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PCS Special:	18 May
18M	Qutub Shahi splendour set to shine at Cannes Film Festival कांस फिल्म महोत्सव में चमकने को तैयार कुतुब शाही वैभव



Dust storm



Tactical formation: A Libyan soldier walks past tanks during the 'Dara' al-Karama 2' military exercises, conducted by the Libyan National Army (LNA), under the command of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, in the Ras al-Alba region in southeastern Libya on Saturday. AFP

Tactical formation: A Libyan soldier walks past tanks during the 'Dara' al-Karama 2' military exercises, conducted by the Libyan National Army (LNA), under the command of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, in the Ras al-Alba region in southeastern Libya on Saturday.

Qutub Shahi splendour set to shine at Cannes Film Festival

PCS

GS I: History
HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's Qutub Shahi heritage is set to gain global recognition as filmmaker and theatre revivalist Mohammad Ali Baig takes the Deccan's history to the Cannes Film Festival with his debut feature film, *Chand Tara*. The film has been selected for a trailer screening at the internationally acclaimed festival on Monday, according to a press release.



Mohammad Ali Baig and Ranjana Srivastava in a still from *Chand Tara*.

Produced by the Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Foundation, *Chand Tara* is based on the legendary tale of 17th century courtesan Taramati and Sultan Abdul-

lah Qutub Shah. The film marks a historic moment for Hyderabad and Telangana as the French Riviera will resonate with the poetry of Quli Qutub Shah, including the famed *Piya*

Baaj Piyaala. Describing the film as "an ode to womanhood", Mr. Baig, a Padma Shri awardee, said the story draws inspiration from the life of Taramati and the historical works of theatre icon Qadir Ali Baig.

The film features a stellar cast and crew. Actors Anupam Kher and Mohan Agashe play key roles, while music composer Karthik Ilaiyaraaja has composed the music. Singers Lucky Ali and Vasundhara Das have lent their voices to the project.

Ranjana Srivastava essays the role of Taramati, while Mohammad Ali Baig portrays Sultan Abdullah Qutub Shah.

18M. Qutub Shahi splendour set to shine at Cannes Film Festival

कांस फिल्म महोत्सव में चमकने को तैयार कुतुब शाही वैभव

Hyderabad's Qutub Shahi heritage is set to gain global recognition as filmmaker and theatre revivalist Mohammad Ali Baig takes Deccan's history to the Cannes Film Festival with his debut feature film, *Chand Tara*.

हैदराबाद की कुतुब शाही विरासत को वैश्विक पहचान मिलने जा रही है, क्योंकि फिल्म निर्माता और थिएटर पुनर्जीवक मोहम्मद अली बेग अपनी पहली फीचर फिल्म चांद तारा के साथ दक्कन के इतिहास को कांस फिल्म

महोत्सव तक ले जा रहे हैं।

- The film has been selected for a trailer screening at the internationally acclaimed festival on Monday, according to a press release. प्रेस विज्ञप्ति के अनुसार, इस फिल्म को सोमवार को अंतरराष्ट्रीय ख्याति प्राप्त महोत्सव में ट्रेलर प्रदर्शन के लिए चुना गया है।
- Produced by the Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Foundation, *Chand Tara* is based on the legendary tale of 17th century courtesan Taramati and Sultan Abdullah Qutub Shah. कादिर अली बेग थिएटर फाउंडेशन द्वारा निर्मित चांद तारा 17वीं शताब्दी की प्रसिद्ध गणिका तारामती और सुल्तान अब्दुल्ला कुतुब शाह की पौराणिक कथा पर आधारित है।
- The film marks a historic moment for Hyderabad and Telangana as the French Riviera will resonate with the poetry of Quli Qutub Shah, including the famed *Piya Baaj Piyaala*. यह फिल्म हैदराबाद और तेलंगाना के लिए एक ऐतिहासिक क्षण है क्योंकि फ्रेंच रिवेरा में कुली कुतुब शाह की कविताएं, जिनमें प्रसिद्ध *पिया बाज पियाला* भी शामिल है, गूंजेंगी।
- Describing the film as "an ode to womanhood", Mr. Baig, a Padma Shri awardee, said the story draws inspiration from the life of Taramati and the historical works of theatre icon Qadir Ali Baig.



फिल्म को "नारीत्व को समर्पित" बताते हुए पद्मश्री पुरस्कार प्राप्त श्री बेग ने कहा कि यह कहानी तारामती के जीवन और थिएटर जगत के महान व्यक्तित्व कादिर अली बेग के ऐतिहासिक कार्यों से प्रेरणा लेती है।

- Actors **Anupam Kher** and **Mohan Agashe** play key roles, while music composer **Karthik Ilaiyaraaja** has composed the music.

अभिनेता अनुपम खेर और मोहन आगाशे ने प्रमुख भूमिकाएं निभाई हैं, जबकि संगीतकार कार्तिक इलैयाराजा ने संगीत तैयार किया है।

- Singers **Lucky Ali** and **Vasundhara Das** have lent their voices to the project.

गायक लकी अली और वसुंधरा दास ने इस परियोजना के लिए अपनी आवाज दी है।

- Ranjana Srivastava** essays the role of **Taramati**, while **Mohammad Ali Baig** portrays **Sultan Abdullah Qutub Shah**.

