Centre compensates them via cess.
- Current step signals **political consensus** on simplifying tax.

- **Global & Geographical**

- Many countries use **dual or two-rate GST/VAT**:

- EU nations: Standard + reduced rates (on essentials).
- ASEAN countries: often a single slab (simplified system).

- India's large geography & diverse consumption patterns made a **multi-slab GST necessary** initially.

- **6. Broader Significance**

- Supports **ease of doing business** by reducing complexity.
- Cheaper healthcare & insurance → supports **SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-being)**.
- Revenue from tobacco & luxury items ensures **equity in taxation** (progressive taxation).
- Step towards **formalisation of economy**.

DAILY ESSENTIALS	From	To
Hair oil, shampoo, toothpaste, toilet soap bar, toothbrush, shaving cream	18%	5%
Butter, ghee, cheese and dairy spreads	12%	5%
Pre-packaged namkeens, bhujia, and mixtures	12%	5%
Utensils, feeding bottles, napkins for babies, clinical diapers, sewing machines and parts	12%	5%
AGRICULTURE SECTOR		
Tractor tyres and parts	18%	5%
Tractors, specified bio-pesticides, micronutrients	12%	5%
Drip irrigation system and sprinklers	12%	5%
Agricultural, horticultural, and forestry machines	12%	5%
HEALTHCARE SECTOR		
Individual health and life insurance	18%	Nil
Thermometer	18%	5%
Medical grade oxygen, corrective spectacles	12%	5%
STUDY MATERIAL		
Maps, charts, and globes	12%	Nil
Pencils, sharpeners, crayons, and pastels	12%	Nil
Exercise books and notebooks	12%	Nil
VEHICLES		
Petrol and petrol hybrid, LPG, CNG cars (≤ 1,200 cc & 4,000 mm)	28%	18%
Diesel & diesel hybrid cars (≤ 1,500 cc & 4,000 mm)	28%	18%
3-wheeled vehicles, motorcycles (350 cc & below)	28%	18%
Motor vehicles for transport of goods	28%	18%
ELECTRONIC APPLIANCES		
Air conditioners	28%	18%
Television (above 32"), including LED & LCD TVs	28%	18%
Monitors, projectors, dish washing machines	28%	18%
INFRASTRUCTURE MATERIAL		
Cement	28%	18%

Save Big on Daily Essentials

Items	From	To
Hair Oil, Shampoo, Toothpaste, Toilet Soap Bar, Tooth Brushes, Shaving Cream	18%	5%
Butter, Ghee, Cheese & Dairy Spreads	12%	5%
Pre-packaged Namkeens, Bhujia & Mixtures	12%	5%
Utensils	12%	5%
Feeding Bottles, Napkins for Babies & Clinical Diapers	12%	5%
Sewing Machines & Parts	12%	5%

Uplifting Farmers & Agriculture

Items	From	To
Tractor Tyres & Parts	18%	5%
Tractors	12%	5%
Specified Bio-Pesticides, Micro-Nutrients	12%	5%
Drip Irrigation System & Sprinklers	12%	5%
Agricultural, Horticultural or Forestry Machines for Soil Preparation, Cultivation, Harvesting & Threshing	12%	5%

Relief in Healthcare Sector

Items	From	To
Individual Health & Life Insurance	18%	Nil
Thermometer	18%	5%
Medical Grade Oxygen	12%	5%
All Diagnostic Kits & Reagents	12%	5%
Glucometer & Test Strips	12%	5%
Corrective Spectacles	12%	5%

Automobiles made affordable

Items	From	To
Petrol & Petrol Hybrid, LPG, CNG Cars (not exceeding - 1200 cc & 4000mm)	28%	18%
Diesel & Diesel Hybrid Cars (not exceeding - 1500 cc & 4000mm)	28%	18%
3 Wheeled Vehicles	28%	18%
Motor Cycles (350 cc & below)	28%	18%
Motor Vehicles for transport of goods	28%	18%

Affordable Education

Items	From	To
Maps, Charts & Globes	12%	Nil
Pencils, Sharpeners, Crayons & Pastels	12%	Nil
Exercise Books & Notebooks	12%	Nil
Eraser	5%	Nil

Save on Electronic Appliances

Items	From	To
Air Conditioners	28%	18%
Television (above 32") (including LED & LCD TVs)	28%	18%
Monitors & Projectors	28%	18%
Dish Washing Machines	28%	18%

PROCESS REFORMS

Registration

Automatic registration within 3 working days for applicants:

- Identified by the system based on data analysis
- Who determines that he would not pass Input Tax Credit exceeding ₹2.5 Lakh per month and opts for the Scheme

Refund

Sanction of Provisional Refunds by proper officer, through system based risk evaluation for:

- Zero Rated Supplies
- Supplies with Inverted Duty Structure

-
- **Important Committees**
 - **Kelkar Task Force (2003):** First proposed GST in India.
 - **Vijay Kelkar & Asim Dasgupta Committee:** Blueprint for GST implementation.
 - **Constitutional Provisions**
 - **101st Amendment Act, 2016** – inserted:
 - Article **246A**: Special power to Centre & States for GST.
 - Article **269A**: Levy & collection of IGST.
 - Article **279A**: GST Council.

-
- **With reference to the GST reforms of 2025, consider the following statements:**
 - The GST Council is a constitutional body under Article 279A of the Constitution.
 - Individual life and health insurance policies have been moved to the 0% slab.
 - Cement will now attract 5% GST under the new system.
 - A special 40% slab has been introduced for goods such as tobacco and luxury items.
 - **Which of the above statements are correct?**
 - (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
 - (b) 1 and 2 only
 - (c) 1, 2, 3 and 4
 - (d) 2 and 4 only

Foreign firms halted India projects worth ₹2 lakh crore

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Tariff-related uncertainty pushed foreign companies to pull the plug on nearly ₹2 lakh crore worth of projects in India in the first quarter of this financial year, more than 1,200% higher than the corresponding quarter last year.

An analysis by *The Hindu* of data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) shows that foreign private companies dropped projects worth ₹1.97 lakh crore in Q1 of 2025-26, the highest amount since at least 2010, the earliest date for which there is data, and 570% higher than the long-term quarterly average.

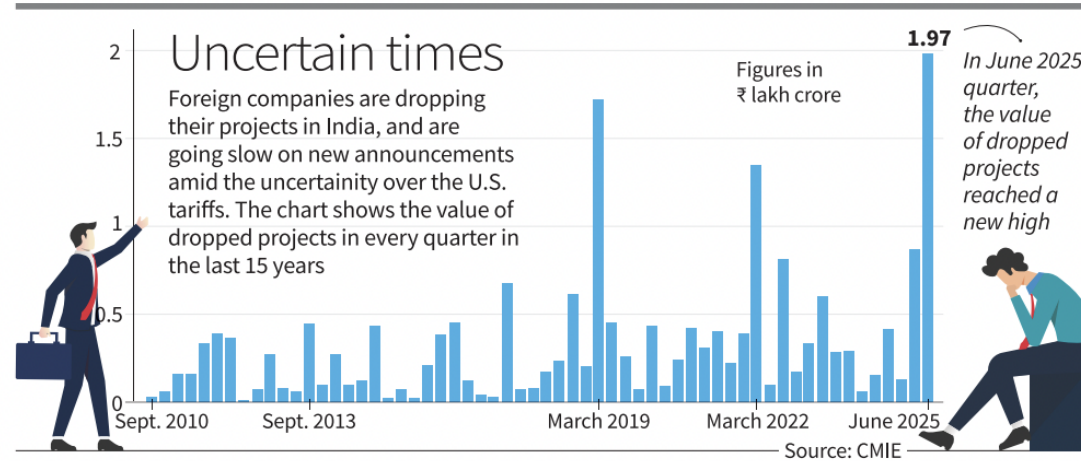
The CMIE data further

breaks up the dropped projects into those that have been abandoned entirely, shelved temporarily, stalled, or for which information is not available on why it was dropped. Given the recency of the data, the bulk of the dropped projects fall under the “lack of information” category.

Tariff woes

According to economists, however, the reason is clear: tariff-related uncertainty.

The period between this April and June saw a lot of missed deadlines in terms of a ‘mini trade deal’ being announced between India and the United States, which was supposed to address the issue of reciprocal tariffs imposed by the



United States on Indian imports.

“This is very largely the impact of tariff uncertainties,” D.K. Srivastava, Chief Policy Advisor at EY India, told *The Hindu*.

“Whether this will carry on will depend on whether these companies are from the United States or el-

sewhere. Mostly, if the investment was from U.S. companies, they would have dropped it. Apart from the tariffs, the U.S. President is also keen for these companies to move their investments back to the U.S.”

Mr. Srivastava, however, was confident that a large

part of these investments would return once there was greater clarity on the tariffs.

New projects

The analysis further showed that this investment uncertainty was also reflected in new project announcements.

