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# PATRIOTIC IAS

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

### THE HINDU NEWSPAPER

#### 30 APRIL 2026

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PCS Special:	30 April
30A	The Hindu launches tabloid TeenDigest for young readers द हिंदू ने युवा पाठकों के लिए टैब्लॉयड Teen Digest लॉन्च किया
30A	The Hindu's SIR data story wins gold at WAN-IFRA awards द हिंदू की SIR डेटा स्टोरी ने WAN-IFRA पुरस्कारों में गोल्ड जीता
30A	Golfer Vijay Kumar passes away गोल्फर विजय कुमार का निधन



# The Hindu launches tabloid *TeenDigest* for young readers

## Career Counselling

### The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

The Hindu Group on Wednesday launched *The Hindu TeenDigest*, a new weekend tabloid that caters to teenagers.

A revamp of *The Hindu In School* on Sunday, the 32-page edition aims at engaging curious young minds in an age of endless scrolling.

Content ranges from deep dives into science and world affairs, to stories designed to spark creativity.

### Core values

Speaking during the launch at *The Hindu* office in Chennai, Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, The Hindu Group, said that as a publication, "it is vital that we remain culturally significant and reliable, as young people today are caught up in social media and are targets of misinformation".

"Therefore, it is essen-

tial that *TeenDigest* instils the core values of *The Hindu*. It is also a vulnerable age, where you are discovering your identities and want to know what choices to make. We hope this serves as a guide," she said.

Gokul C., Editor of *In School* and *TeenDigest*, said, "Going forward, we hope we can give children what they want in terms of quality content, especially at a time when social media access is being curtailed and there is a lot of discussion on what is coming out from there."

Suresh Nambath, Editor, *The Hindu* and L.V. Navaneeth, CEO, The Hindu Group, were present at the launch.

Sridhar Aranala, Chief Sales and Distribution Officer, *The Hindu*, said *TeenDigest* has been thoughtfully crafted for young readers. The weekend tabloid is priced at ₹50. To subscribe, visit [www.thehindu.com/teendigest](http://www.thehindu.com/teendigest)

## 30A. The Hindu launches tabloid *TeenDigest* for young readers

### द हिंदू ने युवा पाठकों के लिए टैब्लॉयड *Teen Digest* लॉन्च किया

The Hindu Group on Wednesday launched *The Hindu TeenDigest*, a new weekend tabloid that caters to teenagers.

द हिंदू ग्रुप ने बुधवार को *The Hindu Teen Digest* लॉन्च किया, जो किशोरों के लिए एक नया वीकेंड टैब्लॉयड है।

A revamp of *The Hindu In School* on Sunday, the 32-page edition aims at engaging curious young minds in an age of endless scrolling.

*The Hindu In School* on Sunday के पुनरुद्धार के रूप में, यह 32-पृष्ठीय संस्करण अंतहीन स्क्रॉलिंग के युग में जिज्ञासु युवा दिमागों को आकर्षित करने का लक्ष्य रखता है।

Content ranges from deep dives into science and world affairs, to stories designed to spark creativity.

इसमें सामग्री विज्ञान और वैश्विक मामलों की गहराई से जानकारी से लेकर रचनात्मकता को प्रेरित करने वाली कहानियों तक फैली हुई है।

### Core values

#### मुख्य मूल्य

Speaking during the launch at *The Hindu* office in Chennai, Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, The Hindu Group, said that as a publication, "it is vital that we remain culturally significant and reliable, as young people today are caught up in social media and are targets of misinformation".

चेन्नई में *The Hindu* कार्यालय में लॉन्च के दौरान, *The Hindu* Group की चेयरपर्सन निर्मला

लक्ष्मण ने कहा कि एक प्रकाशन के रूप में "यह आवश्यक है कि हम सांस्कृतिक रूप से महत्वपूर्ण और विश्वसनीय बने रहें, क्योंकि आज के युवा सोशल मीडिया में उलझे हुए हैं और गलत सूचना के शिकार हैं।"

- "Therefore, it is essential that *TeenDigest* instils the core values of *The Hindu*. "इसलिए यह आवश्यक है कि *Teen Digest*, *The Hindu* के मुख्य मूल्यों को स्थापित करे।
- It is also a vulnerable age, where you are discovering your identities and want to know what choices to make. यह एक संवेदनशील आयु भी है, जहाँ आप अपनी पहचान खोज रहे होते हैं और यह जानना चाहते हैं कि कौन से विकल्प चुनें।
- We hope this serves as a guide," she said. हमें उम्मीद है कि यह एक मार्गदर्शक के रूप में काम करेगा," उन्होंने कहा।
- Gokul C., Editor of *In School* and *TeenDigest*, said, "Going forward, we hope we can give children what they want in terms of quality content, especially at a time when social media access is being curtailed and there is a lot of discussion on what is coming out from there."



In School और Teen Digest के संपादक **गोकुल सी.** ने कहा, “आगे बढ़ते हुए, हम उम्मीद करते हैं कि हम बच्चों को उनकी पसंद के अनुसार गुणवत्तापूर्ण सामग्री दे सकेंगे, खासकर ऐसे समय में जब सोशल मीडिया की पहुंच सीमित हो रही है और वहाँ से आने वाली सामग्री पर काफी चर्चा हो रही है।”

- Suresh Nambath, Editor, The Hindu and L.V. Navaneeth, CEO, The Hindu Group, was present at the launch.  
The Hindu के संपादक **सुरेश नांबथ** और The Hindu Group के CEO **एल.वी. नवनीत** इस लॉन्च कार्यक्रम में उपस्थित थे।
- Sridhar Aranala, Chief Sales and Distribution Officer, The Hindu, said TeenDigest has been thoughtfully crafted for young readers.  
The Hindu के चीफ सेल्स और डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन ऑफिसर **श्रीधर अरनाला** ने कहा कि TeenDigest को युवा पाठकों के लिए सोच-समझकर तैयार किया गया है।
- The weekend tabloid is priced at **₹50**.  
यह वीकेंड टैब्लॉयड **₹50** में उपलब्ध है।

## The Hindu's SIR data story wins gold at WAN-IFRA awards

PCS

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

At WAN-IFRA's Digital Media South Asia Awards, 2026, *The Hindu* bagged the “Gold” in the category of “best AI-driven news product, format or strategy”, for its data story on the unusual deletion patterns in the Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR). *The Hindu* also won the “Silver” for “Best in countering disinformation”.

“*The Hindu Explains*” newsletter won the bronze in the “best newsletter” category. The newspaper won bronze awards in the categories of “best marketing campaign for a news brand”, “best use of audio”, and “best reader revenue”.

Among other winners, Collective Newsroom bagged the “Gold” for best

data visualisation, while Spot On won top honours for best emerging news provider. *The Financial Times* “India Business Briefing” won the “Gold” for the best newsletter, while *Deutsche Welle*'s “Delayland” topped in the “best use of audio” category.

### Video honours

In the “best use of video” category, the gold went to *The Daily Star* for “Anatomy of BGB shootings in Rampura”, the silver to *Prothom Alo* for “The highway of death: Jatrabari killings”, and the bronze to *The Quint* for “Why Indian cities aren't walkable”.

These awards for excellence in digital innovation are presented annually by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).

इस समाचार पत्र ने “न्यूज़ ब्रांड के लिए सर्वश्रेष्ठ मार्केटिंग अभियान”, “ऑडियो का सर्वश्रेष्ठ उपयोग” और “रीडर रेवेन्यू में सर्वश्रेष्ठ” श्रेणियों में ब्रॉन्ज पुरस्कार जीते।

- Among other winners, **Collective Newsroom** bagged the “Gold” for best data visualisation, while **Spot On** won top honours for best emerging news provider.  
अन्य विजेताओं में **कलेक्टिव न्यूज़रूम** ने सर्वश्रेष्ठ डेटा विज़ुअलाइज़ेशन के लिए **गोल्ड** जीता, जबकि **स्पॉट ऑन** ने सर्वश्रेष्ठ उभरता समाचार प्रदाता के लिए शीर्ष सम्मान प्राप्त किया।

## 30A. The Hindu's SIR data story wins gold at WAN-IFRA awards

द हिंदू की SIR डेटा स्टोरी ने WAN-IFRA पुरस्कारों में गोल्ड जीता

• At WAN-IFRA's Digital Media South Asia Awards, 2026, *The Hindu* bagged the “Gold” in the category of “best AI-driven news product, format or strategy”, for its data story on the unusual deletion patterns in the Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

WAN-IFRA डिजिटल मीडिया साउथ एशिया अवॉर्ड्स 2026 में द हिंदू ने “सर्वश्रेष्ठ AI-आधारित समाचार उत्पाद/फॉर्मेट/रणनीति” श्रेणी में गोल्ड जीता, बिहार स्पेशल इंटेंसिव रिवीजन (SIR) में असामान्य डिलीशन पैटर्न पर अपनी डेटा स्टोरी के लिए।

• *The Hindu* also won the “Silver” for “Best in countering disinformation”.

द हिंदू ने “भ्रामक सूचना का मुकाबला करने में सर्वश्रेष्ठ” श्रेणी में सिल्वर भी जीता।

• “*The Hindu Explains*” newsletter won the bronze in the “best newsletter” category.

“द हिंदू एक्सप्लेन्स” न्यूज़लेटर ने “सर्वश्रेष्ठ न्यूज़लेटर” श्रेणी में ब्रॉन्ज जीता।

• The newspaper won bronze awards in the categories of “best marketing campaign for a news brand”, “best use of audio”, and “best reader revenue”.



- The Financial Times "India Business Briefing" won the "Gold" for the best newsletter, while Deutsche Welle's "Delayland" topped in the "best use of audio" category.  
द फाइनेंशियल टाइम्स का "इंडिया बिजनेस ब्रीफिंग" सर्वश्रेष्ठ न्यूज़लेटर के लिए गोल्ड जीता, जबकि डॉयचे वेले का "डिलेइलैंड" "ऑडियो के सर्वश्रेष्ठ उपयोग" श्रेणी में शीर्ष पर रहा।

## Video honours

### वीडियो सम्मान

- In the "best use of video" category, the gold went to The Daily Star for "Anatomy of BGB shootings in Rampura".  
"वीडियो के सर्वश्रेष्ठ उपयोग" श्रेणी में गोल्ड द डेली स्टार को "रामपुरा में BGB शूटिंग की एनाटॉमी" के लिए मिला।
- The silver to Prothom Alo for "The highway of death: Jatrabari killings".  
सिल्वर प्रोथोम आलो को "मौत का हाईवे: जातराबाड़ी हत्याएं" के लिए मिला।
- And the bronze to The Quint for "Why Indian cities aren't walkable".  
और ब्रॉन्ज द क्विंट को "भारतीय शहर पैदल चलने योग्य क्यों नहीं हैं" के लिए मिला।
- These awards for excellence in digital innovation are presented annually by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).  
डिजिटल नवाचार में उत्कृष्टता के ये पुरस्कार हर वर्ष वर्ल्ड एसोसिएशन ऑफ न्यूज़पेपर्स एंड न्यूज़ पब्लिशर्स (WAN-IFRA) द्वारा दिए जाते हैं।

## Golfer Vijay Kumar passes away

PCS  
Sports Bureau  
HYDERABAD

Veteran Indian golfer Vijay Kumar passed away in his hometown of Lucknow, following a heart attack on Wednesday. He was 57.

A winner of the 2002 Indian Open and a four-time Order of Merit champion, Vijay was widely regarded as one of the most accomplished and respected figures in Indian professional golf. His victory at the 2002 Indian Open remains one of the defining moments in Indian golf history.

Vijay is among a select group of just nine Indian golfers to have claimed the prestigious title. He also represented India at the Alfred Dunhill Cup in 1999 at St. Andrew's.

Known for his exceptional skill, consistency, competitive spirit, and exemplary sportsmanship, Vijay inspired generations of golfers and played a significant role in shaping the



Vijay with the 2002 Indian Open trophy. FILE PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

sport's growth in India.

Kapil Dev, President, Professional Golf Tour of India, expressed his condolences.

"Vijay Kumar was one of the true stalwarts of Indian golf. His achievements, humility, and dedication to the sport made him a role model for generations. His passing is a great loss to Indian golf, and we extend our heartfelt sympathies to his family and loved ones."

### 30A. Golfer Vijay Kumar passes away गोल्फर विजय कुमार का निधन

- A winner of the 2002 Indian Open and a four-time Order of Merit champion, Vijay was widely regarded as one of the most accomplished and respected figures in Indian professional golf.

2002 इंडियन ओपन के विजेता और चार बार ऑर्डर ऑफ मेरिट चैंपियन, विजय को भारतीय पेशेवर गोल्फ में सबसे सफल और सम्मानित व्यक्तियों में गिना जाता था।

- His victory at the 2002 Indian Open remains one of the defining moments in Indian golf history.

2002 इंडियन ओपन में उनकी जीत भारतीय गोल्फ इतिहास के सबसे महत्वपूर्ण क्षणों में से एक मानी जाती है।

- Vijay is among a select group of just nine Indian golfers to have claimed the prestigious title.

विजय उन चुनिंदा नौ भारतीय गोल्फरों में शामिल हैं जिन्होंने यह प्रतिष्ठित खिताब जीता है।

- He also represented India at the Alfred Dunhill Cup in 1999 at St. Andrew's.

उन्होंने 1999 में अल्फ्रेड डनहिल कप में सेंट एंड्रयूज में भारत का प्रतिनिधित्व भी किया था।

- Known for his exceptional skill, consistency, competitive spirit, and exemplary sportsmanship, Vijay inspired generations of golfers



and played a significant role in shaping the sport's growth in India.

अपनी उत्कृष्ट कौशल, निरंतरता, प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक भावना और आदर्श खेल भावना के लिए जाने जाने वाले विजय ने कई पीढ़ियों के गोल्फरों को प्रेरित किया और भारत में इस खेल के विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई।

- **Kapil Dev, President, Professional Golf Tour of India**, expressed his condolences. कपिल देव, प्रोफेशनल गोल्फ टूर ऑफ इंडिया के अध्यक्ष, ने अपनी संवेदनाएं व्यक्त कीं।

<b>GS Paper 1: History</b>	<b>30 April 2026</b>
<b>TOPICS COVERED</b>	
<b>30A</b>	<b>U.S. returns 657 trafficked artefacts to India in \$14 million restitution</b> अमेरिका ने \$14 मिलियन की बहाली में भारत को 657 तस्करी किए गए पुरावशेष लौटाए

## U.S. returns 657 trafficked artefacts to India in \$14 million restitution

GS I: History: A&C

R. Sivaraman  
CHENNAI

U.S. authorities have announced the return of 657 antiquities, collectively valued at nearly \$14 million, to India. The pieces were recovered pursuant to several ongoing investigations into criminal trafficking networks, including those of alleged antiquities trafficker Subash Kapoor and convicted trafficker Nancy Wiener.

The artefacts were returned at a ceremony attended by the Consul-General of India, Rajlakshmi Kadam, in New York. "The scale of the trafficking networks that tar-

geted cultural heritage in India is massive, as demonstrated by the return of more than 600 pieces today," Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said in a statement.

