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FRIDAY
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SC slams States for not posting regular DGPs
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Mandhana, Voll power RCB to second title
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INSIDE

DAC mulls Rafale acquisition ahead of Macron visit

NEW DELHI
Ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's visit, the Defence Acquisition Council is set to review key proposals, including the acquisition of 114 Rafale fighter aircraft. » Page 4

43 citizens seek action on Assam CM's 'hate speech'

GUWAHATI
A group of 43 citizens have urged the Gauhati High Court to take suo motu cognisance of "repeated instances of hate speech" by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. » Page 5

Explosion in illegal Meghalaya mine kills 18

■ The explosion was likely caused by dynamite and has trapped several persons, police said

■ CM has promised action following one of the worst mining tragedies in the State since 2012

■ Activists claim mine owners continue to operate illegally, despite the blanket ban on coal mining

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

An explosion in an illegally operated rat-hole coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district killed 18 miners on Thursday, officials said.

This is one of the biggest mining-related tragedies since July 2012, when 15 miners died in a flooded mine in the State's South Garo Hills district. Two years later, in 2014, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had banned the hazardous mining method.

Vikash Kumar, East Jaintia Hills district's Superintendent of Police, said the police received information about an explosion at an illegal coal mine at Mynsyngut in the Thangkoi area around 11 a.m. A team rushed to the spot and confirmed that an explosion,

suspected to have been caused by dynamite, had trapped several persons at an unspecified depth.

"We mobilised rescue and disaster response operations and recovered 18 bodies from the site of the explosion. An injured person, initially rushed to a community health centre, was referred to a higher medical centre for further treatment," he said.

CM vows action
Expressing condolences to the families of those killed, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said the government has ordered an inquiry. "Accountability will be fixed, and those responsible will face strict legal action," he said. He also said the government has announced an ex gratia of ₹3 lakh for the next of kin of each deceased mine worker.

Deep death traps

Many workers have died in Meghalaya's rat-hole coal mines before and after the NGT banned the practice in April in 2014. Some of the major mishaps:

■ **July 2012:** Underground stream flooded a mine in South Garo Hills district, killing at least 15 miners

■ **May 30, 2021:** Five miners died after a dynamite blast caused flooding of a mine in East Jaintia Hills district

■ **Dec. 2018:** Five fell to death after a cable of a carriage mechanism broke in East Jaintia Hills district

■ **Dec 13, 2018:** At least 15 drowned in a flooded 370-foot-deep mine in East Jaintia Hills

■ **Jan. 31, 2021:** Six killed

after a crane snaps in East Jaintia Hills district

■ **Feb. 5, 2026:** At least 18 died after a suspected dynamite blast trapped them

Blast site: A videograb of the mine where the explosion occurred in East Jaintia Hills on Thursday.

"We have started an investigation and have sought information from the people about the mine creators involved in the illegal act," Mr. Kumar said, adding that the police were gathering information about the mine owner and

the people who were running it.

The police registered a *suo motu* first information report (FIR) at the Khliehriat (district headquarters) police station under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, read

with the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act and the Explosive Substances Act.

District officials said teams from the National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force, and Special

Rescue Team have been engaged at the site to continue with the rescue and recovery efforts. Officials said they were trying to identify the victims, although locals said most of the deceased were from Assam.

Activists claim mine owners, backed by politicians and other influential people, continue to operate illegally despite the NGT's blanket ban on the mining of coal and its transportation in April 2014, which was later upheld by the Supreme Court.

Several accidents
There have been several incidents of coal mine accidents before and after the ban, killing at least 80 workers to date. The last major incident was in December 2018, in East Jaintia Hills district, where at least 18 miners were

trapped in a flooded mine 370 feet below the surface.

Multiple agencies, including the Indian Navy, could retrieve only two bodies in the rescue operation that lasted months.

"Rat-hole mining, entailing digging holes about 4-ft feet in height, allowing an adult to squat and work, is risky. However, daily wages as high as ₹2,000 attract many people to take up the job," Shillong-based anti-illegal mining activist Agnes Kharshiing said.

Earlier, the High Court of Meghalaya constituted the one-man Justice (retired) B.P. Katakey Committee to investigate, monitor, and recommend measures for environmental restoration following the ban on illegal coal mining in the State. The panel's periodic reports have hardly made any difference, activists say.

Opposition defiled the temple of democracy, but nation's poor are behind me, says Modi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In a scathing attack on the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said successive defeats inflicted by the National Democratic Alliance on the Opposition were proving indigestible to it, but he had the support of the poor of India that any plans to "dig his grave" would not be successful.

Replying to the debate in the Upper House on the Motion of Thanks to the President for her Address to the joint sitting of Parliament, he referred to the absence of a reply by him in the Lok Sabha on the same debate as a "defilement of the temple of democracy" and an insult to not just President Droupadi Murmu, her position, and her tribal identity, but the Constitution as well.

The Opposition benches staged a walkout as Mr. Modi began his speech.

Referring to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata

Ali sala: Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. SANSAD TV/ANI

Banerjee's appearance in the Supreme Court in the special intensive revision (SIR) case without directly naming her, he termed the Trinamool Congress-led government as *nirmam* or merciless, pushing for inclusion of "infiltrators rather than citizens", whereas every country in the world was determined to stop infiltrators along their borders.

He deplored Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "traitor" comment on Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu, and termed it an in-

sult to the entire Sikh community.

Congress retorts
The Congress, on the other hand, accused the Prime Minister of "hiding behind" Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. After Mr. Birla claimed that Opposition members were planning to hurt Mr. Modi, speaking outside the House, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra dismissed the claim as "absolute lie".

Referring to slogans about "digging Modi's grave", he said that those

who talk of '*mohabbat ki dukaan*' (a shop of love used by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi) are raising slogans like '*Modi teri kabr khudegi*' (Modi we will dig your grave), which he said, highlighted the Opposition's frustration over successive electoral defeats. "They will never be able to dig my grave, the blessings of the poor are with me," he said.

The Prime Minister listed out the achievements of his government in the last 11 years.

"The trade deals that we

struck with nine countries and then the 27 countries of the European Union will open opportunities for growth," he said.

Mr. Modi laid a big emphasis on his government's implementation of projects, speaking at length of the PRAGATI project monitoring programme supervised by himself.

The speech lasted 97 minutes, and the Rajya Sabha, in the absence of the Opposition, passed the Motion of Thanks to the President, concluding the debate.

Told PM to avoid LS over Congress 'plot': Birla

Sreeparna Chakraborty
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said he had asked Prime Minister Modi not to come to the Lower House to deliver his response to the Motion of Thanks to

the President's Address since he had "concrete information" that many Congress MPs could carry out an "unexpected act" of protest at the PM's seat.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 5

'Talks under way, India-U.S. statement on deal in days'

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India and the U.S. will "finalise and sign" a joint statement on the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement in the next four to five days, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

He said U.S. tariffs on Indian exports will be cut from 50% to 18% through an executive order from the U.S. President following the statement.

India can reduce tariffs on U.S. imports after signing the legal and formal agreement, which is expected mid-March, the Minister said.

"Meaningful talks are going on between India and the U.S. on the decisions that were announced by the leaders of the two countries," Mr. Goyal said. "The first tranche of the Bilateral Trade Agreement is nearly ready."

On the commitment to buy goods worth $500 billion from the U.S., the Minister cited India's growth

Meaningful talks are going on between India and the U.S. on the decisions that were announced by the leaders of the two countries.

PIYUSH GOYAL
Commerce Minister

requirements and said one "can clearly see before our eyes as potential that we can import from the U.S. over the next five years."

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said a joint statement has followed each free trade agreement that India has negotiated with other countries.

$500-billion imports
"Once the joint statement is there, it needs to be converted into a legal agreement," he said. "The legal agreement will give us the authority to reduce our tariffs. Their (U.S.) tariffs are executive tariffs (and can be amended by executive orders). Our tariffs are

most-favoured nation (MFN) tariffs that can only be cut after the legal agreement has been signed."

Mr. Goyal said India's growth would require large volumes of energy, data centre equipment, information and communication technology products and aircraft plus spares. "When we estimated what we would need from the U.S., we came to a figure of at least $500 billion," he said.

India's global imports of critical items are above $200 billion, said Mr. Agrawal. "In five years, these are going to be over $2 trillion.... U.S. will add to diversification," he said.

Kuki-Zo groups boycott tribal MLAs in Manipur govt., accuse them of 'betrayal'

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Kuki-Zo tribal groups declared a social boycott on Thursday of Kuki-Zo legislators who have joined the newly formed Manipur government of Yumnam Khemchand Singh.

The boycott and a dawn-to-dusk "total shutdown" across the hills inhabited by the Kuki-Zo people, to protest "betrayal" by these MLAs, were enforced hours before the seventh session of the 12th Manipur Assembly began with an

address by Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

Normal life was hit in Chandel, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, and Pherzawl districts as protesters rallied with posters calling some Kuki-Zo MLAs "traitors".

There were reports of arson in some of these districts where protesters accused the MLAs of prioritising government formation over preserving the Centre for a Union Territory-like separate administration for the Kuki-Zo community.

First visit
It was the first such visit by any Kuki-Zo MLA to the State capital since the ethnic conflict between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei com-

Anger was directed at Nemcha Kipgen, sworn in as a Deputy Chief Minister on Wednesday, and four other legislators — former Director General of Police L.M. Khaute and Ngursanglur Sanate, who flew to Imphal from New Delhi with other NDA legislators. All three are BJP legislators.

munities broke out in May 2023. The Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) said the decision of some Kuki-Zo legislators to join the government was in

Up in arms: Kuki-Zo protesters target Kuki-Zo MLAs who joined the government, calling them 'traitors'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

gave written political commitment to support a separate administration.

Opposing views
The KZC, apex body of the Kuki-Zo community, said these MLAs were party to the resolution along with leaders of Kuki-Zo social organisations and some rebel groups that had signed the Suspension of Operations agreement with the Centre in August 2008.

"By joining a Meitei-dominated government, these MLAs have effectively aligned themselves with

violation of a resolution adopted unanimously to abstain from government formation till the Central and the State governments

our enemy, disregarding the immense pain and sacrifices endured by the Kuki-Zo community," the KZC said.

The KZC urged the Kuki-Zo people not to cooperate or associate with the MLAs in any social, customary, or public matters. "This boycott shall remain in force until they refrain from participation in the Manipur government and realign themselves with the collective position of the Kuki-Zo people," it added.

The Thadou Inpi Mani-

pur (TIM), however, welcomed Ms. Kipgen's "historic appointment" as a Deputy Chief Minister and asked her to uphold the Thadou identity, protect Manipur's territorial integrity, and disassociate from Kuki tags, organisations, and separatist ideology". The Thadou resent their inclusion in the Kuki group.

In his address to the House, the Governor said maintenance of law and order remained the foremost priority of the government.