रंजना श्रीवास्तव ने तारामती की भूमिका निभाई है, जबकि मोहम्मद अली बेग ने सुल्तान अब्दुल्ला कुतुब शाह का किरदार निभाया है।

GS Paper 1: History		18 May 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
18M	Return of Chola-era copper plates should spark efforts for further repatriations, say Indian archaeologists चोल कालीन ताम्रपत्रों की वापसी से अन्य धरोहरों की वापसी के प्रयास तेज होने चाहिए, भारतीय पुरातत्वविदों ने कहा	
18M	Nalanda University revives ancient debate tradition नालंदा विश्वविद्यालय ने प्राचीन वाद-विवाद परंपरा को पुनर्जीवित किया	
18M	QUIZ	

Fish by the basket



All in the game: People catching fish with willow wicker baskets during a festival at Panzath Nag in Kulgam, Kashmir on Sunday. Every May, hundreds of people take to the water to fish and to clean the spring, restoring the waterbody ahead of the paddy harvest. www.istock.com

All in the game: People catching fish with willow wicker baskets during a festival at Panzath Nag in Kulgam, Kashmir on Sunday. Every May, hundreds of people take to the water to fish and to clean the spring, restoring the waterbody ahead of the paddy harvest.



Return of Chola-era copper plates should spark efforts for further repatriations, say Indian archaeologists

GS I: History

T.S. Subramanian
CHENNAI

The return of the Chola-era Anaimangalam copper plates charter from the Netherlands this week marks a watershed event in the history of the repatriation of India's invaluable bronzes, stone sculptures, and carved temple pilasters, according to historians and archaeologists.

The artefacts, which have been in the possession of Leiden University for almost two centuries and are popularly known as the Leiden copper plates, were presented in a ceremony at the Hague on Saturday, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Dutch counterpart, Rob Jetten.

"This is the first time that the Chola-period copper plates are being brought back to India," said V. Vedachalam, an archaeologist who specialises in the Pandya, the Pallava and the Chola copper plate charters, welcoming the development.

"We should make efforts to bring back the Velvikudi copper plates issued by



The Chola-era copper plates, which were handed back to India by the Netherlands on Saturday, and, right, the tower of the Buddha vihara, called Chulamanivarma Vihara, near Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu, which was demolished by Jesuit priests in 1867. PTI

the Pandya ruler Parantaka Nedunchadaiyan (regnal years 765-815 CE) from the British Museum, London, to Tamil Nadu," he added.

'Enduring history'

Former Tamil Nadu Archaeology Minister Thangam Thenarasu, who is also a scholar of Chola history, said the Anaimangalam copper plate inscriptions were "enduring records of Tamil history, culture, and the grandeur of the Chola era".

The late R. Nagaswamy, who was the director of the Tamil Nadu State Depart-

ment of Archaeology, had described the artefacts in this way in a 2009 lecture: "One of the most important copper plates of Raja Raja Chola I (regnal years 985-1014 CE) is from Anaimangalam near Nagapattinam."

The plates recorded Raja Raja Chola I's gift of land at Anaimangalam village to a Buddha *vihara*, he had said. This *vihara* was built by the king Sri Mara Vijayotunga Varman of Java in the name of his father Sri Chudamani Varman, and so was called the Chulamanivarma Vihara.

Unfortunately, the tow-



er of the *vihara* itself was demolished by Jesuit priests in 1867, with the permission of the colonial government of Madras.

Buddhist vihara

"The plates are an interesting example of how a Saivite king helped in building a Buddha *vihara*," Nagaswamy said, according to an article published in *The Hindu* on December 25, 2009.

While Raja Raja Chola I gave the order for building the Buddha *vihara*, it was his son Rajendra Chola I (regnal years 1014-1044 CE), who implemented the

command. This is mentioned in the larger Leiden plates, Dr. Vedachalam said.

The Chulamanivarma *Vihara* was also called the Raja Raja Cholan Perumpalli (or the big *vihara*), during the time of Rajendra Chola I.

"The Leiden copper plates... are a complete set of 21 large plates and three small plates. The large plates were committed to writing by Rajendra Chola I in five Sanskrit plates and 16 Tamil plates, honouring his father Raja Raja's oral commitment," says K. Kirubanidhi in the book titled *Epic saga of the Cholas: Their art, temples and heritage*, first published by *The Hindu* in August 2023.

"The small plates in Tamil, later given effect to by Kulottunga Chola I (regnal years 1070-1120 CE), talk about the additional grants made to the *sangha* associated with the *vihara* in Nagapattinam," Mr. Kirubanidhi wrote.

Dr. Vedachalam added that two emissaries from the Javanese kingdom appealed to Kulottunga Chola I to ensure the implemen-

tation of Raja Raja Chola I's order.

Kulottunga not only gave them that assurance but made a grant of 4,500 *kalam* (an unit of measurement) of paddy plus land to the Chulamanivarma *Vihara*. This was in addition to Raja Raja Chola I's grant of 8,943 *kalam* of paddy.

Chola insignia

The Leiden plates were strung together by a ring bearing the royal insignia of the Chola dynasty. These included a tiger, the royal emblem of the Cholas, the two fish of the Pandyas, the bow of the Cheras, two *chamaras*, the royal parasol, lamps, and a swastika. The inclusion of the two fish and the bow signified that the Cholas had defeated the Pandyas and the Cheras.

The bigger Leiden plates carry the word "Anaimangalam" in Tamil on the royal emblem, and a short *sloka* in Sanskrit in praise of Rajendra Chola I, Dr. Vedachalam said. The small plates carry a brief *sloka* lauding Kulottunga Chola I.

