Daily Current Affairs



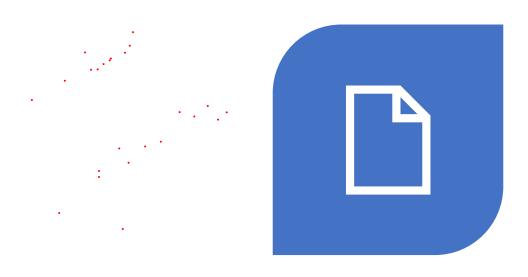








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PDF

10 MCQ QUIZ



"Accept yourself, love yourself, and keep moving forward. If you want to fly, you have to give up what weighs you down."

Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

Next session 22nd August: Going for 10 day Vipassana center

OMCs to get ₹30,000 cr. towards LPG subsidy





Fix the flaws in electoral rolls Problems in voter registration demand systemic solutions by EC STORIAL IS PAGE 8



Keymer posts second successive win

ENSERRE



Income Tax Bill withdrawn: fresh version on Aug. II

NEW DELIN

Amid parsistent disruptions in the Lek Sabha by the Opposition, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Billiaraman on Friday withdraw the Income Fax 818, 2025, sa the government is set to introduce a fresh version of the Bill on August 11: in made a

Railways mounts vigil on staff to curb sabotage

employees a page a Submit the 'fake' EPIC card by Aug.

16: EC to Tejashwi Friday said the EPIC that BJD Irender Tejashori Vadav displayed during the August 3 ross conference was take. The lectoral Registration Officer of Oigha constituency sent a tier asking from to hamf over the EPSC for inventigation by August 15.11 PRGE 6

SBI Of net profit rises 12.48% to T19.160 crore

#19,160 crore on operations

Modi and Putin discuss Ukraine amid tariff row

two leaders hold detailed conversation reviewing bilateral agenda and Ukraine developments: the exchange came amid Trump exerting pressure on India over purchase of oil from Russia

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the latest developments on threatme. We also reviewed a lagenda, and reaffirmed our commitment to furth-ed agenda, and reaffirmed our commitment to furth-ed the latest latest latest posted and furthered stra-tegie Pertnerships. I knot forward to housing Pros-this year. In mile lore in a natestream, the Ex-the Prime Minister released to the latest latest latest of the condition to the or the latest latest latest of the condition to the latest of the condition to the latest of the condition of the condition.

Trump signals pause in trade talks with India over Russian oil visit to the U.S.

After doubling turiffs on In-dia to 50% over Russian oil and Trienty has indicated that he may even passed that he may even passed that he may even passed two countries until the oil succession of the passed two countries on the total Speaking to permellass. Speaking to permellass own of the properties of the total permellass of the permellass own of the permellass of the permellass own of the permellass of the permellass own of the permellass of the permellass of the little of the permellass of the little of the permellass o

OFTA).

"No, not until we get it resolved," Mr. Trump replied in what appeared to lie a reference to his demand that India cancel its oil imports from Busia sure if the war in Ukraine ends.

Amid tariff tussle, Rajnath postpones his

Subasini Haidar

Prime Minister Narendra Medi travelled to Washing-ten in February this year. Despite five rounds of facestarface talks in Delti and Washington, and more discussions over cidea conference, the negotia-tors were unable to agree to a "ministral" ubead of Mr. Terres Annales on to a 'rmm-and' shead of
Mr. Trump's August I deal
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state of the blinker in the
import of findian goods last
week, and then followed it
in with annaber 30% on
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PULLEBOOK

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Defence Minister Rajnach Singli hus prostported file vi-criginally scheduled for the last week of August.

The control of the last week of August.

In visit has been deferred in of cancelled — and is likely to take place within The development comes against the backlings of Trump's indication in Dause trade talks with. In dia until the tareff tonic is greatery of Defense Pete greatery of Defense Pete

cretary of Defence Pete Hegseth held a telephone

Joyous start



Rahul accuses EC of 'institutionalised theft' in SIR exercise

The Hinds Sureau

The exected intensive rest The special intensive revi-sion GBIO of selection rolls in Bihar is an "institutional-ised elseri (theft) to deny the poor their right to vite", Gengross leader Ra-hul thandhi said on Friday, doubling down on his ac-tack against the Election Commission (EC).

In a videa, Mr. Gamilli-in a videa, Mr. Gamilli-month, co. Investigation

devapura Assembly reg-ment in Karnsiska re-vealed only take additions to the voters list. The SIR exercise, however, facili-tates incorrect debetions as well, he said.

well, he said.
"The ECI knows that we have caught their chort and that is why SR (special intensive Revision) has come Revision) has come RR is an institution-alised chort (theft). EC is openly colluding with the BP to carry out this theft. SIR's objective is to take away the voting rights of the poor," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sab-ha said.

thing: our entire investiga-tion lanked at only addi-tions. But perhaps much more than additions, dele-

more than additions, dele-tions or subtraction takes place. We have caught one investigated orber meth-ods. The added. The candidate meth-ods to the control of the EC does not want to pro-vide votes data in machine-ment and needs to therety CCTV footage of polling booth within 48 days to make action electors.

clear to the ISC and its offi-cials that what you are do-ing is against the country. Don't forget that there will come a time when we will catch you," he warned poll officials.

gress general assortary K.C. Verugopal announced that the parry would show Mr. Gandhi's video presen-tation across the country on Friday and would draw up a plan at a meeting of of fice-bearers on Monday.

Mr. Gandhi also repeat ed his earlier charge, made at Thursday's presenta-tion, that the RC is "openly collading" with the RP to carry out "vote theft" through five different methods: duplicate voters, fake and invalid addresses, used to register

Profile allegations'
Conjeres general secretary
Priyariba Canulhi Vadra
said the Ec should investigate the charges made by
Mr. Gandhi inatead of being combative. The exdensie is in from of their
and they bave its investigate it. How can they say it
is the control of their control
in the control of the control
in the

Israel set for full control of Gaza City after security vote

Agence France-Presse.

brael's military will "take control" of Gaza City un-der a new plan approved min Netunyahu's security cabinet, touching off a wave of criticism on Priday.

Nearly two years into nyatu faces mounting pressure to secure a truce to pall the territory's more

NH AMERICA

sa City while distributing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population outside combat sones Premier's office said Fri-

day. Before the decision, Mr. Natanyahu had said Israel planned to seize complete control of the Gaza Strip, but did not intend to gov-

"We don't want to keep it." the Premier told Pos to pail the territory's mose than two million people bank from the brink or de-bank from the brink of the beld type Telestinian milliants. Palestinian "Security portineter" Under the newly approved, plan to "debeta" Hamas. Metangalus's office said the cabinet had adopt-

ed "five principles", in-cluding Gaza's demilitari-citation of an after-native sixil administration that is neither Hamas nor limited by the second of the Uni-sitation of the University of the University of the numerous Arab governthe Paleatinian Authorny.

The plant triggered awift critician, with China, Tur-key, Britain and the UN'a rights chief as well as numerous Arab govern-

fensive could see ground troops operate in densely ments issuing statements of concern. brueli opposition leader Yatr Lapid denounced the populated areas where hostages are believed to be held, local media have Vair Lapid demanated the cabiners move as "a dissa-ter" that could result in "the death of the heatages, the killing of many sol-diers... and lead to diple: reported.

"Sacrificing bostages"
Case residents said they
feared for the worst, as
they braced for the nextonslaught.
Hamse on Friday said matic bankruptey";
The main compatign group for hostages' families also slammed the plan, saying it amounted to "abandoning" the the "plans to occupy Gaza City and evacuate its resi-dents constitute a new war

"abandoning" the captives.