Procurement of minor forest produce dips 92% in 2024-25

Government procurement of minor forest produce (MFP) at minimum support price (MSP) saw a sharp dip in 2024-25 compared to the year before, with data tabled in Parliament on Thursday showing that the amount of MFP procured across 19 States dropped by over 92% from 2023-24 to 2024-25. Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram tabled the data in response to a question on MFP procurement by Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Mr. Oram said that the Tribal Affairs Ministry had, till date, released ₹89.65 crore to State governments for the procurement of MFP at MSP.

Senior Maoist leader killed in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur

A senior leader of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) was gunned down by the security forces in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on Thursday, the police said. Udham Singh, a divisional committee member of the South Bastar division, had been with the outfit for over 20 years, a police officer said, adding that he carried a reward of ₹8 lakh on his head. Based on a tip-off about the presence of Singh and other armed Maoists in a forested, hilly area under the Tarrem police station, a joint team of the District Reserve Guards, Bijapur, and CoBRA personnel took part in the operation, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Yadav said.

SC flags States' preference for 'ad-hoc' DGP appointments

CJI-led Bench says States are opting for 'Acting' police chiefs of their choice in violation of 2006 verdict, directs UPSC to approach top court if process for appointing regular DGPs is delayed

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday observed that States were avoiding appointment of regular Directors-General of Police (DGPs) with a fixed tenure of two years, opting instead for "Acting" police chiefs of their choice in violation of a 20-year-old top court judgment.

The court, in a 2006 judgment in the *Prakash Singh* case, had made it clear that the office of DGP should be divorced from political or other external pressures and cushioned governments against mixing politics and law enforcement.

It had invoked its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to direct that DGPs must be selected by States from among the three senior-most and meritorious officers empanelled by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The court had thrown out the "concept" of Acting DGPs. It had held that State police chiefs should have a minimum fixed tenure of two years.

On Thursday, the UPSC informed a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant that the reality on the ground hardly resembled the process envisaged in the 2006 judgment.

The Bench was hearing the case of Telangana, where the UPSC said the last regular DGP retired about nine years ago, in November 2017. The State had not forwarded any proposals to initiate the appointment of a regular DGP, choosing to carry on with 'Acting' DGPs. "A State will send a proposal only when it wants to appoint a certain officer," Chief Justice Kant said.

Subsequent top court orders in July 2018 and March 2019 detailed the appointments mechanism, which included the State concerned sending a proposal to the UPSC three months ahead of the retirement of the incumbent DGP. The UPSC would prepare a panel of suitable officers. The State would appoint one of the empanelled officers as DGP "immediately".

Meritorious officers

The court said many meritorious and senior police officers had lost their opportunity at becoming DGPs owing to the "month-by-month delay" shown by State governments to send proposals to the UPSC. "There are several States which keep on delaying the submission of proposals for appointment of regular DGPs in total disregard of the direction of the Supreme Court in the *Prakash Singh* case... An ad-hoc arrangement by appointing an Acting DGP is preferred," the Bench observed.

> There are several States which keep on delaying the submission of proposals for appointment of regular DGPs in total disregard of the direction of the Supreme Court in the *Prakash Singh* case... An ad-hoc arrangement by appointing an Acting DGP is preferred
> **SUPREME COURT**

The court said the UPSC should not fall into ploys of the States. The Bench directed the Commission to write to States to send timely proposals for appointment of regular DGPs whenever such an occasion arise in the future. The Bench gave the UPSC liberty to approach the Supreme Court in case the States chose to ignore such communication.

"Then necessary consequences, including accountability of those responsible for the delay would follow," the court observed in its order.

Noting that there was a "serious lapse" on the part of Telangana in not sending a timely proposal to the UPSC, the Commission four weeks to hold meetings and make the recommendations to the Telangana government on the appointment of a regular DGP.

UPSC adds more norms for Civil Services aspirants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A notification says that the conditions will apply to those allotted IPS or any 'Group A' service

The Union Public Service Commission has expanded the restrictions on applying for the Civil Services Examination from 2026 for candidates who are allotted the Indian Police Service or any other Central Services Group "A", said the notification for the 2026 exam issued on Wednesday.

The notification said the UPSC was looking to fill up previously 933 vacancies this year, of which 33 would be reserved for Persons with Benchmark Disability.

While keeping the restrictions for those already allotted the Indian Administrative Service or the Indian Foreign Service in past CSEs unchanged, it introduced a set of conditions. A candidate allotted any of these services in the CSE 2026 would be eligible for the CSE 2027 if they are granted an exemption from training for that service by the "authority concerned".

The notification added that the candidate would be eligible for grant of one-time exemption only from joining the training in order to enable him/her to appear in CSE-2027. It added that such a candidate should join the training for "foundation course only".

Further, the notification said that such candidate would not be allowed to appear in CSE 2026 or any subsequent CSEs "unless he/she resigns from the allocated service".

One-time opportunity

The notification said that candidates who had been allotted any service based on CSE 2025 or earlier years, would have "a one-time opportunity" to appear either in this year's examination or the one for 2027 without having to resign from their services. "A candidate who wish to use their remaining attempts for CSE 2026 or subsequent exams, they would have to follow the resignation rule," the UPSC said.

The notification said that this set of conditions would apply to those being allotted Indian Police Service or any Central Service categorised as Group A.

NHRC notice over alleged exploitation, forced religious conversion of women at gyms

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Wednesday issued notice to the Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories, the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, and the Sports Authority of India over allegations of exploitation and violation of human rights, and forced religious conversion of women at gyms and fitness centres.

The notice was issued by NHRC member Priyank Kanoongo who said that numerous cases of sexual exploitation of women targeted by trainers in gyms and fitness clubs had come to light from various places across the country.

"Additionally, from a health perspective as well, substandard food supplements and uncontrolled

NHRC asks Chief Secretaries of States, Union Territories to form guidelines for gym establishments

physical activities also pose a threat to human life. Therefore, notices have been issued to all State governments, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, and sports authorities, summoning information regarding the rules and guidelines related to the establishment/operation of gyms/fitness centers. So that steps can be taken in the direction of controlling unethical activities in this sector," he wrote on X.

The notice came in the complaint filed by a Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh) resident who alleged that an organised racket was being run under the cover of a gym and fitness centre to target young women for exploitation and forced religious conversion. The complainant cited media reports and also alleged that police were hand in glove with the activities. Terming police's involvement as "abuse of authority, failure of law enforcement, and violation of human rights, women's safety, and religious freedom", the complainant sought the intervention of the Commission.

Taking cognisance of the complaint under Section 12 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, the Bench directed the Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories to form guidelines and standards for gym establishments/fitness centres etc., in the State.

MSF raises concerns over FTA impact on medicines in India

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), an international aid organisation that provides emergency medical assistance to populations in distress in more than 80 countries, has written to India expressing its concern over the recently announced EU-India Free Trade Agreement.

The group said that the proposed restrictive provisions will have major consequences for access to medicines in India and the rest of the developing world. "We are concerned that the EU-India FTA may contain provisions that seek to detain imports or exports of good suspected of infringing intellectual property rights.

It also said that some provisions of the negotiation seeks to limit, and in some cases completely block, generic competition. "Generic competition has proven to be key in lowering the prices of medicines...," the letter said.

Commissioner for Trade. "They will strengthen and extend the monopoly rights of multinational pharmaceutical manufacturers at the expense of patients in India and beyond," the group warned.

MSF has specifically expressed concern over data exclusivity that could effectively block compulsory licences, patent term extensions, enforcement and border measures that seek to detain imports or exports of good suspected of infringing intellectual property rights.

Webinar on biotechnology education, skill development to be held on February 8

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai, in association with *The Hindu*, has launched the "Biotechnology: Role in Industry 5.0 - Sustainable Future Pathways" initiative to examine the expanding role of biotechnology in an Industry 5.0 landscape that emphasises human-centric innovation, sustainability, and technological integration.

As biotechnology continues to drive advances across healthcare, agriculture, environmental solutions, and research-led innovation, the initiative seeks to create wider awareness of its societal impact while positioning it as a dynamic and future-ready career domain.

As part of this ongoing

initiative, the second webinar in the series, titled "Biotechnology Education: Skills & Opportunities for a Sustainable Future", will focus on how education and skill development in biotechnology are evolving to meet these emerging demands.

The second webinar will be held on February 8, 2026 from 11.30 a.m. onwards. It will bring together experts from academia, international education, and research, to discuss how biotechnology education is evolving to meet the demands of a sustainable and innovation-led future.

The webinar will feature G. Jayaraman, professor and dean, School of Bio Sciences and Technology, VIT Chennai; Pooja Shivanand Breh, Environmental and Life Sciences Programme, Faculty of Science, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei; K.S. Nagabhushana, Director - Research, Prayoga Institute of Education Research, Bengaluru; and Jayanthi Velayudhan, Project Post Doctoral Fellow and alumni, VIT. The discussion will be moderated by Soma Basu, journalist.

To register, visit *https://newsth.live/THVTTBTSE* or scan the QR code.

CROSSWORD + 14710
(set by Bruni)

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https://thehindu.com/crosswords
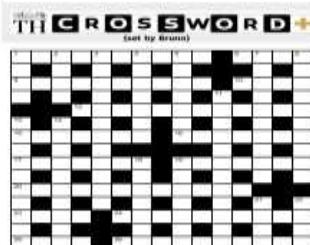
Across
1 Post-graduate hiding dead girl with sheet (10)
6 Spice's odour turning estate's core inhabitants out (4)
8 More fighting - guerrilla finally escapes with family (10)
10 Greek Goddess's loss of heart in earth sadly (6)
12 Straps designed with a bend and decorated like a flag (6-6)
15 Circular displaying head of communist revolutionary (7)
16 Model's bottoms - one concealing nothing is tops! (1-6)
17 Agricultural product from a very old company displaying a date (7)
19 Setter's excited being part of attempt to retract ragtag army (7)
20 Assembly embargoed bananas after seeing money stuffed in (5,7)
23 One chosen to convey answer (6)
24 Dodgy part of city square's last line with worn interior's redesigned (10)
25 Sailor left Shanghai channel (4)
26 Teen milling around may loud riot often recklessly robbing contents has cheek (10)

Down
2 Spy work? (4)
3 Feathers pitching outskirts... it's low! (4)
4 Cabins slated to be renovated with stretchy things (7,5)
5 After some time, a language becomes creative (7)
7 Delight of perverted liar consumed by old hostility (10)
9 Drink label has upturned flower (10)
11 Ultimately, running hotel's hard (2,3,4,3)
13 Old custom - to put hand in mouth and put on black register (5,5)
14 Essential part of testimony - a cop hid it, surprisingly for unknown causes (10)
18 How I would refer to setter's working style, mainly, during leave? Kicking back! (7)
21 Man waving red flag returning from Belgrano - a familiar (7)
22 Fail to win not so tight DDs, initially getting out (4)
23 Individual working largely in the peripheries (4)

SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Bring home Mahalakshmi

Every day is a good day to pray to Mahalakshmi. However, Fridays falling in the Tamil month of *Thai* are considered extra special. Mahalakshmi is the repository of everything that a devotee needs in this life and needs to be blessed in order to pray to Her or listen to discourses on Her, said Damal Perundevi. When one recites or listens to Swami Vedanta Desikan's Sri Stuti, one can be assured of Mahalakshmi's blessings.