Sources said the 657 antiquities were delivered in three phases: 612 were returned in November 2024, 26 in July 2025, and in the third phase, 19 were returned to India on Tuesday. Of the 19, 17 are linked to Subash Kapoor.

Among the pieces being returned is a red sandstone figure of Buddha standing with his right hand raised in *abhaya mudra*, a gesture of protection. The Buddha's feet are broken below

the knees, and only fragments of the halo behind his head remain – damage that likely occurred when the statue was looted from northern India. The statue worth \$7.5 million was smuggled into New York by Subash Kapoor and later seized by the Antiquities Trafficking Unit from one of his storage units.

**Ancient figures**  
Another returned artefact is a bronze figure of Avalokiteshvara, seated on an inscribed double-lotus base over a lion-flanked throne. The inscription identifies the craftsman as Dronaditya of Sirpur, located near modern-day Raipur in



A red sandstone Buddha figure worth \$7.5 million, which has been returned to India.

Chhattisgarh. The Avalokiteshvara sculpture was part of a large hoard of bronzes discovered near the Lakshmana Temple in 1939 and had entered the

collection of the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur, by 1952. It was later stolen from the museum and smuggled into the U.S. by 1982, eventually ending up in a private collection in New York by 2014.

The \$2 million bronze figure was located and seized from that collection in 2025.

Another artefact includes a sandstone figure of a dancing Ganesha, which was looted by one of Kapoor's indicted co-conspirators, Ranjeet "Shantoo" Kanwar, from a temple in Madhya Pradesh in 2000. Convicted trafficker Vaman Ghiya later sold

and shipped the Ganesha to New York-based gallery owner Doris Wiener. In 2012, following her mother's death, Nancy Wiener – later convicted for antiquities trafficking – knowingly created false provenance for the sculpture and sold it through Christie's New York. The Ganesha was purchased by a private collector at the 2012 auction, who surrendered it to the District Attorney earlier this year.

Commenting on the development, S. Vijay Kumar, cultural enthusiast and co-founder of India Pride, said, "We are seeing the results of our work over more than a decade bear

fruit. India must thank Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) for its sustained efforts in tracking these looted artefacts and ensuring their restitution. This is the result of over a decade-and-a-half of deciphering and dismantling the Indian art smuggling market, which stole our Gods and supplied them to the West via dealers like Subash Kapoor and the Wieners."

He added: "There are more than 1,000 artefacts yet to be returned, and we hope India and HSI will continue to work on these cases and further decipher the Kapoor and Wiener dossiers, which span nearly 50 years of looting."

### 30A. U.S. returns 657 trafficked artefacts to India in \$14 million restitution

#### अमेरिका ने \$14 मिलियन की बहाली में भारत को 657 तस्करी किए गए पुरावशेष लौटाए

- Among the pieces being returned is a **red sandstone figure of Buddha standing with his right hand raised in *abhaya mudra*, a gesture of protection.**

लौटाई गई वस्तुओं में एक लाल बलुआ पत्थर की बुद्ध प्रतिमा शामिल है, जिसमें उनका दाहिना हाथ अभय मुद्रा में उठा हुआ है।

- Another returned artefact is a **bronze figure of Avalokiteshvara, seated on an inscribed double-lotus base over a lion-flanked throne.**

एक अन्य लौटाया गया पुरावशेष अवलोकितेश्वर की कांस्य प्रतिमा है, जो शेरों से घिरे सिंहासन पर दोहरे कमल आधार पर विराजमान है।

- The Avalokiteshvara sculpture was part of a large hoard of bronzes discovered near the **Lakshmana Temple in 1939 and had entered the collection of the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur, by 1952.**

अवलोकितेश्वर की यह मूर्ति 1939 में लक्ष्मण मंदिर के पास मिले कांस्य संग्रह का हिस्सा थी और 1952 तक महंत घासीदास मेमोरियल संग्रहालय, रायपुर के संग्रह में शामिल हो गई थी।



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<b>GS Paper 1: Geography</b>		<b>30 April 2026</b>
<b>TOPICS COVERED</b>		
<b>30A</b>	<b>T.N. against inclusion of surplus Cauvery water released in monthly schedule</b> तमिलनाडु मासिक कार्यक्रम में अतिरिक्त कावेरी जल को शामिल करने के खिलाफ	
<b>30A</b>	<b>The loyal, lonely keepers of Sudan's proud pyramids</b> सूडान के गौरवशाली पिरामिडों के वफादार, अकेले रक्षक	

### T.N. against inclusion of surplus Cauvery water released in monthly schedule

**The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI**

The Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday rejected Karnataka's contention that the surplus water released to Tamil Nadu during 2025-26 should be taken into consideration for the monthly schedule. The Tamil Nadu government made its position clear at the 50th meeting of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) on Wednesday.

While 174,500 tmc was due to be released by Karnataka to Tamil Nadu at Biligundlu between June 1, 2025 and April 27, 2026, the quantum realised in Tamil Nadu, including the surplus water, was 326,945 tmc.

Pointing this out, Karnataka requested that the surplus be included in the monthly schedule.

An official release from the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Department (WRD) said the State declined to accept Karnataka's request, contending that Karnataka cannot account for the surplus water that could not be stored in reservoirs in that State.

**2.5 tmc water**

Tamil Nadu insisted that the release of 2.5 tmc due monthly to the State as mandatory environmental flows should be ensured at Biligundlu as per the Supreme Court judgment, considering the storage in reservoirs in Karnataka, the release said.

As on April 28, the storage in the Mettur dam was 42,397 tmc, and the discharge was 1,503 cusecs for industrial purposes and mandatory environmental flows. Tamil Nadu informed the CWMA.

The meeting, held in New Delhi, was chaired by CWMA chairperson S.K. Haldar. WRD Secretary J. Jayakanthan and Cauvery Technical Cell chairperson R. Subramanian, among others, represented Tamil Nadu virtually at the meeting.

### 30A. T.N. against inclusion of surplus Cauvery water released in monthly schedule

तमिलनाडु मासिक कार्यक्रम में अतिरिक्त कावेरी जल को शामिल करने के खिलाफ

- The Tamil Nadu government made its position clear at the **50th meeting of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)** on Wednesday. तमिलनाडु सरकार ने बुधवार को कावेरी जल प्रबंधन प्राधिकरण (CWMA) की 50वीं बैठक में अपना रुख स्पष्ट किया।

- As on April 28, the storage in the **Mettur dam** was **42,397 tmc**, and the discharge was **1,503 cusecs** for industrial purposes and mandatory environmental flows, Tamil Nadu informed the CWMA.

28 अप्रैल तक **मेट्टूर बांध** में जल भंडारण **42,397 tmc** था, और औद्योगिक उपयोग तथा अनिवार्य पर्यावरणीय प्रवाह के लिए **1,503 क्यूसेक** पानी छोड़ा जा रहा था, तमिलनाडु ने CWMA को बताया।

### 30A. The loyal, lonely keepers of Sudan's proud pyramids

सूडान के गौरवशाली पिरामिडों के वफादार, अकेले रक्षक

- "These pyramids are ours, it's our history, it's who we are," the **65-year-old** said, flanked by the dark sandstone structures of the **Bajrawiya necropolis, which is part of the Island of Meroe, a UNESCO World Heritage site.**  
"ये पिरामिड हमारे हैं, यह हमारा इतिहास है, यही हमारी पहचान है," **65 वर्षीय** ने कहा, जो **बजराविया नेक्रोपोलिस** की गहरे बलुआ पत्थर की संरचनाओं से घिरे थे, जो **मेरोए द्वीप** का हिस्सा है और एक **यूनेस्को विश्व धरोहर स्थल** है।
- Clad all in white, Mr. Mostafa cut a striking figure crossing the **2,400-year-old burial site, which holds 140 pyramids built during the Kingdom of Kush's Meroitic period.**  
सफेद कपड़ों में सजे, श्री मोस्तफा **2,400 साल पुराने दफन स्थल** को पार करते हुए अलग ही दिखाई देते हैं, जिसमें **140 पिरामिड** हैं जो **कुश साम्राज्य** के **मेरोइटिक काल** में बनाए गए थे।

### The loyal, lonely keepers of Sudan's proud pyramids

**ISSN: Geography**  
**Agence France Presse**  
**MEROE**

Mostafa Ahmed Mostafa is the heir to a long line of groundskeepers who have guarded Sudan's ancient pyramids of Meroe. Now, three years into the war between the Army and paramilitary forces, he stands near-solitary sentinel over his heritage.

"These pyramids are ours, it's our history, it's who we are," the 65-year-old said, flanked by the dark sandstone structures of the Bajrawiya necropolis, which is part of the Island of Meroe, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Clad all in white, Mr. Mostafa cut a striking figure crossing the 2,400-year-old burial site, which holds 140 pyramids built during the Kingdom of Kush's Meroitic period.

None are intact. Some were decapitated, others reduced to rubble, first in the 1800s by dynamite at the hands of treasure-hunting Europeans, and then by two centuries of sand and rain.

A three-hour drive from the capital Khartoum, it was once Sudan's most visited heritage site. Now three years into the war between Sudan's Army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, only a lone camel's grunt cuts through the silence.

Archaeologist and site director Mahmoud Soliman gave AFP journalists a tour, explaining the Kush kingdom's matrilineal succession, trade routes and relationship with neighbouring Egypt.

Together, he, Mr. Mostafa and young archaeologist Mohamed Mubarak man the site, cobbling together resources to keep the erosive rain and sands at bay.

Apart from a short-lived influx of visitors early in the war - mostly displaced people desperate for something to do - the site has stood largely abandoned.

<b>GS Paper II: Polity</b>		<b>30 April 2026</b>
<b>TOPICS COVERED</b>		
<b>30A</b>	<b>NHRC ignoring attacks on Muslims, dabbling in matters that don't concern it: HC judge</b> NHRC मुसलमानों पर हमलों को नजरअंदाज कर रहा, ऐसे मामलों में दखल दे रहा जो उसके अधिकार क्षेत्र में नहीं: हाईकोर्ट जज	



30A	<b>SC says courts cannot reform matters of faith</b> सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने कहा कि अदालतें आस्था के मामलों में सुधार नहीं कर सकतीं
30A	<b>An SIR-marred turnout in West Bengal</b> पश्चिम बंगाल में SIR से प्रभावित मतदान
30A	<b>Why has the creamy layer debate returned to court?</b> क्रीमी लेयर पर बहस फिर से अदालत में क्यों लौटी है?

## NHRC ignoring attacks on Muslims, dabbling in matters that don't concern it: HC judge

GS II: Polity  
NEW DELHI

Justice Atul Sreedharan of the Allahabad High Court has criticised the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for allegedly overlooking serious instances of violence against Muslims while engaging in matters "that prima facie do not concern" its mandate.

The case stems from a petition filed by the Teachers Association Madaris Arabia challenging a February 2025 NHRC direction to the Economic Offences Wing to investigate allegations concerning 558-aided madrasas in Uttar Pradesh. The complaint before the NHRC alleged financial irregularities, including misuse of government grants and the appointment of unqualified teachers by the madrasas through corrupt

**The court questioned the NHRC's silence on incidents of mob lynching and vigilante violence**

practices.

The petitioners argued that the NHRC lacks the authority to initiate inquiries into alleged human rights violations beyond a one-year limitation period. The High Court had earlier stayed the commission's order in September 2025.

Justice Vivek Saran, who was also part of the Bench, however, disagreed with Justice Sreedharan's remark made in the court on Monday.

Justice Sreedharan said he was "astounded" by the commission's order and questioned its jurisdiction under the Protection of Hu-

man Rights Act, 1993.

"It is surprising that the Human Rights Commissions in the country are trying to indulge in matters, which should otherwise have been agitated before the High Court under Article 226 by way of public interest litigation if need be for appropriate orders," the judge said.

"Instead of taking suo motu cognisance in which members of the Muslim community are attacked and at times lynched in some cases, and where cases are not registered against perpetrators, or not investigated properly, the Human Rights Commissions are seen dabbling in matters that prima facie do not concern them. This court is not aware of the NHRC taking suo motu cognisance in situations where vigilantes take the law in their own

hands and harass ordinary citizens, or harass individuals on account of the nature of relationship between persons of different communities, or where even having a cup of coffee at a public place with the person of different religion becomes a fearful act," Justice Sreedharan said.

Justice Vivek Saran, however, underscored that the NHRC was not represented during the hearing and that the petitioner had sought an adjournment. In such circumstances, he said, it would have been appropriate to refrain from making adverse remarks without hearing all parties concerned.

The Bench has issued notice to the NHRC and extended the interim stay on its order. The matter is scheduled for further hearing on May 11.

**30A. NHRC ignoring attacks on Muslims, dabbling in matters that don't concern it: HC judge**

**NHRC मुसलमानों पर हमलों को नजरअंदाज कर रहा, ऐसे मामलों में दखल दे रहा जो उसके अधिकार क्षेत्र में नहीं: हाईकोर्ट जज**

• Justice Atul Sreedharan of the Allahabad High Court has criticised the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for allegedly overlooking serious instances of violence against Muslims while engaging in

matters "that prima facie do not concern" its mandate.

इलाहाबाद हाईकोर्ट के न्यायमूर्ति अतुल श्रीधरन ने राष्ट्रीय मानवाधिकार आयोग (NHRC) की आलोचना की है कि वह मुसलमानों के खिलाफ हिंसा की गंभीर घटनाओं को नजरअंदाज कर रहा है और ऐसे मामलों में दखल दे रहा है "जो प्रथम दृष्टया उसके अधिकार क्षेत्र में नहीं आते।"

- The case stems from a petition filed by the Teachers Association Madaris Arabia challenging a February 2025 NHRC direction to the Economic Offences Wing to investigate allegations concerning 558-aided madrasas in Uttar Pradesh.

यह मामला टीचर्स एसोसिएशन मदरिस अरबिया द्वारा दायर याचिका से जुड़ा है, जिसमें फरवरी 2025 में NHRC द्वारा इकोनॉमिक ऑफेंस विंग को उत्तर प्रदेश के 558 सहायता प्राप्त मदरसों की जांच के निर्देश को चुनौती दी गई है।

- The complaint before the NHRC alleged financial irregularities, including misuse of government grants and the appointment of unqualified teachers by the madrasas through corrupt practices.

NHRC के समक्ष शिकायत में वित्तीय अनियमितताओं के आरोप लगाए गए, जिनमें सरकारी अनुदानों का दुरुपयोग और भ्रष्ट तरीकों से अयोग्य शिक्षकों की नियुक्ति शामिल है।

- The petitioners argued that the NHRC lacks the authority to initiate inquiries into alleged human rights violations beyond a one-year limitation period.