The ratio of dropped projects to new project announcements – a rough metric of investment mood – surged to a value of 8.8 in Q1 of this year. The higher the figure, the more pessimistic the investors. This ratio was the highest since 2010.

The value of new projects announced by foreign companies in India in Q1 stood at ₹22,490 crore. While this was nearly 50% higher than in Q1 of last year, this is likely because the April-June 2024 quarter saw an overall investment slowdown due to last year’s general election. The value of new project announcements by foreign companies in Q1 was 56% lower than the long-term quarterly average.

- Nearly **₹2 lakh crore worth of projects** were halted by foreign firms in India during **Q1 of FY 2025-26**.
 - This is **1,200% higher** than the same quarter last year and the **highest since 2010**.
 - Analysis based on data from **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)**.
-

2. Causes of Project Halts

- **Tariff-related uncertainty:**
 - Linked to trade tensions between **India and the U.S.**
 - A "mini trade deal" expected between the two countries faced **missed deadlines**.
 - U.S. tariffs on Indian imports created unpredictability.
- U.S. President reportedly encouraging **repatriation of investments back to U.S. soil**.

- **Impact on Investments**

- **Dropped projects ratio** (dropped vs. new announcements) surged to **8.8 in Q1 2025** → highest since 2010.

- **New project announcements:**

- ₹22,490 crore in Q1 2025, ~50% higher than Q1 2024.
- Still **56% below long-term quarterly average**.

- Clear indication of **pessimistic investor sentiment**.

- **India-U.S. Trade Tensions:**

- Began escalating after **2018** when U.S. imposed tariffs on steel & aluminium under Trump.
- India retaliated with tariffs on American goods like almonds, apples, walnuts.

- **India's FDI Context:**

- India remains a top destination for FDI inflows (UNCTAD, 2024 → India was 3rd largest recipient in Asia).
- However, tariff and policy uncertainty often slow foreign participation.

- **Geographical Fact:**

- Major investment hubs in India include **Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Delhi-NCR.**

- **Political Fact:**

- The issue is tied to **protectionism vs. liberalization debate** in global trade.

- **Consider the following statements regarding India's FDI and trade policy context:**

- The data on dropped foreign projects in India is maintained by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).
- The ratio of dropped projects to new projects in Q1 2025 was the highest since 2010.
- India is the largest recipient of FDI inflows in Asia, according to UNCTAD 2024.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - **A. 1 and 2 only**
 - B. 2 and 3 only**
 - C. 1 and 3 only**
 - D. 1, 2, and 3**

IN BRIEF



FIR against ex-UP Minister over 'objectionable' remarks

An FIR has been registered against former Uttar Pradesh Minister Swami Prasad Maurya in Varanasi over his alleged objectionable remarks on Ramcharitmanas, police said on Wednesday. The FIR, lodged on Tuesday at the Cantonment police station, was filed in connection with a local court. According to the petitioner, advocate Ashok Kumar, his initial plea against Mr. Maurya was dismissed by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate. He then filed a revision petition after which the MP-SLA court ordered on August 7 that an FIR be lodged against Mr. Maurya and appropriate legal action be taken. **en**

Telangana Governor's son 'threatens' Tripura MLA

The ruling BJP in Tripura on Wednesday said the law will take its course after Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma's son Pathik allegedly threatened Tripura Motha Panchayat legislator Philip Kumar Reang at the MLA Hostel in Agartala. Mr. Pathik was among the four youths who allegedly threatened Mr. Reang on Monday night. They were granted bail after surrendering before the New Capital Complex police station on Tuesday night. Speaking to reporters, State BJP President Rajib Bhattacharjee said, "The law will take its own course in the incident to ensure justice because the government has zero tolerance for any kind of crime". **en**

Police lathi-charge farmers waiting for fertilizer in Rewa as shortage worsens in M.P.

Mohul Malpani
BHOJAL

The fertilizer shortage in Madhya Pradesh continues to worsen with police resorting to lathi charge on protesting farmers who had been waiting in line for hours through the night in Rewa district, prompting Chief Minister Mohan Yadav to issue directions to District Collectors to deal with the situation.

The incident took place late on Tuesday night at Rewa's Karahiya Mandi where several farmers from across the district had gathered in queues to collect tokens for fertilizers, with some saying they had been waiting for at least 48 hours and alleging mismanagement on the part of the administration.

The farmers began agitating against the administration after officials



CM Mohan Yadav has issued directions to District Collectors to deal with the situation.

halted the token distribution, resulting in arguments between the two sides and lathi charge by the local police. Some videos of the alleged incident have also gone viral on social media, showing police personnel resorting to lathi charge to disperse a large crowd.

Speaking to reporters, a farmer said that they had been waiting in line since the early morning but around 10 p.m. the officials said that the tokens will not

be given any more.

"Since they had distributed the tokens on Monday night too, we requested them to continue the distribution. But they were reportedly do so and when the farmers did not leave the spot, they started hitting us with lathis," the farmer said.

Another farmer alleged that a fellow farmer was "locked in a room and beaten up by the police".

Allegations denied

The district administration, however, refuted the allegations and claimed that some enraged farmers had locked up some officials in a room.

Following the incident, Mr. Yadav held a review meeting with senior officials and District Collectors of various districts, issued directions for proper management of distribution.

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI



Thousands of faithful devotees at the Nanda Devi temple in Nainital, Uttarakhand. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

plains Lalit Tiwari, the head of Kumhar University's Botany Department and spokesperson for Ram Sewak Sabhu, the trust that has been organising the fair since 1926.

"Nanda Devi is our patron deity. She is our mother and our protector," says Mr. Tiwari.

Maratha quota row: OBC leaders threaten protests; Bhujbal to approach court

Veteran OBC leader skips both Cabinet meeting and a separate NCP meeting; Deputy CM Shinde says move strictly in accordance with law and no injustice has been done to other communities

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Maratha reservation row escalated on Wednesday with OBC leaders threatening State-wide protests and senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and Minister Chhagan Bhujbal declaring he would move court against the Maharashtra government's decision to issue Kumbh caste certificates to eligible Marathas.

The controversy stems from a government resolution (GR) issued by the Social Justice and Special Assistance Department on Tuesday, enabling Marathas to document their proof of Kumbh lineage to claim OBC benefits. The move came amid acrimony between the two communities. We are seeking legal opinion on whether the public trust is even authorised to change people's caste. I will personally approach the court."

Mr. Bhujbal, a prominent OBC leader, skipped both the Cabinet meeting and a separate NCP meet-



Minister Chhagan Bhujbal said OBC leaders have doubts over who won after Jarange-Patil ended his five-day agitation. ANI

ing convened by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. OBC leaders have been protesting about the GR, about who really won after Jarange-Patil's five-day agitation. We are seeking legal opinion on whether the public trust is even authorised to change people's caste. I will personally approach the court."

The GR states that "in accordance with the historical references con-

tained in the Hyderabad gazetteer, a dedicated scrutiny process shall be conducted to verify documents and establish the eligibility of persons from the Maratha community for the Kumbh caste certificates."

"Threat to reservation" However, the move has sparked fierce backlash from OBC leaders and activists. Laxman Hake, a pro-

minent activist, accused the government of illegally granting OBC benefits to Marathas bypassing repeated rejections by the Supreme Court and the Central and State Backward Classes Commission. "This is contempt of court and a threat to the reservation system," Mr. Hake said, urging OBC and Vimal jati and Nomadic Tribes communities to "unite and take to the streets".

He also alleged that senior political figures, including Sharad Pawar, Supriya Sule, and Ajit Pawar's MLAs, supported Mr. Jarange-Patil's movement to "erode OBC quotas".

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde defended the government's decision, saying it was "strictly in accordance with the law" and that no injustice had been done to other communities. He added that CM Devendra Fadnis would personally speak to Mr. Bhujbal to address his concerns.

Bombay High Court asks Jarange to clarify his role in 'vandalism'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed activist Manoj Jarange-Patil and organisers of the Maratha reservation protest in Mumbai to file affidavits responding to allegations of large-scale damage to public property during the five-day agitation.

A Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Shree Chandrabhaskar and Justice Aarti Sathe were informed by Mr. Jarange-Patil's advocates that the agitation had been "called off" after the issue was resolved on the evening of September 2. While the Bench noted the submission, it said the activist and other organisers must respond to the charges raised in multiple petitions.

The court also questioned the Maharashtra government and the protest organisers about reports of vandalism during the agitation. "There are some issues. Who will take care of this? Large-scale damages were caused to the public property. Who will pay for that," said the Acting Chief Justice.

Senior advocates Satish Maneshinde and V.M. Thorat, appearing for Mr. Jarange-Patil and others, de-



Manoj Jarange-Patil

nied the allegations, stating that no public property had been damaged during the protest. "Those are old photos. This time, there has not been any damage to public properties. There are some files," Mr. Maneshinde said.