Why does Mahalakshmi enjoy this exalted status?

In the Ramayana, when Vali lies wounded, he looks at Rama and says, "You have attacked me and wounded me. This has happened only because Janaka's daughter Sita, the manifestation of Mahalakshmi, is not with you. Had She been by your side, you would not have harmed me." She is the one who makes everything better. When Perumal joined the devas and asuras as they churned the Milky Ocean, with his locks of hair dancing due to the effort, Mahalakshmi emerged from it, glowing brilliantly like the light of one crore suns. She placed Her garland around Perumal and He gave Her a place in His heart, where She always resides. He churned the ocean for the ultimate *amrut*, Mahalakshmi. Wherever there is *Mangalam* (auspiciousness, welfare), there will be Her abode.

The only time She enters any other place is when She is moved by the devotion of Her devotee. She rushes to their homes, ever ready to shower Her grace, blessings and prosperity. When a poor bachelor appealed to Vedanta Desikan for funds for his wedding, the great preceptor composed Sri Stuti and Mahalakshmi responded by showering wealth. She showers lasting wealth on all.

UPSC adds more norms for Civil Services aspirants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

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A notification says that the conditions will apply to those allotted IPS or any 'Group A' service

ded that such a candidate should join the training for "foundation course only".

Further, the notification said that such candidates would not be allowed to appear in CSE 2028 or any subsequent CSEs "unless he/she resigns from the allocated service".

One-time opportunity

The notification said that candidates who had been allotted any service based on CSE 2025 or earlier years, would have "a one-time opportunity" to appear either in this year's examination or the one for 2027 without having to resign from their service.

If their aim was to use their remaining attempts for CSE 2028 or subsequent exams, they would have to follow the resignation rule, the UPSC said.

The notification said that this set of conditions would apply to those being allotted Indian Police Service or any Central Service categorised as Group A.

- UPSC has expanded restrictions on appearing in the Civil Services Examination (CSE) from 2026 for candidates who get allotted IPS or any other Central Services Group 'A'. / UPSC ने 2026 से CSE में बैठने के नियमों/प्रतिबंधों का दायरा बढ़ाया है—यह IPS या अन्य केन्द्रीय सेवा (Group 'A') आवंटित उम्मीदवारों पर लागू होगा।

- The notification (for CSE 2026) says these conditions apply to those allotted IPS or any Group 'A' service. / अधिसूचना (CSE 2026) में कहा गया है कि ये शर्तें IPS या किसी भी Group 'A' सेवा आवंटित उम्मीदवारों पर लागू होंगी।

- Vacancies mentioned: about 933 posts, including 33 reserved for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD). / रिक्तियाँ: लगभग 933 पद, जिनमें 33 पद PwBD (Persons with Benchmark Disabilities) के लिए आरक्षित बताए गए हैं।

- Earlier restrictions for candidates already allotted IAS/IFS in past CSEs remain unchanged. / IAS/IFS पहले से आवंटित उम्मीदवारों के लिए पुराने प्रतिबंधों में बदलाव नहीं किया गया है।

New conditions explained (CSE 2026 onwards) / नई शर्तें (CSE 2026 से)

- If a candidate is allotted IPS/Group 'A' through CSE 2026, they may be eligible for CSE 2027 only if the "authority concerned" grants them exemption from training for that service. / यदि CSE 2026 से IPS/Group 'A' आवंटित होता है, तो CSE 2027 में बैठने की पात्रता तभी होगी जब "संबंधित प्राधिकरण" उस सेवा के प्रशिक्षण से छूट दे।

- The notification adds that such a candidate should join training for "foundation course only". / अधिसूचना के अनुसार ऐसे उम्मीदवार को प्रशिक्षण में "केवल फाउंडेशन कोर्स" जॉइन करना होगा।

- They will NOT be allowed to appear in CSE 2028 or any subsequent CSE unless they resign from the allocated service. / CSE 2028 या उसके बाद की किसी भी CSE में बैठने की अनुमति नहीं होगी, जब तक उम्मीदवार आवंटित सेवा से त्यागपत्र (resign) न दे।

One-time opportunity for already-allotted candidates / पहले से आवंटित उम्मीदवारों हेतु एक-बार का अवसर

- Candidates allotted any service through CSE 2025 or earlier get a "one-time opportunity" to appear either in this year's exam or in 2027 without resigning. / CSE 2025 या उससे पहले किसी सेवा में आवंटित उम्मीदवारों को "एक बार" बिना resign किए इस वर्ष की परीक्षा या 2027 में बैठने का अवसर मिलेगा।

- If they want to use remaining attempts for CSE 2028 or later, they must follow the resignation rule. / यदि वे CSE 2028 या आगे शेष प्रयासों का उपयोग करना चाहें, तो resign नियम लागू होगा।

Topic	Key facts (English)	रूद्र ल्ह्ू जHindi)
UPSC constitutional basis	UPSC is a constitutional body; Public Service Commissions are covered under Articles 315–323 of the Constitution. (upsc.gov.in)	UPSC ड़ ड़्क्ष्क्ड़ श्र्ड़व्य प्ध्च्ह्र द्क्ष्ण् ग्ह्म्प्श इव ब्व्त्र्श्व द्क्ष्र्श्व ड़१ फ़र्ड़ ट्झड़–ट्ज्ट रह्ग्ह् जीupsc.gov.in)
PwBD (benchmark disability)	"Benchmark disability" is generally 40% or more; RPwD Act, 2016 provides at least 4% reservation in government jobs for persons with benchmark disabilities (Section 34).	प्क्ष्र्क्ष्श क्र प्ल्क्फ़द्क्र्की ल्थ ठ्ज्प ग्र्श्श्ड RPwD Act, 2016 ड़१ फ़्ध्य् द्घ्ड़व्ध्ह ख़्ड्प्ध्ग्ह्की ड़्ख्घ्द्क्ष्ह्ख ठ्प ष घ्ल् र् जSection 34)ड़
Group 'A' (concept)	Group 'A' broadly refers to higher-level officer posts/managerial roles in government classification. (The Economic Times)	Group 'A' द्क्र्की ल्थ द्घ्ड़व्ध्ह द्क्ष्ह्त रह्-द घ्ह्ग १श्श ड़व्ध्प्र्क्ष्क्य्च द्ह ड़्ज ट्र्क्व प्ह्ज The Economic Times)
Foundation Course (context)	Foundation Course is the common initial training module for many services (before service-specific training).	व्क्ष्ण्ट ष ड़्ल्ख्ड ह द्क्ष्त इव द्क्ह ल्ह द्र्प ब्श्र ल्र् द्घ्र प्क्ष्व प्न्ड्ड़ व्ढ द्क्ष्प्र्टH ब्श्र ल्झड
What changed (core)	New restriction focuses on candidates allotted IPS/Group 'A': CSE 2028 onwards requires resignation from allocated service to re-appear.	व्ह च्व्त्र इव ड़ल IPS/Group 'A' ष आफ़्क द्ट्ह्द्क्ष्क्ष CSE 2028+रह्ध्ड़्फ़्ल्प्श आफ़्क द्क्ष्प्द्ल्resign ड़्घ्ध १श्ष्अक्ष्ह्ग्ह्

SC flags States' preference for 'ad-hoc' DGP appointments

CJI-led Bench says States are opting for 'Acting' police chiefs of their choice in violation of 2006 verdict, directs UPSC to approach top court if process for appointing regular DGPs is delayed

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday observed that States were avoiding appointment of regular Directors-General of Police (DGPs) with a fixed tenure of two years, opting instead for "Acting" police chiefs of their choice in violation of a 20-year-old top court judgment.

The court, in a 2006 judgment in the *Prakash Singh* case, had made it clear that the office of DGP should be divorced from political or other external pressures and cautioned governments against mixing politics and law enforcement.

It had invoked its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to direct that DGPs must be selected by States from among the three senior-most and meritorious officers empanelled by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The court had thrown out the "concept" of Acting DGPs. It had held that State police chiefs should have a minimum fixed tenure of two years.

> There are several States which keep on delaying the submission of proposals for appointment of regular DGPs in total disregard of the direction of the Supreme Court in the Prakash Singh case... An ad-hoc arrangement by appointing an Acting DGP is preferred
>
> **SUPREME COURT**

Subsequent top court orders in July 2018 and March 2019 detailed the appointments mechanism, which included the State concerned sending a proposal to the UPSC three months ahead of the retirement of the incumbent DGP. The UPSC would prepare a panel of suitable officers. The State would appoint one of the empanelled officers as DGP "immediately".

On Thursday, the UPSC informed a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant that the reality on the ground hardly resembled the process envisaged in the 2006 judgment.

The Bench was hearing the case of Telangana, where the UPSC said the last regular DGP retired about nine years ago, in November 2017. The State had not forwarded any proposals to initiate the appointment of a regular DGP, choosing to carry on with 'Acting' DGPs. "A State will send a proposal only when it wants to appoint a certain officer," Chief Justice Kant said.

Meritorious officers

The court said many meritorious and senior police officers had lost their opportunity at becoming DGPs owing to the "inordinate delay" shown by State governments to send proposals to the UPSC. "There are several States which keep on delaying the submission of proposals for appointment of regular DGPs in total disregard of the direction of the Supreme Court in the *Prakash Singh* case... An ad-hoc arrangement by appointing an Acting DGP is preferred," the Bench observed.

The court said the UPSC should not fall into ploys of the States. The Bench directed the Commission to write to States to send timely proposals for appointment of regular DGPs whenever such an occasion arises in the future. The Bench gave the UPSC liberty to approach the Supreme Court in case the States chose to ignore such communication.

"Then necessary consequences, including accountability of those responsible for the delay would follow," the court observed in its order.

Noting that there was a "serious lapse" on the part of Telangana in not sending a timely proposal to the UPSC, it gave the Commission four weeks to hold meetings and make the recommendations to the Telangana government on the appointment of a regular DGP.