"The cabinet chose last night to embark on anoth-er march of recklessness, on the backs of the bestig. rrime".
If warned Israel that the If warned larget that the operation would "cost it dearly", and that "expand-ing the aggression means sacribeing" the luminges. on the backs of the hosting-ic, the soldiers, and farauli society as a whole," the Hostage and Missing Parauli Lies Forum sald.

An expanded farauli of-PAOR 13

malpractices, tacy of our nation. It is not a joke," she said.

Modi and Putin discuss Ukraine amid tariff row

Two leaders hold detailed conversation reviewing bilateral agenda and Ukraine developments; the exchange came amid Trump exerting pressure on India over purchase of oil from Russia

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

midst worsening ties with the United States over India's oil imports from Russia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke over the telephone to Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday night. According to statements from New Delhi and Moscow, the two leaders discussed Mr. Putin's upcoming visit to India for the 23rd Annual India Russia Summit, their strategic partnership, and the Ukraine conflict.

The telephone call, that came days after U.S. President Donald Trump slapped a doubled levy of 50% on India for purchasing Russian crude oil despite the Ukraine conflict, followed National Security

Had a detailed conversation with my friend President Putin.
I thanked him for sharing the latest developments on Ukraine. We also reviewed the progress in our bilateral agenda, and reaffirmed our commitment to further deepen the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.—PM MODI

Adviser Ajit Doval's visit to Moscow to prepare for Mr. Putin's trip to India.

Pressure tactics

The conversation is significant as Mr. Putin is expected to meet Mr. Trump as early as next week, possibly in a neutral venue like the United Arab Emirates. Mr. Trump's penalty tariffs on India are seen as pressure tactics to ensure a breakthrough in the Ukraine conflict, as well as leverage for the U.S. to get a more favourable trade agreement with India. Last week, the U.S. President had called India and Russia's economies "dead", and accused India of not caring about those killed in the conflict in Ukraine.

In a post on X, Mr. Modi said, "Had a very good and detailed conversation with my friend President Putin. I thanked him for sharing the latest developments on Ukraine. We also reviewed the progress in our bilateral agenda, and reaffirmed our commitment to further deepen the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership. I look forward to hosting President Putin in India later this year."

In a statement, the External Affairs Ministry said the Prime Minister reiterated India's consistent position for peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Mr. Modi looked forward to welcoming Mr. Putin in India later this year. "The two leaders confirmed their commitment to further deepen the India-Russia special and privileged strategic partnership," it added.

Agenda of Discussion:

- Latest developments on the Ukraine conflict.
- Progress in the India–Russia bilateral agenda.
- Strengthening of the India–Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.
- Preparation for Putin's visit to India for the 23rd Annual India—Russia Summit.

Backdrop:

- Occurred amidst worsening India-US ties over India's Russian oil imports.
- US President Donald Trump recently imposed a 50% penalty tariff on India for purchasing Russian crude oil.

4. Historical Context (India-Russia Relations)

Diplomatic Legacy:

- India–Russia relations trace back to the Soviet era.
- 2000: Declaration on the India–Russia Strategic Partnership signed.
- 2010: Upgraded to "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership".

Major Cooperation Areas:

- Defence (BrahMos missile, S-400 systems, nuclear submarines lease).
- Nuclear Energy (Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant).
- Space cooperation (Gaganyaan training support).
- Oil and gas imports.

. Economic Context

- Bilateral Trade (2023–24):
 - Total trade: USD 65.7 billion.
 - India's imports from Russia: USD 61.4 billion (mainly crude oil, fertilizers, defence equipment).
 - India's exports to Russia: USD 4.3 billion (mainly pharma, machinery, chemicals, tea, coffee).
 - Heavy trade imbalance in Russia's favour due to energy imports.

Oil Imports:

Post-Ukraine war, India emerged as one of the largest buyers of discounted Russian crude.

i. Geopolitical Context

Ukraine Conflict:

- Started in Feb 2022 after Russia's military invasion of Ukraine.
- India maintains a neutral stance abstains from UN votes condemning Russia, calls for dialogue.

US-India Tensions:

US seeks to isolate Russia; India prioritizes energy security and strategic autonomy.

Geographical Factors:

- Russia's vast oil and gas reserves make it a key energy partner.
- India's location and need for affordable energy make Russian oil attractive.

Consider the following statements regarding the India–Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership:

- 1. It was first established in the year 2010, upgrading the earlier Strategic Partnership.
- 2. Defence cooperation forms a major pillar of this partnership, including joint projects like BrahMos missile.
- 3. India's exports to Russia are significantly higher than its imports from Russia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Israel set for full control of Gaza City after security vote

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM

Israel's military will "take control" of Gaza City under a new plan approved by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet, touching off a wave of criticism on Friday.

Nearly two years into the war in Gaza, Mr. Netanyahu faces mounting pressure to secure a truce to pull the territory's more than two million people back from the brink of famine and free the hostages held by Palestinian militants.

'Security perimeter'

Under the newly approved plan to "defeat" Hamas,

the Israeli army "will prepare to take control of Gaza City while distributing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population outside combat zones", the Premier's office said Friday.

Before the decision, Mr. Netanyahu had said Israel planned to seize complete control of the Gaza Strip, but did not intend to govern it.

"We don't want to keep it," the Premier told *Fox News* on Thursday, adding Israel wanted a "security perimeter" and to hand the Palestinian territory to "Arab forces that will govern it properly without threatening us".

Mr. Netanyahu's office said the cabinet had adopt-



The main campaign group for hostages' families slammed the plan, saying it amounted to 'abandoning' the captives. GETTY IMAGES

ed "five principles", including Gaza's demilitarisation and "the establishment of an alternative civil administration that is neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority".

The plan triggered swift criticism, with China, Turkey, Britain and the UN's rights chief as well as numerous Arab governments issuing statements of concern.

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid denounced the cabinet's move as "a disaster" that could result in "the death of the hostages, the killing of many soldiers... and lead to diplomatic bankruptcy".

The main campaign group for hostages' families also slammed the plan, saying it amounted to "abandoning" the captives.

"The cabinet chose last night to embark on another march of recklessness, on the backs of the hostages, the soldiers, and Israeli society as a whole," the Hostage and Missing Families Forum said.

An expanded Israeli of-

fensive could see ground troops operate in densely populated areas where hostages are believed to be held, local media have reported.

'Sacrificing hostages'

Gaza residents said they feared for the worst, as they braced for the next onslaught.

Hamas on Friday said the "plans to occupy Gaza City and evacuate its residents constitute a new war crime".

It warned Israel that the operation would "cost it dearly", and that "expanding the aggression means sacrificing" the hostages.