याचिकाकर्ताओं ने तर्क दिया कि NHRC के पास एक वर्ष की सीमा अवधि के बाद कथित मानवाधिकार उल्लंघनों की जांच शुरू करने का अधिकार नहीं है।



- Justice Sreedharan said he was “astounded” by the commission’s order and questioned its jurisdiction under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**.  
न्यायमूर्ति श्रीधरन ने कहा कि वह आयोग के आदेश से “चकित” हैं और उन्होंने मानवाधिकार संरक्षण

## SC says courts cannot reform matters of faith

CS II: Polity  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said courts cannot herald reform in religion even as senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for two women who made history by entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala to enforce their right to worship under a 2018 top court verdict, said religion must mend to remain relevant.

Appearing before a nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Ms. Jaising opened submissions for respondents supporting the 2018 verdict, which upheld the right of menstruating women aged between 10 and 50 to enter

A person can say a temple is a denomination and only certain people can enter that temple... This would lead to complete balkanisation of Hinduism when the history of the country is that of unification. The Indian Constitution protects every religion, every faith

INDIRA JAISING  
Senior advocate



and pray at the Lord Ayappa temple.

“Social reform includes the reform of religion,” Ms. Jaising said. She dismissed the contention that courts could not review religious practices challenged as discriminatory.

Justice B.V. Nagarathna

pointed out that the petitioners, who have sought a review of the Sabarimala verdict, had argued that reform cannot hollow out a religion out of existence. The judge said there ought to be a balance between reforms which actually benefit and those which were

intrusive and made inroads into doctrinal and religious matters.

Ms. Jaising, assisted by advocates Prashant Padmanabhan and Paras Nath Singh, said the Constitution had to be read out as a whole. One cannot make the right to equality under Article 14 and the right to dignity under Article 21 subservient to the freedom of religion. Religious practices must harmonise with social reform. The Constitution must be read as a whole, and not in bits and pieces. The Constitution was the conscience of the Supreme Court. The morality of the Constitution must govern the decisions of the court, she argued. She cautioned the judges against the “balkanisation”

of Hinduism. Ms. Jaising supported the ‘essential religious practice’ test evolved by the court. She said expanding the ambit of religious freedom to each and any “bonafide” ritual or belief would end up seeing Hinduism torn to bits.

“A person can say a temple is a denomination and only certain people can enter that temple... This would lead to complete balkanisation of Hinduism when the history of the country is that of unification. The Constitution protects every religion, every faith. It is unique. It protects all faiths and gets rid of all limitations that were once embedded in religion like caste, temple entry, etc,” she said.

अधिनियम, 1993 के तहत उसके अधिकार क्षेत्र पर सवाल उठाया।

### 30A. SC says courts cannot reform matters of faith

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने कहा कि अदालतें आस्था के मामलों में सुधार नहीं कर सकतीं

- The **Supreme Court** on Wednesday said courts cannot herald reform in religion even as senior advocate **Indira Jaising**, appearing for two women who made history by entering the **Sabarimala temple** in Kerala to enforce their right to worship under a **2018 top court verdict**, said religion must mend to remain relevant.

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने बुधवार को कहा कि अदालतें धर्म में सुधार की पहल नहीं कर सकतीं, वहीं वरिष्ठ

अधिवक्ता इंदिरा जयसिंह, जो उन दो महिलाओं की ओर से पेश हुई जिन्होंने सबरीमाला मंदिर में प्रवेश कर 2018 के सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले के तहत अपने पूजा के अधिकार को लागू किया, ने कहा कि प्रासंगिक बने रहने के लिए धर्म को बदलना होगा।

- “**Social reform includes the reform of religion**,” Ms. Jaising said. “**सामाजिक सुधार में धर्म का सुधार भी शामिल है**,” इंदिरा जयसिंह ने कहा।
- She dismissed the contention that courts could not review religious practices challenged as discriminatory. उन्होंने इस तर्क को खारिज किया कि अदालतें भेदभावपूर्ण धार्मिक प्रथाओं की समीक्षा नहीं कर सकतीं।
- One cannot make the right to equality under **Article 14** and the right to dignity under **Article 21** subservient to the freedom of religion. अनुच्छेद 14 के तहत समानता का अधिकार और अनुच्छेद 21 के तहत गरिमा का अधिकार, धर्म की स्वतंत्रता के अधीन नहीं किया जा सकता।



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- Religious practices must harmonise with social reform.

धार्मिक प्रथाओं को सामाजिक सुधार के साथ सामंजस्य स्थापित करना चाहिए।

## Why has the creamy layer debate returned to court?

Is the current push based on a misreading of the judgment? Can income be used as a proxy?

ISSUE

LETTER & SPIRIT

Prannv Dhawan  
Vignesh Karthik K.R.

Fresh petitions before the Supreme Court are seeking to extend the creamy layer principle to SC/ST reservations, based on a misreading of the 2024 Davinder Singh judgment. The move revives a decades-old debate about whether income can serve as a proxy for caste-based disadvantage, and whether social justice can be trapped inside an economic test.

The renewed push

On March 10, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Centre and all States on a public interest litigation filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay seeking the exclusion of a "creamy layer" from SC/ST

reservations. A separate plea, filed in February, sought an income-based prioritisation mechanism within these quotas. Both petitions claim constitutional sanction from the same source: the seven-judge bench decision in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024). That judgment permitted States to sub-classify Scheduled Caste communities to direct reservation benefits toward the most marginalised within them. Four of seven judges made passing observations that creamy layer logic might apply to SC/ST groups.

A doctrine born in ambiguity

The creamy layer principle entered Indian constitutional law through the judgment in *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992), where the Supreme Court upheld OBC reservations but held that the more advanced sections, the "creamy layer," should be excluded from benefits. The 1993 Office Memorandum that

followed identified creamy layer exclusion primarily through status, not income. Holding a Class I or Class II post in government was the proxy, a recognition that institutional power compounds across generations.

This architecture was progressively diluted. A 2004 clarificatory letter from the Department of Personnel and Training began treating PSU salaries as a standalone disqualifying criterion. On March 11, the Supreme Court in *Union of India v. Rohith Nathan* struck down that letter, holding that parental salary alone cannot determine creamy layer status. The 1993 OM's status-based logic was restored, but the deeper premise of the doctrine, that economic attainment adequately measures the erasure of social disadvantage, remained intact and unexamined.

The Ambedkar objection  
In his 1932 note to the Lothian

Committee, B.R. Ambedkar warned that excluding wealthy or educated individuals from the category of untouchables was "a totally erroneous view."

At the Mahar Conference of 1936, Ambedkar put it concretely: the educated, propertied Mahar still cannot open a shop without customers leaving when his caste is known; he still cannot apply for a job without his identity becoming a disqualification. Economic progress and social emancipation travel on different tracks, and the creamy layer doctrine collapses the two.

Data presented in *Jaishri Patil v. Union of India* (2020) showed that even Group D government employees were rendered ineligible for post-matric scholarships due to income-testing. The court noted that a family earning ₹6 lakh a year cannot be equated with one earning ₹24 lakh simply because both exceed a common ceiling. Statistical research published by Nishith Prakash showed that elite capture of quota benefits was a myth. Contrary to the popular notion, the positive impact of quota policy is concentrated among the less-educated SC members in rural areas! The doctrine's bluntness produces what may be called a creamy layer trap: the bar is set low enough to exclude the barely stable, yet the social burdens that reservation addresses persist regardless of salary bracket.

The SC/ST distinction

The case for creamy layer exclusion was

always weaker for SC/ST communities than for OBCs. Sub-classification, what Davinder Singh actually authorised, is a different instrument entirely. It asks which sub-communities within the SC list are least represented and directs preference toward them.

Extending creamy layer logic to SC/ST would mean removing individuals from reservation eligibility based on parental income, precisely what Ambedkar argued was constitutionally and sociologically indefensible. Justice B.R. Gavai, who endorsed the broader principle in Davinder Singh, himself acknowledged that the criteria for SC/ST cannot be identical to those for OBCs.

Parliament's moment

The *Rohith Nathan* judgment creates a narrow but real opportunity for legislative recalibration, one that measures social backwardness by the subordination they continue to face. Parliament has both the constitutional authority and the democratic obligation to clarify that sub-classification and creamy layer exclusion are distinct instruments, and that the latter has no application to communities whose inclusion in the Presidential list was never conditioned on poverty.

(Prannv Dhawan is an LLM Candidate at Yale Law School. Vignesh Karthik KR is a postdoctoral research affiliate at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden)

### 30A. Why has the creamy layer debate returned to court?

क्रीमी लेयर पर बहस फिर से अदालत में क्यों लौटी है?

- Fresh petitions before the Supreme Court are seeking to extend the creamy layer principle to SC/ST reservations, based on a misreading of the 2024 Davinder Singh judgment.

सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के समक्ष नई याचिकाएं SC/ST आरक्षण में क्रीमी लेयर सिद्धांत को लागू करने की मांग कर रही हैं, जो 2024 के दविंदर सिंह निर्णय की गलत व्याख्या पर आधारित है।

- The move revives a decades-old debate about whether income can serve as a proxy for caste-based disadvantage, and whether social justice can be trapped inside an economic test.

यह कदम एक दशकों पुराने विवाद को पुनर्जीवित करता है कि क्या आय जाति-आधारित वंचना का प्रतिनिधि हो सकती है, और क्या सामाजिक न्याय को आर्थिक परीक्षण में सीमित किया जा सकता है।

The renewed push / नया प्रयास

- On March 10, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Centre and all States on a public interest litigation filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay seeking the exclusion of a "creamy layer" from SC/ST reservations.

10 मार्च को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने केंद्र और सभी राज्यों को नोटिस जारी किया, जो अधिवक्ता

अश्विनी कुमार उपाध्याय द्वारा दायर जनहित याचिका पर आधारित था, जिसमें SC/ST आरक्षण से "क्रीमी लेयर" को हटाने की मांग की गई।

- Both petitions claim constitutional sanction from the same source: the seven-judge bench decision in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024).

दोनों याचिकाएं एक ही स्रोत से संवैधानिक आधार का दावा करती हैं: *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024) का सात-न्यायाधीशों का निर्णय।

- That judgment permitted States to sub-classify Scheduled Caste communities to direct reservation benefits toward the most marginalised within them.

उस निर्णय ने राज्यों को अनुसूचित जाति समुदायों का उप-वर्गीकरण करने की अनुमति दी ताकि आरक्षण के लाभ सबसे अधिक वंचित वर्गों तक पहुंच सकें।

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- Four of seven judges made **passing observations** that **creamy layer logic** might **apply to SC/ST groups**.  
सात में से चार न्यायाधीशों ने संक्षिप्त टिप्पणियां कीं कि क्रीमी लेयर सिद्धांत SC/ST पर लागू हो सकता है।
- **A doctrine born in ambiguity / अस्पष्टता में जन्मा सिद्धांत**
- The **creamy layer principle** entered Indian constitutional law through the judgment in **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)**, where the Supreme Court upheld **OBC reservations** but held that the **more advanced sections** should be excluded.  
क्रीमी लेयर सिद्धांत भारतीय संवैधानिक कानून में **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)** के निर्णय के माध्यम से आया, जिसमें सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने **OBC आरक्षण को बरकरार रखा** लेकिन **उन्नत वर्गों को बाहर रखने का निर्देश दिया**।
- Holding a **Class I or Class II post** in government was the proxy, recognising that **institutional power compounds across generations**.  
सरकार में **Class I या Class II पद धारण करना** इसका संकेत था, जो मान्यता देता है कि **संस्थागत शक्ति पीढ़ियों में संचरित होती है**।
- **A 2004 clarificatory letter** from the Department of Personnel and Training began treating **PSU salaries as a standalone disqualifying criterion**.  
**2004 का स्पष्टीकरण पत्र** (कार्मिक एवं प्रशिक्षण विभाग) ने **PSU वेतन को एकमात्र अयोग्यता मानदंड के रूप में मानना शुरू किया**।
- On **March 11**, the Supreme Court in **Union of India v. Rohith Nathan** struck down that letter.  
**11 मार्च** को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने **Union of India v. Rohith Nathan** में उस पत्र को रद्द कर दिया।
- The Court held that **parental salary alone cannot determine creamy layer status**.  
न्यायालय ने कहा कि **केवल माता-पिता का वेतन क्रीमी लेयर तय नहीं कर सकता**।
- In his **1932 note to the Lothian Committee**, **B.R. Ambedkar** warned that excluding wealthy or educated individuals from untouchables was **“a totally erroneous view.”**  
**1932 में लोथियन समिति को दिए गए नोट में**, डॉ. बी.आर. आंबेडकर ने कहा कि अमीर या शिक्षित व्यक्तियों को अछूत श्रेणी से बाहर करना **“पूर्णतः गलत दृष्टिकोण”** है।
- **At the Mahar Conference of 1936**, Ambedkar explained that even educated individuals still face **caste-based discrimination**.  
**1936 के महार सम्मेलन में** आंबेडकर ने स्पष्ट किया कि शिक्षित व्यक्ति भी **जातिगत भेदभाव का सामना करते हैं**।
- Data in **Jaishri Patil v. Union of India (2021)** showed inequities due to **income testing**.  
**Jaishri Patil v. Union of India (2021)** में प्रस्तुत आंकड़ों ने **आय-आधारित परीक्षण की असमानताओं** को उजागर किया।
- Justice **B.R. Gavai** acknowledged that **criteria for SC/ST cannot be identical to OBCs**.  
न्यायमूर्ति **बी.आर. गवाई** ने स्वीकार किया कि **SC/ST के लिए मानदंड OBC जैसे नहीं हो सकते**।



**TELEGRAM CHANNEL:** <https://t.me/patrioticIAS>  
**YOUTUBE CHANNEL:** <https://www.youtube.com/@PatrioticIAS>  
**CONTACT: 9971932488**



<b>GS Paper II: Governance</b>		<b>30 April 2026</b>
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PATRIOTIC IAS



# EPFO to launch portal to track inoperative accounts

GS II: Governance: Government Scheme

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is set to launch E-PRAAPTI, a dedicated digital platform to facilitate identification, tracking, unique account number (UAN) linking, and activation of old EPF accounts.

A senior Labour Ministry official said E-PRAAPTI, or EPF Aadhaar-Based Access Portal for Tracking Inoperative Accounts, will provide a streamlined Aadhaar-based authentication mechanism that will enable members to securely access their old EPF account which may not have an UAN linked with it and initiate the process for updating their member profile, followed by seamless UAN linking and activation.

"In the initial phase, the



**Official says the portal will deliver immediate benefits to those who possess their member IDs**

portal will be member ID-based, ensuring a secure and efficient roll-out while delivering immediate benefits to a large segment of members who possess their member IDs," the official said.

Going forward, E-PRAAPTI's scope will be expanded to include members who may not be able to recall or access their old

member IDs. "The platform is expected to reduce manual intervention, minimise documentation, and enhance transparency and efficiency," he said.

**Claims settled**

The official said the EPFO had settled a record 8.31 crore claims in 2025-26, compared with 6.01 crore in 2024-25. "5.51 crore claims were for advance or partial withdrawals, indicating the ease of access to PF accounts, enabling members to draw upon their savings to meet their needs. 71.11% of advance claims were processed in auto mode (processed in three days), up from 59.19% in the previous year, minimising manual intervention. 6.68 crore members were able to file their claims without the hassle of uploading cheque leaf image," he said.

account which may not have an UAN linked with it and initiate the process for updating their member profile, followed by seamless UAN linking and activation.