Level / Rank	Role (English + Hindi together)	Service required (approx.)	Salary (₹/month, approx.)
Director General of Police (DGP)	Head of State Police / घ्रृ ह्ख्प्ग्रढ ड़रक्ख्	30–35 years	**₹2,25,000 (fixed)**
Additional DGP (ADGP)	State-level wing head / घ्रृ b घ्र ह्घ्र श्र्भा ड़रक्ख्	25–30 years	₹2,05,400
Inspector General (IG)	Zonal/Range supervision / न्ड़्रःण्ख्छ ह्ग्क्छ्ः र्	20–25 years	₹1,82,200
Deputy Inspector General (DIG)	Range/sector command / छ्छ्ण्ट्छ्ःघ ड़क्रघ्छ	14–18 years	₹1,44,200
Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP)	Large district policing / ⬜न्छ्ःँ श्रा च्छ्ड्व छ्छ्ख्छ़	10–14 years	₹1,18,500
Superintendent of Police (SP)	District head / श्र्प्च्व ह्ख्प्घ्ढ ड़रक्ख्	6–10 years	₹78,800 – ₹1,18,500
Additional SP (Addl. SP)	Assists SP / SP ड़्व ढ़ुण्क्ग्ड़्	4–6 years	₹67,700 – ₹78,800
Deputy SP / Assistant SP	Sub-division / २ श्र्ख्छ्च्छ्च्र ड़क्रघ्छ	Entry–4 years	₹56,100 – ₹67,700

Non-Gazetted Officers (State Police)

Level / Rank	Role (English + Hindi together)	Service required (approx.)	Salary (₹/month, approx.)
Inspector	Police Station head / थाना प्रभारी	8–12 years	₹44,900 – ₹54,000
Sub-Inspector (SI)	Investigation & operations / जाँच व संचालन	Entry–8 years	₹35,400 – ₹44,900
Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI)	Supervisory support / पर्यवेक्षण सहायता	Entry–6 years	₹29,200 – ₹35,400
Head Constable	Senior constable duties / वरिष्ठ कांस्टेबल	5–10 years	₹25,500 – ₹29,200
Constable	Field policing / मैदानी पुलिस कार्य	Entry	₹21,700 – ₹25,500

How promotions typically work (Quick view)

Entry Route	Promotion Path (English + Hindi together)
UPSC (IPS)	ASP → SP → SSP → DIG → IG → ADGP → DGP / UPSC से IPS क्रम
State PSC / Recruitment	SI → Inspector → DySP (limited) / राज्य सेवा से क्रमिक पदोन्नति
Time + Performance	ACR, training, vacancies matter / सेवा अवधि + प्रदर्शन

- Supreme Court flagged that many States are avoiding appointment of **regular DGPs** (with **fixed 2-year tenure**) and prefer **"Acting/Ad-hoc DGPs"** of their choice, which goes against the **2006 Prakash Singh judgment.** / सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने कहा कि कई राज्य **नियमित DGP** (कम-से-कम **2 वर्ष का निश्चित कार्यकाल**) नियुक्त करने से बच रहे हैं और अपनी पसंद के **"Acting/Ad-hoc DGP"** लगा रहे हैं—यह **2006 के प्रकाश सिंह फैसले** के विपरीत है।

- **Prakash Singh (2006) directions (core idea):** DGP post must be insulated from political/external pressures; "Acting DGP" concept was rejected; selection should be from **UPSC-empanelled** officers (among **3 senior-most & meritorious**). / **प्रकाश सिंह (2006) निर्देश:** DGP पद को राजनीतिक/बाहरी दबावों से अलग रखा जाए; **Acting DGP** की अवधारणा अस्वीकार; चयन **UPSC द्वारा empanel** किए गए (राज्य के **3 वरिष्ठतम व मेधावी**) अधिकारियों में से।

- Court noted later orders (2018 & 2019) laid down the **mechanism:** States should send proposal to UPSC **3 months before** the incumbent DGP's retirement; UPSC prepares a panel; State must appoint one **immediately.** / कोर्ट ने बताया कि 2018 और 2019 के आदेशों में प्रक्रिया स्पष्ट हुई: वर्तमान DGP की सेवानिवृत्ति से **3 माह पहले** राज्य UPSC को प्रस्ताव भेजे; UPSC पैनल बनाए; राज्य **तुरंत नियुक्ति** करे।

- UPSC told the CJI-led Bench that **ground reality doesn't match** the process envisioned in 2006. / UPSC ने CJI-नेतृत्व वाली पीठ को बताया कि **वास्तविक स्थिति** 2006 में तय प्रक्रिया जैसी नहीं है।

- Example flagged (Telangana): UPSC said the **last regular DGP retired in Nov 2017**; the State did not forward proposals and continued with **Acting DGPs**; remark: proposals are sent "only when a State wants to appoint a particular officer." / उदाहरण (तेलंगाना): UPSC के अनुसार **अंतिम नियमित DGP नवम्बर 2017** में सेवानिवृत्त हुआ; राज्य ने प्रस्ताव नहीं भेजे और **Acting DGPs** से काम चलाया; टिप्पणी: राज्य "तभी प्रस्ताव भेजता है जब किसी खास अधिकारी को नियुक्त करना हो।"

- Impact on merit: SC said many **senior/meritorious officers lose chance** to become DGP due to **inordinate delay** by States in sending proposals. / प्रभाव: राज्यों की **अत्यधिक देरी** के कारण कई **वरिष्ठ/मेधावी अधिकारियों** का DGP बनने का अवसर छिन जाता है।

- Directions now:

  - UPSC must **write to States** to send timely proposals whenever DGP appointment occasion arises. / UPSC राज्यों को पत्र लिखकर समय पर प्रस्ताव भेजने को कहे।

  - UPSC can **approach the Supreme Court** if States ignore the communication. / यदि राज्य न मानें तो UPSC को सुप्रीम कोर्ट जाने की छूट।

  - Court warned of **consequences & accountability** for delay. / देरी पर **परिणाम** और **जवाबदेही** तय होगी।

  - In Telangana matter, UPSC was given **4 weeks** to hold meetings and make recommendations to the State for regular DGP appointment. / तेलंगाना मामले में UPSC को **4 सप्ताह** में बैठक कर सिफारिशें देने को कहा।

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles posts ₹3,483 cr. loss

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles on Thursday reported a consolidated net loss of ₹3,483 crore for the third quarter ended December 2025, impacted significantly by the cyber incident at its British arm, Jaguar Land Rover. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹5,483 crore in the corresponding quarter of the last fiscal. Consolidated total revenue from operations stood at ₹70,108 crore compared with ₹94,472 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

Govt. says 2,645 posts vacant at AAI, 3 aviation regulators

A total of 2,645 positions are lying vacant at the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and three aviation regulators DGCA, BCAS and AERA, the government said on Thursday. In a written reply to Lok Sabha, MoS for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said adequate steps are taken from time to time to fill up vacancies under the ministry, including its attached offices and regulatory bodies. At the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, there are 787 vacancies, largely due to the creation of 441 additional posts as part of the restructuring undertaken during 2022-2024.

TRAI issues telecom services interconnection regulations

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Thursday issued the Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable System) (Seventh Amendment) Regulations, 2026. The salient features include clearly defined timelines for audits, wherein distributors have to conduct audit and submit audit report to broadcasters by September 30 every year; audit to be done on financial year basis in place of calendar year; and presence of broadcasters' representatives during audit to ensure transparency and credibility.

India, GCC nations sign terms of reference for FTA

Appropriate that we enter a robust trading arrangement for greater free flow of goods and services, and predictability, stability to policy: Goyal

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Representatives of India and the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Thursday signed the Terms of Reference for negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA). The GCC countries are together India's largest merchandise trade partners, with total merchandise trade exceeding that done with even the EU and the U.S.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) were signed by India's chief negotiator for the FTA, Additional Secretary Ajay Bhadoo, and his counterpart representing the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Raja Al Marzouki. The signing of the ToR is a necessary precursor for the start of formal negotiations. The GCC countries are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.
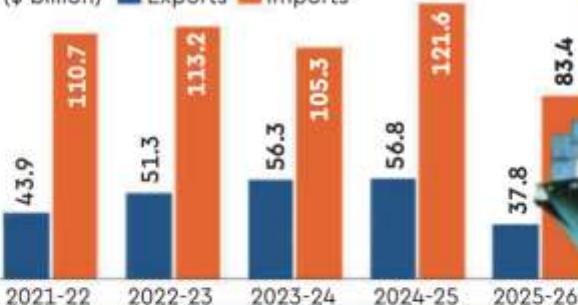
"It is most appropriate that we now enter into a much stronger and robust trading arrangement, which will enable a greater free flow of goods and services, bring predictability and stability to policy, help encourage greater degree of investments and take our bilateral relations between the six nation GCC group and India to greater heights," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, who presided over the signing, said in his speech.

Bilateral benefit

Mr. Goyal pointed out that the two sides could significantly benefit from each other, with India's workforce both within the GCC countries as well as in India standing to gain from the eventual agreement.

"The GCC countries can help us with further diversification and growth of our energy sources, opportunities for our youth, and massive amounts of investments that different countries have already committed at different points of time, which will further get an impetus with a free trade agreement between India and the GCC nations," he added.

The GCC countries are together India's largest merchandise trade partners.

India-U.S. trade deal provides macro predictability: Nasscom

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Indian tech firms are increasingly contributing to AI-driven energy optimisation

The India-U.S. trade deal provided much-needed macro predictability at a time when technology, talent and trust are central to global competitiveness, said Nasscom President Rajesh Nambiar. "Indian technology companies are already delivering measurable outcomes for the U.S. economy – high-quality jobs, regional investment and innovation at scale," he said at a Nasscom U.S. CEO Forum meeting held in Washington DC , shortly after the announcement of the trade deal.

Energy security also emerged as a strategic priority, with the U.S. scaling AI-critical energy capacity and India integrating green and nuclear energy to support next-generation data centres, the forum noted.

According to the forum, Indian technology companies are increasingly contributing to AI-driven energy optimisation, and digital infrastructure, reinforcing the resilience of the U.S. innovation ecosystem.

The meeting held at Capitol Hill, brought together leading Indian technology business leaders and senior U.S. policymakers to advance a shared agenda focused on enhancing innovation, AI, trusted supply chains, workforce development and local job creation across the U.S., Nasscom said in a statement on Thursday.

Meanwhile, in another statement, Nasscom said AI models and tools would continue to drive exponential innovation and rapid adoption. "However, concerns that such tools will significantly disrupt or eliminate the technology services sector where India has a strong global presence are misplaced," the apex trade body said.

RIL buys 2 mn barrels of Venezuelan oil

Reuters
NEW DELHI/SINGAPORE

India's Reliance Industries has bought 2 million barrels of Venezuelan oil from trader Vitol, trade sources said on Thursday, the first purchase by the company from the South American nation in nearly a year.

Reliance, which operates the world's biggest refining complex, has bought Venezuelan crude for April delivery at a discount of around $6.5-$7 per barrel to ICE Brent, the trade sources said.

Reliance did not respond to a Reuters email seeking comment.

IndianOil Q3 profit rises fourfold amid lower crude oil prices

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

State-owned refiner IndianOil's profit in the December-ended quarter accelerated more than four times on a year-on-year (YoY) basis fuelled by a favourable lower crude oil price regime.

The refiner's net profit, on a standalone basis, more than quadrupled to ₹12,125.86 crore from the comparable period last year.

Gross refining margin in the ongoing financial year until the end of December 2023 more than doubled from the comparable period last year to $8.41 for a barrel. Standalone revenue rose 6.62% on a year-on-year basis to ₹2.32 lakh crore in the reporting quarter.

Domestic sales increased approximately 5% on a year-on-year basis to 26.018 million metric tonnes (MMT).

PBPL arm's GMP certificates revoked

The National Centre for Public Health and Pharmacy, Hungary (NCPHP) has revoked the good manufacturing practice (GMP) certificates it had issued to Panacea Biotec Pharma's (PBPL) facility in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh.

LIC Q3 net climbs 17% to ₹12,958 crore on premium

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

State-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) reported standalone net profit for the December quarter increased more than 17% year-on-year to ₹12,958.22 crore.