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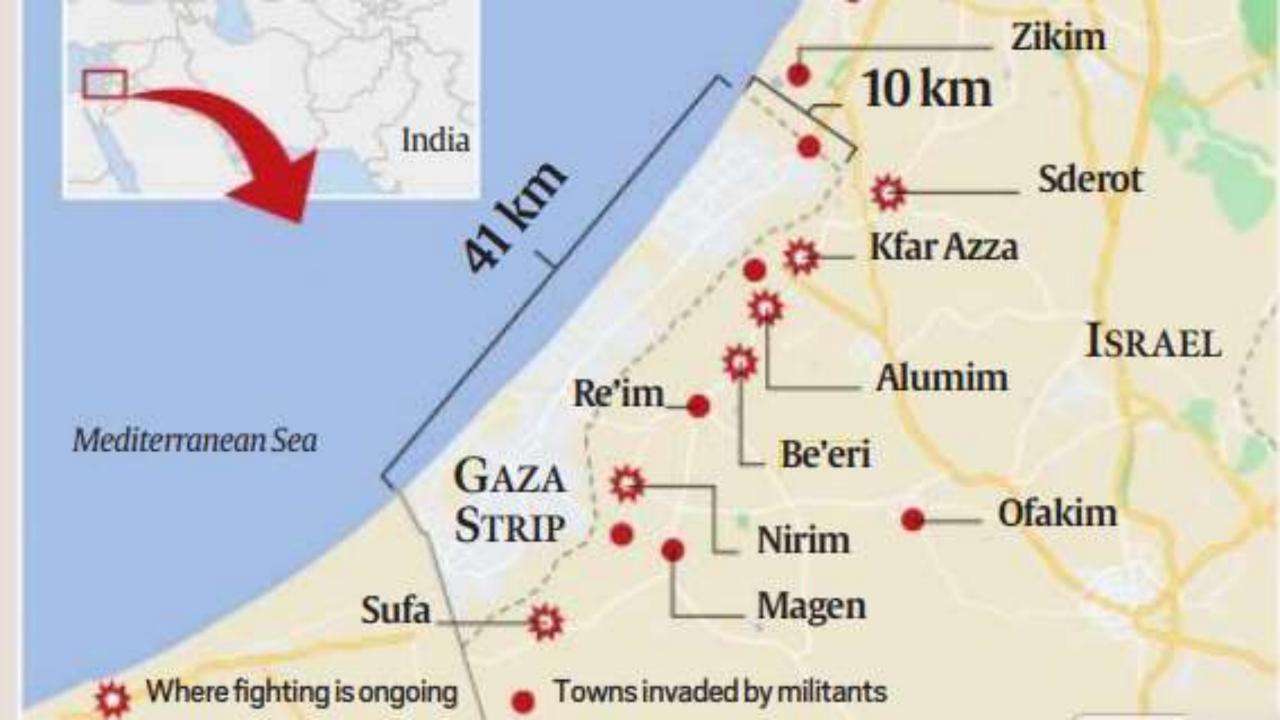
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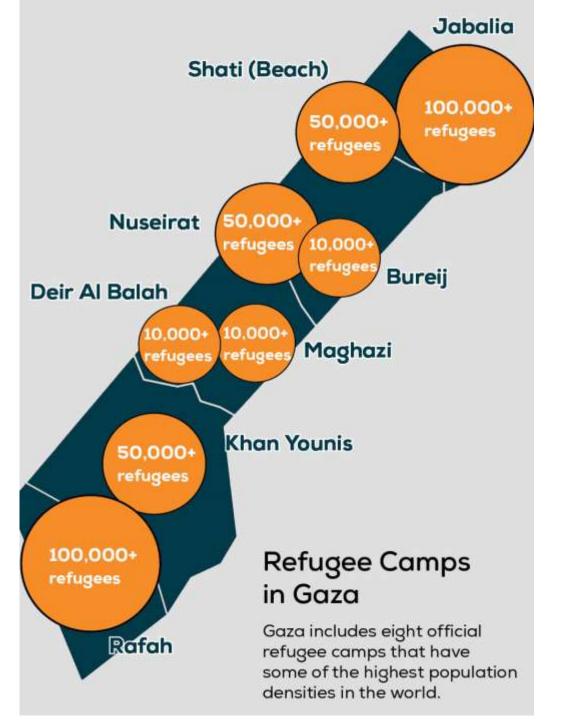
Israel's boundaries today



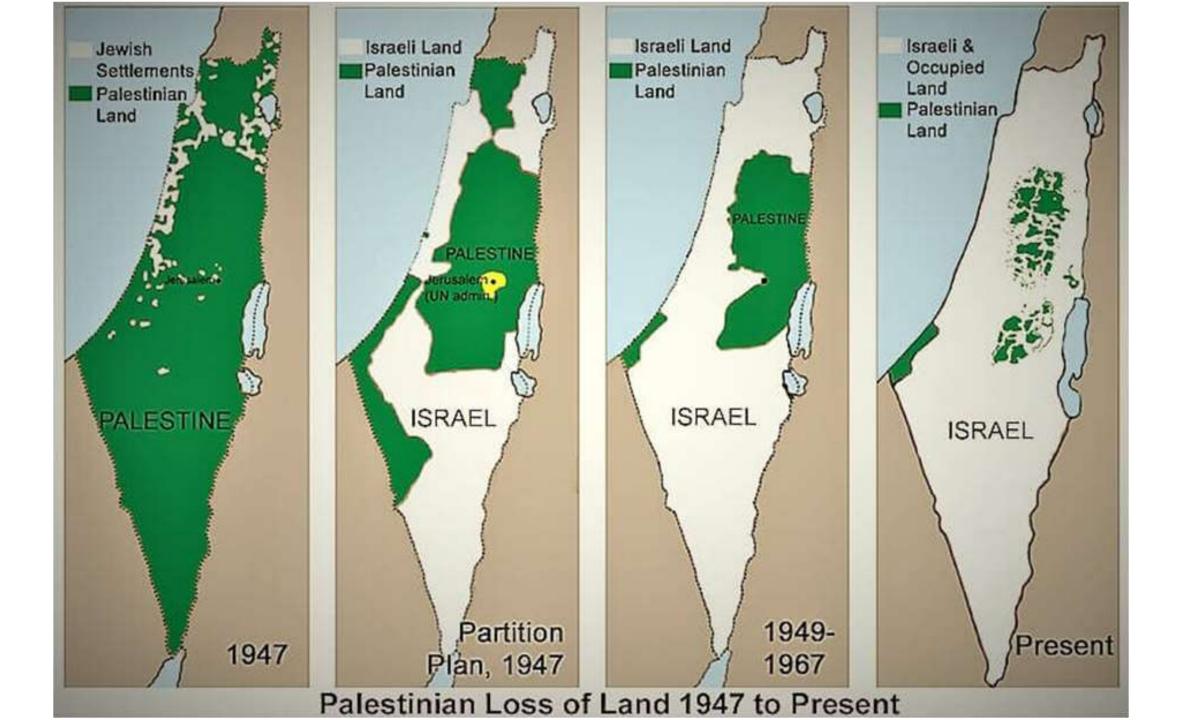












- Event: Israel's security cabinet approved a new plan to take control of Gaza City.
- Leader: Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu.
- Objective:
 - Defeat Hamas.
 - Establish a security perimeter.
 - Distribute humanitarian assistance outside combat zones.

Political Context:

- Nearly 2 years into the war in Gaza.
- Mounting pressure to secure a truce, prevent famine for 2+ million residents, and free hostages held by Palestinian militants.

2. Details of the Plan

- Israel will:
 - Prepare to take control of Gaza City.
 - Eventually hand over governance to Arab forces that can manage without threatening Israel.
 - Follow five principles, including:
 - Gaza's demilitarisation.
 - Establishing an alternative civil administration (neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority).
- Netanyahu's Position:
 - Does not intend to govern Gaza permanently.
 - Seeks to ensure security for Israel's borders.

Domestic:

- Opposition leader Yair Lapid called it a "disaster" risking hostages' lives, soldiers, and Israel's diplomacy.
- Hostage families' groups said it meant "abandoning" captives.

International:

Criticism from China, Turkey, Britain, UN Rights Chief, and several Arab governments.

Hamas:

- Called the plan a "new war crime".
- Warned Israel of heavy costs if aggression continues.

Israel–Gaza Conflict:

- Gaza controlled by Hamas since 2007 after elections and armed takeover from Fatah.
- Multiple wars: 2008–09, 2012, 2014, 2021, and post–Oct 7, 2023 escalation after Hamas attack on Israel.