Four weeks given "You are denying, but there are photos of police men injured. You file an affidavit stating that you (Mr. Jarange-Patil and other organisers) were not the instigators. You have to say that you are not responsible. Everything done is voluntary by the protesters," the Bench said, giving four weeks to respond.

On Tuesday, Mr. Jarange-Patil withdrew the stir after receiving the government resolution on the implementation of the Hyderabad gazetteer, which grants Kumbh status to Marathas.

India's first culture conservation portal launched in Assam

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

An Assam-based foundation working on culture conservation has developed a portal to document the first of its kind in India - to build a network of individuals engaged in saving the large scavenger birds.

A group of organisations led by We Foundation India launched the portal on Tuesday in collaboration with Gauhati University's Department of Zoology.

The event brought together conservationists, researchers, scientists, academicians, and students to discuss the status of vulture in India and the measures needed for their survival.

"We organised the event ahead of International Vulture Awareness Day, which is observed every year on the first Saturday of September to highlight the im-

The initiative aims to share information in local languages, beginning with Assamese

portance of vultures and the urgent need for their conservation," said Nitya Mahanta of We Foundation India.

He said the focus of the portal was on disseminating information in local languages, beginning with Assamese, to ensure that people at the grassroots understood how vulture survival was linked to their lives and the local economy.

We Foundation's partners in "The Vulture Network" include the Assam Bird Monitoring Network, LASA Foundation, Sutaha Samite, and individual conservationists and researchers.

How can friendship be proved with documentary evidence for organ donation, asks HC

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI



Court sets aside panel order refusing permission for kidney transplant over kin clause

Wondering how friendship can be proved through documentary evidence, the Madras High Court has set aside an order passed by the Transplantation Committee constituted to regulate unaffiliated organ donations, refusing permission for kidney transplantation between two individuals who claimed to be family friends.

Justice N. Anand Venkatesh found that the committee had denied permission solely on the basis of the Erode Collector's report, which said that donor C. Ganesh of Erode and recipient P. Periasamy of Thanjavur had not produced documents to prove they were family friends.

"It is incomprehensible as to how family friends can establish their relationship

only insists that such donation must be out of love and affection, without the involvement of any financial transaction between the donor and the recipient. The law also insists that no pressure/coercion should have been exerted upon the donor. The objective behind the enactment was to prevent the exploitation of the poor and the disadvantaged, and to ensure that money does not become the only criterion for transplantation of human organs.

"The tricky question that is involved is as to who must establish that there is no commercial dealing in a case of the donor and the donee not being near relatives," Justice Venkatesh said, and added that the donor and the recipient could only be expected to assert that there was no commercial dealing.

What the rules say

The judges pointed out that the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act of 1994 does not prohibit organ transplantation between non-near relatives. It

No discontent with BJP, says Nishad Party president

Press Trust of India
BELLARY (U.P.)

Nishad Party chief and Uttar Pradesh Minister Sanjay Nishad on Wednesday dismissed reports of discontent with the BJP, asserting that his party remains firmly aligned with the ruling party and will continue to support it in the future.

Talking to reporters after distributing relief material to flood-affected families in Chandpur village under Banaholi schol, Mr. Nishad, the Nirdal Indian Shoshil Hamwara Aam Dal (Nishad Party) president, said, "The Opposition has no issues to raise. They make statements from here and there".

India's first vulture conservation portal launched in Assam

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

An Assam-based foundation working on vulture conservation has developed a portal - reportedly the first of its kind in India - to build a network of individuals engaged in saving the large scavenger birds.

A group of organisations led by We Foundation India launched the portal on Tuesday in collaboration with Gauhati University's Department of Zoology.

The event brought together conservationists, researchers, scientists, academicians, and students to discuss the status of vultures in India and the measures needed for their survival.

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We Foundation's partners in The Vulture Network include the Assam Bird Monitoring Network, LASA Foundation, Suraksha Samitee, and individual conservationists and researchers.

VANISHING VULTURES

High mortality hinders India's plans of stabilising its vulture population

53% drop in India's vulture population since 2003



The fatal four

DICLOFENAC

was banned for veterinary use in 2006 to arrest the shrinking vulture population

ACECLOFENAC

gets converted into diclofenac within hours of administration to cattle

NIMESULIDE

causes visceral gout and renal failure in vultures within 30 hours of ingestion

KETOPROFEN

causes death in vultures within 48 hour after ingestion due to heightened toxicity levels



Major habitation loss

307
VULTURE
DEATHS

BIKANER RAJASTHAN, 2019, 2020

REASONS: Use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for treating animals; electrocution

210

RAIGAD MAHARASHTRA, 2010

REASON: Habitat loss due to Cyclone Nisarga

120

JAISALMER RAJASTHAN, 2021

REASONS: Use of non-steroidal NSAIDs for treating animals; electrocution

100

KAMRUP ASSAM, 2022

REASON: Consumption of pesticide-laced carcasses kept to control stray dog population

SURENDRANAGAR GUJARAT, 2019

REASON: Use of NSAIDs for treating animals

4

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

9 RECORDED SPECIES:

Oriental white-backed, long-billed, slender-billed, Himalayan, red-headed, Egyptian, bearded, cinereous and the Eurasian Griffon.

(4 CRITICALLY ENDANGERED, 1 ENDANGERED, 3 NEAR THREATENED)

THE CRISIS:

A massive dip in vulture populations came into limelight in the mid-90s, and in 2004 the cause of the crash was established as diclofenac, a veterinary nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug.



WHAT NEXT AFTER 2006 PROJECT:

■ Testing of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs on vultures, development of new NSAIDs

■ Covering two more species in the breeding programme that earlier focussed on 3 critically

endangered species

■ Additional conservation breeding centres and four rescue centres planned across India

■ Nationwide vulture survey once in four years

Declining population

India has nine species of vultures, six of which are found in Assam



Vultures of the genus 'Gyps'

- Oriental white-backed (Assam, critically endangered)
- Long-billed (critically endangered)
- Slender-billed (Assam, critically endangered)
- Himalayan griffon (Assam, winter visitor from Himalayas)

- Eurasian griffon (Assam, winter visitor from Himalayas)

Single representative species

- Egyptian
- Bearded
- Cinereous (Assam)
- King (Assam, critically endangered)

1. Launch of the Portal


- **Event:** India's first vulture conservation portal launched in Assam.
- **Organisers:** We Foundation India in collaboration with Gauhati University's Department of Zoology.
- **Objective:** To build a network of individuals and organisations engaged in saving vultures.

2. Features of the Portal

- Disseminates information in **local languages**, beginning with Assamese.
- Aim: Ensures grassroots communities understand the importance of vulture survival and its connection to human lives & local economy.

3. Importance of the Initiative

- **International Vulture Awareness Day:** Event organised ahead of this day (first Saturday of September every year).
- Vultures play a key role as **scavengers**, preventing spread of diseases by disposing of carcasses.
- The decline in vultures has been linked to **diclofenac use** in veterinary medicine.

- 
- India witnessed a **catastrophic vulture decline (1990s–2000s)**, with populations of Oriental white-backed, long-billed, and slender-billed vultures falling by **>95%**.
 - Cause: Veterinary use of **diclofenac**, later banned in 2006.
 - **Geographical Context**
 - Assam and Northeast India host significant vulture populations.
 - Key sites: **Kaziranga National Park** (UNESCO site) and other protected areas.
 - **Economic & Ecological Importance**
 - Vultures prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases like **rabies & anthrax** by consuming carcasses.
 - Their decline led to an increase in feral dog populations and human health risks, imposing **economic costs on public health**.

-
- **Action Plan for Vulture Conservation (2020–2025):** Government initiative targeting restoration of populations through breeding centres and safe zones.
 - India is a signatory to the **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)**, under which vulture protection is prioritised.

- **Consider the following statements regarding Vulture Conservation in India:**

- The primary reason for vulture decline in India was the use of diclofenac in veterinary practices.
- The first vulture conservation portal in India has been launched in Assam in collaboration with Gauhati University.
- Vultures are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- **Which of the above statements are correct?**
- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Flyers without mobility issues can pay for wheelchair: DGCA

Proposal aims to curb misuse of wheelchairs, and is part of draft norms released by the authority; the Bombay HC had ordered a committee to examine the issue of wheelchair shortage at airports

Jagriti Chandra

NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has proposed that airlines offer paid assistance to passengers without mobility issues or disabilities to curb the alleged misuse of wheelchairs. It suggests documentation to verify any physical or mental challenges for free assistance to those with disabilities or restricted mobility.

Airports too will have to ensure that car drop-off points at airport entrances are earmarked for air travellers with special needs, and that these remain unobstructed and available for use, the DGCA suggests. Airports may be required to provide staff at these points to provide assistance and coordinate with airlines.