The higher net profit came on 17.5% increase in the net premium income to ₹1,25,613.36 crore (₹1,06,891.48 crore). Total income increased almost 16% to ₹2,33,983.79 crore.

Consumers and firms in the life insurance industry have responded positively to the various initiatives of the government, especially

ment's plans to cut stake in LIC, he said the government is committed to paring its holding by 10% as required within five years from the May 2022 IPO. The timing of the reduction will be decided by the government, he said.

On the proposed foray into health insurance, he said LIC is not moving fast on the plan to enter the sector by becoming a strategic investor in a standalone health insurer.

To a query on monetising real estate, Mr. Doraiswamy and senior officials, said the plan is to leverage the assets to enhance returns for the insurer.

To queries on government

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) logo.

to GST 2.0, CEO and MD R. Doraiswamy said, referring to the GST exemption since September 22, from 18% earlier, on individual life insurance policies.

Lupin unveils generic seizure drug in U.S.

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Lupin has launched Topiramate Extended-Release capsules, in different strengths, in the U.S.

Bioequivalent to Supernus Pharmaceuticals' Trokendi XR capsules and indicated for the treatment of certain types of seizures, the product launch follows U.S. FDA approval for Lupin's abbreviated new drug application. Topiramate ER capsules had an estimated annual sale of $164 million in the U.S., the company said.

Sea sweeper

On show: The Drone Mass Cleaner, an autonomous and modular drone for cleaning and depolluting water is displayed during the 'Euromaritime 2026' trade fair at the Parc Chanot exhibition center in Marseille, on Thursday. AFP

Bharti Q3 net up 34% on subscriber growth

Reuters

Bharti Airtel, India's second-largest mobile carrier by number of users, posted its seventh straight quarterly profit rise on Thursday, as subscribers upgraded to higher-margin telecom plans and steady rise in the customer base.

Bharti Airtel's industry-leading average revenue per user (ARPU) rose 5.7% year-on-year to ₹259 during the quarter, while the share of users on faster 4G and 5G connections rising.

Bharti Airtel's India user base rose 12.6% year-on-year as of December 31, 2025.

Consolidated pre-tax profit rose 34.4% to ₹12,588 crore ($1.39 billion) from

A man walks across the logo of Bharti Airtel

₹9,346 crore a year earlier.

The results include a ₹257 crore charge linked to the implementation of new labour codes.

The firm's year-earlier profit had got a ₹7,880-crore boost from a higher valuation of its stake in telecom infrastructure provider Indus Towers.

Alchemist: NCLT recalls CIRP after ED intervention

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) recalled the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) initiated in the case of Alchemist Limited, holding it was vitiated by fraud, collusion and malicious intent as claimed by the Enforcement Directorate.

The ED found Alchemist Holdings and Alchemist Township India allegedly collected over ₹1,640 crore from people for offering high returns/plots/villas/flats to investors. But investors neither got their money nor were given plots/villas/flats/high returns.

'Artificial Intelligence in global commerce an opportunity but challenging'

Lalatendu Mishra
BHUBANESWAR

Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is coming into reshape global commerce in an exciting opportunity but it's also very much a challenging one said Douglas Feagin, President, Ant International, a Singapore-based fintech company, while speaking at the opening session of the Black Swan Summit being held in Bhubaneswar.

"You start with the digital infrastructure, which you have here in India and in many countries around the world. But then you need players like what we are trying to introduce with our partners that have some fundamental philosophy to enable the local people and businesses to adopt AI on top of their digital infrastructure," he said.

On how it is done, he said his company designs products from the begin-

ning so that people can understand on the street, in their homes, and understand the power of the AI solution for them. So it has to be simple through certain steps, Mr. Feagin said.

"We believe in bringing global technology to local

economies. And so a lot of the things that we're talking about this morning here in Odisha are things that can happen by bringing global technology further in," he said.

"And there's going to be a huge influx of AI technology. And then you need to be collaborative. You can't have your own solution. Everything must work together," Mr. Feagin added.

He said through its Alipay+ solution, the company is connecting 40 mobile wallets around the world to be able to transact in different recent countries.

On what kind of partnerships are needed to unlock the smaller merchant opportunity in India, Sanjiv Bajaj, Chairman, Bajaj Finserv, said despite 30% of India's GDP being driven by small business, and MSMEs, credit is available to just a fraction of them.

"So there is clearly an arbitrage over there between demand and supply," he said.

Mr. Bajaj said over the last 20 years India's digital infrastructure has evolved and creating public platform protocols as public goods. But many of the MSMEs are not aware about multiple available platforms from where they can seamlessly avail credit.

(The writer was in Bhubaneswar at the invitation of the Odisha Government & GFTN).

Delegates at the Black Swan summit. BY ARRANGEMENT

India, GCC nations sign terms of reference for FTA

Appropriate that we enter a robust trading arrangement for greater free flow of goods and services, and predictability, stability to policy: Goyal

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Representatives of India and the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Thursday signed the Terms of Reference for negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA). The GCC countries are together India's largest merchandise trade partners, with total merchandise trade exceeding that done with even the EU and the U.S.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) were signed by India's chief negotiator for the FTA, Additional Secretary Ajay Bhadoo, and his counterpart representing the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Raja Al Marzouki. The signing of the ToR is a necessary precursor for the start of formal negotiations. The GCC countries

The GCC countries are together India's largest merchandise trade partners.

are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

"It is most appropriate that we now enter into a much stronger and robust trading arrangement, which will enable a greater free flow of goods and services, bring predictability and stability to policy, help encourage greater degree of investments and take our bilateral relations between the six nation GCC group and India to greater heights," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, who presided over the signing, said in his speech.

Bilateral benefit

Mr. Goyal pointed out that the two sides could significantly benefit from each other, with India's workforce both within the GCC countries as well as in India standing to gain from the eventual agreement.

"The GCC countries can help us with further diversification and growth of our energy sources, opportunities for our youth, and massive amounts of investments that different countries have already committed at different points of time, which will further get an impetus with a free trade agreement between India and the GCC nations," he added.

India, GCC agree on terms of free trade agreement

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, February 5

INDIA AND THE six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Thursday signed the terms of reference (ToR) for a free trade agreement (FTA), setting the framework for negotiations that would follow.

The discussions on the FTA with GCC have been going on for two decades and now finally reached the ToR stage, ready to take-off more than two decades after the first attempt was made.

The ToR establishes the framework, scope, objectives, and procedures for the negotiations. The signing of ToR is the first step for negotiations to begin.

"It is most appropriate that we now enter into a much stronger and robust trading arrangement which will enable greater free flow of goods and services, bring predictability and stability to policy, help encourage greater degree of investments and take our bilateral relations between the six nation GCC group and India to greater heights," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said at the signing of the ToR.

The agreement is crucial because when it comes to just goods trade the GCC — that includes Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait — is India's biggest partner.

The bilateral trade between two sides totalled $178.56 billion in 2024-25 with India's exports at $58.87 billion and imports at $121.68 billion.

The agreement with the GCC will further strengthen our relations both on geopolitical and trading elements, will help draw greater amounts of investments, create job opportunities, encourage the food security and energy security of both the GCC nations and India, the minister added.

"We already have about 10 million Indians living and working in the GCC region, helping power the economies of the GCC and working as a living bridge between our societies, between our nations," he added.

Among the GCC nations, India already has signed FTAs with UAE, Oman and is in discussions with Qatar for laying the ground for negotiations to begin. Even with Bahrain, draft ToR has been exchanged for initiation of negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

In August 2004, India and GCC signed a Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation, paving the way for FTA talks. In 2006 and 2008, two rounds of negotiations were held. In 2009, the GCC deferred its negotiations with all countries.

The UAE is India's biggest trade partner in the GCC with bilateral trade of $100 billion followed by Saudi Arabia at $41.8 billion. It is an important source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) with inflows totalling $31 billion between April 2000 and September 2025.

GREATER HEIGHTS

India-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) merchandise trade ($ billion)

Legend: ■ Exports ■ Imports

Bilateral trade between the two sides totalled $178.56 billion in 2024-25

Year	Exports	Imports
2021-22	43.9	110.7
2022-23	51.3	113.2
2023-24	56.3	105.3
2024-25	56.8	121.6
2025-26*	37.8	83.4

*April-November

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

KUWAIT
Kuwait

PERSIAN GULF

BAHRAIN
Manama

QATAR
Doha

OMAN

Riyadh

Abu Dhabi

U.A.E.

Muscat

SAUDI ARABIA

OMAN

RED SEA

INDIAN OCEAN

Gulf of Aden

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📝 Formation

- **Founded:** 25 May 1981
- **Headquarters:** Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

🎯 Objectives

- **Economic integration** (trade, customs, investment)
- **Political & security coordination**
- **Common market & mobility** for citizens
- **Cultural & social cooperation**
- **Energy coordination** (oil, gas, renewables)

🏛️ Key Institutions

- **Supreme Council** – Heads of State (top decision-making body)
- **Ministerial Council** – Foreign Ministers
- **Secretariat General** – Administrative arm

💰 Economic Snapshot

- Among the **richest regions globally (per capita)**
- Major global players in **oil & gas**
- Strong push towards **diversification** (Vision 2030, fintech, tourism, AI, renewables)

- India and the six-nation **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** signed the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** to start negotiations for a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**. / भारत और **छह देशों वाले GCC** ने **FTA वार्ता** शुरू करने के लिए **Terms of Reference (ToR)** पर हस्ताक्षर किए।

- **GCC countries named:** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE. / **GCC देश:** बहरीन, कुवैत, ओमान, क़तर, सऊदी अरब, यूएई।

- The GCC countries together are India's **largest merchandise trade partners**, and their total merchandise trade with India is stated to be **more than India's trade with the EU and the U.S.** / GCC देश मिलकर भारत के **सबसे बड़े वस्तु-व्यापार भागीदार** हैं; लेख के अनुसार इनका कुल व्यापार **EU और U.S. से भी अधिक** है।

- ToR was signed by India's chief negotiator **Ajay Bhadoo (Additional Secretary)** and GCC Secretariat representative **Raja Al Marzouki.** / ToR पर भारत की ओर से **अजय भदू (Additional Secretary)** और GCC सचिवालय की ओर से **राजा अल मरज़ूकी** ने हस्ताक्षर किए।

- ToR signing is described as a **necessary precursor** for starting **formal negotiations.** / ToR पर हस्ताक्षर **औपचारिक वार्ता** शुरू करने की **आवश्यक पूर्व-शर्त** है।

- Commerce & Industry Minister **Piyush Goyal** said a robust trading arrangement can improve **free flow of goods & services** and bring **predictability and policy stability.** / पीयूष गोयल के अनुसार मजबूत व्यापार व्यवस्था से **वस्तुओं-सेवाओं का मुक्त प्रवाह** बढ़ेगा और **नीति में पूर्वानुमेयता व स्थिरता** आएगी।