एक वरिष्ठ श्रम मंत्रालय अधिकारी ने कहा कि E-PRAAPTI (EPF आधार-आधारित निष्क्रिय खाता ट्रैकिंग पोर्टल) एक सरल आधार-आधारित प्रमाणीकरण प्रणाली प्रदान करेगा, जिससे सदस्य अपने पुराने EPF खाते तक सुरक्षित पहुंच बना सकेंगे, भले ही उसमें UAN लिंक न हो, और प्रोफाइल अपडेट के बाद आसानी से UAN लिंकिंग और सक्रियण कर सकेंगे।

- "In the initial phase, the portal will be member ID-based, ensuring a secure and efficient roll-out while delivering immediate benefits to a large segment of members who possess their member IDs," the official said.  
"प्रारंभिक चरण में यह पोर्टल मेंबर आईडी आधारित होगा, जिससे सुरक्षित और प्रभावी कार्यान्वयन सुनिश्चित होगा और उन सदस्यों को तुरंत लाभ मिलेगा जिनके पास उनकी मेंबर आईडी है," अधिकारी ने कहा।
- Going forward, EPRAAPTI's scope will be expanded to include members who may not be able to recall or access their old member IDs.  
आगे चलकर EPRAAPTI का दायरा उन सदस्यों को भी शामिल करने के लिए बढ़ाया जाएगा जो अपनी पुरानी मेंबर आईडी याद नहीं रख पाते या एक्सेस नहीं कर पाते।
- "The platform is expected to reduce manual intervention, minimise documentation, and enhance transparency and efficiency," he said.

## 30A. EPFO to launch portal to track inoperative accounts

EPFO निष्क्रिय खातों को ट्रैक करने के लिए पोर्टल लॉन्च करेगा

• The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is set to launch E-PRAAPTI, a dedicated digital platform to facilitate identification, tracking, unique account number (UAN) linking, and activation of old EPF accounts.

कर्मचारी भविष्य निधि संगठन (EPFO) E-PRAAPTI नामक एक समर्पित डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म लॉन्च करने जा रहा है, जो पहचान, ट्रैकिंग, यूनिक अकाउंट नंबर (UAN) लिंकिंग और पुराने EPF खातों के सक्रियण को आसान बनाएगा।

• A senior Labour Ministry official said E-PRAAPTI, or EPF Aadhaar-Based Access Portal for Tracking Inoperative Accounts, will provide a streamlined Aadhaar-based authentication mechanism that will enable members to securely access their old EPF



### 30A. How decentralising therapy can support mental health treatment

# How decentralising therapy can support mental health treatment

Antidepressants are increasingly being prescribed by general physicians, often in busy settings; if a clinician has limited follow-up and no access to psychosocial services, medication becomes the most feasible intervention, and over time reinforces both clinical habits and patient expectations

Jeel Vasa  
Richa Shete  
Madhurima Vudemary

India continues to face a large mental health treatment gap, with nearly 85% of individuals with common mental disorders receiving no formal care. However, over the past decade, access to antidepressant medication, especially drugs called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), has improved, marking an important shift toward making treatment more available.

This expansion is important because, for moderate to severe depression, antidepressants are not optional but often essential. For many patients, they remain one of the most effective and life-changing interventions available.

The concern, therefore, is not about medications themselves. It is about how, when, and for whom they are being used in routine practice. Emerging evidence suggests that a significant proportion of prescriptions either occur without a clear diagnosis of major depression, particularly in primary care settings, or have poor follow-up.

The Indian Psychiatric Society recommends a stepped-care model, where people with milder issues are first managed with psychosocial interventions before initiating pharmacotherapy. Yet in practice, this step is often bypassed and medication becomes the first-line response even in situations where other approaches may be more appropriate.

Consequences of routine prescribing The distinction between distress and disorder is important. In busy clinics, this may blur. Patients present with sleep problems, work stress, interpersonal conflicts, or grief. These experiences are real and often impairing, and deserve attention. Even when they do not meet the threshold for clinical depression, they may still require psychological support.

They are not always best addressed through medication alone, especially when they are closely tied to identifiable life circumstances. Routine prescribing in such scenarios is understandable. It offers a quick, tangible intervention in systems where time is limited and follow-up uncertain, whether the presentation is mild depression or distress that does not meet diagnostic thresholds. However, when medication becomes the default response, we risk shifting focus away from understanding content and towards suppressing the symptoms.

Antidepressants are not addictive in the conventional sense. They do not cause cravings, people do not feel the need to keep increasing the dose, and they do not lead to compulsive use. These details are important and must be clear, especially for patients who benefit from them. However, discontinuation symptoms are well-known, with some individuals experiencing dizziness, sleep disturbances, or sensory symptoms when attempting to stop.

This concern has been reflected in recent policy discussions, including a UK House of Lords debate, which highlighted issues of long-term antidepressant use, withdrawal difficulties, and the need for better prescribing guidance and tapering support.

On the other hand, sleeping pills that are usually prescribed alongside antidepressant medications complicate the problem. They are frequently co-prescribed for sleep or anxiety and can be effective in the short term. Unlike antidepressants, however, they can lead to true dependence, where the body gets used to them, higher doses may be needed over time, and stopping them can be difficult. With longer use, they carry risks of dependence, cognitive slowing, and difficult withdrawal. Patients are also often unaware of the risks of these medications.

Over time, patterns emerge. What begins as short-term symptomatic treatment can extend into prolonged use, particularly in the absence of structured follow-up. In such instances, patients may continue medication not because it is still clearly indicated, but because stopping it has become difficult.

There is also a less visible cost. When treatment is centred primarily around medication, opportunities to develop coping strategies, address maladaptive thinking, and engage with underlying stressors may be reduced. Many individuals with mild to moderate symptoms benefit significantly with addition of brief psychological interventions such as behavioural activation or problem-solving therapy.



The Indian Psychiatric Society recommends a stepped-care model, where people with milder issues are first managed with psychosocial interventions before initiating pharmacotherapy. IMA BALAJESTER/UNISPLASH

including structured models like the 'Healthy Activity Program', which has been effective in Indian primary-care settings. These approaches reduce symptoms and build skills that persist beyond the treatment period.

**Little choice** It is tempting to frame this as just overprescription by doctors. In reality, it reflects a deeper structural issue.

India has a limited mental health workforce, and psychotherapy remains concentrated in urban and specialist settings. In many parts of the country, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, pharmacological treatment is the only consistently available form of care. When alternatives are scarce, prescribing becomes less a choice and more a necessity.

Public health programmes illustrate this imbalance. Access to screening and medication have improved but the availability of structured psychotherapy remains uneven. Continuity of care is difficult to maintain across districts; even where frameworks exist, implementation varies widely. This shortage is further reflected in the limited number of formal psychotherapy training positions, such as M.Phil seats, which remain insufficient relative to the population's needs.

Antidepressants are also increasingly being prescribed by general physicians and non-psychiatric practitioners, often in busy settings with limited time. If a clinician has ten minutes, limited follow-up, and no access to psychosocial services, medication becomes the most feasible intervention, and over time reinforces both clinical habits and patient expectations.

Where options are available, prescribing patterns tend to shift even in non-psychiatric practitioners, with reduced reliance on antidepressants. This suggests that clinicians do incorporate these options when they are accessible. Thus, if psychotherapy were more easily available, many patients could be referred for it, sometimes even before medication.

**Therapy beyond the clinic** Expanding access to psychotherapy can't rely solely on increasing specialists' numbers, which is a slow and resource-intensive process. Decentralising psychotherapy offers a more immediate pathway, based on identifying core, evidence-based components of psychological support that can be delivered by trained non-specialists within community settings.

There is growing evidence to support this approach. In low- and middle-income countries, brief interventions delivered by non-trained counsellors, such as

**India has a limited mental health workforce, and psychotherapy remains concentrated in specialist settings. In many semi-urban and rural areas, pharmacological treatment is the only consistently available form of care. When alternatives are scarce, prescribing becomes more a necessity**

behavioural activation, problem-solving, and psychoeducation, have demonstrated meaningful reductions in depression and anxiety. In 2006, after losing a patient who could not afford to travel for care, a senior psychiatrist, Dixon Chibanda in Zimbabwe, recognised the need to take mental health services into communities rather than wait for patients to reach hospitals. The Friendship Bench in Zimbabwe trained old women to deliver structured therapy to people with mild levels of mental distress on park benches, showing reductions of almost 45% on depression scales within six months. In India, the 'Atmiyata' programme uses community volunteers to provide basic emotional support and identify individuals who may need referral, linking local care with formal services.

These interventions are intentionally simple. Skills like active listening, validation, sleep hygiene, and structured activity scheduling can be manual and scaled up, and delivered in schools, workplaces, primary care centres, and community groups, bringing support closer to where people actually live and struggle. When these approaches are adapted to local culture, they become easier to understand and accept. Using familiar language, social roles, and everyday examples helps people engage with care more naturally.

Nearly 85% of people don't access formal care and turn elsewhere for help. A significant fraction seek help from faith-based healers, traditional practitioners or community elders, who often serve as the first point of contact for distress. Rather than viewing this in opposition to medical care, there is value in engaging with these systems, especially for rural, while building pathways to identify and refer more severe afflictions to formal mental health services.

At the same time, limits must be clear. Complex conditions, trauma-affected individuals, and individuals at high risk require specialist expertise. Primary diagnosis and treatment of conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and obsessive compulsive disorder should remain within specialist care settings – but a substantial component of ongoing supportive care can be safely and

effectively task-shared within the community.

A stepped-care model can ensure decentralised care complements, rather than replaces, professional psychotherapy. Even in instances of seemingly simple distress, if the signs that an individual presents with fall outside the provider's level of training or if they fail to improve, they must be referred in a timely fashion to more expert care. Expanding non-specialist roles must overall be a cautious venture. New cadres risk overstepping competence and delaying referrals, however, underscoring the need for clear safeguards, supervision, and referral pathways.

**Not less treatment**

For moderate to severe depression, medications remain central and often indispensable. In many cases, the best outcomes arise from combining pharmacological treatment with psychotherapy. This integrated approach should remain the standard rather than the exception.

For milder presentations, the sequence can differ. Psychosocial interventions can be tried first, with medication introduced when needed. Even when antidepressants are started, regular review allows for dose adjustment or tapering in appropriate instances.

Training frontline providers in brief psychosocial interventions, embedding counselling within primary care, strengthening community support systems, and introducing basic prescription monitoring can collectively shift practice without major structural disruption. Digital platforms can extend this further, supporting both delivery and follow-up in areas with limited specialist access.

India has already made progress in improving access to treatment. The next step is ensuring that this access is balanced, thoughtful, and responsive to different levels of need. Medication should remain available when it is needed. But it should not be the default option, especially when it is possible to have alternatives available.

A system that offers both, clearly, appropriately, and at scale, is far more likely to serve patients well.

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चिकित्सा का विकेन्द्रीकरण मानसिक स्वास्थ्य उपचार को कैसे समर्थन दे सकता है

- India continues to face a large mental health treatment gap, with nearly 85% of individuals with common mental disorders receiving no formal care.

भारत में अभी भी बड़ा मानसिक स्वास्थ्य उपचार अंतराल बना हुआ है, जहां लगभग 85% सामान्य मानसिक विकारों से ग्रस्त व्यक्ति कोई औपचारिक उपचार प्राप्त नहीं करते हैं।

- However, over the past decade, access to antidepressant medication, especially drugs called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), has improved, marking an important shift toward making treatment more available.

हालांकि, पिछले दशक में एंटीडिप्रेसेंट दवाओं, विशेष रूप से सेलेक्टिव सेरोटोनिन रीअपटेक इनहिबिटर्स (SSRIs) तक पहुंच में सुधार हुआ है, जो उपचार को अधिक सुलभ बनाने की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण बदलाव है।

- This expansion is important because, for moderate to severe depression, antidepressants are not optional but often essential.

यह विस्तार महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि मध्यम से गंभीर अवसाद के लिए एंटीडिप्रेसेंट दवाएं वैकल्पिक नहीं बल्कि अक्सर आवश्यक होती हैं।

- Emerging evidence suggests that a significant proportion of prescriptions either occur without a clear diagnosis of major depression, particularly in primary care settings, or have poor follow-up.

उभरते प्रमाण दर्शाते हैं कि दवाओं के महत्वपूर्ण हिस्से का प्रिस्क्रिप्शन या तो स्पष्ट गंभीर अवसाद के निदान के बिना, विशेष रूप से प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य देखभाल स्तर पर, किया

जाता है या फिर उनका अनुवर्ती देखभाल कमजोर होता है।

- The Indian Psychiatric Society recommends a stepped-care model, where people with milder issues are first managed with psychosocial interventions before initiating pharmacotherapy.