Israel's Security Policy:

- Uses "security buffer zones" to prevent cross-border attacks.
- Historically resists Hamas' rule and supports alternative Palestinian governance under conditions.

Consider the following statements regarding Gaza and the recent Israeli security cabinet decision:

- Gaza borders only Israel and the Mediterranean Sea.
- 2. The Israeli plan includes Gaza's demilitarisation and establishment of a civil administration not controlled by Hamas or the Palestinian Authority.
- 3. Gaza has been under Hamas control since 2007.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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



Authorities on high alert after France's largest wildfire

Associated Press

Firefighters and local authorities remained on high alert on Friday after France's largest wildfire in decades was contained in the south of the coun-try, amid forecasts of very high temperatures which could reignite the blaze.

ry, amid forecasts of very lag, temperatures which could regular the blane and across more than 160 square kdomieters in the Aude wine region and claimed one life, forcing hundreds of residents to the their hundred. In his and of the country, the country of the

cal methorities.

Residents have been warned not to return home without authorisation. Those forced to flee have been housed in emergency shelters across 17

have been housed in emergency steelers across a municipalities, when the fire started, we learned that the unballiants of the nearby ullage of Du-ban-Corblères were arriving in Tuchan. Beatrice Bertraud, fine Mayor Ortholan, soll. "We have us-celved and hosted over 200 people. We gave them Sood, flushed to local businesses that Opened their

Canada is trying to salvage ties with Mexico after falling out with Trump

Canada scrambles to mend ties with Mexico after relations disintegrated over Trump's trade strategy; Prime Minister Carney has reached out to Mexican President Sheinbaum, and senior Ministers have travelled to Mexico to ease tensions; the effort comes as tariffs on Canadian goods rise

Carney is covari-bing to save his country's relationality with Mexico after it distribugan-ed late last year when Canadian officials suggested they would be better off negotiating a trade deal with the Donald Trump ad-

ministration alone.
Mr. Carney attempted to break the ice in a phone call with Mexican Presi-dent Claudia Sheinbaum in fully by complimenting an ball she had gifted him at their last meeting and say-ing he hoped to visit Mexi-

ing he hoped to viait Mesi-to 2008. were covernor-ing the Canada's ar-terpat to repair the damage after a arring of public slights by Canadan offi-cials, including Ornatio relation of Canada to Mesi-covas "the most insulting thing Eve ever hearts." Howice and Canada are Mostler and Canada are

in many ways natural al-lies. They've benefited from tributeral trade deals with the U.S. for 31 years: first the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 and the U.S. Menice. Canada Agreement, which replaced 6 in 2020. But the relationship has

But the relationship has been beeset by allegations of betrayal on both sides and memories of fraught negotiations with Mr. Trump. Top officials vir-tually stopped talking in November after former Ca-



Shembaum, and Canada's Furnier Minister Anita Anand, in Mesico City, Insurain-

nadian Prime Minister Jus-

sadian Prime Minister Jus-tin Trudeus mussed about cutting a trade deal with the property of the property of suggesting the U.S. and Ca-nadas were more aligned on the property of the property of the property of the property of or a surprise visit with can officials. It seemed as if cansats land afressity deve-loped a strategy for dealing to was wringing its hands, one Mesican official said. An intrinsed Mes. Shein-

An influence Me. Shein-baum directed her leute-nants to stop dealing with the Canadiane, at leust are all control of the con-trol of the control of the Sine months later, Ca-nada finds inself on the back fines with Mr. Trump, the relative success. Leaf week, Mr. Trump, gave Mexico a 90-day pause on new tearib going into ef-

feet, keeping the rate at 1 Pm here to kick start that

fort, keeping the rate at 25%, while raising tariffs on Garasta to 35%. Now, in Camadian of 35%. Now, in Camadian of 15% of 15%

Trump's latest rounds of tardfs.

Mr. Carney said on Threedow that "We important for latest and planance Minister travelled made and planance Minister travelled made in the week on Medico in the cides, "It is extremely important for Cannada to have a resilient relationship with Menoca, and indeed,"

Canada from being custed from the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)when Canadian QUMCA)when Canadian and U.S. negotiators got into a "severe light" during negotiations in 2018.
"Meskic insisted that the agreement remain trilateral," said Mr. Smith, who represented Mexico.

in those negotiations, ad-ding it's that history that likely made Mesican offi-cials especially bitter when

Caraala appeared in spure Mexico to curry favour with Mr. Trump.

A Canadian source in-volved in the 2018 talks sharply disputed that characterisation.

characterisation.

"The Mexican team wont behind our back and negotiated their own bilatical sheat with the U.S. Trump then used that in pressure Caracla to make concessions," said the source.

source.
The source said the bad blood with Mexico aren-ming from the 2016 nego-tations is part of the reason. Canadian officials. expressed interest last year to a bilateral deal with the

U.S. "If there are Mexicans who feel Canada betrayed them, they should look in the mirror."

Trailing barbs
After Mr. Trudeau came
away from Mar-a-Lago
empty-handed, the relationship became openlyto-stile with blm and Mr.
Trump trading barbs. Ms.
Sheinbaum, meanwhile,
unshed or stoying on Mr.

Trump's good side, virtual-by at any cost, according to three people familiar with her strategy. As the Canadians fell in-

As the Canadams fell in-to a desper rut with Mr. Trump, blc. Carrierysonghi to make amende with Mrs-ico by inviting Ms. Shein-baum to attend the Group of 7 summit in Canada. Mr. Carney's invitution and Ms. Sheinbaums ar-tensiones appeared to be

tendance appeared to be a react of sorts in the two countries' relationship, said Pedro Casas, CEO of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico.

creating a potentially disac-trous economic blow to Mexico. U.S. Secretary of Com-

merce Howard Lutnick has privately raised the idea of ditching the agreement in favour of a bilateral trade deal with Mexico, accord-ing to the Mexican official said Mexico is not keen to

pursue, "Mesico knows very "Messen known very well that if we try to go bould to heast, the to too with Washington fibe asymmetry in the negotia-tions is going to flevious the U.S.' said former Mestcan rade togothers' knot Car-ter to have a three-player garm."

Scene of tragedy



Russia launches construction of Kazakhstan's first nuclear facility

Bussia on Fritay launched works to build the first ma-ches power plant in Ka-lear power plant in Ka-gest uranium producer and vast Central Asian state where Moscow, Bell-ma, and Europe are all sy-least the property of the Russia has historically been the sole dominant player in the region and is trying to maintain its lead-

ing position, while china has invested billions of dol-lars as part of its "Belt and

'accategic chalce'

An aerial view of the village of tilken and the proposed nuclear power plant site located on the shores of Lake Balkhash, Arr

capacity nuclear power plant", project b Kandhstart strategie choixe and a driver of long-term ecopointie growth for the region and the country as a
the Kasaahh nuclear ageicy. Almasaiam Sathalise.

'China is set to build two
more plants in the reto demands: consumption.

capacity nuclear power source-rich country, with

and nuclear power is a sen-ative topic in the country following Soviet-era nu-lear tests that exposed 1.8 million people to fadia-tion. Construction of the first nuclear plant – to be built near the half-aban-ches to the country of the country of the country of the country of the country takes ever all years. Russia's Russians said that the reactor will have a

that the reactor will have a 80 year lifespan, with the option to extend that for another 20 years.