- **Bilateral benefit points:** India's workforce (in GCC and in India) can gain; GCC can support India in **energy diversification**, **youth opportunities**, and **investments**, with FTA giving added impetus. / **आपसी लाभ:** भारत का कार्यबल (GCC में भी और भारत में भी) लाभान्वित; GCC भारत की **ऊर्जा विविधता, युवाओं के अवसर,** और **निवेश** में मदद कर सकता है—FTA से इसे गति मिलेगी।

- Bilateral trade (India–GCC) in **2024–25: $178.56 billion** (Exports **$58.87 bn**, Imports **$121.68 bn**). / **2024–25** में भारत-GCC द्विपक्षीय व्यापार: **$178.56 अरब** (निर्यात **$58.87 अरब**, आयात **$121.68 अरब**)।

- About **10 million Indians** live and work in the GCC region, acting as a bridge between societies and economies. / GCC क्षेत्र में लगभग **1 करोड़ भारतीय** रहते-काम करते हैं, जो समाजों-अर्थव्यवस्थाओं के बीच सेतु हैं।

- Among GCC nations, India already has FTAs with **UAE and Oman**; talks are on with **Qatar**; with **Bahrain**, a draft ToR has been exchanged for **CEPA** negotiations. / GCC देशों में भारत के **UAE और ओमान** के साथ FTA हैं; **क़तर** से चर्चा चल रही है; **बहरीन** के साथ **CEPA** वार्ता हेतु ड्राफ्ट ToR का आदान-प्रदान हुआ है।

- UAE is India's biggest GCC trade partner with bilateral trade of **$100 bn**, followed by Saudi Arabia at **$41.8 bn**. / GCC में भारत का सबसे बड़ा व्यापार-साझेदार **UAE ($100 अरब)** है, इसके बाद **सऊदी अरब ($41.8 अरब)**।

- The article notes earlier history: **Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation (Aug 2004)**; two negotiation rounds in **2006 & 2008**; GCC deferred negotiations in **2009**. / लेख में इतिहास: **आर्थिक सहयोग फ्रेमवर्क समझौता (अगस्त 2004)**; **2006** व **2008** में दो राउंड; **2009** में GCC ने वार्ता स्थगित की।

Year	Exports (India → GCC)	Imports (GCC → India)	श्री रूह
2021–22	43.9	110.7	(imports higher) / ष ग्रब्ल १श्र१ड
2022–23	51.3	113.2	exports up /
2023–24	56.3	105.3	imports dipped / ष ग्रब्ल त्ह्ब्र
2024–25	56.8	121.6	imports rose sharply / ष ग्रब्ल त्क्ष्ह्ह्ळ्ह्प्र
2025–26*	37.8	83.4	*April–November / १ ब्र्ब्र–ष्ऋ्बघ

Theme	Key facts (English)	मुख्य तथ्य (Hindi)
ToR (Terms of Reference)	Sets scope, objectives, chapters, process, timelines, and negotiating structure for talks.	[illegible Hindi text]
FTA (Free Trade Agreement)	Agreement to reduce/eliminate tariffs & ease trade in goods/services; often includes rules of origin, standards, dispute settlement.	[illegible Hindi text] Rules of Origin, [illegible Hindi text]
GCC (regional grouping)	A Gulf regional bloc; members include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE.	[illegible Hindi text]
Why GCC matters to India	Strong trade linkages; major energy partnership; large Indian workforce presence; investment potential.	[illegible Hindi text]
Expected negotiation focus (typical FTA)	Goods tariffs, services, investment, customs facilitation, standards/technical barriers, government procurement (sometimes), IPR (sometimes).	[illegible Hindi text] IPR [illegible Hindi text]

Exam	Year/Date (Memory-based)	Type	Question (English)	प्रश्न (Hindi)	Answer
UPSC CSE Prelims	2022 (memory-based)	Memory-based	"Rules of Origin" are important in FTAs because they: (a) fix exchange rate (b) prevent tariff circumvention (c) decide voting rights (d) regulate migration	FTA में "Rules of Origin" इसलिए महत्वपूर्ण हैं (क) ... (ख) ... (ग) ... (घ) ...	(b)
UPSC CSE Prelims	2020 (memory-based)	Memory-based	Which is a regional grouping in the Gulf region?	खाड़ी क्षेत्र में क्षेत्रीय समूह कौन-सा है?	GCC
SSC CGL (GA)	2021 (memory-based)	Memory-based	FTA mainly aims at: (a) raising tariffs (b) reducing tariffs (c) banning imports (d) nationalising trade	FTA का मुख्य उद्देश्य (क) ... (ख) ... (ग) ... (घ) ...	(b)
Banking (IBPS/SBI)	2019 (memory-based)	Memory-based	Balance of Payments: remittances are recorded under which account?	भुगतान संतुलन: प्रेषण किस खाते में दर्ज होते हैं?	Current Account (secondary income/transfer)
Railway/Defence (GS/Eco)	2018 (memory-based)	Memory-based	Tariff vs Non-tariff barriers—identify correct pair/examples.	टैरिफ बनाम गैर-टैरिफ बाधाएं—सही युग्म/उदाहरण पहचानें।	Tariff = customs duty; NTB = quotas/standards etc.

- As per the article, GCC countries together are:

A. India's smallest trade partners

B. India's largest merchandise trade partners

C. Only services trade partners

D. Only defense partners

Dubai Loop (Underground Transport System)

Dubai Loop

High-speed all-electric underground transportation system

— First stage — Second stage

Al Satwa

Al Wasl

D71

E11

Burj Khalifa

ICD Brookfield Place

DIFC 2

DOWNTOWN DUBAI

Zabeel Dubai Mall Parking

Zabeel Second

E44

D88

Al Merkadab

1km

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Project Name	**Dubai Loop** – Underground high-speed transport system / दुबई लूप – अंडरग्राउंड हाई-स्पीड ट्रांसपोर्ट सिस्टम
Announcing Authority	Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), Dubai / रोड्स एंड ट्रांसपोर्ट अथॉरिटी (RTA)
Announcement Platform	World Government Summit / वर्ल्ड गवर्नमेंट समिट
Developer / Technology Provider	The Boring Company (tunnelling technology) / द बोरिंग कंपनी लड़ टनलिंग
Global Position	Second city after Las Vegas to implement Loop system / लास वेगास के बाद लूप सिस्टम लागू करने वाला दूसरा शहर
Objective	Reduce congestion, faster urban mobility, point-to-point travel / कंजेशन कम करना, तेज़ शहरी मोबिलिटी, पॉइंट-टू-पॉइंट यात्रा

Parameter	Details (English + Hindi together)
Total Network Length	22.2 km / 22.2श्रु च्न्यक्र्घ
Total Stations	19 stations / 19 अड्ट्ष
Phase-1 Coverage	Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) to Dubai Mall / DIFC द्धुक्षाह रक्ष्य
Phase-1 Length	6.4 km / 6.4श्रुरक्ह
Phase-1 Stations	4 stations / 4 अड्ट्ष
Phase-1 Completion	1–2 years (expected) / 1–2 ञक्रज्ञे क्षक्का त्ज़

Economic Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Total Project Cost	~$681 million / चपक्रप इढ्त्झश्रक्क्ष्ग्रप
Phase-1 Cost	~$163 million / चपक्रप इझछट श्रक्क्ष्ग्रप
Cost Efficiency	Underground system reduces land acquisition costs / क्रश्रप ऌ ब्र्व्रच्ह ङ्क्ष्श्य १श्र इण्र् चव्ण ऌ ड्रख
Economic Rationale	Saves time, reduces congestion cost, boosts productivity / ढ्रय्र ऌद्ऌ क्ष्ख ड् चव्ण ऌ रछ्ह रख् ङ्ह्व्ड् ऌ व्र रछ्क्ष्
Urban Economics Impact	Improves business district connectivity and tourism flow / श्रधर्छ् ध्रक ड् ष्छ्श्र्ञ्ह ्घ हग्क्ष्प व्ऋण ष्ण्ऌ

Capacity & Speed

Feature	Details (English + Hindi together)
Initial Capacity	~13,000 passengers/day / लगभग 13,000 यात्री प्रतिदिन
Full Operational Capacity	Up to 30,000 passengers/day / अधिकतम 30,000 यात्री प्रतिदिन
Vehicle Type	Electric vehicles (EVs) / इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन
Max Speed	Up to 160 km/h / अधिकतम 160 किमी/घंटा
Stops	Point-to-point travel, no intermediate stops / पॉइंट-टू-पॉइंट यात्रा, बीच में कोई स्टॉप नहीं

Technology & Features

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Core Technology	Tunnel-based transport system / टनल आधारित परिवहन प्रणाली
Tunnel Type	One-directional underground tunnels / एक-दिशात्मक भूमिगत सुरंग
Energy Source	Electric mobility (low emissions) / इलेक्ट्रिक मोबिलिटी (कम उत्सर्जन)
Automation Level	High automation potential / उच्च स्वचालन की संभावना
Sustainability	Supports clean & smart transport vision / स्वच्छ व स्मार्ट परिवहन दृष्टि को समर्थन