भारतीय मनोचिकित्सा सोसायटी एक स्टेप्ड-केयर मॉडल की सिफारिश करती है, जिसमें हल्की समस्याओं वाले लोगों को पहले मनोसामाजिक हस्तक्षेपों से प्रबंधित किया जाता है, उसके बाद औषधीय उपचार शुरू किया जाता है।

- Yet in practice, this step is often **bypassed** and medication becomes the **first-line response** even in situations where other approaches may be more appropriate.  
लेकिन व्यवहार में, यह चरण अक्सर छोड़ दिया जाता है और दवाएं ही प्रथम उपचार विकल्प बन जाती हैं, भले ही अन्य उपाय अधिक उपयुक्त हों।

### Consequences of routine prescribing / नियमित दवा-निर्धारण के परिणाम

- The **distinction between distress and disorder** is important.  
तनाव (distress) और विकार (disorder) के बीच अंतर महत्वपूर्ण है।
- In busy clinics, this may **blur**.  
व्यस्त क्लीनिकों में यह अंतर धुंधला पड़ सकता है।
- **Patients present with sleep problems, work stress, interpersonal conflicts, or grief**.  
मरीज नींद की समस्या, कार्य तनाव, पारस्परिक संघर्ष या शोक जैसी समस्याओं के साथ आते हैं।
- However, when medication becomes the **default response**, we risk shifting focus away from **understanding context** and towards **suppressing the symptoms**.  
हालांकि, जब दवाएं डिफॉल्ट प्रतिक्रिया बन जाती हैं, तो हम परिस्थिति को समझने से ध्यान हटाकर केवल लक्षणों को दबाने का जोखिम उठाते हैं।
- **Antidepressants are not addictive in the conventional sense**.  
एंटीडिप्रेसेंट दवाएं पारंपरिक अर्थ में नशे की लत पैदा नहीं करतीं।
- They do not cause **cravings**, people do not feel the need to keep **increasing the dose**, and they do not lead to **compulsive use**.  
ये लालसा उत्पन्न नहीं करतीं, लोग इन्हें लगातार खुराक बढ़ाने की आवश्यकता महसूस नहीं करते, और ये अनिवार्य उपयोग की ओर नहीं ले जातीं।
- These details are important and must be clear, especially for **patients who benefit from them**.  
ये बातें महत्वपूर्ण हैं और स्पष्ट होनी चाहिए, विशेषकर उन मरीजों के लिए जिन्हें इससे लाभ होता है।
- However, **discontinuation symptoms** are well-known, with some individuals experiencing **dizziness, sleep disturbances, or sensory symptoms** when attempting to stop.  
हालांकि, दवा बंद करने पर लक्षण सामान्य रूप से देखे जाते हैं, जहां कुछ लोगों को चक्कर आना, नींद में गड़बड़ी या संवेदी समस्याएं अनुभव होती हैं।

### Policy concerns and prescribing practices / नीतिगत चिंताएं और दवा-निर्धारण व्यवहार

- This concern has been reflected in **recent policy discussions**, including a **U.K. House of Lords debate**, which highlighted **issues of long-term antidepressant use, withdrawal difficulties, and the need for better prescribing guidance and tapering support**.  
यह चिंता हाल की नीतिगत चर्चाओं में परिलक्षित हुई है, जिसमें यू.के. हाउस ऑफ लॉर्ड्स की बहस शामिल है, जिसने दीर्घकालिक एंटीडिप्रेसेंट उपयोग, दवा छोड़ने में कठिनाई, तथा बेहतर प्रिस्क्रिप्शन मार्गदर्शन और धीरे-धीरे दवा कम करने के समर्थन की आवश्यकता पर प्रकाश डाला।
- On the other hand, **sleeping pills** that are usually prescribed alongside **antidepressant medications** complicate the problem.  
दूसरी ओर, नींद की गोलियां, जो आमतौर पर एंटीडिप्रेसेंट दवाओं के साथ दी जाती हैं, समस्या को और जटिल बनाती हैं।



- They are frequently **co-prescribed for sleep or anxiety** and can be effective in the **short term**.  
इन्हें अक्सर नींद या चिंता के लिए साथ में दिया जाता है और ये अल्पकाल में प्रभावी हो सकती हैं।
- Unlike antidepressants, however, they can lead to **true dependence**, where the body gets used to them, **higher doses may be needed**, and stopping them can be **difficult**.  
हालांकि, एंटीडिप्रेसेंट के विपरीत, ये वास्तविक निर्भरता उत्पन्न कर सकती हैं, जहां शरीर इनका आदी हो जाता है, **उच्च खुराक की आवश्यकता** हो सकती है, और इन्हें छोड़ना कठिन हो जाता है।
- In India, the '**Atmiyata**' programme uses **community volunteers** to provide **basic emotional support** and identify individuals who may need **referral**, linking **local care with formal services**.  
भारत में, 'आत्मीयता कार्यक्रम' सामुदायिक स्वयंसेवकों का उपयोग करके मूलभूत भावनात्मक समर्थन प्रदान करता है और ऐसे व्यक्तियों की पहचान करता है जिन्हें रेफरल की आवश्यकता हो सकती है, जिससे स्थानीय देखभाल को औपचारिक सेवाओं से जोड़ा जाता है।
- **Nearly 85% of people don't access formal care** and turn elsewhere for help.  
लगभग **85% लोग औपचारिक उपचार तक नहीं पहुंचते** और सहायता के लिए अन्य विकल्पों की ओर जाते हैं।
- **A stepped-care model can ensure decentralised care complements, rather than replaces, professional psychotherapy**.  
एक स्टेप्ड-केयर मॉडल यह सुनिश्चित कर सकता है कि विकेंद्रीकृत देखभाल, व्यावसायिक मनोचिकित्सा का पूरक बने, न कि उसका स्थान ले।
- In many cases, the best outcomes arise from **combining pharmacological treatment with psychotherapy**.  
कई मामलों में, सर्वोत्तम परिणाम **औषधीय उपचार और मनोचिकित्सा के संयोजन** से प्राप्त होते हैं।
- This **integrated approach** should remain the **standard rather than the exception**.  
यह **समेकित दृष्टिकोण** अपवाद नहीं बल्कि मानक होना चाहिए।
- For **milder presentations**, the sequence can differ.  
हल्के लक्षणों के मामलों में उपचार का क्रम अलग हो सकता है।
- **Psychosocial interventions** can be tried first, with **medication introduced when needed**.  
**मनोसामाजिक हस्तक्षेपों** को पहले आजमाया जा सकता है, और आवश्यकता पड़ने पर दवाएं जोड़ी जा सकती हैं।
- Even when **antidepressants are started**, **regular review** allows for **dose adjustment or tapering** in appropriate instances.  
यहां तक कि जब **एंटीडिप्रेसेंट शुरू किए जाते हैं**, तब भी **नियमित समीक्षा** से उचित स्थिति में **खुराक समायोजन** या **धीरे-धीरे कमी** संभव होती है।
- **Training frontline providers in brief psychosocial interventions, embedding counselling within primary care, strengthening community support systems, and introducing basic prescription monitoring** can collectively shift practice without major **structural disruption**.  
**फ्रंटलाइन स्वास्थ्य प्रदाताओं को संक्षिप्त मनोसामाजिक हस्तक्षेपों में प्रशिक्षित करना, प्राथमिक देखभाल में परामर्श को शामिल करना, सामुदायिक सहायता प्रणालियों को मजबूत करना, और प्रिस्क्रिप्शन निगरानी लागू करना, बिना बड़े संरचनात्मक बदलाव के व्यवहार में सुधार ला सकता है।**
- **Digital platforms** can extend this further, supporting both **delivery and follow-up** in areas with limited **specialist access**.  
**डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म** इस प्रक्रिया को और आगे बढ़ा सकते हैं, विशेषकर उन क्षेत्रों में जहां **विशेषज्ञों की पहुंच सीमित है**, वहां सेवा प्रदान करने और **अनुवर्ती देखभाल** में सहायता कर सकते हैं।

<b>GS Paper II: International Relations</b>	<b>30 April 2026</b>
<b>TOPICS COVERED</b>	
<b>30A</b>	<b>South Asian power balance shifts toward Pakistan</b>



	दक्षिण एशिया का शक्ति संतुलन पाकिस्तान की ओर स्थानांतरित हो रहा है
30A	EU chief says Kremlin imposing 'digital Iron Curtain' on Russians EU प्रमुख ने कहा कि क्रेमलिन रूसियों पर 'डिजिटल आयरन कर्टन' थोप रहा है

## South Asian power balance shifts toward Pakistan

ESSAIR MOE

In recent weeks, an intense debate has emerged in India regarding Pakistan's rising diplomatic stature, following its role as mediator and venue for negotiations between the United States and Iran. Iranian and American officials – including U.S. President Donald Trump – have publicly acknowledged Pakistan's leadership, specifically Field Marshal Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, for their role in precipitating and sustaining the ceasefire, and maintaining channels of communication.

While Pakistan is now seen as central to diplomacy around the Iran war, India's response has been marked by silence – variously interpreted as caution toward Mr. Trump or as strategic restraint. India has not criticised Israel or the U.S. for their actions, and this contrast with Pakistan's rising role has fuelled debate within India's strategic community about the shifting balance between the two countries.

**Gains from enhanced diplomatic visibility**  
Pakistan's diplomatic visibility has increased not only due to its mediation role but also because of its expanding engagement with Washington and its growing influence in Gulf security. Its relationship with the U.S. – particularly under Mr. Trump – has elevated Pakistan's profile. At the same time, its defence partnership with Saudi Arabia, and possibly a similar security partnership with Qatar, have further reinforced its strategic relevance in the region.

This enhanced diplomatic position has translated into economic and political gains. Saudi Arabia's pledge of billions of dollars highlights the financial dividends of Pakistan's rising influence. Since the end of Operation Sindoor, Pakistan has also secured several diplomatic wins denying India's efforts to portray it as a state sponsor of terrorism and diplomatically isolate it. India's efforts have been undermined by Pakistan's growing alignment with the U.S. as a counterterrorism partner against al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, as well as its role in Gaza-related discussions and the Iran crisis. Together, these developments suggest that Pakistan's recent diplomatic momentum has blunted India's strategy, raising broader questions



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Pakistan's recent diplomatic momentum appears to have blunted India's strategy, raising broader questions about the regional balance of power in South Asia

about whether the regional balance of power in South Asia is beginning to shift.

### Pyramid of power

According to scholars of international relations, states are often understood within a hierarchy of power based on their capacity to project influence and shape outcomes beyond their borders. At the apex are superpowers such as the U.S. and China – states with the ability to project power globally and to shape the international order itself; their influence spans military, economic and institutional domains on a worldwide scale. The next tier consists of global powers, which, while not able to unilaterally shape the global order, possess sufficient capabilities to project power across multiple regions, as illustrated by Russia. Below them are middle powers, which lack comprehensive global reach and do not dominate multiple regions, yet exert meaningful influence through partnerships and economic and military capacity; countries such as Türkiye, South Korea, Indonesia and Brazil are often cited as examples. Next are regional powers, which dominate a specific geographic area but have limited ability to project influence beyond it, such as Saudi Arabia in the Gulf. Finally, there are minor powers, comprising most states whose influence remains largely confined within their own borders and whose role in shaping regional or global outcomes is limited.

The Lowy Institute operationalises comprehensive national power by combining hard and soft capabilities into a single analytical framework. It assigns roughly 55% weight to material power – economic size, military capability, and resources – and 45% to softer dimensions such as diplomacy, economic networks, and institutional influence.

Before Operation Sindoor, using the Lowy Institute metric, I would place India in the second tier from the top as a global power given both its hard power and soft power capabilities, while Pakistan would fall into the second tier from the bottom as a regional power. However, developments over the past few months suggest movement in opposite directions. India's

performance during Operation Sindoor has not been widely seen as commensurate with its perceived stature or the expectations surrounding its rise, whereas Pakistan has been viewed by many as performing above its capacity. At the same time, India's continued silence or restraint – particularly in relation to Mr. Trump and major geopolitical developments – has contributed to its marginalisation from key global events. This perception has been reinforced by economic and geopolitical shifts, including a decline in India's ranking from the fourth to the sixth largest economy and the waning visibility of groupings that once elevated its profile, such as I2U2, BRICS, and the Quadrilateral Dialogue.

In contrast, Pakistan, without any change in material capabilities, has significantly enhanced its diplomatic profile and relevance. The result is a perceptible shift: India appears to be moving from a global power toward the characteristics of a middle power, while Pakistan is emerging as a more consequential regional power with aspirations toward middle-power status. This evolving dynamic – India trending downward and Pakistan upward in relative standing – may help explain the intensity of current debates within India's strategic community, as well as the more confident and optimistic mood within Pakistan's strategic discourse.

### In context

My final observation for Indian policymakers is that whatever constraints India faces with regard to the U.S. and Israel – whether driven by ideological alignment or dependence on defence technology – the choices it is making will inevitably affect the softer dimensions of its power. While these softer elements can enhance or diminish a country's influence in global affairs, they are not a substitute for hard power: military capability, a robust economy, demographic scale, and cutting-edge technological capacity. In these foundational areas, there has been no significant relative change between India and Pakistan.

While India remains firm in the elements of hard power, Pakistan while gaining in soft power is still nursing a fragile economy. And that matters.

### 30A. South Asian power balance shifts toward Pakistan

दक्षिण एशिया का शक्ति संतुलन पाकिस्तान की ओर स्थानांतरित हो रहा है

#### Pyramid of power / शक्ति का पिरामिड

- According to scholars of **international relations**, states are often understood within a **hierarchy of power** based on their capacity to **project influence** and **shape outcomes beyond their borders**.

अंतरराष्ट्रीय संबंधों के विद्वानों के अनुसार, राज्यों को अक्सर उनकी शक्ति के पदानुक्रम के आधार पर समझा जाता है, जो उनकी प्रभाव डालने और सीमाओं से परे परिणामों को आकार देने की क्षमता पर निर्भर करता है।

- At the apex are **superpowers** such as the **U.S. and China** — states with the ability to **project power globally** and shape the **international order**.

शीर्ष पर महाशक्तियां जैसे अमेरिका और चीन होते हैं — ऐसे देश जो वैश्विक स्तर पर शक्ति का प्रदर्शन कर सकते हैं और अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यवस्था को आकार दे सकते हैं।

- Their influence spans **military, economic and institutional domains worldwide**.

उनका प्रभाव सैन्य, आर्थिक और संस्थागत क्षेत्रों में वैश्विक स्तर पर फैला होता है।



- The next tier consists of **global powers**, which can project power across **multiple regions**, as illustrated by **Russia**.

अगले स्तर पर वैश्विक शक्तियां होती हैं, जो कई क्षेत्रों में प्रभाव डाल सकती हैं, जैसे रूस।

- Below them are **middle powers**, which lack full global reach but exert influence through **partnerships and economic and military capacity**, such as **Türkiye, South Korea, Indonesia and Brazil**.

इसके नीचे मध्यम शक्तियां होती हैं, जिनकी वैश्विक पहुंच सीमित होती है, लेकिन वे साझेदारी और आर्थिक-सैन्य क्षमता के माध्यम से प्रभाव डालती हैं, जैसे तुर्किये, दक्षिण कोरिया, इंडोनेशिया और ब्राजील।

- Next are **regional powers**, which dominate a **specific geographic area** but have limited global reach, such as **Saudi Arabia** in the Gulf.

इसके बाद क्षेत्रीय शक्तियां आती हैं, जो एक विशिष्ट भौगोलिक क्षेत्र में प्रभुत्व रखती हैं, जैसे खाड़ी में सऊदी अरब।

- Finally, there are **minor powers**, whose influence remains largely within their **own borders**. अंत में छोटी शक्तियां होती हैं, जिनका प्रभाव मुख्यतः उनकी सीमाओं के भीतर ही रहता है।

- The **Lowy Institute** operationalises **comprehensive national power** by combining **hard power and soft power**.

लोवी संस्थान समग्र राष्ट्रीय शक्ति को मापने के लिए हार्ड पावर और सॉफ्ट पावर को जोड़ता है।

- It assigns **55% weight to material power** and **45% to softer dimensions** such as diplomacy and networks.

यह 55% भार भौतिक शक्ति को और 45% सॉफ्ट पावर जैसे कूटनीति और नेटवर्क को देता है।

- Before **Operation Sindoor**, India could be placed as a **global power**, while Pakistan was seen as a **regional power**.

ऑपरेशन सिंदूर से पहले भारत को वैश्विक शक्ति और पाकिस्तान को क्षेत्रीय शक्ति माना जाता था।

- However, recent developments suggest movement in **opposite directions**.

हाल के घटनाक्रम विपरीत दिशाओं में बदलाव का संकेत देते हैं।

- India's performance during **Operation Sindoor** was not seen as matching its **expected stature**.

ऑपरेशन सिंदूर के दौरान भारत का प्रदर्शन उसकी अपेक्षित स्थिति के अनुरूप नहीं माना गया।

- Meanwhile, Pakistan has been viewed as performing **above its capacity**.

वहीं पाकिस्तान को उसकी क्षमता से अधिक प्रदर्शन करते हुए देखा गया।

- India's continued **silence or restraint**, especially regarding **Mr. Trump and global events**, has led to **marginalisation**.