France and South Roses tract to build the station, but Kazakhstan said it had chosen neighbouring Rus-

Across the region, Russia also plans to build a nu-clear plant in Usbekistan and wants to build a small

Palestinian uses sign language on social media to convey Gaza's struggles

Basem Alhabet stood amongst the ruins of Gaza. with people flat on the floor all around him as bui-

now affecting most of the population - by informing Palestinians and people abroad with special needs. there, so that someone can belp us," he said dirough his friend and interpreter Mohammed Moshtaha, whom he met during the

war.
"I tried to help, to film

"I tried to help, to film and do a video from here and there, and publish them so that we can make our voteen heard in the Mr. Albabet has an finite gram following of 144,000. His page, which shows him in a flak jacket and helmet, features images of stav-ing, emaclated children and other utilizing.

220

Patentinian influencer Basem At-Hallet, who turned to social mode to discurrent the war in Gaza through sign language. NUTTER

He films a video then re-turns to a tent to edit - one nians have sought shelter

Alhabel describes Alhabet describes himself as a 'deaf journalist in Gaza' on instagram; he says he wants to raise more awareness of conflict

and safety during the war,
which erupted when its
the and in October 2034,
drawing massive retailation.
Albated produced
images of people collecting
flour from the ground
white he useed sign language to explain the pilight
for a year sephatneel.

view of a global hunger monitor that has warned a famine scenario is unfolding.

"As you can see, people are collecting flour mixed with sand." be communicated.

early on Friday to take con-trol of Gaza 121y, as the country expands its mili-tary operations despite in-tensifying criticism at home and abroad over the war.

"We want this situation "Life can be be mutiful"
Mr. Alhabed and his family
were displaced when the
war starfed. They stated in
"There was no speem for
a purson to even reat a litle. I stayed in that achool
for a year and a half," he
explained.

be busy for some time. There are no signs of a cea-seize on the horizon des-pite mediation efforts. bracks political security cabinet approved a plan early on Friday to take con-

Russia launches construction of Kazakhstan's first nuclear facility

Agence France-Presse

KAZAKHSTAN

Russia on Friday launched work to build the first nuclear power plant in Kazakhstan, the world's biggest uranium producer and vast Central Asian state where Moscow, Beijing, and Europe are all vying for influence.

Russia has historically been the sole dominant player in the region and is trying to maintain its leading position, while China has invested billions of dollars as part of its "Belt and Road Initiative".

'Strategic choice'

In a joint statement, Kazakhstan and Russia's nuclear agencies said that they had started "engineering surveys to select the optimal site and prepare project documentation for the construction of a large-



An aerial view of the village of Ulken and the proposed nuclear power plant site located on the shores of Lake Balkhash. AFP

capacity nuclear power plant".

"This project is Kazakhstan's strategic choice and a driver of long-term economic growth for the region and the country as a whole," said the head of the Kazakh nuclear agency, Almasadam Satkaliev.

China is set to build two more plants in the resource-rich country, with the details to be revealed by the end of the year, Kazakh authorities said.

Kazakhstan supplies 43% of the world's uranium and is the third-largest supplier of raw uranium to the European Union.

But it struggles to generate enough electricity for domestic consumption, and nuclear power is a sensitive topic in the country following Soviet-era nuclear tests that exposed 1.5 million people to radiation. Construction of the first nuclear plant – to be built near the half-abandoned village of Ulken on Lake Balkhash – is set to take several years.

Russia's Rosatom said that the reactor will have a 60-year lifespan, with the option to extend that for another 20 years.

France and South Korea also competed for the rights to secure the contract to build the station, but Kazakhstan said it had chosen neighbouring Russia and China, which "objectively had the best bids".

Across the region, Russia also plans to build a nuclear plant in Uzbekistan and wants to build a small reactor in Kyrgyzstan.



Event: Russia began construction of Kazakhstan's first nuclear power plant.



Location: Near Ulken village on the shores of Lake Balkhash.



Partners: Kazakhstan's nuclear agency and Russia's state nuclear corporation **Rosatom**.



Significance:

- Kazakhstan is the world's largest uranium producer.
- Geopolitical competition among Russia, China, Europe for influence in Central Asia.



Timeline: Several years for completion; reactor lifespan of 60 years (extendable by 20 years).

2. Strategic & Political Context

Russia:

- Historically the dominant player in Kazakhstan's nuclear and energy sector.
- Strengthening ties to maintain influence against China's Belt and Road Initiative investments.

China:

Building two more nuclear plants in Kazakhstan.

Other Competitors:

 France and South Korea also bid for the contract, but Kazakhstan selected Russia and China citing "best bids".

Regional Strategy:

Russia also plans nuclear projects in Uzbekistan and a small reactor in Kyrgyzstan.

. Economic Context

- Kazakhstan's Uranium:
 - Supplies 43% of global uranium.
 - 3rd largest supplier of raw uranium to EU.

Energy Needs:

- Despite uranium wealth, struggles to meet domestic electricity demand.
- Nuclear plant seen as a long-term growth driver for the region.

Project's Impact:

- Energy self-sufficiency.
- Diversification from fossil fuels.
- Potential export of surplus electricity.

Soviet-era Legacy:

- Kazakhstan was part of the USSR nuclear program.
- Site of **Semipalatinsk nuclear test range**, where 1.5 million people were exposed to radiation (1949–1989).
- Public sensitivity to nuclear power due to past health and environmental damage.

Post-independence:

- Closed nuclear test sites in 1991.
- Advocated nuclear disarmament globally.

Consider the following statements regarding Kazakhstan's first nuclear power plant:

- 1. It is being built near Lake Balkhash in partnership with Russia's Rosatom.
- 2. Kazakhstan is the largest uranium producer in the world.
- 3. France and South Korea won the contract to build the plant.
- 4. The reactor will have an initial lifespan of 60 years, extendable by 20 years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- **A.** 1, 2 and 4 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- **D.** 1, 2, 3 and 4

TN govt unveils education policy, commits to 2-language formula in departure from NEP

ARUN JANARDHANAN

CHENNAL AUGUST 8

IN A departure from the National Education Policy (NEP), Tamil Nadu on Friday launched its own State Education Policy, with Chief Minister M K Stalin describing it as "a vision document for the future" tailored to the state's "unique character".

Stalin, who unveiled the policy at the Anna Centenary Library in Chennai, reiterated Tamil Nadu's commitment to its two-language formula — Tamil and English — rejecting the three-language policy prescribed by the NEP.

"We will not allow pirooku (reactionary thinking) in our education. Our State Education Policy aims to create samathuva kalvi (education for equality) and pagutharivu kalvi (education with rational thought)," Stalin said.

Tamil Nadu has become the first state to formally adopt its own comprehensive school education policy in direct contrast to the Centre's NEP — an act seen as both pedagogical and political.

The 230-page policy document was developed by a 14-member committee headed by retired Delhi High Court Chief Justice D Murugesan. "Designed through extensive consultation and contextual analysis, the policy outlines a comprehensive, child-centric vision that is at once inclusive, forward-looking, and deeply anchored in Tamil Nadu's unique cultural, linguistic, and social heritage," the document read.

The policy scraps board examinations for class 11 with immediate effect — a move that reverses a 2017 decision by the then-AIADMK government. "Conducting public examina-



Chief Minister M K Stalin

tions for Classes 10, 11, and 12 consecutively would have an adverse impact on the mental health of students," Stalin said, recalling his earlier criticism of the earlier exam structure.

The policy sets a target to ensure that all students complete school and move into higher education. Stalin noted that 72% of students who passed class 12 this year had already enrolled in higher education. "We hope the number will soon reach 100%," he said. During the launch, he also felicitated 901 students from state-run schools who had secured admission to premier in-

stitutions, including ITTs and NITs.