18M. Return of Chola-era copper plates should spark efforts for further repatriations, say Indian archaeologists

चोल कालीन ताम्रपत्रों की वापसी से अन्य धरोहरों की वापसी के प्रयास तेज होने चाहिए, भारतीय पुरातत्वविदों ने कहा

- The return of the **Chola-era Anaimangalam copper plates charter** from the **Netherlands** this week marks a watershed event in the history of the repatriation of India's invaluable bronzes, stone sculptures, and carved temple pilasters, according to historians and archaeologists.

इतिहासकारों और पुरातत्वविदों के अनुसार, इस सप्ताह **नीदरलैंड** से **चोल कालीन आनाइमंगलम ताम्रपत्र**

अभिलेख की वापसी भारत की अमूल्य कांस्य प्रतिमाओं, पत्थर की मूर्तियों और नक्काशीदार मंदिर स्तंभों की वापसी के इतिहास में एक महत्वपूर्ण घटना है।

- The artefacts, which have been in the possession of **Leiden University** for almost two centuries and are popularly known as the **Leiden copper plates**, were presented in a ceremony at **The Hague** on Saturday, in the presence of Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** and his Dutch counterpart, **Rob Jetten**.

ये कलाकृतियां, जो लगभग दो सदियों से **लाइडन विश्वविद्यालय** के पास थीं और लोकप्रिय रूप से **लाइडन**

ताम्रपत्र के नाम से जानी जाती हैं, शनिवार को **द हेग** में आयोजित समारोह में प्रधानमंत्री **नरेंद्र मोदी** और उनके डच समकक्ष **रॉब जेटन** की उपस्थिति में प्रस्तुत की गईं।



- “This is the first time that the **Chola-period copper plates** are being brought back to India,” said **V. Vedachalam**, an archaeologist who specialises in the **Pandya, the Pallava and the Chola copper plate charters**, welcoming the development.
पांड्य, पल्लव और चोल ताम्रपत्र अभिलेखों के विशेषज्ञ पुरातत्वविद वी. वेदाचलम ने इस घटनाक्रम का स्वागत करते हुए कहा, “यह पहली बार है जब **चोल कालीन ताम्रपत्र** भारत वापस लाए जा रहे हैं।”
- “We should make efforts to bring back the **Velvikkudi copper plates issued by the Pandya ruler Parantaka Nedunchadaiyan (regnal years 765-815 CE)** from the **British Museum, London**, to Tamil Nadu,” he added.
उन्होंने आगे कहा, “हमें पांड्य शासक **परांतक नेडुंचडैयन (765-815 ईस्वी)** द्वारा जारी **वेल्विकुडी ताम्रपत्रों** को **ब्रिटिश म्यूजियम, लंदन** से तमिलनाडु वापस लाने के प्रयास करने चाहिए।”
- ‘Enduring history’
‘स्थायी इतिहास’
- Former Tamil Nadu Archaeology Minister **Thangam Thenarasu**, who is also a scholar of Chola history, said the **Anaimangalam copper plate inscriptions were “enduring records of Tamil history, culture, and the grandeur of the Chola era”**.
तमिलनाडु के पूर्व पुरातत्व मंत्री और चोल इतिहास के विद्वान **थंगम थेनारासु** ने कहा कि **आनाइमंगलम ताम्रपत्र अभिलेख** “तमिल इतिहास, संस्कृति और चोल युग की महानता के स्थायी अभिलेख” हैं।
- “One of the most important copper plates of **Raja Raja Chola I (regnal years 985-1014 CE)** is from **Anaimangalam near Nagapattinam**.”
“**राजा राजा चोल प्रथम (985-1014 ईस्वी)** के सबसे महत्वपूर्ण ताम्रपत्रों में से एक **नागपट्टिनम** के पास स्थित **आनाइमंगलम** से है।”
- The plates recorded **Raja Raja Chola I's gift of land at Anaimangalam village to a Buddha vihara**, he had said.
उन्होंने कहा था कि इन ताम्रपत्रों में **राजा राजा चोल प्रथम** द्वारा **आनाइमंगलम गांव** की भूमि एक **बौद्ध विहार** को दान देने का उल्लेख है।
- This vihara was built by the king **Sri Mara Vijayotunga Varman** of Java in the name of his father **Sri Chudamani Varman**, and so was called the **Chulamanivarman Vihara**.
यह विहार जावा के राजा **श्री मारा विजयोतुंग वर्मन** ने अपने पिता **श्री चूडामणि वर्मन** के नाम पर बनवाया था, इसलिए इसे **चूलामणिवर्म विहार** कहा गया।
- “The plates are an interesting example of how a Saivite king helped in building a Buddha vihara,” Nagaswamy said, according to an article published in **The Hindu** on December 25, 2009.
25 दिसंबर 2009 को **द हिंदू** में प्रकाशित एक लेख के अनुसार नागास्वामी ने कहा, “ये ताम्रपत्र इस बात का रोचक उदाहरण हैं कि किस प्रकार एक शैव राजा ने बौद्ध विहार के निर्माण में सहायता की।”
- While **Raja Raja Chola I** gave the order for building the Buddha vihara, it was his son **Rajendra Chola I (regnal years 1014-1044 CE)**, who implemented the command.
हालांकि **राजा राजा चोल प्रथम** ने बौद्ध विहार के निर्माण का आदेश दिया था, लेकिन उनके पुत्र **राजेंद्र चोल प्रथम (1014-1044 ईस्वी)** ने उस आदेश को लागू किया।
- This is mentioned in the larger **Leiden plates**, Dr. Vedachalam said.
डॉ. वेदाचलम ने कहा कि इसका उल्लेख बड़े **लाइडेन ताम्रपत्रों** में मिलता है।
- The **Chulamanivarman Vihara** was also called the **Raja Raja Cholan Perumpalli (or the big vihara)**, during the time of **Rajendra Chola I**.
राजेंद्र चोल प्रथम के समय में **चूलामणिवर्म विहार** को **राजा राजा चोलन पेरुमपल्ली** (अर्थात बड़ा विहार) भी कहा जाता था।
- “The Leiden copper plates are a complete set of 21 large plates and three small plates.”
“लाइडेन ताम्रपत्र 21 बड़े और तीन छोटे ताम्रपत्रों का पूर्ण संग्रह हैं।”
- “The large plates were committed to writing by **Rajendra Chola I** in five Sanskrit plates and 16 Tamil plates, honouring his father Raja Raja's oral commitment,” says **K. Kirubanidhi** in the book titled **Epic saga of the Cholas: Their art, temples and heritage**.