भारत की निरंतर मौन या संयम, विशेषकर ट्रंप और वैश्विक घटनाओं पर, उसे हाशिए पर धकेलने का कारण बना है।

- This perception is reinforced by **economic and geopolitical shifts**, including a decline from the **fourth to sixth largest economy**.

यह धारणा आर्थिक और भू-राजनीतिक परिवर्तनों से और मजबूत हुई है, जिसमें चौथे से छठे स्थान पर गिरावट शामिल है।

- There is also reduced visibility of groupings such as **I2U2, BRICS, and Quadrilateral Dialogue**.

साथ ही I2U2, ब्रिक्स और क्वाड जैसे समूहों की दृश्यता में कमी आई है।

- In contrast, Pakistan has enhanced its **diplomatic profile** without changes in **material capabilities**.

इसके विपरीत, पाकिस्तान ने भौतिक क्षमता में बदलाव के बिना अपनी कूटनीतिक स्थिति मजबूत की है।

- This suggests a shift: India moving toward a **middle power**, and Pakistan emerging as a stronger **regional power** with aspirations for **middle-power status**.

यह बदलाव दर्शाता है कि भारत मध्यम शक्ति की ओर बढ़ रहा है और पाकिस्तान एक मजबूत क्षेत्रीय शक्ति के रूप में उभर रहा है, जिसकी आकांक्षा मध्यम शक्ति बनने की है।



- My final observation for **Indian policymakers** is that choices regarding **U.S. and Israel** will affect **soft power dimensions**.  
भारतीय नीति-निर्माताओं के लिए अंतिम टिप्पणी यह है कि अमेरिका और इजराइल से जुड़े निर्णय सॉफ्ट पावर पर प्रभाव डालेंगे।
- **Soft power can enhance influence but cannot replace hard power such as military, economy, demography, and technology.**  
सॉफ्ट पावर प्रभाव बढ़ा सकती है, लेकिन यह सैन्य शक्ति, अर्थव्यवस्था, जनसंख्या और तकनीक जैसी हार्ड पावर का विकल्प नहीं हो सकती।
- **In these areas, there has been no significant relative change between India and Pakistan.**  
इन क्षेत्रों में भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच कोई महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन नहीं हुआ है।
- **India remains strong in hard power, while Pakistan, despite gains in soft power, still has a fragile economy.**  
भारत हार्ड पावर में मजबूत बना हुआ है, जबकि पाकिस्तान सॉफ्ट पावर में वृद्धि के बावजूद अभी भी कमजोर अर्थव्यवस्था से जूझ रहा है।

### EU chief says Kremlin imposing 'digital Iron Curtain' on Russians



AFP

GS II: IR

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday accused the Kremlin of cutting Russians off from the internet to hide the worsening economic conditions as sanctions over the Ukraine war bite. In Strasbourg, she told EU lawmakers that "Russians feel that they live behind an Iron Curtain again, this time a digital Iron Curtain." AFP

डिजिटल आयरन कर्टन है।"

### 30A. EU chief says Kremlin imposing 'digital Iron Curtain' on Russians

EU प्रमुख ने कहा कि क्रेमलिन रूसियों पर 'डिजिटल आयरन कर्टन' थोप रहा है

- **EU chief Ursula von der Leyen** on Wednesday accused the **Kremlin** of cutting Russians off from the **internet** to hide the worsening economic conditions as sanctions over the **Ukraine war** bite.  
EU प्रमुख उर्सुला वॉन डेर लेयेन ने बुधवार को क्रेमलिन पर आरोप लगाया कि वह रूसियों को इंटरनेट से काट रहा है ताकि यूक्रेन युद्ध पर लगे प्रतिबंधों के कारण बिगड़ती आर्थिक स्थिति को छिपाया जा सके।
- In **Strasbourg**, she told EU lawmakers that "**Russians feel that they live behind an Iron Curtain again, this time a digital Iron Curtain.**"  
स्ट्रासबर्ग में उन्होंने EU सांसदों से कहा कि "रूसियों को लगता है कि वे फिर से एक आयरन कर्टन के पीछे रह रहे हैं, इस बार यह एक

GS Paper III: Economy		30 April 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
30A	Modi inaugurates 594-km Ganga Expressway in Uttar Pradesh, praises overall development मोदी ने उत्तर प्रदेश में 594 किमी गंगा एक्सप्रेसवे का उद्घाटन किया, समग्र विकास की सराहना की	
30A	Webinar to explore opportunities in the pharma industry फार्मा उद्योग में अवसरों की खोज के लिए वेबिनार	
30A	Compounding gains संचयी लाभ	
30A	Tamil Nadu's growth record तमिलनाडु का विकास रिकॉर्ड	



30A	<b>Increasing coverage, growing distress</b> बढ़ता कवरेज, बढ़ती पीड़ा
30A	<b>Gold shining as investment: WGC</b> निवेश के रूप में सोना चमक रहा है: WGC
30A	<b>Rare earth mining poisoning Mekong tributaries, threatening 'world's kitchen'</b> रेयर अर्थ खनन मेकांग की सहायक नदियों को प्रदूषित कर रहा है, 'दुनिया की रसोई' को खतरा

## Modi inaugurates 594-km Ganga Expressway in Uttar Pradesh, praises overall development

GS VI: Economy

Mayank Kumar  
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the 594-km Ganga Expressway in Hardoi, describing it as the identity of a "new Uttar Pradesh", which would emerge as a new lifeline for the State's connectivity and employment.

Hailing the development of the State, Mr. Modi added, "In Uttar Pradesh today, not only are expressways being built, but the overall development is also progressing at an even faster pace."

"The Ganga Expressway is not merely a road project, but the foundation of Uttar Pradesh's economic, social, and industrial transformation in which development is moving ahead



**Grand opening:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of the Ganga Expressway in Hardoi on Wednesday. ANI

even faster than the speed of the expressway itself. People can now reach the Sangam in a few hours and visit Kashi for darshan," he said.

Inaugurating the project built at an approximate cost of ₹36,230 crore, he said the six-lane access-

controlled expressway was likely to significantly reduce travel time, making the journey from Meerut to Prayagraj possible in about six hours. The expressway would begin from Meerut and pass through Hapur, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Sambhal, Badaun, Shahja-

hanpur, Hardoi, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, and Pratapgarh before culminating in Prayagraj.

"Previously, farmers' produce could not reach markets promptly, but now, with the expressway, products will arrive at markets more quickly, thereby increasing farmers' income," Mr. Modi said.

Uttar Pradesh was experiencing significant infrastructure development with remarkable advancements in expressways, airports, industrial corridors, and defence manufacturing.

### Swift progress

"Initiatives like the BrahMos missile project are providing a new identity to the State's industrial capabilities. Uttar Pradesh is swiftly progressing towards becoming a one-tril-

lion-dollar economy. With fresh opportunities in investment, industry, and employment, the State's reputation has evolved, making it a key destination for investors," the Prime Minister said.

He slammed the Opposition parties, primarily the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, for being "anti-women" and opposing the women's reservation amendment Bill.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the expressway would serve as a major medium for the progress of farmers, employment for youth, preservation of faith and culture, and the prosperity of Uttar Pradesh.

Earlier, the Prime Minister held a roadshow in Varanasi drawing large crowds along the route.

### 30A. Modi inaugurates 594-km Ganga Expressway in Uttar Pradesh, praises overall development

मोदी ने उत्तर प्रदेश में 594 किमी गंगा एक्सप्रेसवे का उद्घाटन किया, समग्र विकास की सराहना की

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** on Wednesday inaugurated **the 594-km Ganga Expressway in Hardoi**.

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने बुधवार को हरदोई में 594 किमी गंगा एक्सप्रेसवे का उद्घाटन किया और इसे "नए उत्तर प्रदेश" की पहचान बताया, जो राज्य की कनेक्टिविटी और रोजगार के लिए नई जीवनरेखा बनेगा।

- Inaugurating the project built at an approximate cost of **₹36,230 crore**, he said the **six-lane access-controlled expressway** was likely to significantly reduce travel time, making the journey from **Meerut to Prayagraj** possible in about **six hours**.

लगभग ₹36,230 करोड़ की लागत से बने इस प्रोजेक्ट का उद्घाटन करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि यह छह-लेन एक्सेस कंट्रोल्ड एक्सप्रेसवे यात्रा समय को काफी कम करेगा, जिससे मेरठ से प्रयागराज की यात्रा लगभग छह घंटे में संभव होगी।



- The expressway would begin from **Meerut** and pass through **Hapur, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Sambhal, Badaun, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, and Pratapgarh** before culminating in **Prayagraj**.  
यह एक्सप्रेसवे मेरठ से शुरू होकर हापुड़, बुलंदशहर, अमरोहा, संभल, बदायूं, शाहजहांपुर, हरदोई, उन्नाव, रायबरेली और प्रतापगढ़ से होते हुए प्रयागराज तक जाएगा।

# Webinar to explore opportunities in the pharma industry

GS III: Economy  
The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

The Future Career Conversations series, organised by SRM Institute of Science & Technology and *The Hindu*, will host the sixth webinar in this series, '**Pharma 2030: Innovation, Regulation and the Rise of India**' on May 3 at 11.30 a.m.

With advancements in drug discovery, growing focus on research and development, integration of digital health, and shifting regulatory frameworks, the webinar will unpack what these changes mean for the industry. It will provide insights into **emerging career paths in the sector**.

The panel will feature V. Chitra, Dean, Professor & Head, Department of Pharmacology, SRM College of Pharmacy; S. Vincent, Member Secretary, Tamil



Nadu State Council for Science and Technology, Government of Tamil Nadu; N. Damodaran, Vice-Principal, Professor & Head, Department of Pharmaceutics, SRM College of Pharmacy; and Vasanthambandamurthy, Senior Vice-President (Strategic & Global Operations) at Bugworks Research Inc.

The session will be moderated by Athira Elssa Johnson, Senior Reporter, *The Hindu*. To register, visit [newsth.live/THSRMDE](http://newsth.live/THSRMDE) or scan the QR code.



## 30A. Webinar to explore opportunities in the pharma industry

फार्मा उद्योग में अवसरों की खोज के लिए वेबिनार

- The Future Career Conversations series, organised by SRM Institute of Science & Technology and *The Hindu*, will host the sixth webinar in this series, '**Pharma 2030: Innovation, Regulation and the Rise of India**' on May 3 at 11.30 a.m.

फ्यूचर करियर कन्वर्सेंशंस सीरीज, जिसका आयोजन SRM इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ साइंस एंड टेक्नोलॉजी और द हिंदू द्वारा किया गया है, इस श्रृंखला का छठा वेबिनार 'फार्मा 2030: इनोवेशन, रेगुलेशन और भारत का उदय' 3 मई को सुबह 11:30 बजे आयोजित करेगा।

- With advancements in drug discovery, growing focus on research and development, integration of digital health, and shifting regulatory frameworks, the webinar will unpack what these changes mean for the industry.  
दवा खोज (ड्रग डिस्कवरी) में प्रगति, अनुसंधान और विकास पर बढ़ता ध्यान, डिजिटल हेल्थ का एकीकरण और बदलते नियामक ढांचे के साथ, यह वेबिनार बताएगा कि ये बदलाव उद्योग के लिए क्या मायने रखते हैं।



TELEGRAM CHANNEL: <https://t.me/patrioticIAS>

YOUTUBE CHANNEL: <https://www.youtube.com/@PatrioticIAS>

CONTACT: 9971932488



GS III: Economy

## Compounding gains

The New Zealand Free Trade

Agreement builds on seven recent FTAs

The India-New Zealand Free Trade agreement (FTA) signed on Monday might look underwhelming when viewed in isolation, but is nevertheless significant when looking at what has been happening over the last five to six years. This impression is because New Zealand's economy is one-sixteenth the size of India's, and makes up less than 1% of India's total trade. Yet, this view ignores the fact that the FTA comes soon after the signing of, or closure of negotiations on, seven other trade agreements in the past three and a half years or so. It also ignores the larger policy goals that India is trying to achieve through such deals. The COVID-19 pandemic and the U.S. tariff frictions have shown India that it needs to diversify supply chains on the import and export sides. Weaning off imports from China is a tough task. Yet, any chipping away of the 16% of India's imports that China accounts for would be welcome. Importantly, the strategic need to diversify export destinations, especially while the mercurial Donald Trump is in charge of India's largest export market, is clear and urgent. The trade deals with Mauritius, the UAE, Australia, the EFTA nations, the U.K., the EU, Oman, and now New Zealand all provide Indian exporters opportunities that they should take advantage of. Finally, dismissing this FTA on the basis of its size would be unfair to India's negotiators who have done well to use India's comparative advantage to push through key victories.

The first key strength of the FTA for India, and unprecedented, is that New Zealand will remove all goods tariffs immediately on execution of the agreement. The second strength is that India managed to avoid providing any concessions on any of its sensitive sectors. Key among these exclusions is dairy, something New Zealand had been especially keen to include. The third positive is New Zealand's commitment to facilitate investments in India worth \$20 billion over 15 years. This is similar to the provisions in the EFTA trade pact, wherein the four EFTA countries committed to facilitate \$100 billion of investments in India over 15 years. To be sure, these are commitments to facilitate and not commitments to invest, but getting them included in the text of the deal is nevertheless significant. To help this along, India will create a dedicated desk to address any issues New Zealander investors might face. Such a targeted approach to foreign investment is necessary if India wants to achieve the multiple goals of weaning off China, increasing and diversifying exports, creating jobs, bolstering the capital account, and generally increasing incomes. The other long-standing need of helping domestic manufacturers scale up remains a sticky problem.

### 30A. Compounding gains

संचयी लाभ

This impression is because **New Zealand's economy is one-sixteenth the size of India's**, and makes up **less than 1% of India's total trade**.

यह धारणा इसलिए बनती है क्योंकि **न्यूजीलैंड की अर्थव्यवस्था भारत की तुलना में एक-षोडशांश है** और भारत के कुल व्यापार का **1% से भी कम हिस्सा बनाती है।**

The **trade deals with Mauritius, the UAE, Australia, the EFTA nations, the U.K., the EU, Oman, and now New Zealand** all provide Indian exporters opportunities that they should take advantage of.

**मॉरीशस, यूएई, ऑस्ट्रेलिया, ईएफटीए देश, यू.के., यूरोपीय संघ, ओमान और अब न्यूजीलैंड** के साथ हुए व्यापार समझौते भारतीय निर्यातकों को ऐसे अवसर प्रदान करते हैं जिनका उन्हें लाभ उठाना चाहिए।



## Rare earth mining poisoning Mekong tributaries, threatening 'world's kitchen'

CS III: Economy  
ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CHIANG SAEN

Perched on the bow of his long-tail fishing boat, 75-year-old Sukjai Yana untangled a handful of small fish from his net, disappointed by his catch and fretting over whether he can sell them.

Some days Mr. Yana earns nothing; demand for fish is falling due to worries over contamination of the Mekong River and its tributaries by toxic runoff from rare earth mines upstream that is threatening millions who rely on those waters for farms and fisheries.