India Develops Lead-Free Self-Powered Photodetector
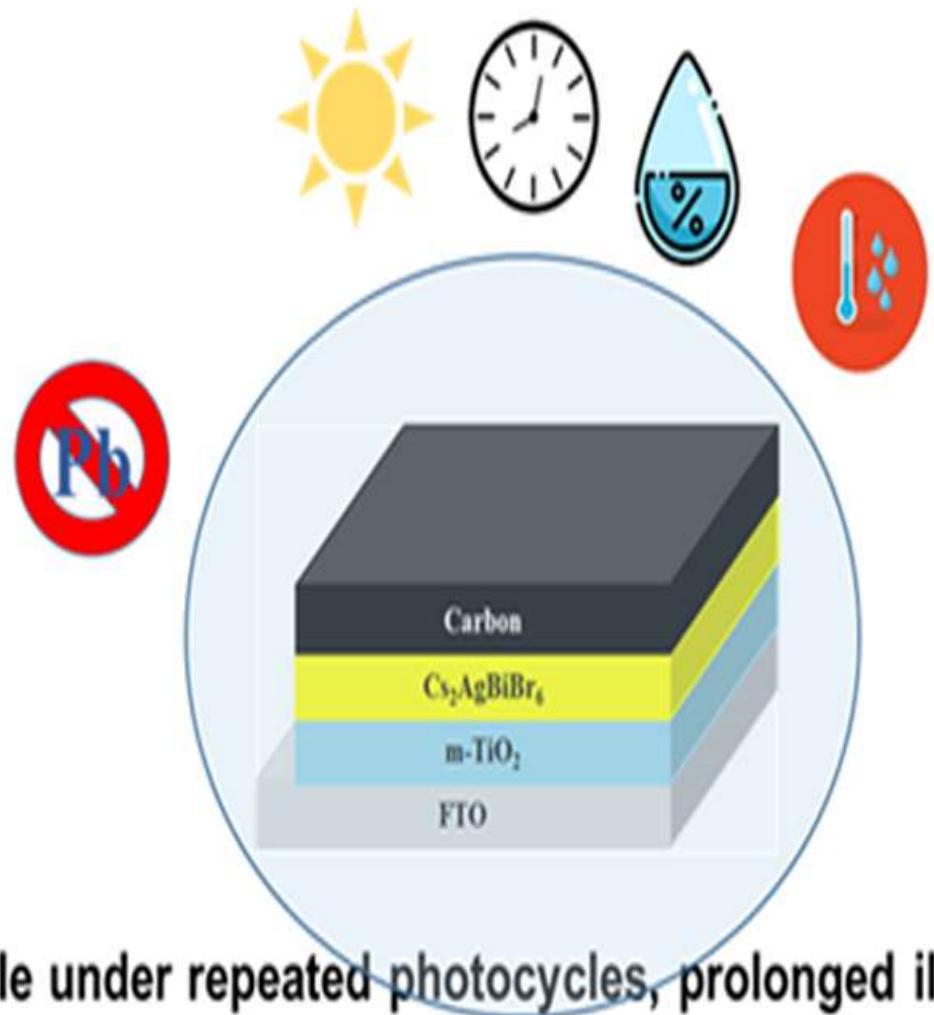
Stable under repeated photocycles, prolonged illumination, humid, elevated temperature and ambient conditions
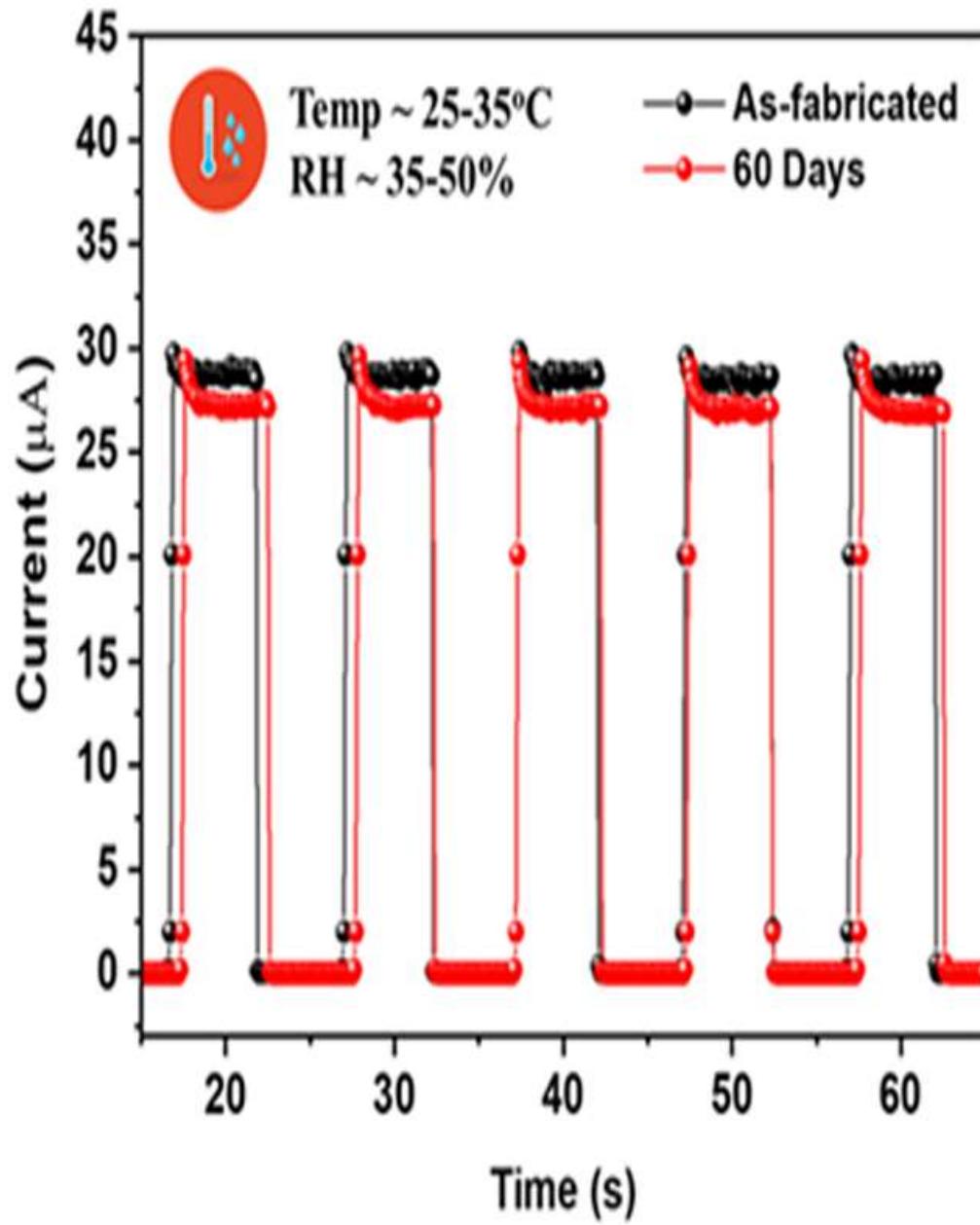
Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Development	India has developed a **lead-free, self-powered photodetector** / कक्ष ङ्चुर-भह, sग्त्र-र न्व्रब्र ढ़ त्द्रक्ष्य्ल ड्ड्ड्ड्ड्र्क्ष्ड्क्ष्य श्क्डश्ढ़ ह श्र् ग्त्र
Nature of Device	Environment-friendly, stable, long-term performance / ह्ग्क्क्ष्घ्र् घ्श् ष्क्ष्त्र्य व्ह्ल्ड्क्श्च्ड् अर्स घ्र व व ट्र्क्ष
Power Requirement	Operates **without external power supply** / श्र श्र व्रण्घ्ह श्र न च्ह इर ड्ड्ड्व्ग्क्ड् घ्ल्व ण्ह
Core Function	Converts light into electrical signals / ह इव्ट् ड्झ्त्र्श्क्ड्क्ष ट्ह्क्ड्स्क्र र्क्ष्घ्क्ष्क्ष्क् ड् घ्ल्व ण्ह

Parameter	Details (English + Hindi together)
Lead Institution	ARCI, Hyderabad / एआरसीआई, हैदराबाद
Collaborating Institute	IIT Hyderabad / आईआईटी हैदराबाद
Administrative Status	ARCI is an autonomous institute under **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** / ARCI, **विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी विभाग (DST)** के अंतर्गत स्वायत्त संस्था
Journal Published In	*Solar Energy* (Elsevier) / *Solar Energy* (Elsevier)

Material Science & Technology

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Key Material Used	**$Cs_2AgBiBr_6$** (lead-free double perovskite) / **$Cs_2AgBiBr_6$** (लेड-फ्री डबल पेरोव्स्काइट)
Why Lead-Free	Avoids lead toxicity & environmental risk / लेड विषाक्तता व पर्यावरणीय जोखिम से बचाव
Traditional Issue	Lead-based perovskites degrade & are toxic / लेड-आधारित पेरोव्स्काइट अस्थिर व विषैले
Charge Transport	Efficient charge separation / कुशल चार्ज पृथक्करण

Design & Fabrication Innovation

Feature	Details (English + Hindi together)
Architecture	Simple, cost-effective design / सरल व कम-लागत संरचना
Transport Layers	Hole-transport-material free / होल-ट्रांसपोर्ट लेयर की आवश्यकता नहीं
Electrodes	Low-cost carbon electrodes / कम-लागत कार्बन इलेक्ट्रोड
Manufacturing Process	Single-step coating at **room temperature** / **कमरे के तापमान** पर एक-चरणीय कोटिंग
Infrastructure Need	No glove box or vacuum system / ग्लोव बॉक्स या वैक्यूम सिस्टम की आवश्यकता नहीं

Performance & Stability

Parameter	Details (English + Hindi together)
Switching	Reliable ON–OFF switching / भरोसेमंद ON–OFF स्विचिंग
Stability	Retained **>90% performance after 60 days** / **60 दिनों बाद भी 90%+** प्रदर्शन
Environmental Durability	Stable under real-world conditions / वास्तविक परिस्थितियों में स्थिर
Operational Mode	Self-powered photodetection / स्वयं-ऊर्जा आधारित फोटोडिटेक्शन

Applications

Sector	Use (English + Hindi together)
Consumer Electronics	Cameras, smart devices / कैमरा, स्मार्ट डिवाइस
Industrial Monitoring	Light & environmental sensors / प्रकाश व पर्यावरण सेंसर
Security Systems	Imaging & detection systems / इमेजिंग व डिटेक्शन सिस्टम
Biomedical Imaging	Medical diagnostics & imaging / मेडिकल डायग्नोस्टिक्स व इमेजिंग
Wearable Tech	Smart wearables / स्मार्ट पहनने योग्य उपकरण

Historical Context (Extra Facts)

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Photodetectors History	Earlier used silicon & lead-based semiconductors / पहले सिलिकॉन व लेड-आधारित सेमीकंडक्टर
Perovskite Entry	Perovskites gained popularity in solar & optoelectronics / पेरोव्स्काइट सोलर व ऑप्टो-इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स में लोकप्रिय
Key Challenge	Toxicity + poor stability / विषाक्तता + कम स्थिरता
Indian Breakthrough	Shift towards **green electronics** / ग्रीन इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स की ओर बदलाव

Rouble Nagi wins Global Teacher Prize in Dubai

Basic Overview

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Award	**Global Teacher Prize / ग्लोबल टीचर प्राइज़**
Winner	**Rouble Nagi (India) / रूबल नागी (भारत)**
Award Venue & Date	Dubai, **5 February 2026 / दुबई, 5 फ़रवरी 2026**
Field	Education & Social Impact / शिक्षा एवं सामाजिक प्रभाव
Core Recognition	Transforming education access for children in urban slums / शहरी झुग्गियों में बच्चों की शिक्षा तक पहुँच बदलने हेतु सम्मान

Why She Won (Core Contributions)

Dimension	Details (English + Hindi together)
Target Group	Children in urban slums; out-of-school & drop-out risk / शहरी झुग्गियों के बच्चे; स्कूल से बाहर व ड्रॉपआउट जोखिम
Scale of Work	**800+ learning centres** across India / पूरे भारत में **800+ लर्निंग सेंटर्स**
Pedagogy Innovation	**Educational murals**—walls as classrooms / **शैक्षणिक भित्ति-चित्र**—दीवारें बनीं कक्षा
Subjects Covered	Literacy, Mathematics, Science, History / साक्षरता, गणित, विज्ञान, इतिहास
Teaching Model	Community-based, flexible schedules / समुदाय-आधारित, लचीली समय-सारिणी

Grassroots Teaching & Mentorship

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Teacher Workforce	**600+ trained volunteer & paid educators / 600+ प्रशिक्षित स्वयंसेवी व सवेतन शिक्षक**
Mentorship	Direct mentoring of teachers managing centres / केंद्र चलाने वाले शिक्षकों का प्रत्यक्ष मेंटरशिप
Adaptation to Reality	Addresses poverty, child labour, early marriage, irregular attendance / गरीबी, बाल श्रम, बाल-विवाह, अनियमित उपस्थिति से निपटना
Learning Methods	Practical lessons using recycled materials; skill-based learning / रीसायकल सामग्री से प्रायोगिक पाठ; कौशल-आधारित सीख