According to the document, at the heart of the new policy lies a commitment to social equity. academic excellence, and holistic development. The vision -"To build an inclusive, equitable, resilient, and future-ready school education system in Tamil Nadu that nurtures every child's potential, ensures holistic development, upholds social justice, and empowers learners with 21stcentury skills and values rooted in Tamil Nadu's rich cultural heritage - enabling them to thrive as compassionate, confident, and responsible citizens in a rapidly evolving world."

The policy is structured across key thematic areas — foundational literacy and numeracy, curriculum reform, teacher training, safe and inclusive schools, digital learning, and sustainable infrastructure. The government's flagship Ennum Ezhuthum Mission remains central to its literacy goals. "The State will operationalise a mission-mode programme to ensure that every child in classes 1–3 acquires agappropriate reading, writing, and numeracy skills," it said.

It also asserted Tamil Nadu's intention to maintain educational autonomy. Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin used the occasion to reiterate the state's demand to bring education back to the State List, a long-standing call of federalist voices in India. School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi said, "The NEP is vidhi (fate), but our SEP is madhi (intellect)."

In a chapter on Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, the document read, "Rooted in Tamil Nadu's legacy of social justice, this chapter outlines a powerful agenda to ensure educational equity across caste, gender, geography, and ability." Under the policy, special attention is given to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, first-generation learners, and children with special needs, with measures ranging from inclusive curriculum and barrier-free infrastructure, scholarships and targeted mentoring.

The Centre's push to implement the NEP has faced resistance from several quarters. Tamil Nadu has fiercely resisted it, citing its emphasis on Hindi and the threelanguage formula. In May, the state moved the Supreme Court, alleging that the Union government had withheld ₹2,291,30 crore in central education funds, including Samagra Shiksha grants, as punishment for Tamil Nadu's refusal to adopt the NEP. The plea called the move "unconstitutional" and sought 6% annual interest on the withheld amount.

its own State Education
Policy (SEP), diverging from
the National Education
Policy (NEP) 2020.

Key Change: Adoption of two-language formula (Tamil + English), rejecting NEP's three-language formula (which promotes Hindi).

Chief Minister: M. K. Stalin described it as a "vision document for the future" tailored to the state's unique character.

Launch Date & Place: August 8, Anna Centenary Library, Chennai. Policy Length: 230 pages, prepared by a 14-member committee headed by retired Delhi High Court Chief Justice D. Murugesan.

Educational Philosophy:

- Anchored in samathuvam kalvi (education for equality) and pagutharivu kalvi (education with rational thought).
- Comprehensive, child-centric, inclusive, and culturally rooted.

Exam Reform:

Scraps Class 11 public exams (reversing AIADMK's 2017 decision).

Higher Education Goal:

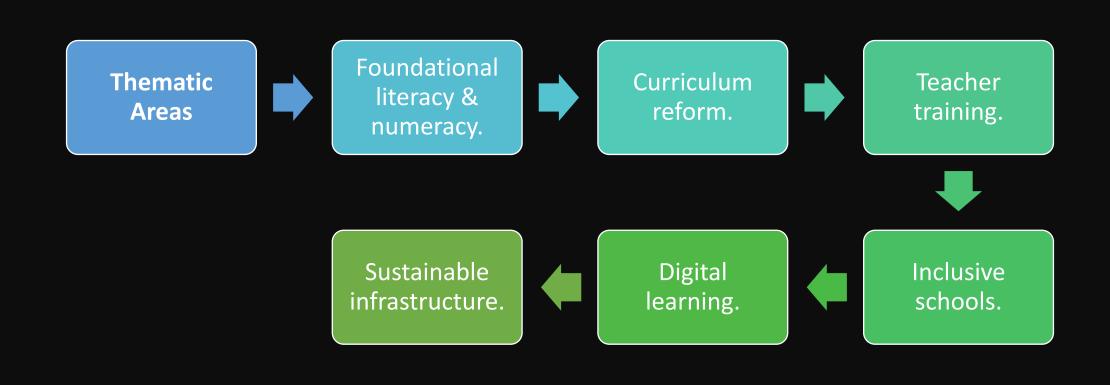
- Ensure 100% school completion and higher education enrollment.
- Current status: 72% of Class 12 pass-outs already in higher education.

Literacy Mission:

Ennum Ezhuthum Mission: Classes 1–3 to acquire reading, writing, numeracy skills.

Equity Measures:

- Special attention to SCs, STs, minorities, first-gen learners, children with special needs.
- Inclusive curriculum, barrier-free infrastructure, scholarships, mentoring.



Tamil Nadu has long resisted Hindi imposition:

• 1965 Anti-Hindi Agitation led to adoption of two-language formula.

State's education model historically linked to **Dravidian movement values**: social justice, rationalism, inclusivity.

Consider the following statements regarding Tamil Nadu's new State Education Policy (SEP):

- 1. It follows the NEP's three-language formula to promote multilingualism.
- 2. The SEP scraps Class 11 public examinations.
- 3. The Ennum Ezhuthum Mission aims to improve foundational literacy for Classes 1–3.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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



WHY NASA WANTS TO SEND A NUCLEAR REACTOR TO MOON, HOW IT WILL WORK

US TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY Sean Duffy, who is now also NASA's acting administrator, last week issued a directive to fast-track efforts to put a nuclear reactor on the Moon. Duffy ordered the agency to solicit industry proposals for a 100-kilowatt nuclear reactor to launch by 2030.

Why put a nuclear reactor in space?

Nuclear reactor technology would transform the ability of humanity to travel and live in the solar system. Many of NASA's robotic spacecraft today operate at power levels equivalent to what a few incandescent light bulbs consume. That limits what scientific instruments can be put on board.

The International Space Station gets its energy from swaths of solar panels, but that is not practical for human habitats on the Moon, where the cold, dark night lasts two weeks, or on Mars, where the Sun is farther away and dimmer.

Nuclear reactors would enable faster and more efficient propulsion systems.

Putting radioactive energy sources in space is not unusual. The Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 space probes, which are still operating after launching in 1977, are powered by plutonium, with the heat of natural radioactive decay turned into electricity. The plutonium heat initially generated 470 watts. In the decades since, the power output has dwindled to about 225 watts.

But the plutonium power sources on the Voyagers are more like batteries than nuclear power plants on Earth. Fission the chain-reaction splitting of atoms like uranium — releases much more energy than solar panels and the power sources on the Voyagers. This is what Duffy's order aims to harness.

How would a nuclear reactor on the Moon work?

A reactor on the Moon would not operate in guite the same way as one on Earth.

For one, it has to be small and light enough to fit inside a rocket. Safety precautions would include not turning the reactor on until it reaches the Moon

On the Moon, there is also no water or air. The surface swings between 250 degrees Fahrenheit (roughly 121 degrees Celsius) during the day and minus 400 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 240 degrees Celsius) at night. Those make it more difficult to manage the reactor's temperature to keep it operating efficiently.

Kevin Au, the vice president of lunar exploration at Lockheed Martin, said the biggest challenge of a higher-power reactor would be developing materials that could survive hotter temperatures for use in the conversion of heat to electricity.

However, experts say building such a power source falls within what is realistically possible.

How feasible is the lunar reactor plan?

What is unrealistic, according to some outside experts, is building a reactor and launching it by 2030. They also call the decision somewhat perplexing because NASA is not currently planning anything on the lunar surface that would require a reactor there that soon.

"It's just a very aggressive, frankly unrealistic timeline for something that is good and should happen," said Kathryn Huff, a former nuclear energy official at the Department of Energy.

THENYT

• NASA acting administrator **Sean Duffy** issued a directive to **fast-track** a 100-kilowatt nuclear reactor for the Moon by 2030. • Objective: Solicit industry proposals to enable long-term human and robotic presence on the Moon.