Chiang Saen, a fishing hub in northern Thailand, has been Mr. Yana's family's home for decades. "I don't know where else I'd go," he said.

He is one of 70 million people in mainland Southeast Asia who depend on the nearly 5,000-kilometre (3,100-mile) Mekong River. Rising demand for rare earth materials is driving an unregulated mining boom centred in war-torn Myanmar, to the west, that is spreading to Laos, in the east.

The Mekong has long faced mounting pressures, from plastic pollution to hydropower dams hemming it upstream and sand mining devouring its banks. But experts warn that the toxic runoff from the mines could pose an existential threat.

Exposure to heavy metals such as arsenic, mercury, lead and cadmium raises risks of cancer, organ failure and developmental

harm, especially for children and pregnant women.

Thailand is bearing the brunt of the mining boom as such toxins imperil its global food exports – from bags of rice in U.S. supermarkets to edamame snacks served in Japan and garlic used in Malaysian kitchens. Responses remain local and limited, while smuggling and Myanmar's civil war complicate regional fixes, raising concerns for downstream Cambodia and Vietnam.

Agriculture is the backbone of Southeast Asia's economies, said Suebsakun Kidnurom of Mae Fah Luang University in northern Thailand's Chiang Rai, warning that rare earth mines are destroying "the world's kitchen."



People protest, calling for shutdown of mines upstream of the Kok, Sai, Ruak, Mekong, Salween rivers, in Chiang Mai, Thailand. REUTERS

While cutting banana bunches on a farm in the hilly Thai village of Tha Ton, 63-year-old Lah Boon-rung taps his fingers to count the toxin-exposed crops he harvests – rice, garlic, corn, onion, mangoes and bananas.

He irrigates his fields with water from the Kok

River, a Mekong tributary that flows into Thailand from Myanmar and is laden with toxins. "Everyone is afraid of the toxins," he said. "If we can't export, a farmer is the first to die."

Thailand is one of the world's top rice exporters along with India and Vietnam. It exported over \$10

million worth of rice and fruits in 2024, according to trade figures that rank the U.S. as the top rice importer.

### Heavy metal pollution

"Our worry is that toxins accumulate in the rice we export. This would make our rice farming industry, which is our culture, collapse," said Niwat Roykaew, founder of the environmental institute The Mekong School in northern Thailand's Chiang Khong.

Thai scientists have found elevated heavy metal pollution in other Mekong tributaries, like the Sai and Ruak rivers.

The Mekong starts in China and flows through five Southeast Asian nations before emptying into

the sea. Millions rely on fish from the Mekong Basin for protein.

Warnings to ethnic minorities in the hills of northern Thailand to avoid using river water are painful for the Lahu, who are famed as fisher people, said Sela Lipo, 56, a Lahu elder. "The Lahu's way of life is always with a river," he said. "The contaminated river has cut off our lifeline."

Thailand's government says it has little leverage against mining operations across the border in strife-torn Myanmar and Laos. The Thai response has also been constrained by limited expertise, information and funds, said Aweera Pakkamart of Thailand's Pollution Control

Department.

Instead, public universities, local governments and regional organisations like the Mekong River Commission, have mainly focused on monitoring levels of heavy metals and educating communities about risks.

Recent water, fish and sediment samples from tributaries had high levels of dangerous heavy metals, such as arsenic, mercury, lead and cadmium, from rare earth mining, said Warakorn Manechuket, a researcher at Thailand's Naresuan University.

The accumulation of heavy metals is insidious. Arsenic can cause organ failure. Mercury damages the nervous system. Lead impairs cognition and cadmium harms the kidneys.

### 30A. Rare earth mining poisoning Mekong tributaries, threatening 'world's kitchen'

रेयर अर्थ खनन मेकांग की सहायक नदियों को प्रदूषित कर रहा है, 'दुनिया की रसोई' को खतरा

- Some days Mr. Yana earns nothing; demand for fish is falling due to worries over contamination of the **Mekong River** and its tributaries by toxic runoff from **rare earth mines** upstream that is threatening millions who rely on those waters for farms and fisheries.  
कुछ दिनों में श्री याना कुछ भी नहीं कमा पाते: मछली की मांग घट रही है क्योंकि **मेकांग नदी** और उसकी सहायक नदियों में ऊपर स्थित **रेयर अर्थ खानों** से निकलने वाले विषैले अपशिष्ट से प्रदूषण की चिंता है, जो उन लाखों लोगों के लिए खतरा है जो इन जल स्रोतों पर खेती और मत्स्य पालन के लिए निर्भर हैं।
- **Chiang Saen**, a fishing hub in northern **Thailand**, has been Mr. Yana's family's home for decades.  
उत्तरी **थाईलैंड** का मछली पकड़ने का केंद्र **चियांग सीन**, दशकों से श्री याना के परिवार का घर रहा है।
- He is one of **70 million people** in mainland Southeast Asia who depend on the nearly **5,000-kilometre Mekong River**.  
वह मुख्यभूमि दक्षिण-पूर्व एशिया के **7 करोड़ लोगों** में से एक हैं जो लगभग **5,000 किलोमीटर लंबी मेकांग नदी** पर निर्भर हैं।
- Rising demand for **rare earth materials** is driving an unregulated mining boom centred in war-torn **Myanmar**, to the west, that is spreading to **Laos**, in the east.  
**रेयर अर्थ पदार्थों** की बढ़ती मांग पश्चिम में युद्धग्रस्त **म्यांमार** में अनियंत्रित खनन को बढ़ावा दे रही है, जो पूर्व में **लाओस** तक फैल रहा है।
- **Exposure to heavy metals such as arsenic, mercury, lead and cadmium raises risks of cancer, organ failure and developmental harm, especially for children and pregnant women.**  
**आर्सेनिक, पारा, सीसा और कैडमियम** जैसे भारी धातुओं के संपर्क से कैंसर, अंग विफलता और विकास संबंधी नुकसान का खतरा बढ़ता है, खासकर बच्चों और गर्भवती महिलाओं में।
- Responses remain local and limited, while smuggling and **Myanmar's civil war** complicate regional fixes, raising concerns for downstream **Cambodia** and **Vietnam**.  
प्रतिक्रियाएँ स्थानीय और सीमित हैं, जबकि तस्करी और **म्यांमार का गृह युद्ध** क्षेत्रीय समाधान को जटिल बना रहा है, जिससे नीचे स्थित **कंबोडिया** और **वियतनाम** के लिए चिंताएं बढ़ रही हैं।
- **Thailand is one of the world's top rice exporters along with India and Vietnam.**  
**थाईलैंड, भारत और वियतनाम** के साथ दुनिया के शीर्ष चावल निर्यातकों में से एक है।
- **The Mekong starts in China** and flows through five Southeast Asian nations before emptying into the sea.  
**मेकांग नदी चीन** से शुरू होकर पांच दक्षिण-पूर्व एशियाई देशों से होकर समुद्र में मिलती है।



- **Arsenic** can cause organ failure.  
आर्सेनिक अंग विफलता का कारण बन सकता है।
- **Mercury** damages the nervous system.  
पारा तंत्रिका तंत्र को नुकसान पहुंचाता है।
- **Lead** impairs cognition and **cadmium** harms the kidneys.  
सीसा संज्ञानात्मक क्षमता को प्रभावित करता है और कैडमियम गुर्दों को नुकसान पहुंचाता है।

<b>GS Paper III: Science and Technology</b>		<b>30 April 2026</b>
<b>TOPICS COVERED</b>		
<b>30A</b>	<b>DRL gets Canada nod for generic Semaglutide injection</b> <b>DRL को जेनेरिक सेमाग्लूटाइड इंजेक्शन के लिए कनाडा की मंजूरी मिली</b>	



GS III: S&T

## DRL gets Canada nod for generic Semaglutide injection

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories has received a Notice of Compliance (NOC) from Health Canada for its generic Semaglutide Injection. It has become the first company to receive the market authorisation for generic Semaglutide Injection in Canada, ahead of Health Canada's review target date. The authorisation covers the 2 mg/pen (1.34 mg/mL) and 4 mg/pen (1.34 mg/mL). Canada is recognised as the world's second-largest market for Semaglutide, Dr. Reddy's said, citing IQVIA MAT Q3 2025 numbers. With launch preparations under way, it is well-positioned to bring the "important treatment option available to Canadian patients". Semaglutide is indicated for the once-weekly treatment of adult patients with Type 2 diabetes to improve glycemic control, the company said.

वयस्क मरीजों के लिए सप्ताह में एक बार उपचार के रूप में किया जाता है, जिससे ग्लाइसेमिक नियंत्रण बेहतर होता है।

### 30A. DRL gets Canada nod for generic Semaglutide injection DRL को जेनेरिक सेमाग्लूटाइड इंजेक्शन के लिए कनाडा की मंजूरी मिली

- **Dr. Reddy's Laboratories** has received a **Notice of Compliance (NOC)** from **Health Canada** for its generic **Semaglutide Injection**.  
डॉ. रेड्डीज लैबोरेटरीज को अपने जेनेरिक सेमाग्लूटाइड इंजेक्शन के लिए हेल्थ कनाडा से नोटिस ऑफ कंप्लायंस (NOC) प्राप्त हुआ है।
- It has become the **first company** to receive the **market authorisation** for generic **Semaglutide Injection in Canada**, ahead of Health Canada's review target date.  
यह कनाडा में जेनेरिक सेमाग्लूटाइड इंजेक्शन के लिए मार्केट ऑथराइजेशन प्राप्त करने वाली पहली कंपनी बन गई है, जो हेल्थ कनाडा की समीक्षा समय-सीमा से पहले मिला।
- **Canada is recognised as the world's second-largest market for Semaglutide**, Dr. Reddy's said, citing **IQVIA MAT Q3 2025** numbers.  
डॉ. रेड्डीज ने **IQVIA MAT Q3 2025** के आंकड़ों का हवाला देते हुए कहा कि कनाडा सेमाग्लूटाइड के लिए दुनिया का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा बाजार है।
- **Semaglutide is indicated for the once-weekly treatment of adult patients with Type 2 diabetes to improve glycemic control**, the company said.  
कंपनी ने कहा कि सेमाग्लूटाइड का उपयोग टाइप 2 मधुमेह से पीड़ित



<b>GS Paper III: Environment</b>		<b>30 April 2026</b>
<b>TOPICS COVERED</b>		
<b>30A</b>	<b>Why some marine species are speckled with 'eyes'</b> कुछ समुद्री प्रजातियाँ 'आँखों' जैसे धब्बों से युक्त क्यों होती हैं	
<b>30A</b>	<b>Govt. proposes E100 as approved fuel</b> सरकार ने E100 को स्वीकृत ईंधन के रूप में प्रस्तावित किया	

## Why some marine species are speckled with 'eyes'

GS III: Environment  
Divya Ganam

**T**hey look like eyes staring back at you daringly: butterflies have them and so do birds, to ward off predators. Now, it turns out, many marine creatures exhibit "eye spots" on their bodies as a defence against being the next meal of a shark or a large marine mammal.

A new study published in *Nature* delves into the evolutionary history of marine skates and rays to find out the origins of this visual defence.

Why do some anti-predator defences such as spots appear in some groups but are completely absent in others, the authors pondered. "Our results show that you have to look at the full range of options for avoiding predators. Eye spots evolve only under certain ecological and defensive conditions," said lead author Madicken Åkerman, of the Department of Zoology at Stockholm University, Sweden, in a release.

This is one solution among many in the evolutionary arms race between predator and prey, he added. Prey have evolved a large array of defences to avoid predation, including mechanical, visual, chemical and behavioural traits to foil predators, said the paper.

The bombardier beetle is a classic example: it sprays a hot and toxic jet of chemicals to repel predators with startling force.

The scientists examined the co-evolution of conspicuous markings with alternative anti-predator defences and assessed their evolutionary drivers in batoids (skates and rays, superorder Batoidea), a diverse group of cartilaginous fishes comprising over 600 species. "Conspicuous markings are more commonly found in skate and ray species lacking robust anti-predator defences," the study found.

### स्केट्स और रे

मछलियों के विकासात्मक इतिहास का अध्ययन किया।

- Why do some **anti-predator defences** such as spots appear in some groups but are completely absent in others, the authors pondered.

लेखकों ने विचार किया कि क्यों कुछ समूहों में शिकार-रोधी रक्षा

Skates and rays have a large range of predators, including sharks, marine mammals and large fish. While some marine species develop powerful electric organs or venomous spines, others rely on camouflage, and bury themselves in the ocean bed. But smaller-bodied species, without these "weapons", which live in sun-lit shallow waters less than 200 metres deep, were far more likely to develop bold spots or "eyespot," the authors found.

"Eyespots are far from random. They tend to evolve in species that lack strong physical defences, such as venomous tail stings or electric shocks, and that live in bright, shallow waters where visual signals are effective," said senior author J.L. Fitzpatrick in a release.

Interestingly, research found that eyespots almost never evolved directly. Skates, for instance, first gained basic markings that later evolved into concentric-ring eyespots. Smaller species without "weapons" were much more likely to develop bold spots if they lived in well-lit, shallow waters less than 200 metres deep, the paper said.

"Eyespots ... tend to evolve in species that lack strong physical defences, such as venomous tail stings or electric shocks, and that live in bright, shallow waters where visual signals are effective," said Prof. Fitzpatrick. Eyespots "are one solution among many in the evolutionary arms race between predator and prey," per lead author Prof. Åkerman.

Eyespots are far from random. "They tend to evolve in species that lack strong physical defences, such as venomous tail stings or electric shocks, and that live in bright, shallow waters where visual signals are effective," according to Prof. Fitzpatrick.

### 30A. Why some marine species are speckled with 'eyes'

कुछ समुद्री प्रजातियाँ 'आँखों' जैसे धब्बों से युक्त क्यों होती हैं

**Eyespots as anti-predator defence / शिकारी से बचाव के रूप में नेत्र-जैसे धब्बे**

- Now, it turns out, **many marine creatures exhibit "eye spots" on their bodies as a defence against being the next meal of a shark or a large marine mammal.**

अब यह पाया गया है कि कई समुद्री जीव अपने शरीर पर "आंख जैसे धब्बे (आईस्पॉट्स)" प्रदर्शित करते हैं, जो उन्हें शार्क या बड़े समुद्री स्तनधारियों का शिकार बनने से बचाने के लिए एक रक्षा तंत्र है।

A new study published in *Nature* delves into the **evolutionary history** of marine **skates and rays** to find out the origins of this **visual defence**.

*Nature* में प्रकाशित एक नए अध्ययन ने इस **दृश्य रक्षा तंत्र** की उत्पत्ति जानने के लिए समुद्री

**THE POWER OF EYESPOTS**  
NATURE'S DEFENCE AGAINST PREDATORS

- Many marine creatures have "eyespots" on their bodies.
- These eye-like patterns help confuse, scare or mislead predators like sharks and large marine mammals.

**WHAT ARE EYESPOTS?**  
Eyespots are markings that resemble eyes. They create the illusion that a larger animal is watching, deterring predators.