Award Details & Future Plans

Parameter	Details (English + Hindi together)
Prize Money	**$1 million / 1 मिलियन डॉलर**
Year Launched	**2015 / 2015**
Recipient Number	**10th recipient / 10वाँ प्राप्तकर्ता**
Use of Prize	Set up institute for **free vocational training** / निःशुल्क व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण हेतु संस्थान

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Awarding Body	**Varkey Foundation**
Objective	Recognise exceptional educators & social impact / क्ष-रुक्रH श्रू ल ङ्ड्भात्र ढ्वरक्रम ड़ ब्रक्व्रत्र ड्झ्म ह्णाद्व्रष
Global Nature	International award; educators worldwide / ऋक्रCड़ ह्स्त्राWव्घा श्राCक्रघ ड्डु श्रू ल ड़
Past Winners	Kenya, Palestine, Canada, Saudi Arabia, etc. / ड्डौं व्र श्राश्च्रbहृष ड़ फ्व्रम्व्रा ढ़ र व्हृ १ घ्रा ष्श्रट

Exercise Khanjar begins at Missamari, Assam

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Exercise Name	**Exercise Khanjar** / २ ह्र्व्द्र् ढ़ ऱ्न्घ्
Nature	Annual **bilateral Special Forces exercise** / ऱ्व्ष्ष्ह् श्रेह ़ल्ह्ग्य श्ब्र्ट्ड्ड् ़ च्र २ ह्व्द्र्
Participating Countries	**India – Kyrgyzstan** / क्व्घ्र् –श्ह्ुश्ऱ ब्ध b्र्ष
Start Date	**4 February 2026** / 4 फ्घ्र्ऱ्घ्ह्2026
Venue	**Missamari**, Assam / श्व्द्व्रव्क्ऱ्ह् २ ढ़्र्व
Purpose	Enhance counter-terrorism capabilities & regional stability / ष ल्ह्ु ऱ्व्घ्ष्क्ष्ह् ल्र्घ्ल्व् ऱ ल्ह्ुद्ह्ग्य सॅ घ्ल्व ़ प्व्ष्व्

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
First Edition	**2011** / **2011**
Frequency	Annual exercise / ऋऋष्ह्ठ् १ ह्व्रढ्
Previous Edition	**Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan (2025)** / इ्ह्रख्ह्ड़ , ॠॢश्र० ब्रध्रbत्रष् (2025)
Hosting Pattern	Alternates between India & Kyrgyzstan / क्त्रघ्र- त्र ॠष्श्रफ़्ड़ःbत्रष् रछ् त्रघ्ह्र्प्रघ्ह्र् द्ह्ऽष ग़्झत्न् ष

US Congress approves security funds for Baltic States

SWEDEN

FINLAND

RUSSIA

Helsinki

Stockholm

Tallinn

St. Petersburg

ESTONIA

Riga

LATVIA

Klaipėda

LITHUANIA

Gdynia

Vilnius

Gdansk

Kaliningrad

POLAND

CSIS | INTERNATIONAL SECURITY PROGRAM

NORWAY

FINLAND

Helsinki

Oslo

SWEDEN

Stockholm

Tallinn

St Petersburg

ESTONIA

Baltic Sea

RUSSIA

Riga

LATVIA

DENMARK

LITHUANIA

Vilnius

Kaliningrad
(Russia)

Berlin

BELARUS

Warsaw

GERMANY

POLAND

UKRAINE

CZECH REP.

200 km

■ NATO members

Country	Capital	Bordering Sea	Currency	EU Member	NATO Member
Estonia	Tallinn	Baltic Sea	Euro (€)	Yes (2004)	Yes (2004)
Latvia	Riga	Baltic Sea	Euro (€)	Yes (2004)	Yes (2004)
Lithuania	Vilnius	Baltic Sea	Euro (€)	Yes (2004)	Yes (2004)

Period	Major Historical Developments
Medieval Era	Influenced by Germanic tribes, Vikings, and Christian crusaders
16th–18th Century	Controlled by Sweden, Poland-Lithuania, and later Russia
1918	Independence after World War I
1940	Annexed by Soviet Union under Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact
1941–1944	Nazi German occupation
1944–1991	Soviet rule as USSR republics
1991	Independence after collapse of Soviet Union
2004	Joined EU and NATO

🏛️ 4. Political System

Feature	Details
System	Parliamentary democracy
Government	Republic
Foreign Policy	Strongly pro-EU & pro-NATO
Security Focus	Russian border security, NATO defense

💰 5. Economy Snapshot

Aspect	Details
Economic Model	Open, export-oriented
Key Sectors	IT, logistics, manufacturing, services
Estonia USP	Digital governance & e-residency
Latvia USP	Port logistics & transport
Lithuania USP	Manufacturing & fintech
Per Capita Income	High (EU standards)

⚔️ 6. Strategic & Geopolitical Importance

Dimension	Significance
NATO	Eastern frontline of NATO
Russia Factor	Historical tension with Russia
Energy	Reducing dependence on Russian gas
Ukraine War Impact	Heightened security & NATO presence

📚 7. Baltic States – Quick Exam Facts

Point	Fact
Common Feature	All were part of USSR
Language Family	Indo-European (except Estonian – Finno-Ugric)
Religion	Christianity (Lutheran & Catholic)
Independence Day	Celebrated in 1991
Currency	Euro

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Decision	**US Congress approved $200 million security assistance /** ... **$200** ...
Beneficiary Region	**Baltic States /** ...
Countries Covered	**Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania**
Context	Rising Russian military activity on **NATO's eastern flank / NATO** ...
Strategic Signal	Continued US commitment to deterrence & regional security / ... (deterrence) ...

Parameter	Details (English + Hindi together)
Law	**FY 2026 Defence Appropriations Act / श्रत्तु त्रड्त्र 2026 घत्त्रश्कःगहूक ष १श्श्श्ष ग्ररत्र**
US Defence Budget	**$838.7 billion / $838.7 १घ्ता म्छ्त्रघ्र**
Initiative	**Baltic Security Initiative (BSI) / त्रम्यङ क्ष्ग्रल्त्र हृण्त्रत्र**
Presidential Assent	Signed into law on **3 February 2026** by **Donald Trump** / 3 फ्घत्र्यघ्ह 2026 ड्झ ड्त्रझ्त त्ण्त्र
Pentagon Position	Funding approved despite earlier proposals to discontinue / हृण्त्रक्षूत्र ड्घ्त्रछ्ड्ड् क्ष्रन्त्रझ्हड् त्र्त्रन्त्र त्रत् न्त्रघ्ह

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Extra Allocation	**$10 million** additional for **Estonia** / इकका गत इझन १श्त्त्घऽ $10 श्रक्ष्ग्रः
Programme	**Foreign Military Financing (FMF)** / श्ब्द्ट्ह ढ्रौं श्रत्त्ह्झर् (FMF)
Purpose	Purchase of US-made defence equipment / १रक्क्द्ह श्ष्रक्ष घल्त्न ६ह इ घल्झ्झ इह ढ घ्ल्च
Examples of Equipment	HIMARS ammunition, Javelin anti-tank missiles, artillery shells / HIMARS ष्श्च्रम ्रच् च न्रक्ष्र्घ ष् इल्ह्घ्ल्ह्ष् श्ल्द्त्व्र-च १श्क्त्त्घ्ह ट्ड्च

Dimension	Details (English + Hindi together)
NATO Status	Baltic States are members of **NATO** / िक्राय् ड़ ल्ूट् **NATO** ड़ड़ढ़ ़ p
Strategic Location	Eastern flank of NATO, near Russia / NATO ड़व़ ह्क़ा ष्ु प्रघ्ा ़च ढ़ ड़ुक़ड़ ह़
NATO Article	**Article 4** allows consultations when a member feels threatened / १ ़ ़क़ड़4 ड़ु ़ाय्ल ढ़ ़घ़ड़ह सँ थ़ल रल़ हघ्ायलट़
Threat Perception	Russian airspace violations & hybrid activities / ़ ढ़ह ़क़ढ़ ़ँ ़ऱ ़ ़ ़ाय़्म़् ़क़क़क़ ग़ल़

India–China trade reaches record USD 155 billion

Aspect	Details (English + Hindi together)
Countries	**India – China**
Headline	**Bilateral trade hits a record ~USD 155–156 billion (2025)** / **~USD 155–156 (2025)**
Growth	**>12% YoY** growth in total trade / **12%+**
Exports Trend	India's exports to China rose **~9–10% YoY** / **~9–10%**
Significance	Highest-ever trade despite strategic frictions

Indicator	Value (English + Hindi together)
Total Trade (2025)	**USD 155–156 billion** / **USD 155–156 १ घ्रा**□
YoY Change	**+12% (approx.)** / च्रए क्रए +12%
Exports (India → China)	**Up ~9–10%** / ~9–10% अफ़ड़
Imports (China → India)	Still dominant; drives deficit / ष ग्प्रह् ब्रक्त्□ त्व्ख़्ड्डव्र ड्व्घ्र्

Issue	Details (English + Hindi together)
Deficit	India continues to face a **large trade deficit** with China / क्ग्र्घ्ऱ ड्झ्र द्ह्ष ड्ड द्व्र्ळ □ **न्त्र □क्ह्व्र्घ्र त्व्र्ब्व्र**
Import Dependence	Electronics, APIs, machinery, solar components / स्च्ह्ज्न्ह्श्ख्र ष □ API, ख्व्र्ट्ह्ष्घ्र्ह□ द्ध्न्व्र्घ्र ड्त्र्ह्ष्छ्ह
Policy Response	PLI, diversification, scrutiny of sensitive imports / PLI, श्ख्श्ग्र्श्ह्ड घ्र्र□ द्क्र्ख्ह ष ट्ह्च्र ष ग्व्र्ल्ड्ग्र्ड्ह न्व्र्ह्ह

Sindhu Nagaraj

◤

QUESTION 1

Elizabeth II ascended the throne of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland this day, following the death of her father, King George VI. She became the longest-reigning monarch in British history in 2015. In which year did she ascend the throne?

◤

QUESTION 2

The President of the U.S. was born on this day in 1911. In his first term as President, he began implementing a policy involving economic deregulation and cuts in both taxes and government spending. Name him.

◤

QUESTION 3

This Jamaican singer was born on this day in 1981. Considered one of the pioneers of reggae, he fused elements of reggae, ska, and rocksteady, and was renowned for his distinctive vocal and songwriting style. Identify him.

◤

QUESTION 4

Eva Braun was born on this day

◤

Visual Question:
Identify this French filmmaker who was born on this day. He is widely regarded as one of the founders of an art movement in France. What was it? WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Word of the day

Inchoate:

only partly in existence; imperfectly formed

Synonyms: initial, budding, unorganised

Usage: *The policy was introduced in an inchoate form.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/inchoatepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪnkəʊeɪt/

Word of the day

Specious:

plausible but false

Synonyms: deceptive, incorrect, ambiguous

Usage: *What seemed like solid evidence turned out to be specious.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/speciouspro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /spiːʃəs/

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Thank you ☺