These proposals are part of revised draft rules for ferrying air travellers with disabilities and reduced mobility floated by the aviation safety regulator for stakeholder comments till September 19. The revised norms have been made public ahead of a Bombay High Court hearing on September 25



Easy travel: Airports will have to ensure that car drop-off points at entrances are earmarked for travellers with special needs. ISTOCK

after the court appointed a committee in April, headed by Justice Goda Raghuram, former judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, to study the matter of wheelchair availability and challenges faced by senior citizens and those with special needs, emphasising that access to adequate facilities was “a fundamental human right” for such persons.

New proposal

Clause 4.1.37 in the draft Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) says, “Airline may levy appropriate as-

sistance fee from passengers other than persons with disability (*Divyangjan*) and persons with reduced mobility who opt to use these services.” International airlines such as Singapore Airlines offer “meet and assist services” which include support during boarding, disembarkation, or flight transfers for elderly and non-English speaking passengers or those with sensory impairment or cognitive disabilities as well as help with navigation at large and unfamiliar airports when travellers may not

necessarily require wheelchairs.

The move aims to curb misuse of wheelchairs so that the limited inventory with airlines and airports can be made available to those with a genuine need, which is reported by airlines largely on international flights though there are plenty of instances of wheelchair denial on domestic flights as well.

“There needs to be an effort to address infrastructure challenges that include lack of kerbside assistance and ambulifts resulting in wheelchair-borne passengers being carried down a step ladder in a manner that is not only humiliating and uncomfortable but also unsafe. Moreover, not all senior citizens may require or desire a wheelchair, for whom golf carts or buggies must be provided,” says Vaishnavi Jayakumar, member, Disability Rights Alliance.

“Just like the highly discriminatory fit-to-fly addition in the last CAR revision, it is ominous that the latest provision appears in a disability-focussed document rather than an overarching passenger facilitation protocol,” she said.

1. DGCA Proposal

- Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has proposed draft norms.
- Passengers **without mobility issues or disabilities** may be charged for wheelchair use.
- Objective: To **curb misuse** of limited wheelchair availability at airports.

2. Free Assistance

- **Free wheelchair service** will remain for:
 - Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
 - Senior citizens with reduced mobility.
 - Passengers with medical/physical challenges (with documentation).

3. Operational Guidelines for Airports

- Airports must ensure **dedicated drop-off points** for passengers with special needs.
- These points must remain unobstructed and staffed.
- Coordination with airlines will be mandatory.

4. Judicial Context

- Bombay High Court (April 2024) ordered a committee to study wheelchair shortages.
- Emphasis: Access to mobility assistance is a **"fundamental human right."**

5. Global Practices

- International examples:
 - Singapore Airlines: "Meet and assist" services (boarding, transfer, etc.).
 - Other airlines provide support for elderly, visually impaired, or cognitively challenged passengers.

6. Concerns Raised

- **Misuse:** Healthy passengers requesting wheelchairs.
- **Shortage:** Leads to denial of service for genuine cases.
- **Infrastructure issues:** Lack of kerbside ramps and ambulifts in many Indian airports.

-
- The **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** mandates non-discrimination in transport.
 - Earlier, airlines were criticized for inadequate accessibility measures (e.g., cases where PwDs were deboarded).
 - Compliance with international norms: India is a signatory to the **UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**.
 - **Economic**
 - **International Comparison**
 - In the US & EU, airlines are legally mandated to provide free wheelchair assistance.
 - India's move for **paid access for non-disabled passengers** is a unique hybrid approach.



Shaken souls: Afghans seek refuge after an earthquake in Kunar province on Wednesday. AFP

Hope dwindles for survivors days after Afghan earthquake

Agence France-Presse
JALALABAD

Hope faded on Wednesday of finding survivors in the rubble of homes devastated by the weekend's powerful earthquake in eastern Afghanistan, as emergency services struggled to reach remote villages.

A magnitude-6.0 earthquake hit the mountainous region bordering Pakistan on Sunday, leaving residents huddled in the open air for fear of powerful aftershocks and desperately trying to pull people from under flattened buildings.

The earthquake killed more than 1,400 people and injured over 3,300, Taliban authorities said, making it one of the deadliest in decades to hit the impoverished country.

The vast majority of the casualties were in Kunar province, with a dozen dead and hundreds hurt in nearby Nangarhar and Laghman provinces.

In Kunar's Nurgal district, victims remained trapped under the rubble and were difficult to rescue, local official Ijaz Ullah Yaqd said on Wednesday.

Landslides caused by the earthquake stymied access to already isolated villages.

The non-governmental group Save the Children said one of their aid teams "had to walk for 20 km to reach villages cut off by rock falls, carrying medical equipment on their backs with the help of community members".

The World Health Organization warned the number of casualties from the earthquake was expected to rise, "as many remain trapped in destroyed buildings".

Construction intensifies at site linked to Israel's suspected nuclear programme

Experts say the ongoing construction at the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center could be for nuclear arms assembly, or, considering its site, vast construction area, and many floors, it could be a new heavy water reactor — a crucial material for producing nuclear weapons

Associated Press
DIBALI

Construction work has intensified on a major new structure at a facility key to Israel's long-suspected atomic weapons programme, according to satellite images analysed by experts. They say it could be a new reactor or a facility to assemble nuclear arms — but secrecy shrouding the programme makes it difficult to know for sure.

The work at the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center near the city of Dimona will renew questions about Israel's widely believed status as West Asia's only nuclear-armed state.

It could also draw international criticism, especially since it comes after Israel and the United States bombed nuclear sites across Iran in June over their fears that the Islamic Republic could use its enrichment facilities to pursue an atomic weapon. Atomic sites in the area were Iran's heavy water reactor at Arak.

Seven experts who examined the images said they believed the construction was related to Israel's long-suspected nuclear weapons programme, given its proximity to the reactor at Arak, where no other power plant exists. However, they split on what the



This 1973 spy satellite photograph, later declassified by the U.S. government, shows what now is known as the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center near the city of Dimona in Israel. AP

new construction could be. They said the location and size of the area under construction and the fact that it appeared to have multiple floors meant the most likely explanation for the work was the construction of a new heavy water reactor. Such reactors can produce plutonium and another material key to nuclear weapons. The other four acknowledged it could be a heavy water reactor but also suggested the work could be related to a new facility for assembling nuclear weapons. They declined to be definitive given the construction was still in an early stage.

"It's probably a reactor — that judgement is circumstantial but that's the nature of these things," said Jeffrey Lewis, an expert at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, who based his assessment on the images and Dimona's history. "It's very hard to imagine it is anything else."

Israel does not confirm or deny having atomic weapons, and its government did not respond to requests for comment. The AP first reported on excavations at the facility, some 90 km south of Jerusalem, in 2022. Then, satellite images only showed workers digging a hole that was 150 m long and 15 m wide near the site's original heavy water reactor.

Images taken on July 5 by Planet Labs PBC show intensified construction at the site of the dig. Thick concrete retaining walls seem to be laid at the site, which appears to have multiple floors underground. Cranes loom overhead.

There's no containment dome or other features typically associated with a heavy water reactor now visible at the site. However, one could be added later or a reactor could be designed without one.

Dimona's current heavy water reactor, which came online in the 1960s, has been operating far longer than most reactors of the same era. That suggests it will need to be replaced or

retrofitted soon. "It's tall, which you would expect, because the reactor core is going to be pretty tall," Mr. Lewis said. "Based on the location, size and general lack of construction there, it's more likely a reactor than anything."

Edwin Lyman, a nuclear expert at the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Union of Concerned Scientists, also said the new construction could be a box-shaped reactor that does not have a visible containment dome, though he acknowledged the lack of transparency made it difficult to be certain.

Israel "doesn't allow any international inspections or verification of what it's doing, which forces the public to speculate," said Mr. Lyman.

While details about Dimona remain closely held secrets in Israel, a whistle-blower in the 1980s released details and photos of the facility that led experts to conclude that Israel had produced dozens of nuclear warheads.

"If it's a heavy water reactor, they are seeking to maintain the capability to produce spent fuel that they then can process to separate plutonium for more nuclear weapons," said Daryl G. Kimball, the executive director of the Washington-based Arms Control Association. "Or

they are building a facility to maintain their arsenal or build additional warheads."

Israel, like India and Pakistan, is believed to rely on a heavy water reactor to make its nuclear weapons. The reactors can be used for scientific purposes, but plutonium — which causes the nuclear chain reaction needed in an atomic bomb — is a byproduct of the process. Tritium is another product and can be used to boost the explosive yield of warheads.

Given the secrecy of Israel's programme, it remains difficult to estimate just how many nuclear weapons it possesses. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists in 2022 put the number at around 90 warheads.

Obtaining more tritium to replace decaying material may be the reason for the construction at Dimona, as Mr. Lyman noted it decays 5% each year.

"If they're building a new production reactor," he said, "it doesn't necessarily mean they're looking to expand the plutonium they have, but to manufacture tritium."