के. किरुबानिधि ने अपनी पुस्तक **Epic saga of the Cholas: Their art, temples and heritage** में लिखा है, “बड़े ताम्रपत्रों को **राजेंद्र चोल प्रथम** ने पांच संस्कृत और 16 तमिल ताम्रपत्रों में लिखवाया, जिससे उन्होंने अपने पिता राजा राजा की मौखिक प्रतिज्ञा का सम्मान किया।”

- “The small plates in Tamil, later given effect to by **Kulottunga Chola I** (regnal years 1070-1120 CE), talk about the additional grants made to the sangha associated with the vihara in Nagapattinam,” Mr. Kirubanidhi wrote.
श्री किरुबानिधि ने लिखा, “तमिल में लिखे छोटे ताम्रपत्र, जिन्हें बाद में **कुलोतुंग चोल प्रथम** (1070-1120 ईस्वी) ने प्रभावी बनाया, नागपट्टिनम के विहार से जुड़े संघ को दिए गए अतिरिक्त अनुदानों का उल्लेख करते हैं।”
- Dr. Vedachalam added that **two emissaries from the Javanese kingdom** appealed to **Kulottunga Chola I** to ensure the implementation of Raja Raja Chola I's order.
डॉ. वेदाचलम ने बताया कि **जावानी राज्य** के दो दूतों ने **कुलोतुंग चोल प्रथम** से राजा राजा चोल प्रथम के आदेश को लागू करने की अपील की थी।
- **Kulottunga not only gave them that assurance but made a grant of 4,500 kalam of paddy plus land to the Chulamanivarma Vihara.**
कुलोतुंग ने न केवल उन्हें आश्वासन दिया बल्कि **चूलामनिवर्म विहार** को **4,500 कलम** धान और भूमि का अनुदान भी दिया।
- This was in addition to **Raja Raja Chola I's** grant of **8,943 kalam** of paddy.
यह **राजा राजा चोल प्रथम** द्वारा दिए गए **8,943 कलम** धान के अनुदान के अतिरिक्त था।

Chola insignia

चोल राजचिह्न

- **The Leiden plates were strung together by a ring bearing the royal insignia of the Chola dynasty.**
लाइडेन ताम्रपत्रों को **चोल वंश** के राजचिह्न वाली एक अंगूठी से एक साथ बांधा गया था।
- These included a tiger, the royal emblem of the Cholas, the two fish of the Pandyas, the bow of the Cheras, two chamaras, the royal parasol, lamps, and a swastika.
इनमें चोलों का राजचिह्न बाघ, पांड्यों की दो मछलियां, चेरों का धनुष, दो चंवर, राजछत्र, दीपक और स्वस्तिक शामिल थे।
- **The inclusion of the two fish and the bow signified that the Cholas had defeated the Pandyas and the Cheras.**
दो मछलियों और धनुष का शामिल होना इस बात का प्रतीक था कि चोलों ने पांड्यों और चेरों को पराजित किया था।
- The **bigger Leiden plates** carry the word “Anaimangalam” in Tamil on the royal emblem, and a short sloka in Sanskrit in praise of **Rajendra Chola I**, Dr. Vedachalam said.
डॉ. वेदाचलम ने कहा कि बड़े **लाइडेन ताम्रपत्रों** पर राजचिह्न में तमिल में “आनाइमंगलम” शब्द अंकित है और **राजेंद्र चोल प्रथम** की प्रशंसा में संस्कृत में एक छोटा श्लोक लिखा गया है।

GS I: History

Nalanda University revives ancient debate tradition

Bihar's Nalanda University has formally integrated the ancient Indian tradition of *Śāstrārtha*, a historical form of philosophical, religious, and intellectual debate, by including it in the programme for the University's third convocation being held this week. The initiative, called 'Śāstrārtha 2026', is a platform for dissertation defence and scholarly debate spread over two days, on May 17 and 18. Over the course of two days, the University is hosting 23 thematic *Śāstrārtha* panels spanning Buddhist Studies, Hindu Studies, Archaeology, Ecology, International Relations, Sustainable Development, Literature, and Philosophy.