2. Why a Nuclear Reactor in Space?

Current Limitation:

- Most NASA robotic spacecraft operate at very low power levels (comparable to a few light bulbs).
- The International Space Station uses solar panels, which are unsuitable for the Moon's 14-day long night and extreme cold, or for Mars, where sunlight is weaker.

Nuclear Advantage:

- Continuous, high-energy power supply.
- Enables faster propulsion systems and more scientific payload capacity.

Precedent:

- Voyager 1 & 2 (launched 1977) use plutonium-powered systems via radioactive decay (initially 470 watts, now ~225 watts).
- Fission reactors (like uranium) release much more energy than plutonium decay sources.

3. How Would It Work on the Moon?

- Design Requirements:
 - Small & light enough to fit in a rocket.
 - Reactor remains inactive until arrival on Moon (safety).
- Environmental Challenges:
 - No atmosphere or water for cooling.
 - Extreme temperature variation:
 - Day: ~121°C (250°F).
 - Night: ~-240°C (-400°F).
 - Need for special materials to withstand heat-to-electricity conversion under harsh conditions.
- Feasibility:
 - Building such a reactor is technically possible, but challenging.

4. Feasibility & Criticism

- Challenges:
 - Tight timeline (2030 seen as aggressive by experts).
 - NASA currently has no specific lunar mission needing such a reactor by then.
- Support & Skepticism:
 - Supporters: Important for future Moon/Mars colonies.
 - Critics: Unrealistic schedule; could divert resources from other priorities.

5. Historical Context

- Space Nuclear Power:
 - 1960s–70s: USSR and USA used radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs) in space probes.
 - Past nuclear experiments faced safety concerns after re-entry accidents (e.g., Kosmos 954, 1978 Soviet satellite crash in Canada with radioactive debris).

Consider the following statements regarding NASA's plan for a nuclear reactor on the Moon:

- 1. The proposed reactor will produce energy through fission, similar to nuclear power plants on Earth.
- The Moon's long nights and extreme temperature variations make solar power insufficient for permanent human presence.
- 3. Voyager 1 and 2 spacecraft currently use uranium-based fission reactors.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Was Jaisalmer ever part of the Maratha empire? Here's what historians say

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND& SOHAM SHAH

NEW DELHI, PUNE, AUGUST B

A MAP in the new NCERT Class 8 text book showing the extent of the Maratha empire in 1759 has come under criticism.

Chaitanya Raj Singh, head of the royal family of the erstwhile princely state of Jaisalmer, on Monday called the map, which shows

EXPLAINED

HISTORY

Jaisalmer lying within the Maratha dominion, "historically misleading, factually baseless, and deeply objectionable".

Michel Danino, chairperson of the NCERT's curricular area group for the new social science textbooks, on Wednesday clarified that a "revised map will be prepared" if the current one's boundaries are "incorrect". What do historians say?

Marathas' 'northern expansion'

As Mughal authority crumbled in the early 18th century, Peshwa Baji Rao I "could not resist a Maratha drive" into the north. historian Stewart Gordon wrote in his book The Maruthas 1600–1818 (1993).

At the time, the Marathas were already a formidable force in the Deccan where they were collecting tribute from erstwhile Mughal dominions. In the 18th century, the Marathas pushed into parts of Rajasthan, the areas around Delhi and Punjab, and Bundelkhand, and attacked Orissa, Bengal, and Bihar, Gordon wrote.

These conquests, according to Gordon,

saw the Marathas make next to no attempt to displace the local powers. Instead, they focussed on entering agreements to collect tribute.

Rahul Magar, assistant professor of history at Savitribai Phule Pune University, said collecting economic tribute should not be confused with exercising political authority.

"These states, like Rajputana and even Orissa and Bengal, were paying financial tribute, but it is not necessary that they politically considered the Peshwa as their overlord," he told *The Indian Express*.

Dilbagh Singh, retired professor of his-



Maratha empire in 1759; NCERT map posted by C R Singh on X. X/@crsinghbhati

tory at Jawaharlal Nehru University, concurred. No Raiput state was "directly ruled by the Marathas," he said.

The Marathas & Jaisalmer

"The Marathas didn't raid Jaisalmer and Bikaner. They never went too far. Most of their attacks were confined to Jaipur and Jodhpur," Singh said. Jaisalmer remained under the rule of the Bhati clan of Raipurs till Independence.

Other historians agree. Professor B L. Bhadani, former head of the History Department at Aligarh Muslim University, told *The Indian Express*, "I can say with full confidence that Jaisalmer was never a tributary state. This map is incorrect."

Gordon wrote of a tribute-collecting expedition that Baji Rao I led in 1728 through western Malwa. "There had been, however, a friendship between Bajirao and Jai Singh (of Jaipur) which lessened the pressure for tribute in the 1730s. After Bajirao's death, Maratha military contingents invaded Rajasthan almost every year," he wrote.

"Through the later years of the 1750s, the Peshwa, Scindia, and Holkar sent armies into Rajasthan to collect the arrears of the large promised tribute...but nothing like an administration was in place. As soon as the main-force Maratha army left, the Maratha representatives were thrown out, and no tribute paid," Gordon wrote.

Professor Manisha Choudhary of Delhi University said, "Even Amber-Jaipur was not paying the tribute regularly, forget about any other state located in the present territory of Rajasthan.

"If somebody is not paying you fullfledged revenue but only sending some gifts and nazars occasionally, that doesn't fit them in the category of a subsidiary state," she told The Indian Express.

What 'empire' means

It is easy to project modern ideas of statehood into the past. But historical empires seldom had as much authority as they are sometimes credited with today.

Historian Richard Eaton wrote in India in the Persianate Age (2019) that in the decades of the 1730s to the 1750s, "Maratha rule was patchy and irregular across much of central India". Some regions were fully administered by the Peshwa's men "and others only thinly administered, and populated by recalcitrant zamindars who managed to defy Maratha authority from behind walled strongholds," Eaton wrote.

"It is true that the dominant clan of the Marathas in the 18th century made a general claim of sovereignty over almost the entire north and north-westem parts of India as well as the Deccan," Prof Pankaj Jha of the Lady Shri Ram College told The Indian Express.

"However, their actual control varied enormously. The more critical question is how authority is made, rather than which dynasty or clan proclaimed themselves to be great," he said.

Prof Magar highlighted the need for nuance in cartographic representation.

"Such maps should be made using different shades of colours... One indicating direct control, another for tributary states, one for territories that were captured but did not remain under control, and another indicating influence. This blanket map is not consistent with the truth."

> LONGER VERSION ON indianexpress.com/explained

NCERT Class 8 textbook map (1759) shows **Jaisalmer** within the Maratha Empire.

Criticism:

Chaitanya Raj Singh (Jaisalmer royal family): Called it "historically misleading, factually baseless, deeply objectionable".

Michel Danino (NCERT curriculum expert): Said a **revised map** will be prepared if current boundaries are incorrect.

Period: Early—mid 18th century, post-Mughal decline.

Peshwa Baji Rao I:

- Expanded northwards into Rajasthan, Punjab, Bundelkhand, Orissa, Bengal.
- Strategy: Collect tribute rather than directly administer.