Israel is believed to have begun building the nuclear site in the desert in the late 1950s after facing several wars with its Arab neighbors, according to its founding in 1948 in the wake of the Holocaust.

Indonesian islanders face off against Swiss cement group in climate case

Agence France-Presse
ZUG

A Swiss court on Wednesday weighed whether to hear a landmark climate case pitting residents of a tiny Indonesian island being swallowed by rising sea levels against cement giant Holcim.

The case is part of a wider international movement seeking to assign to major companies responsibility for the climate damage hurting the livelihoods of millions of people, especially in developing countries.

Oil companies have typically been the biggest targets, but climate activists are hoping the suit against Holcim will highlight the role of a lesser-known but highly-polluting industry, which is responsible for



Activist and journalists at the first hearing in the climate lawsuit filed against Holcim in Switzerland on Wednesday. AP

around 8% of carbon dioxide (CO2) emitted into the atmosphere each year.

In the case, four residents of Pari have filed a suit against the world's largest cement firm, demanding that it provide compensation for the damage wrought by climate change and help fund protection

Aid (HEKS) NGO helping the islanders.

Before the hearing, Holcim maintained that "the question of who is allowed to emit how much CO2" should be "a matter for the legislature and not a question for a civil court".

But it said after Wednesday's hearing that "we await the court's decision", insisting that it was "fully committed to reaching net zero by 2050 with sustainability at the core of our strategy".

Environmentalists allege that Holcim figures among the world's 100 largest corporate CO2 emitters. They have said 11% of the 104-acre island of Pari has already disappeared in recent years, and it could be completely under water by 2050 due to rising sea levels.

with her relatives in January 2024 when their car came under fire.

Left as the sole survivor in the badly damaged vehicle, her desperate pleas for help by phone — recorded by the Red Crescent rescue service and later released — caused a brief international outrage.

Rajab was later found dead along with two Red Crescent workers who went to retrieve her.

"Stop the war!" Ben Hania reproduces the phone recordings in the film, and very hard to live with, through the eyes and ears of fictional Red Crescent workers — saying what you don't see is more devastating than what you do," Ben Hania said. Venice Film Festival di-



Director Kautser Ben Hania holds a portrait of Palestinian child Hind Rajab at the Venice Film Festival on Wednesday. AP

rector Alberto Barbera has promised it will be one of the films that will have the biggest impact on audiences and critics."

"I'm not sure how people are going to cope," one insider who worked on the movie told AFP on a condition of anonymity.

In memoriam



U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance and Second Lady Usha Vance pay their respects to victims of the Annunciation Catholic Church shooting in Minneapolis in the U.S. on Wednesday. Two children were killed and 14 others were wounded in the incident of August 27. REUTERS

Film on Israel's killing of five-year-old Gaza girl set to screen at Venice festival

Agence France-Presse
VENICE

A new film about the killing of a five-year-old Palestinian girl by Israeli forces in Gaza last year is set to screen at the Venice Film Festival on Wednesday, after drawing backing from Brad Pitt and Joaquin Phoenix.

The conflict in Gaza has been a major talking point at the 2025 Italian cinema extravaganza, with thousands of protesters marching to the gates of the event on Saturday, shouting: "Stop the genocide!"

An open letter calling on the festival organisers to denounce the Israeli government has gone unheeded, but has been signed by around 2,000 cinema insiders, according

to the organisers. The screening of *The Voice of Hind Rajab* on Wednesday will showcase one of the most hotly awaited and political movies in the running for the top prize at the 11-day event.

Directed by Franco-Tunisian filmmaker Kautser Ben Hania, it is an extraordinary work of fiction that tells the story of a young girl who lost her support as executive producers.

"At the heart of this film is something very simple, and no one comes," Ben Hania told the festival before the premiere. "Rajab was fleeing an Israeli offensive in Gaza City

with her relatives in January 2024 when their car came under fire.

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rector Alberto Barbera has promised it will be one of the films that will have the biggest impact on audiences and critics."

"I'm not sure how people are going to cope," one insider who worked on the movie told AFP on a condition of anonymity.

Rajab's mother said she hoped that the film would tell the story of a young-year-old, which has cost the lives of at least 63,633 Palestinians, mostly civilians, according to figures from the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza that the United Nations

deems reliable. "I hope this film will help stop this destructive war and save the other children of Gaza," Wissam Hamada said via a phone-call from devastated, famine-hit Gaza City where she lives with her five-year-old son.

"The whole world has left us like this, hungry to live in fear and to be forcibly displaced without doing anything. In a huge betrayal," she added.

Point of tension When contacted, the Israeli military said the nearly two stances of Rajab's death were "still being reviewed" without giving further details.

"It has never announced a formal investigation into the case.

The war in Gaza has regularly caused tension in the cinema world since Israel launched its offensive in October 2023 in retaliation for an attack by Palestinian militant group Hamas which left 1,219 people dead, most of them civilians.

Glazer's decision to denounce what he called Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank as he accepted his Oscar for best director for Holocaust drama *The Zone of Interest* in 2024 split the Jewish filmmaking world.

More than 370 actors and directors signed an open letter during the Cannes festival in May saying they were "ashamed" of their industry's "passivity" about the war, including Cannes jury president Ju-

liette Binoche. Others have avoided taking a clear position.

This year's Venice jury president, Alexander Payne (*The Holdovers*, *Sideways*) said he was "unprepared" to answer a question about his views on the war last week, adding he was "here to judge and talk about cinema."

Other movies premiering on Wednesday in Venice include star-packed *In the Hand of Dante* by Julian Schnabel, a gangster story set between New York and Italy about the theft of the original manuscript of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*.

It features Oscar Isaac in the lead role alongside Gerard Butler, John Malkovich, Martin Scorsese and Al Pacino.

Construction intensifies at site linked to Israel's suspected nuclear programme

Experts say the ongoing construction at the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center could be for nuclear arms assembly, or, considering its site, vast construction area, and many floors, it could be a new heavy water reactor — a crucial material for producing nuclear weapons

Associated Press

DUBAI

Construction work has intensified on a major new structure at a facility key to Israel's long-suspected atomic weapons programme, according to satellite images analysed by experts. They say it could be a new reactor or a facility to assemble nuclear arms — but secrecy shrouding the programme makes it difficult to know for sure.

The work at the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center near the city of Dimona will renew questions about Israel's widely believed status as West Asia's only nuclear-armed State.

It could also draw international criticism, especially since it comes after Israel and the United States bombed nuclear sites across Iran in June over their fears that the Islamic Republic could use its enrichment facilities to pursue an atomic weapon. Among the sites attacked was Iran's heavy water reactor at Arak.

Seven experts who examined the images said they believed the construction was related to Israel's long-suspected nuclear weapons programme, given its proximity to the reactor at Dimona, where no civilian power plant exists. However, they split on what the



This 1971 spy satellite photograph, later declassified by the U.S. government, shows what now is known as the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center near the city of Dimona in Israel. AP

new construction could be. Three said the location and size of the area under construction and the fact that it appeared to have multiple floors meant the most likely explanation for the work was the construction of a new heavy water reactor. Such reactors can produce plutonium and another material key to nuclear weapons. The other four acknowledged it could be a heavy water reactor but also suggested the work could be related to a new facility for assembling nuclear weapons. They declined to be definitive given the construction was still in an early stage.

"It's probably a reactor — that judgement is circumstantial but that's the

nature of these things," said Jeffrey Lewis, an expert at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, who based his assessment on the images and Dimona's history. "It's very hard to imagine it is anything else."

Israel does not confirm or deny having atomic weapons, and its government did not respond to requests for comment.

The AP first reported on excavations at the facility, some 90km south of Jerusalem, in 2021. Then, satellite images only showed workers digging a hole some 150 m long and 60 m wide near the site's original heavy water reactor.

Images taken on July 5 by Planet Labs PBC show intensified construction at the site of the dig. Thick concrete retaining walls seem to be laid at the site, which appears to have multiple floors underground. Cranes loom overhead.

There's no containment dome or other features typically associated with a heavy water reactor now visible at the site. However, one could be added later or a reactor could be designed without one.

Dimona's current heavy water reactor, which came online in the 1960s, has been operating far longer than most reactors of the same era. That suggests it will need to be replaced or

retrofitted soon.

"It's tall, which you would expect, because the reactor core is going to be pretty tall," Mr. Lewis said. "Based on the location, size and general lack of construction there, it's more likely a reactor than anything."

Edwin Lyman, a nuclear expert at the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Union of Concerned Scientists, also said the new construction could be a box-shaped reactor that does not have a visible containment dome, though he acknowledged the lack of transparency made it difficult to be certain.

Israel "doesn't allow any international inspections or verification of what it's doing, which forces the public to speculate," said Mr. Lyman.

While details about Dimona remain closely held secrets in Israel, a whistleblower in the 1980s released details and photos of the facility that led experts to conclude that Israel had produced dozens of nuclear warheads.