• The **small plates** carry a brief sloka lauding **Kulottunga Chola I**.
छोटे ताम्रपत्रों में **कुलोतुंग चोल प्रथम** की प्रशंसा में संक्षिप्त श्लोक अंकित है।

18M. Nalanda University revives ancient debate tradition



नालंदा विश्वविद्यालय ने प्राचीन वाद-विवाद परंपरा को पुनर्जीवित किया

- **Bihar's Nalanda University** has formally integrated the ancient Indian tradition of **Śāstrārtha**, a historical form of philosophical, religious, and intellectual debate, by including it in the programme for the University's third convocation being held this week.
बिहार के नालंदा विश्वविद्यालय ने इस सप्ताह आयोजित होने वाले विश्वविद्यालय के तीसरे दीक्षांत समारोह के कार्यक्रम में प्राचीन भारतीय परंपरा शास्त्रार्थ को शामिल करके उसे औपचारिक रूप से पुनर्जीवित किया है, जो दार्शनिक, धार्मिक और बौद्धिक वाद-विवाद का एक ऐतिहासिक स्वरूप है।
- The initiative, called '**Śāstrārtha 2026**', is a platform for dissertation defence and scholarly debate spread over two days, on **May 17 and 18**.
'शास्त्रार्थ 2026' नामक यह पहल शोध प्रबंधों की रक्षा और विद्वत्तापूर्ण वाद-विवाद का मंच है, जो 17 और 18 मई को दो दिनों तक आयोजित किया जा रहा है।
- Over the course of two days, the University is hosting **23 thematic Śāstrārtha panels** spanning **Buddhist Studies, Hindu Studies, Archaeology, Ecology, International Relations, Sustainable Development, Literature, and Philosophy**.
इन दो दिनों के दौरान विश्वविद्यालय 23 विषयगत शास्त्रार्थ पैनलों की मेजबानी कर रहा है, जिनमें बौद्ध अध्ययन, हिंदू अध्ययन, पुरातत्व, पारिस्थितिकी, अंतरराष्ट्रीय संबंध, सतत विकास, साहित्य और दर्शनशास्त्र जैसे विषय शामिल हैं।

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily

quiz: 1. At which historic 1928 meeting was the word "Socialist" formally added to the Hindustan Republican Association's name? **Ans: The September 8–9, 1928, meeting at Feroz Shah Kotla**

2. What organisational post did Sukhdev hold in the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association after the 1928 restructuring? **Ans: Organisational Secretary for Punjab**

3. Which specific incident convinced many HSRA revolutionaries that constitutional protest alone would not weaken colonial rule? **Ans: The fatal lathi-charge injuries suffered by Lala Lajpat Rai during protests against the Simon Commission in 1928**

4. What was the official title of the Lahore Conspiracy Case in which Sukhdev was a principal accused? **Ans: "Crown vs. Sukhdev and Others"**

5. On what date were Sukhdev, Bhagat Singh, and Rajguru executed? **Ans: March 23, 1931**

Visual: Identify this police officer who was assassinated in 1928 in retaliation for the death of Lala Lajpat Rai?

Ans: John P. Saunders

Early Birds: Tamal Biswas | K.N. Viswanathan | Varghese Joseph | Prem Raj P.

Secretary for Punjab.

- The fatal **lathi-charge injuries** suffered by Lala Lajpat Rai during protests against the **Simon Commission** in 1928.
- The brutal lathi-charge on Lala Lajpat Rai during the anti-**Simon Commission** protest in Lahore on 30 October 1928 deeply influenced HSRA revolutionaries. Rai later died from his injuries, which convinced many young revolutionaries that peaceful constitutional methods alone could not challenge British repression effectively.

18M. QUIZ

- At which historic **1928 meeting** was the word "**Socialist**" formally added to the **Hindustan Republican Association's** name?

Answer

- The **September 8–9, 1928 meeting at Feroz Shah Kotla, Delhi**.
- The **secret meeting held at Feroz Shah Kotla in Delhi on 8–9 September 1928** transformed the **Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)** into the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**.
 - Revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and Chandrasekhar Azad added the word "**Socialist**" to reflect their commitment to social and economic equality along with political freedom.
- After the reorganisation of the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)** in 1928, Sukhdev Thapar was appointed as the **Organisational**



- The official title of the famous **Lahore Conspiracy Case** was “**Crown vs. Sukhdev and Others.**” The case was initiated by the British colonial government against HSRA revolutionaries, including **Sukhdev Thapar, Bhagat Singh, and Shivaram Rajguru.**
- They were accused of involvement in revolutionary activities, including the **assassination of British police officer J.P. Saunders in 1928.**
- Sukhdev Thapar, Bhagat Singh, and Shivaram Rajguru were executed by the British government on **23 March 1931** in Lahore Central Jail.
- They were **sentenced to death in the Lahore Conspiracy Case for the assassination of British officer J.P. Saunders.**
- Their execution turned them into national martyrs and inspired millions in India’s freedom struggle. Every year, **23 March is observed as Shaheed Diwas (Martyrs’ Day)** in their honour across India.

GS Paper 1: Geography		18 May 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
18M	With 33 all-new crest gates, Tungabhadra dam gets a fresh lease of life 33 नए क्रेस्ट गेट्स के साथ तुंगभद्रा बांध को मिला नया जीवन	
18M	Drone strikes UAE’s nuclear power plant perimeter, strains ceasefire ड्रोन हमले ने यूएई के परमाणु ऊर्जा संयंत्र की परिधि को निशाना बनाया, संघर्षविराम पर बढ़ा दबाव	

With 33 all-new crest gates, Tungabhadra dam gets a fresh lease of life

GS1 Geography
Kumar Bhatnagar
KALABURAGI

When Crest Gate no. 19 of the Tungabhadra dam near Hosapete, Karnataka, was washed away on August 10, 2024, it triggered panic among lakhs of farmers dependent on the reservoir for irrigation.

The massive reservoir, considered the lifeline of north Karnataka and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, was then brimming with 105,788 tmcft of water at the Full Reservoir Level (FRL) of 1,633 feet. Within minutes of the

chain link snapping, nearly 35,000 cuses of water began gushing uncontrollably through the damaged bay. Engineers scrambled to open the remaining gates to reduce pressure on the structure even as fears mounted downstream.