Tributary vs Political Control:

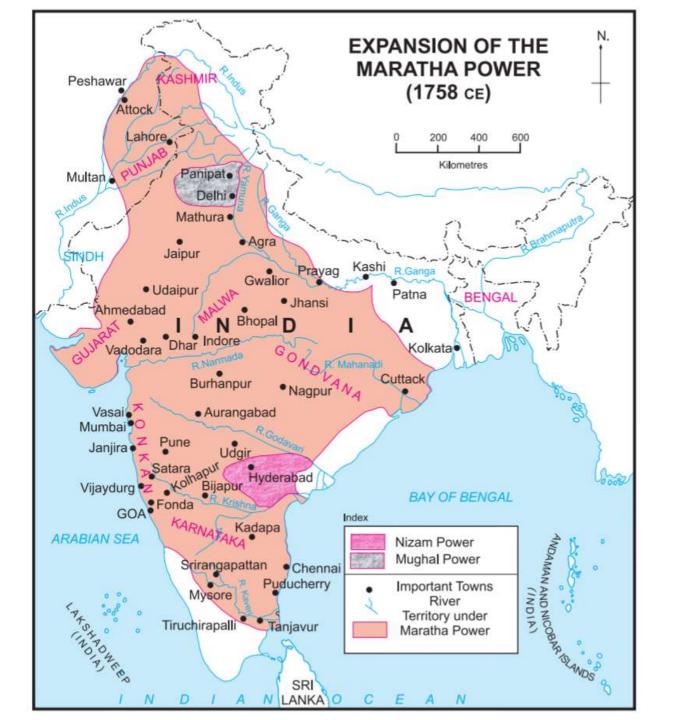
- Historian Stewart Gordon: Marathas often did not displace local rulers; focused on tribute agreements.
- Example: Rajputana states paid tribute but retained autonomy.

- Marathas & Jaisalmer
- Historians' consensus:
 - No Maratha raid on Jaisalmer/Bikaner.
 - Jaisalmer remained under **Bhati Rajput** rule till Independence.
 - Not a tributary state to Marathas.
- **Prof. B.L. Bhadani** (Aligarh Muslim University): "Jaisalmer was never a tributary state. This map is incorrect."
- Tribute collection expeditions often targeted Jaipur/Jodhpur, not Jaisalmer.

Nature of Maratha Authority

- Prof. Manisha Choudhary (Delhi University):
 - Even Amber–Jaipur was not paying tribute regularly.
- Historian Richard Eaton:
 - Maratha sovereignty in 18th century covered wide claims, but actual control varied greatly.
 - Many regions only thinly administered, some merely influenced.
- Key Insight:
 - Difference between direct control, tributary states, and areas under influence.
 - Maps should reflect this nuance with different colours or boundaries.





Consider the following statements regarding the Maratha Empire's control over Jaisalmer in the 18th century:

- 1. Historical evidence confirms that Jaisalmer was a regular tributary state under the Marathas.
- 2. Maratha influence in Rajasthan was often limited to tribute collection without direct administration.
- 3. The Bhati Rajput clan ruled Jaisalmer until India's Independence.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Bharat Forecast System (BharatFS)

India has developed Bharat Forecast System (BharatFS), an advanced weather prediction model that improves extreme rainfall forecasting accuracy by 30% compared to earlier models.

About BharatFS

BharatFS (Bharat Forecast System) is India's most advanced real-time global weather prediction model, **developed by IITM-Pune** in collaboration with NCMRWF-Noida and the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

- It is a **flagship product of the "Make in India" initiative** and supports the Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) vision.
- BharatFS uses the **Triangular Cubic Octahedral (TCo) dynamical grid**, enabling ultrahigh horizontal spatial **resolution of 6 km**—the highest globally for operational real-time models.
 - This is a leap from the **previous GFS T1534 model (12 km resolution)** and surpasses most leading global models that operate between 9–14 km.
- Its improved resolution allows highly localized forecasts, supporting disaster management and agricultural decision-making down to cluster-of-panchayat/village level.

• Significance

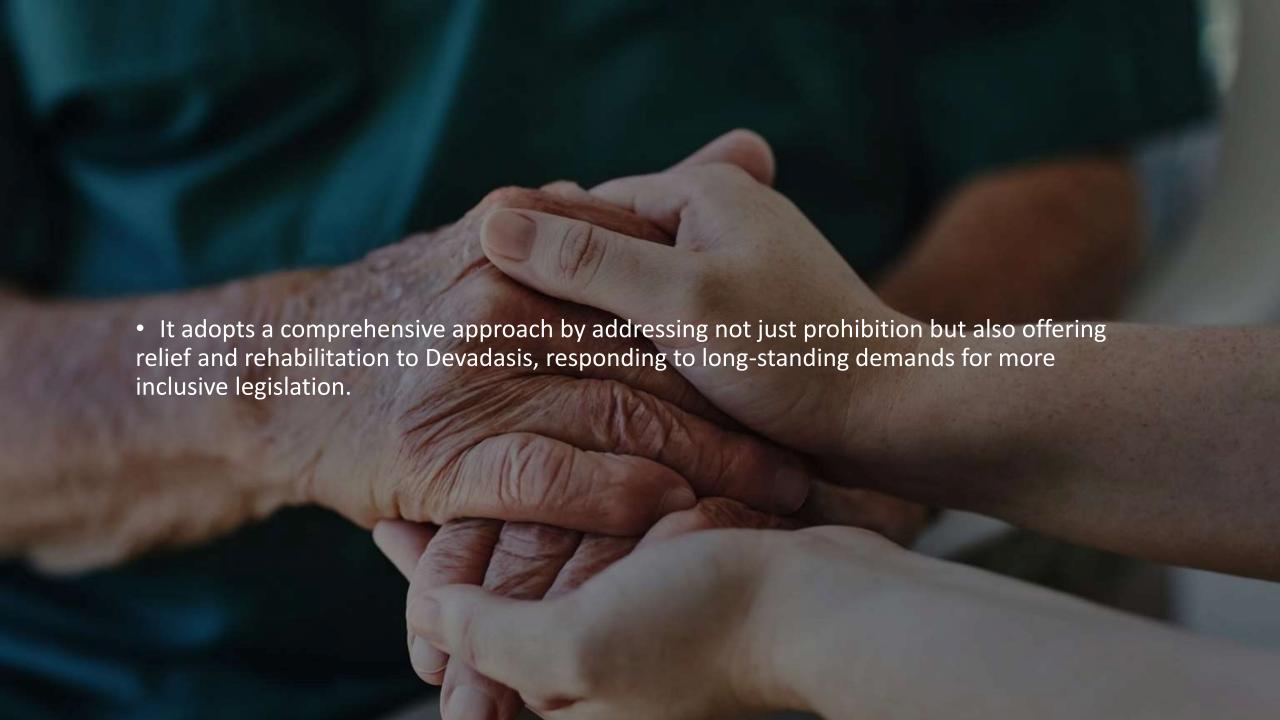
- India is currently the only nation running a global, real-time weather prediction system at such high resolution.
- The improved speed and accuracy (with up to a 30% increase in accuracy for extreme rainfall forecasts) make it especially valuable for short- and medium-range weather predictions.



The Karnataka Cabinet has approved the Karnataka Devadasi (Prevention, Prohibition, Relief and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2025, aiming to strengthen efforts against the Devadasi system

Devadasi rehabilitation Bill

It will replace the 1982 Act and it includes provisions to protect the dignity of Devadasis and their children, such as removing the mandatory declaration of a father's name on official documents and allowing DNA-based identification.



Devadasi system

- It is an ancient practice dating back to the Chola, Chera, and Pandya dynasties, involving dedicating young lower-caste girls to temple deities.
- Though termed "servants of God," these girls often end up providing sexual services to temple patrons and powerful men.
- The system persists under different regional names across India, such as Natis (Assam),
 Maharis (Kerala), Basavi/Jogati (Karnataka), Jogin (Andhra Pradesh), and Aradhini
 (Maharashtra).