"If it's a heavy water reactor, they are seeking to maintain the capability to produce spent fuel that they then can process to separate plutonium for more nuclear weapons," said Daryl G. Kimball, the executive director of the Washington-based Arms Control Association. "Or

they are building a facility to maintain their arsenal or build additional warheads."

Israel, like India and Pakistan, is believed to rely on a heavy water reactor to make its nuclear weapons. The reactors can be used for scientific purposes, but plutonium — which causes the nuclear chain reaction needed in an atomic bomb — is a byproduct of the process. Tritium is another byproduct and can be used to boost the explosive yield of warheads.

Given the secrecy of Israel's programme, it remains difficult to estimate just how many nuclear weapons it possesses. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists in 2022 put the number at around 90 warheads.

Obtaining more tritium to replace decaying material may be the reason for the construction at Dimona, as Mr. Lyman noted it decays 5% each year.

"If they're building a new production reactor," he said, "it doesn't necessarily mean they're looking to expand the plutonium they have, but to manufacture tritium."

Israel is believed to have begun building the nuclear site in the desert in the late 1950s after facing several wars with its Arab neighbours surrounding its founding in 1948 in the wake of the Holocaust.

1. Location and Construction

- The work is at **Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center**, near Dimona, Israel.
- Satellite images reveal new large structures, cranes, and retaining walls.
- Experts suggest it could be a **new heavy water reactor** or a **facility for nuclear arms assembly**.

2. Strategic Concerns

- Israel's nuclear programme is shrouded in secrecy.
- Heavy water reactors can produce **plutonium**, a key material for nuclear weapons.
- The construction fuels speculation on whether Israel is **expanding nuclear capacity** or **modernizing old facilities**.

3. International Context

- Israel is widely believed to be **West Asia's only nuclear-armed state** (though never officially acknowledged).
- U.S. and international experts express difficulty in verification due to lack of transparency.
- Ongoing tensions with **Iran** and its nuclear ambitions amplify regional security concerns.

-
- Israel began its nuclear programme in the **1950s**, with assistance from **France**.
 - The **Dimona reactor** has long been suspected of producing plutonium for Israel's nuclear arsenal.
 - Israel follows a policy of **nuclear ambiguity**—neither confirming nor denying its arsenal.
 - Estimated to have **80–90 nuclear warheads** (Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, 2022).

Nuclear Warhead Reductions Continue Despite Global Tensions

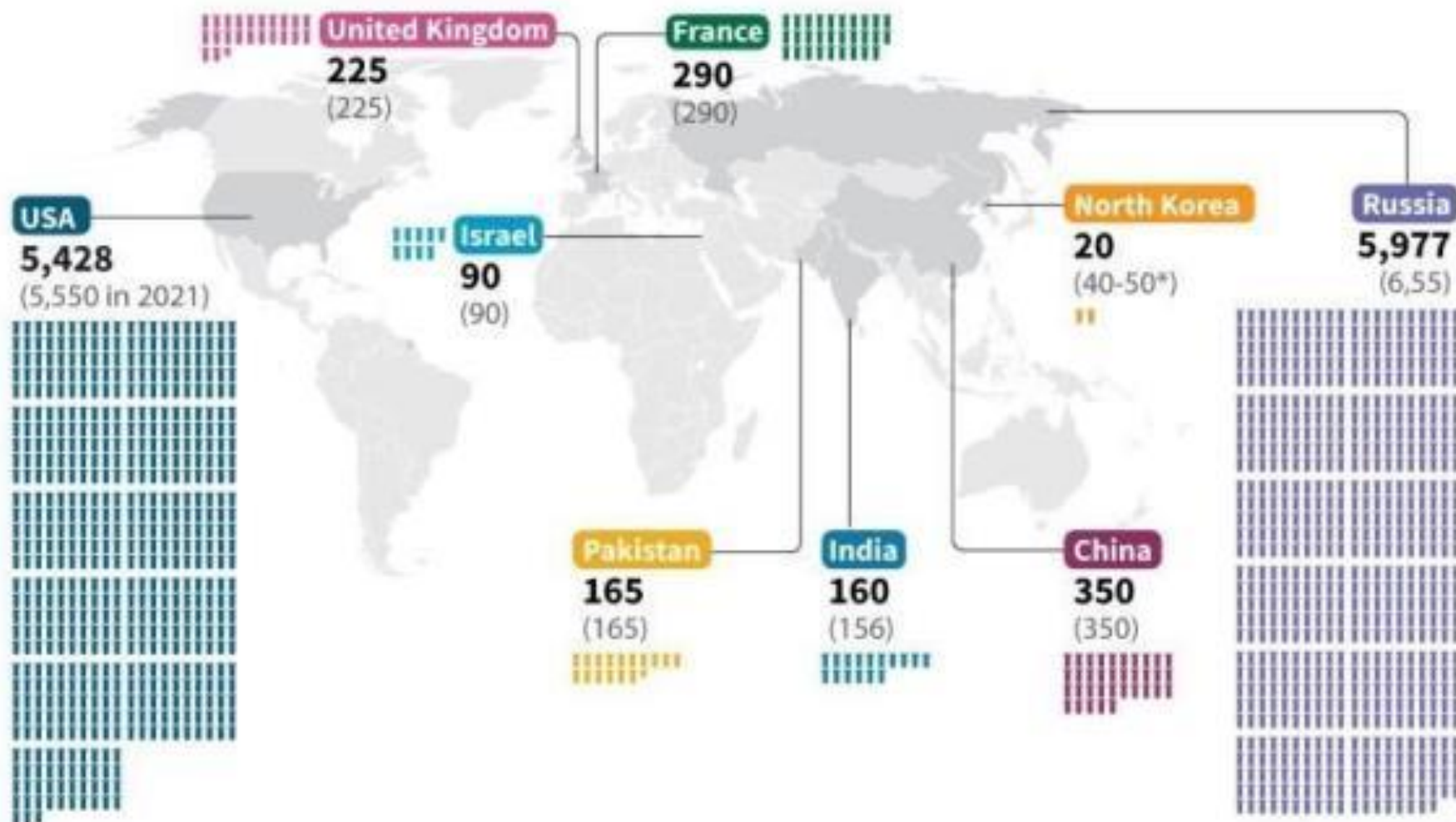
Number of nuclear warheads by country in January 2020



Source: SIPRI

Nuclear weapons stockpiles

Warheads by country in 2022, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)



Source: SIPRI estimates in 2022

*Estimates 2022 based on production of fissile material by the regime, the number of warheads being "extremely uncertain"

- **India's Nuclear Doctrine**

- **Credible Minimum Deterrence** – Maintain only the arsenal required for deterrence.
- **No First Use (NFU)** – Nuclear weapons used only in response to a nuclear attack on India or its forces.
- **Non-use against Non-Nuclear States.**
- **Civilian Control** – Retaliatory strikes authorised only by the Nuclear Command Authority.
- **Massive Retaliation** – Any nuclear first strike will be met with massive retaliation to inflict unacceptable damage.
- **Response to WMDs** – India may use nuclear weapons in response to chemical or biological attacks.
- **Export Controls** – Strict non-proliferation of nuclear/missile materials and technology.
- **Global Commitment** – Long-term goal of a nuclear weapon-free world.

- **Consider the following statements regarding Israel's nuclear programme:**

- Israel is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- The Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center near Dimona is linked to Israel's suspected nuclear weapons development.
- Israel follows a policy of nuclear ambiguity, neither confirming nor denying possession of nuclear weapons.

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

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

Switzerland eases norms to implement FTA with India

● Pact signed in March 2024, to take effect on Oct 1

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, September 3

SWITZERLAND, THE BIGGEST economy of the four-nation European Free Trade Association (EFTA), has adopted all the necessary regulatory amendments to implement the customs concessions agreed in the trade agreement with India.

The agreement that was signed in March 2024, will become operational from October 1. Other members of the EFTA are Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The biggest trade partner for India within the bloc is Switzerland with a large trade of gold.

According to a statement by the Swiss government, for the first time India has enshrined legally binding provisions in the area of trade and sustainable development in a free trade agreement (FTA). Furthermore, the agreement contains a provision in which the parties confirm their rights and obligations under other

KEY TAKEAWAYS

■ The biggest trade partner for India within the bloc is Switzerland with a large trade of gold

■ For the first time India has enshrined legally binding provisions in the area of trade and sustainable development in a FTA



■ TEPA has on offer a promise of **\$100 bn** in direct investments from the bloc in next 15 years

■ In 2024-25 India's exports to the group stood at **\$1.96 bn** while imports were **\$22.4 bn**

international agreements.

From the Indian side the agreement - formally called the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) - has on offer a promise of \$100 billion in direct investments from the bloc in next 15 years.

The agreement lays down one of the objectives: "to develop their trade relations so as to contribute to the objective of sustainable development; and to contribute in this way to the harmonious devel-

opment and expansion of world trade."