What began as a terrifying engineering emergency soon evolved into one of the biggest dam rehabilitation exercises undertaken in recent years. The crisis triggered intense technical efforts, political attention, farmers’ anxiety and inter-State coordination.

Nearly two years later, it has culminated in the replacement of all the 33 crest gates. The old ones operated through an overhead bridge mechanism involving chains, gearboxes, motors and counterweights. For nearly seven decades, the gates functioned without major overhauling.

When the gates gave way in 2024, experts from Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru, along with engineers from JSW Steel and local fabrication companies, began working. Hydro-mechanical exp-



All hands on deck: The engineering emergency evolved into one of the biggest dam rehabilitation exercises in the nation. SRIDHAR KAVALI

ert N. Kanniah Naidu emerged as a key figure, preparing designs and technical drawings for the temporary stop-log arrangement. The operation itself was extremely risky as the engineers had to work

amid powerful currents and fluctuating discharge conditions.

Stop-log gate installed

Against all odds, the engineers succeeded. On August 17, just seven days after the disaster, the team installed the temporary stop-log gate made up of five massive steel elements. It prevented further catastrophic water loss.

Experts, who inspected the dam later, advised comprehensive replacement of all the 33 crest gates. Following technical committee recommenda-

tions, the Tungabhadra Board decided to replace all 33 spillway gates. The board later entrusted the work to Ahmedabad-based Hardware Tools & Machinery Projects Pvt. Ltd. The dismantling and erection of all the gates was completed in 123 days, between December 24, 2025, and April 25, 2026.

The project also involved the replacement of 68 lifting chains and 100 bevel gear units. Though a detailed examination had found the existing chains to be structurally strong, Deputy Chief Minister D.K.

Shivakumar said that the government had decided to replace all the chains as a precautionary measure.

As the renovated gates prepare to be formally dedicated, the Tungabhadra dam stands not just restored, but renewed. Engineers involved with the project believe the comprehensive replacement of all the 33 crest gates has enhanced the structural safety of the dam and extended its operational life by another 50 years.

The government is planning an inauguration by the end of this month.

18M. With 33 all-new crest gates, Tungabhadra dam gets a fresh lease of life 33 नए क्रेस्ट गेट्स के साथ तुंगभद्रा बांध को मिला नया जीवन

- When **Crest Gate no. 19** of the **Tungabhadra dam near Hosapete, Karnataka**, was washed away on August 10, 2024, it triggered panic among lakhs of farmers dependent on the reservoir for irrigation.

जब कर्नाटक के होसपेटे के पास स्थित तुंगभद्रा बांध का क्रेस्ट गेट संख्या 19 10 अगस्त 2024 को बह गया, तो सिंचाई के लिए जलाशय पर निर्भर लाखों किसानों में घबराहट फैल गई।

- The **massive reservoir, considered the lifeline of north Karnataka and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**, was then brimming with **105.788 tmcft** of water at the **Full Reservoir Level (FRL)** of 1,633 feet.

उत्तरी कर्नाटक और आंध्र प्रदेश तथा तेलंगाना के कुछ हिस्सों की जीवनरेखा माने जाने वाला यह विशाल जलाशय उस समय 1,633 फीट के पूर्ण जलाशय स्तर (FRL) पर 105.788 टीएमसीएफटी पानी से भरा हुआ था।

- The project also involved the replacement of **68 lifting chains and 100 bevel gear units.** इस परियोजना में 68 लिफ्टिंग चेन और 100 बेवल गियर यूनिट्स का प्रतिस्थापन भी शामिल था।



Drone strikes UAE's nuclear power plant perimeter, strains ceasefire

No one claims responsibility, but suspicion falls on Iran due to its rising tensions with the UAE; the \$20-bn Barakah plant, built with South Korean support and operational since 2020, is the first commercial nuclear power plant in the Arab world

GS I: Geography:
Mapping
DUBAI

A drone strike targeted the United Arab Emirates' Barakah nuclear power plant on Sunday, setting an electrical generator ablaze on its perimeter and again straining the shaky ceasefire in the Iran war.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which caused no radiological release nor injuries, authorities in the UAE's capital, Abu Dhabi, said. However, suspicion immediately fell on Iran, which has been increasingly threatening the UAE over recent days as the coun-



Shaky truce: No injuries were reported in the fire at the Barakah nuclear power plant in the western Al Dhafra region. AFP

try hosted Israeli Iron Dome missile defences and troops during the war.

The attack comes as Iran still has a chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, a

vital waterway where a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas passed through before the war, disrupting global energy supplies. Meanwhile, America conti-

nues to block Iranian ports in response as negotiations to solidify the ceasefire have failed to advance.

U.S. President Donald Trump has suggested hostilities could resume, and Iranian state television has repeatedly aired segments with anchors holding Kalashnikov-style rifles in an effort to prepare the public for war. Meanwhile, fire exchanges between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon have been rising in recent days as well, threatening a separate ceasefire there.

The \$20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant was built by the UAE with the help of South Korea and went online in 2020. It is

the first and only nuclear power plant on the Arabian Peninsula and can provide a quarter of all the energy needs in the UAE. It is also the first commercial nuclear power plant in the Arab world.

The UAE's nuclear regulator said the fire didn't impact the plant safety. "All units are operating as normal," the organisation wrote on X.