**NEW STUDY INSIGHTS**  
A new study published in *Nature* examined the evolutionary history of marine skates and rays (batoids) to understand the origins of this visual defence.

**KEY QUESTION**  
Why do some species evolve eyespots while others don't? How do they face similar predators?

**DEFENCE STRATEGIES IN NATURE**

MECHANICAL	CHEMICAL	BEHAVIOURAL	VISUAL (EYESPOTS)
Porcupine uses its body to scare bigger predators.	Bombardier beetle sprays hot, toxic chemicals.	Octopus changes colour and texture to blend with surroundings.	Eyespots trick predators by appearing like mirrored eyes.

**ABOUT SKATES & RAYS (BATOIDS)**

- A diverse group of cartilaginous fishes.
- Over 500 species worldwide.
- Face many predators: sharks, marine mammals, large fish, etc.

**EXAMPLES OF EYESPOTS IN NATURE**

Butterfly	Peacock Peacock	Owl	Blue-spotted Ray
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**WHY EYESPOTS WORK**  
Predator sees "eyes", hesitates / confuses. More chance for prey to escape.

**NATURE'S MESSAGE:** Survival is all about adaptation, and sometimes, a pair of fool eyes can be the difference between life and death.



तंत्र, जैसे धब्बे, दिखाई देते हैं जबकि अन्य में पूरी तरह अनुपस्थित होते हैं।

- “Our results show that you have to look at the full range of options for **avoiding predators**. “हमारे परिणाम दर्शाते हैं कि **शिकारियों से बचने** के लिए उपलब्ध सभी विकल्पों पर विचार करना आवश्यक है।
- The **bombardier beetle** is a classic example: it sprays a hot and toxic jet of chemicals to repel predators with startling force.  
बॉम्बार्डियर बीटल इसका एक प्रसिद्ध उदाहरण है: यह शिकारियों को दूर भगाने के लिए गरम और विषैले रसायनों की धारा छोड़ता है।
- This is a diverse group of **cartilaginous fishes** comprising over **600 species**. यह उपास्थि युक्त मछलियों का एक विविध समूह है, जिसमें 600 से अधिक प्रजातियां शामिल हैं।
- While some marine species develop powerful electric organs or venomous spines, others rely on **camouflage** and bury themselves in the **ocean bed**.  
जहां कुछ समुद्री प्रजातियां शक्तिशाली विद्युत अंग या विषैले कांटे विकसित करती हैं, वहीं अन्य छलावरण (कैमोफ्लेज) का उपयोग करके समुद्र तल में छिप जाती हैं।
- But smaller-bodied species, without these “weapons”, which live in sun-lit shallow waters less than 200 metres deep, were far more likely to develop bold spots or eyespots.  
लेकिन छोटे आकार की प्रजातियां, जिनके पास ये “हथियार” नहीं होते और जो 200 मीटर से कम गहराई वाले धूपयुक्त उथले जल में रहती हैं, उनमें स्पष्ट धब्बे या आईस्पॉट्स विकसित होने की अधिक संभावना होती है।
- “Eyespots are far from random.  
“आईस्पॉट्स बिल्कुल भी यादृच्छिक नहीं होते।
- They tend to evolve in species that lack strong physical defences, such as venomous tail stings or electric shocks, and that live in bright, shallow waters where visual signals are effective,” said senior author J.L. Fitzpatrick.  
ये उन प्रजातियों में विकसित होते हैं जिनमें मजबूत शारीरिक रक्षा तंत्र नहीं होते, जैसे विषैले डंक या विद्युत झटके, और जो उज्ज्वल उथले जल में रहती हैं, जहां दृश्य संकेत प्रभावी होते हैं,” वरिष्ठ लेखक जे.एल. फिट्ज़पैट्रिक ने कहा।

## Govt. proposes E100 as approved fuel

GS III: Environment  
Jagriti Chandra  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a draft notification proposing to recognise E100 (or 100% ethanol) as an approved automotive fuel, clearing the way for certification and large-scale production of vehicles

capable of running entirely on ethanol. The proposed amendments relate to Rule 115, sub-rule (18) of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules (CMVR), which governs the recognition and specification of alternative fuels in India.

A key change allows vehicles earlier approved for up to 85% ethanol

blends to now be certified for 100% ethanol, paving the way for pure ethanol-powered vehicles rather than just blended fuel options. A senior government official explained that the amendments will allow for “homologation” and type approvals of E-100 powered vehicles by agencies like Automotive Research

Association of India, facilitating their roll-out and adoption by consumers.

Homologation is the official certification process ensuring a vehicle, or its components, complies with government technical, safety, and environmental regulations before it can be sold or used on public roads.

### 30A. Govt. proposes E100 as approved fuel

सरकार ने E100 को स्वीकृत ईंधन के रूप में प्रस्तावित किया

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a draft notification proposing to recognise E100 (or 100% ethanol) as an approved automotive fuel,

clearing the way for certification and large-scale production of vehicles capable of running entirely on ethanol.

सड़क परिवहन और राजमार्ग मंत्रालय ने एक मसौदा अधिसूचना जारी की है, जिसमें E100 (या 100% एथेनॉल) को स्वीकृत ऑटोमोटिव ईंधन के रूप में मान्यता देने का प्रस्ताव है, जिससे पूरी तरह एथेनॉल पर चलने वाले वाहनों के प्रमाणन और बड़े पैमाने पर उत्पादन का रास्ता साफ होगा।

- A senior government official explained that the amendments will allow for “homologation” and type approvals of E-100 powered vehicles by agencies like Automotive Research Association of India, facilitating their roll-out and adoption by consumers.  
एक वरिष्ठ सरकारी अधिकारी ने बताया कि ये संशोधन E-100 संचालित वाहनों के “होमोलोगेशन” और टाइप अप्रूवल की अनुमति देंगे, जिन्हें ऑटोमोटिव रिसर्च एसोसिएशन ऑफ इंडिया जैसी एजेंसियां प्रमाणित करेंगी, जिससे इनके लॉन्च और उपभोक्ताओं द्वारा अपनाने में सुविधा होगी।
- Homologation is the official certification process ensuring a vehicle, or its components, complies with government technical, safety, and environmental regulations before it can be sold or used on public roads.



होमोलोगेशन एक आधिकारिक प्रमाणन प्रक्रिया है, जो यह सुनिश्चित करती है कि कोई वाहन या उसके घटक सरकारी तकनीकी, सुरक्षा और पर्यावरणीय नियमों का पालन करते हैं, इससे पहले कि उसे सार्वजनिक सड़कों पर बेचा या उपयोग किया जा सके।

<b>GS Paper III: Internal Security</b>		<b>30 April 2026</b>
<b>TOPICS COVERED</b>		
<b>30A</b>	<b>India and Sri Lanka reaffirm maritime ties through bilateral diving exercise in Colombo</b> भारत और श्रीलंका ने कोलंबो में द्विपक्षीय डाइविंग अभ्यास के माध्यम से समुद्री संबंधों की पुष्टि की	
<b>30A</b>	<b>70,000 CAPF personnel will remain in Bengal until further orders: poll body</b> 70,000 CAPF कर्मी आगे के आदेश तक बंगाल में रहेंगे: चुनाव आयोग	
<b>30A</b>	<b>Minister to flag off Vande Bharat from Jammu Tawi</b> मंत्री जम्मू तवी से वंदे भारत को हरी झंडी दिखाएंगे	

## India and Sri Lanka reaffirm maritime ties through bilateral diving exercise in Colombo

GS III: Internal Security  
Saurabh Trivedi  
NEW DELHI

India and Sri Lanka reaffirmed their growing maritime partnership by conducting the fourth edition of the bilateral diving exercise, **IN-SLN DIVEX 2026**, in Colombo from April 21 to 28.

The Indian Navy said that it deployed its diving support and submarine rescue vessel **INS Nireekshak**, while the Sri Lankan Navy fielded its diving teams, jointly enhancing operational coordination and professional synergy.

Focused on complex underwater operations, the exercise was aimed at strengthening interoperability through advanced deep-sea diving evolutions, including mixed gas



Indian Navy personnel during the bilateral India-Sri Lanka diving exercise, with **INS Nireekshak** in the background, in Colombo. PTI

diving drills. Divers from both Navies carried out extensive harbour and open-sea dives, demonstrating high levels of operational expertise.

A key highlight of the exercise was the conduct of mixed gas dives off Colombo over the World War-era wrecks **SS Worcester** and **SS Perseus**.

Marking a significant milestone, the divers successfully executed deep-sea dives beyond 55 metres, boosting joint capabilities in underwater search, rescue and salvage operations in the Indian

Ocean Region (IOR), it added.

During the exercise, Rear Admiral S.J. Kumara, Flag Officer Commanding, Western Naval Area of the Sri Lanka Navy, visited **INS Nireekshak** and commended the Indian Navy's continued support in enhancing the training of Sri Lankan divers. He emphasised the importance of sustained exchange of best practices and professional expertise.

In a solemn gesture, the Commanding Officer of **INS Nireekshak** paid homage at the Indian Peace Keeping Force Memorial in Colombo, laying a wreath in honour of Indian soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice during the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka.

Further, extending hu-

manitarian cooperation, two BHISM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita and Maitri) cubes (portable hospital units) were handed over under India's Aarogya Maitri initiative, enhancing disaster response and medical preparedness.

The exercise concluded with a ceremonial send-off for **INS Nireekshak**, symbolising the strong camaraderie and enduring maritime partnership between the two Navies.

IN-SLN DIVEX 2026 stands as a testament to sustained bilateral collaboration, aligned with the MAHASAGAR vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), and a shared commitment to peace, stability and security in the IOR.

**30A. India and Sri Lanka reaffirm maritime ties through bilateral diving exercise in Colombo**

**भारत और श्रीलंका ने कोलंबो में द्विपक्षीय डाइविंग अभ्यास के माध्यम से समुद्री संबंधों की पुष्टि की**

- India and Sri Lanka reaffirmed their growing maritime

partnership by conducting the fourth edition of the bilateral diving exercise, **IN-SLN DIVEX 2026**, in **Colombo** from April 21 to 28.

भारत और श्रीलंका ने 21 से 28 अप्रैल तक **कोलंबो** में आयोजित द्विपक्षीय डाइविंग अभ्यास **IN-SLN DIVEX 2026** के चौथे संस्करण के माध्यम से अपने बढ़ते समुद्री साझेदारी की पुष्टि की।

- The **Indian Navy** said that it deployed its diving support and submarine rescue vessel **INS Nireekshak**, while the **Sri Lankan Navy** fielded its diving teams, jointly enhancing operational coordination and professional synergy.

**भारतीय नौसेना** ने बताया कि उसने अपनी डाइविंग सहायता और पनडुब्बी बचाव पोत **INS निरीक्षक** तैनात किया, जबकि **श्रीलंकाई नौसेना** ने अपनी डाइविंग टीमों को तैनात किया, जिससे संचालन समन्वय और पेशेवर तालमेल में वृद्धि हुई।

- Focused on complex underwater operations, the exercise was aimed at strengthening interoperability through advanced deep-sea diving evolutions, including **mixed gas diving drills**.

जटिल जलमग्न अभियानों पर केंद्रित यह अभ्यास उन्नत गहरे समुद्र में गोताखोरी प्रक्रियाओं, जिसमें **मिक्सड गैस डाइविंग ड्रिल्स** शामिल हैं, के माध्यम से इंटरऑपरेबिलिटी को मजबूत करने के लिए था।

- A key highlight of the exercise was the conduct of mixed gas dives off Colombo over the **World War-era wrecks SS Worcester and SS Perseus**.



TELEGRAM CHANNEL: <https://t.me/patrioticIAS>

YOUTUBE CHANNEL: <https://www.youtube.com/@PatrioticIAS>

CONTACT: 9971932488



अभ्यास का एक प्रमुख आकर्षण कोलंबो के पास **द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध काल के मलबे SS Worcester और SS Perseus पर मिक्सड गैस डाइव्स का संचालन था।**

- Further, extending humanitarian cooperation, **two BHISM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita and Maitri) cubes (portable hospital units) were handed over under India's Aarogya Maitri initiative, enhancing disaster response and medical preparedness.**

इसके अलावा, मानवीय सहयोग को बढ़ाते हुए, भारत की **आरोग्य मैत्री पहल** के तहत दो **BHISM (भारत हेल्थ इनिशिएटिव फॉर सहयोग, हित और मैत्री) क्यूब्स** (पोर्टेबल अस्पताल इकाइयाँ) सौंपे गए, जिससे आपदा प्रतिक्रिया और चिकित्सा तैयारी में सुधार हुआ।

- **IN-SLN DIVEX 2026 stands as a testament to sustained bilateral collaboration, aligned with the MAHASAGAR vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), and a shared commitment to peace, stability and security in the IOR.**

**IN-SLN DIVEX 2026** निरंतर द्विपक्षीय सहयोग का प्रमाण है, जो **MAHASAGAR दृष्टि (क्षेत्रों में सुरक्षा और विकास के लिए पारस्परिक और समग्र प्रगति)** के अनुरूप है, तथा **IOR** में शांति, स्थिरता और सुरक्षा के प्रति साझा प्रतिबद्धता को दर्शाता है।

### **30A. 70,000 CAPF personnel will remain in Bengal until further orders: poll body**

#### **70,000 CAPF कर्मी आगे के आदेश तक बंगाल में रहेंगे: चुनाव आयोग**

- According to an internal communication of the **CRPF, the nodal force for all CAPFs for election-related deployment, 230 companies of the CRPF or 23,000 personnel** would be de-inducted from Thursday.

**CRPF** के आंतरिक संचार के अनुसार, जो चुनाव से संबंधित तैनाती के लिए सभी CAPFs की नोडल फोर्स है, **CRPF की 230 कंपनियाँ या 23,000 कर्मी** गुरुवार से हटाए जाएंगे।

### **Minister to flag off Vande Bharat from Jammu Tawi**

#### **30A. Minister to flag off Vande Bharat from Jammu Tawi**

#### **मंत्री जम्मू तवी से वंदे भारत को हरी झंडी दिखाएंगे**

- Mr. Vaishnaw will also inspect the **Anji Bridge and the Chenab Bridge on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link, a 272-km route** on which the Vande Bharat train operates.

श्री वैष्णव **उधमपुर-श्रीनगर-बारामूला रेल लिंक के 272 किमी मार्ग पर स्थित अंजी ब्रिज और चेनाब ब्रिज का भी निरीक्षण करेंगे, जिस पर वंदे भारत ट्रेन चलती है।**

#### **GS III: Infrastructure**

NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw will flag off the extended Srinagar-Katra Vande Bharat Express service from the Jammu Tawi railway station on April 30.

The train, which previously operated from Srinagar to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra, will now run all the way to Jammu Tawi.

Mr. Vaishnaw will also inspect the **Anji Bridge and the Chenab Bridge on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link, a 272-km route** on which the Vande Bharat train operates.

The Katra-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express was flagged off on June 6 last year. The extended Jammu Tawi-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express will enter regular service from May 2.