"This is intended to ensure that neither the environmental and labor laws of the partner countries nor international environmental and social law are violated in connection with the agreement," the Swiss statement said.

The agreement, however, also makes it clear that it is not their intention to harmonise the labour or environment standards of the countries that are

part of the agreement.

Under TEPA, India has granted Switzerland improved market access for 94.7% of its current exports, excluding gold. This includes pharmaceutical products, machinery, optical instruments, watches, and processed agricultural products.

EFTA is offering duty cuts on 92.2% of its tariff lines which covers 99.6% of India's exports. The EFTA's market access offer covers 100% of non-agri products and tariff concession on Processed Agricultural Products (PAP).

Overall India is offering 82.7% of its tariff lines which covers 95.3% of EFTA exports of which more than 80% import is Gold. The effective duty on Gold remains untouched. Sectors such as dairy, soya, coal and sensitive agricultural products are kept in the exclusion list.

India runs a massive trade deficit with EFTA. In 2024-25 India's exports to the group stood at \$1.96 billion while imports were \$22.4 billion. A large part of the deficit is due to imports of gold from Switzerland. Last financial year India imported \$ 18.1 billion dollars of gold from Switzerland.





1. Background

- The *Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)* was signed between India and the *European Free Trade Association (EFTA)* in **March 2024**.
 - **Members of EFTA:** Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.
 - Pact comes into effect on **October 1, 2024**.
-

2. Significance of Switzerland in EFTA

- Switzerland is India's **biggest trade partner** within EFTA.
- Trade dominated by **gold imports** from Switzerland.
- India imported **\$18.1 billion worth of gold** from Switzerland in the last financial year.

3. Features of the Agreement

- For the **first time**, India has included **legally binding clauses** on:
 - *Trade & sustainable development* in an FTA.
 - TEPA promises **\$100 billion in direct investments** over the next **15 years**.
 - Duty concessions include:
 - India granting Switzerland improved access for **94.7% of its exports** (excluding gold).
 - EFTA granting **92.2% tariff cuts**, covering **99.6% of India's exports**.
 - 100% access to **non-agri products**; concessions on **Processed Agricultural Products (PAPs)**.
-

4. Trade Balance

- India's exports to EFTA (2024–25): **\$1.96 billion**.
- India's imports from EFTA: **\$22.4 billion**.
- Large **trade deficit**, primarily due to gold imports.

-
- **Historical Trade Ties:** Switzerland has been India's key gold supplier since colonial times, with bullion forming a major component of bilateral trade.
 - **Geographical Note:** Switzerland, despite being landlocked, is a global hub for **banking, gold refining, and pharmaceutical industries.**
 - **Economic Impact:**
 - Helps India attract long-term FDI.
 - Potential to diversify beyond gold into *pharmaceuticals, optical instruments, machinery, processed food.*

- **Consider the following statements regarding the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) signed between India and EFTA:**


- Switzerland is the largest trade partner for India within the EFTA bloc.
- The agreement includes legally binding provisions on trade and sustainable development for the first time in India's FTA history.
- EFTA has granted tariff concessions on 100% of agricultural products exported from India.

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

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only

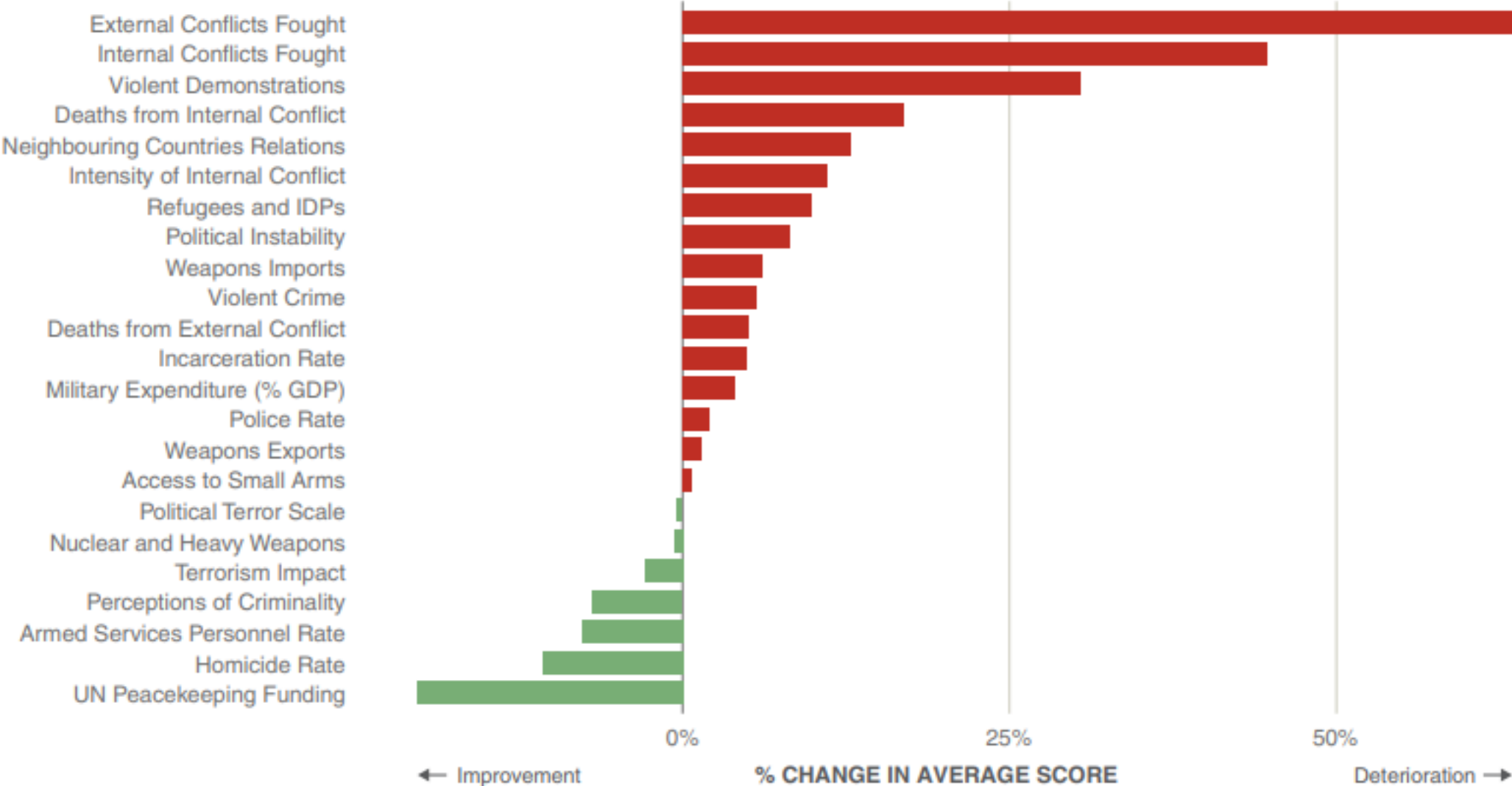



The Global Peace Index (GPI) 2025

- 
- The Global Peace Index (GPI) 2025 ranked Iceland as the most peaceful country, while India stood at 115th out of 163 nations, reflecting a modest improvement in its peace score.

Percentage change by GPI indicator, 2008–2025

Between 2008 and 2025, the number of GPI indicators that deteriorated was more than double the number that improved.



- 
- What it is?
 - An **annual ranking** of countries on peacefulness.
 - Covers **163 states and territories**, representing 99.7% of the world's population.
 - Published by:
 - The **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)**, an international think tank headquartered in Sydney, Australia.
 -

Criteria:

- GPI assesses countries on 23 indicators across 3 broad domains:
 1. Societal Safety & Security (crime rates, political stability, refugee impact).
 2. Ongoing Domestic & International Conflict (war, [terrorism](#), civil unrest).
 3. Militarisation (military expenditure, weapons imports/exports, armed personnel).

Trends and Rankings (2025):

- Top performers: Iceland (1st), followed by Ireland, New Zealand, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Singapore, Portugal, Denmark, Slovenia.
- Least peaceful: Russia, Ukraine, Sudan, DR Congo, Yemen.

- Regional trends:
 - Europe dominates the top 10.
 - South America showed improvements (Argentina, Peru).
 - Sub-Saharan Africa & **Middle East** remain least peaceful.
 - Global average peacefulness declined due to internal conflicts, militarisation, and geopolitical divides.

India & GPI 2025:

- India ranked 115th with a score of 2.229, an improvement of 0.58% over last year.
- Factors behind improvement: gradual decline in domestic violence & disputes, better societal stability.
- Challenges: high militarisation, **cross-border tensions**, and sporadic internal unrest.