The UAE statement didn't blame any party for the attack. Sunday's strike marked the first time the four-reactor Barakah plant has been targeted in the Iran war. The plant sits in the far western deserts of Abu Dhabi.

18M. Drone strikes UAE's nuclear power plant perimeter, strains ceasefire

ड्रोन हमले ने यूएई के परमाणु ऊर्जा संयंत्र की परिधि को निशाना बनाया, संघर्षविराम पर बढ़ा दबाव

- The **\$20-billion Barakah plant**, built with **South Korean support and operational since 2020**, is the first commercial nuclear power plant in the Arab world.

दक्षिण कोरिया के सहयोग से बना 20 अरब डॉलर का बराकाह संयंत्र, जो 2020 से चालू है, अरब दुनिया का पहला वाणिज्यिक परमाणु ऊर्जा संयंत्र है।

- A drone strike targeted the **United Arab Emirates' Barakah nuclear power plant** on Sunday, setting an electrical generator ablaze on its perimeter and again straining the shaky ceasefire in the Iran war.

रविवार को एक ड्रोन हमले ने संयुक्त अरब अमीरात के बराकाह परमाणु ऊर्जा संयंत्र को निशाना बनाया, जिससे उसकी परिधि पर स्थित एक विद्युत जनरेटर में आग लग गई और ईरान युद्ध में नाजुक संघर्षविराम पर फिर दबाव बढ़ गया।

- However, suspicion immediately fell on **Iran**, which has been increasingly threatening the UAE over recent days as the **country hosted Israeli Iron Dome missile defences and troops during the war**.

हालांकि, संदेह तुरंत ईरान पर गया, जिसने हाल के दिनों में यूएई को धमकियां दी हैं क्योंकि युद्ध के दौरान वहां इजरायली आयरन डोम मिसाइल रक्षा प्रणाली और सैनिक तैनात थे।

- The attack comes as Iran still has a chokehold on the **Strait of Hormuz**, a vital waterway where **a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas passed through before the war**, disrupting global energy supplies.

यह हमला ऐसे समय हुआ है जब ईरान अभी भी हॉर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य पर नियंत्रण बनाए हुए है, जो एक महत्वपूर्ण जलमार्ग है जहां से युद्ध से पहले दुनिया के पांचवें हिस्से का तेल और प्राकृतिक गैस गुजरता था, जिससे वैश्विक ऊर्जा आपूर्ति प्रभावित हुई है।



- U.S. President **Donald Trump** has suggested hostilities could resume, and Iranian state television has repeatedly aired segments with anchors holding **Kalashnikov-style rifles in an effort to prepare the public for war.**
अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति **डोनाल्ड ट्रंप** ने संकेत दिया है कि शत्रुता फिर शुरू हो सकती है, और ईरानी सरकारी टेलीविजन लगातार ऐसे कार्यक्रम प्रसारित कर रहा है जिनमें एंकर कलाशिकोव शैली की राइफलें पकड़े दिखाई दे रहे हैं, ताकि जनता को युद्ध के लिए तैयार किया जा सके।
- Meanwhile, fire exchanges between **Israel** and **Hezbollah** in **Lebanon** have been rising in recent days as well, threatening a separate ceasefire there.
इस बीच, हाल के दिनों में **लेबनान** में **इजरायल** और **हिजबुल्लाह** के बीच गोलीबारी भी बढ़ गई है, जिससे वहां अलग संघर्षविराम को खतरा पैदा हो गया है।
- The **\$20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant** was built by the UAE with the help of **South Korea** and went online in 2020.
20 अरब डॉलर का बराकाह परमाणु ऊर्जा संयंत्र यूएई ने दक्षिण कोरिया की मदद से बनाया था और यह 2020 में चालू हुआ।
- It is the first and only nuclear power plant on the Arabian Peninsula and can provide a quarter of all the energy needs in the UAE.
यह अरब प्रायद्वीप का पहला और एकमात्र परमाणु ऊर्जा संयंत्र है और यूएई की कुल ऊर्जा जरूरतों का एक-चौथाई हिस्सा पूरा कर सकता है।
- It is also the first commercial nuclear power plant in the Arab world.
यह अरब दुनिया का पहला वाणिज्यिक परमाणु ऊर्जा संयंत्र भी है।

GS Paper II: Polity		18 May 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
18M	Ordinance increases number of SC judges to 37 अध्यादेश से सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीशों की संख्या 37 की गई	
18M	Shah to chair Central Zonal Council meet in Bastar शाह बस्तर में केंद्रीय क्षेत्रीय परिषद की बैठक की अध्यक्षता करेंगे	
18M	One-horse races are no triumph for democracy एकतरफा चुनाव लोकतंत्र की विजय नहीं होते	
18M	Voting patterns of government employees in recent elections हालिया चुनावों में सरकारी कर्मचारियों के मतदान पैटर्न	

Ordinance increases number of SC judges to 37

President Droupadi Murmu has promulgated an ordinance, which will be taken up by Parliament when it convenes; the move is a step towards tiding over crisis of pendency of cases plaguing the court: current backlog of cases stands at over 93,000, which is threatening to reach six figures rapidly even as the court goes into summer recess in June

GS II: Polity

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu has promulgated an ordinance increasing the number of judges in the Supreme Court to 37 – excluding the Chief Justice of India.

The May 16 Gazette notification says “Parliament is not in session and the President is satisfied that the circumstances exist which render it necessary for her to take immediate action [issue of ordinance]”.

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, has been promulgated in accordance with the powers of the President under Article 123 of the

Constitution. The ordinance will be placed in both Houses of Parliament when it convenes. It will cease to operate if six weeks expire without any resolution passed on it after the reassembly of Parliament or if resolutions are passed in both Houses of Parliament disapproving the ordinance.