BHARATI initiative

-
- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has launched the BHARATI initiative to support 100 agri-food startups and target \$50 billion agri-food exports by 2030.
 - **What it is?**
 - **BHARATI** stands for Bharat's Hub for Agritech, Resilience, Advancement and Incubation for Export Enablement.
 - It is a national startup-support and export-acceleration platform for India's agri-food and agri-tech ecosystem.
 -

Objective:

Empower 100 agri-food and agri-tech startups.

Boost exports to **\$50 billion by 2030.**

Foster innovation in agri-food production, processing, packaging, and logistics.



WBPCS mains -31th
August



Manojit Adhikary

to me ▼

Tue 2 Sept, 15:18 (2 days ago)



Respected Sir

As per your instructions in class, you had mentioned that we should send you the question papers of any exam where Current Affairs questions are included.

In this regard, I am attaching herewith the question paper of the WBPSC Miscellaneous Mains Examination held on 31st August for your kind reference.

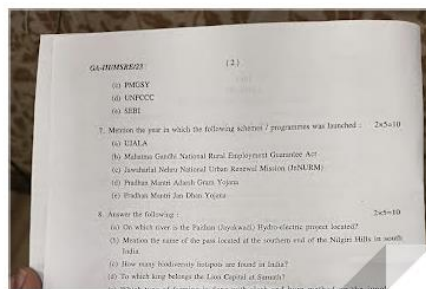
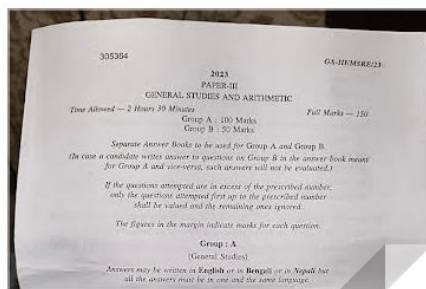
Kindly acknowledge the same.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Manojit Dab Adhikary.

2 attachments • Scanned by Gmail ⓘ



2023
PAPER-III
GENERAL STUDIES AND ARITHMETIC

Time Allowed — 2 Hours 30 Minutes

Full Marks — 150

Group A : 100 Marks

Group B : 50 Marks

Separate Answer Books to be used for Group A and Group B.

(In case a candidate writes answer to questions on Group B in the answer book meant for Group A and vice-versa, such answers will not be evaluated.)

If the questions attempted are in excess of the prescribed number, only the questions attempted first up to the prescribed number shall be valued and the remaining ones ignored.

The figures in the margin indicate marks for each question.

Group : A

(General Studies)

Answers may be written in English or in Bengali or in Nepali but all the answers must be in one and the same language.

Part-I

Answer Question No. 1 and any two from the rest.

- ✓ 1. Explain the challenges posed to Government of India for revamping economic sector through sustaining MSMEs and promotion of export trading. 20
- ✓ 2. Give your opinion on how to mitigate the condition of migrant labours and their further resettlement. 15
3. Identify the potential areas where 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' or 'Self-reliant India' can be implemented immediately. 15
- ✓ 4. Explain the areas of success on Digital India movement. What are the drawbacks which must be redressed with immediate effect? 15
- ✓ 5. Give your opinion on the recent success achieved by India for gaining collective supports in international forum on issues of border disputes and confrontation in Ladakh. 15

Part-II

Answer all the questions.

6. Write down the full form of the following abbreviations : 2×5=10
- (a) MOOC
 - (b) NABARD

Please Turn Over

National Board of Agriculture and Rural Development

1) Answer Challenges in Sustaining MSMEs

- 1.Access to Credit
- 2.Technology Gap
- 3.Infrastructure Bottlenecks
- 4.Regulatory Burden
- 5.Skilled Workforce Shortage
- 6.Market Competition

Challenges in Promoting Export Trading

- 1.Global Uncertainty
- 2.High Logistics Cost
- 3.Quality Standards & Certification Issues
- 4.Exchange Rate Volatility
- 5.Limited Export Diversification

2)

- **Immediate Measures:**
- **Portable Social Security:**
 - Implement nationwide portability for ration cards (One Nation One Ration Card) and health insurance.
- **Cash Transfers:**
 - Direct benefit transfers during crisis situations like COVID-19 lockdown.
- **Safe Housing:**
 - Affordable rental housing complexes (ARHCs) near industrial hubs.
- **Medium & Long-Term Measures:**
- **Skill Mapping & Training:**
 - National database of migrant workers with skill records; provide upskilling in local languages.
- **Employment Guarantee in Urban Areas:**
 - Urban equivalent of MGNREGA to ensure minimum employment.
- **Health & Education Facilities:**
 - Mobile clinics and migrant children's education support centres.
- **Local Employment Generation:**
 - Strengthen rural industries and agro-based MSMEs to reduce distress migration

- **Identify the potential areas where ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ or ‘Self-reliant India’ can be implemented immediately. (15 marks)**
- **Answer:**
 - Defence Manufacturing:**
 - Encourage indigenisation of aircraft, submarines, drones (e.g., Tejas, INS Vikrant).
 - Electronics & Semiconductors:**
 - PLI scheme for chip manufacturing and smartphone production.
 - Renewable Energy:**
 - Solar panel, battery storage, and hydrogen fuel production.
 - Healthcare & Pharma:**
 - Reduce dependence on China for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs).
 - Agriculture:**
 - Self-sufficiency in pulses, edible oils; promotion of organic & millet exports.
 - Space & Technology:**
 - Private sector participation in satellite launches and space research.

- **Explain the areas of success on Digital India movement. What are the drawbacks which must be redressed with immediate effect? (15 marks)**
- **Answer:**
Success Areas:
- **Digital Infrastructure:**
 - Expansion of BharatNet connecting rural areas with high-speed broadband.
- **Digital Governance:**
 - Platforms like UMANG, DigiLocker, GSTN improving transparency.
- **Financial Inclusion:**
 - UPI, Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar-enabled payments made India world's largest real-time digital payment system.
- **E-Health & E-Education:**
 - Telemedicine and DIKSHA app supporting healthcare and education access.
- **Digital Startups:**
 - India now has 100+ unicorns, many in fintech, edtech, and e-commerce.

- **Drawbacks & Concerns:**
- **Digital Divide:**
 - Urban-rural internet gap; affordability of smartphones and data packages.
- **Cybersecurity Threats:**
 - Rise in ransomware and phishing attacks.
- **Privacy Concerns:**
 - Data misuse and lack of strong personal data protection framework.
- **Low Digital Literacy:**
 - Large section of population unable to use advanced services.

- **Give your opinion on the recent success achieved by India for gaining collective supports in international forum on issues of border disputes and confrontation in Ladakh. (15 marks)**
- **Answer:**
India's Diplomatic Success:
- **Galwan Valley Tensions (2020):** India highlighted China's aggression globally.
- **Quad & Indo-Pacific Strategy:** Alignment with USA, Japan, Australia strengthened India's position.
- **UN & BRICS Platforms:** India raised concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- **European & ASEAN Support:** Many countries backed India's stand on peaceful settlement of disputes.
- **Strengthened Defence Ties:**
 - Agreements with France (Rafale, submarines), Russia (S-400), USA (BECA, COMCASA).

- Write down the full form of the following abbreviations (2×5=10 marks):
- (a) **MOOC** – Massive Open Online Course
- (b) **NABARD** – National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

- (c) PMGSY
- (d) UNFCCC
- (e) SEBI

7. Mention the year in which the following schemes / programmes was launched : $2 \times 5 = 10$

- (a) UJALA
- (b) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- (c) Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM)
- (d) Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana
- (e) Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana

8. Answer the following : $2 \times 5 = 10$

- (a) On which river is the Paithan (Jayakwadi) Hydro-electric project located?
- (b) Mention the name of the pass located at the southern end of the Nilgiri Hills in south India.
- (c) How many biodiversity hotspots are found in India?
- (d) To which king belongs the Lion Capital at Sarnath?
- (e) Which type of farming is done with slash and burn method on the jungles of north-eastern part of India?

9. Answer the following: $2 \times 5 = 10$

- (a) Which Indian missile has got the approval from cabinet for export?
- (b) Who signed MoU with NABARD for sustainable agriculture?
- (c) Which Indian climate activist becomes a member of Antonio Guterres's new Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change?
- (d) Who issues the Special Drawing Rights (SDR)?
- (e) By whom the members of the Rajya Sabha are elected?

10. Answer the following : $2 \times 5 = 10$

- (a) Which part of plant evaporates water?
- (b) In which year the name of the Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi islands was changed to Lakshadweep by an Act of Parliament?
- (c) In which year was Pulitzer Prize established?
- (d) On which year was Panama Canal opened?
- (e) Which is the oldest scientific department of Government of India?

Word of the day

Sidereal:

of or relating to the stars or constellations; (of divisions of time) determined by daily motion of the stars

Usage: *It's that time of the sidereal year where we take stock of what's been going on during the last orbit of Earth around the Sun.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/siderealexpress

International Phonetic Alphabet: /saɪ'dɪə.ɹi.əl/



Thank you 😊