The President can withdraw the ordinance at any time.

Strength crisis

The ordinance has amended Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 to replace the word “thirty-three” with “thirty-seven”.

The promulgation has happened nearly two weeks after the Union Ca-

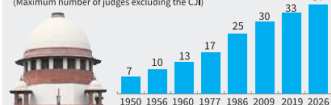
Judicial numbers

The top court currently has a backlog of over 93,000 cases, which is threatening to reach six figures even as the court is going into summer recess, or “partial working days”, in June

The Framers of the Constitution had originally in Article 124(1) envisaged a Supreme Court consisting of the CJI and “not more than seven judges” until “Parliament by law prescribes a larger number”

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 as originally enacted, provided for the maximum number of judges (excluding the CJI) to be 10

Graph shows increase in strength of the Supreme Court (Maximum number of judges excluding the CJI)



binet approved the proposal to increase the number of Supreme Court judges. With the ordinance in place, the total sanctioned judicial strength in the Su-

preme Court, including the Chief Justice of India, will rise from 34 to 38. The move is seen as a step towards tiding over the continuing crisis of

pendency plaguing the court for years now, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, when the facility of e-filing of cases caught on.

The current backlog is over 93,000 cases.

The backlog is threatening to reach six figures even as the court is going into summer recess, or “partial working days”, in June.

Six-year hiatus

The government’s approval for more judges in the Supreme Court had come after a six-year hiatus. Parliament had last amended Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 in 2019, raising the sanctioned strength from 30 to 33, excluding

the Chief Justice of India.

At present, there are two judicial vacancies in the top court. These are of the previous Chief Justice of India, Justice B.R. Gavai, who retired in November 2025, and Justice Rajesh Bindal, who completed office in April 2026.

Three more judges are scheduled to retire in 2026. Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Pankaj Mithal will end their tenure in June, and Justice Sanjay Karol in August.

The Framers of the Constitution had originally in Article 124(1) envisaged a Supreme Court consisting of the Chief Justice of India and “not more than seven judges” until “Parliament by law prescribes a larger number”,

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act 1956, as originally enacted, provided for the maximum number of judges (excluding the CJI) to be 10.

This number was increased to 13 by the Supreme Court (Number of Judges), Amendment Act, 1960, and to 17 by another amendment to the law.

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1986, augmented the strength of the Supreme Court judges from 17 to 25, excluding the CJI. Subsequently, a fresh amendment in 2009 further augmented the strength of top court judges from 25 to 30.

This was followed by the previous amendment in 2019.



18M. Ordinance increases number of SC judges to 37

अध्यादेश से सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीशों की संख्या 37 की गई

- **President Droupadi Murmu** has promulgated an ordinance, which will be taken up by **Parliament when it convenes**; the move is a step towards tiding over crisis of **pendency of cases** plaguing the court; current backlog of cases stands at **over 93,000**, which is threatening to reach six figures rapidly even as the court goes into summer recess in June.
राष्ट्रपति द्रौपदी मुर्मू ने एक अध्यादेश जारी किया है, जिसे संसद के सत्र शुरू होने पर प्रस्तुत किया जाएगा; यह कदम अदालत को प्रभावित कर रहे मुकदमों के लंबित रहने के संकट से निपटने की दिशा में उठाया गया है; वर्तमान में मामलों का लंबित बोझ 93,000 से अधिक है, जो जून में अदालत के ग्रीष्मकालीन अवकाश में जाने तक तेजी से एक लाख तक पहुंचने की आशंका पैदा कर रहा है।
- The **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026**, has been promulgated in accordance with the powers of the President under **Article 123** of the Constitution.
सुप्रीम कोर्ट (न्यायाधीशों की संख्या) संशोधन अध्यादेश, 2026 संविधान के अनुच्छेद 123 के तहत राष्ट्रपति की शक्तियों के अनुसार जारी किया गया है।
- The ordinance will be placed in both Houses of Parliament when it convenes.
संसद के सत्र शुरू होने पर इस अध्यादेश को संसद के दोनों सदनों में रखा जाएगा।
- **It will cease to operate if six weeks** expire without any resolution passed on it after the reassembly of Parliament or if resolutions are passed in both Houses of Parliament disapproving the ordinance.
यदि संसद के पुनः एकत्र होने के बाद छह सप्ताह तक इस पर कोई प्रस्ताव पारित नहीं होता है या संसद के दोनों सदनों द्वारा अध्यादेश को अस्वीकार करने वाले प्रस्ताव पारित कर दिए जाते हैं, तो यह अध्यादेश प्रभावहीन हो जाएगा।
- The ordinance has amended **Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956** to replace the word **“thirty-three” with “thirty-seven”**.
अध्यादेश ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट (न्यायाधीशों की संख्या) अधिनियम, 1956 की धारा 2 में “तीस” शब्द को “सैंतीस” से प्रतिस्थापित कर दिया है।
- The **promulgation has happened nearly two weeks after the Union Cabinet approved the proposal to increase the number of Supreme Court judges**.
यह अध्यादेश केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल द्वारा सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीशों की संख्या बढ़ाने के प्रस्ताव को मंजूरी देने के लगभग दो सप्ताह बाद जारी किया गया है।
- With the ordinance in place, the total sanctioned judicial strength in the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice of India, will rise from 34 to 38.
अध्यादेश लागू होने के बाद, भारत के मुख्य न्यायाधीश सहित सुप्रीम कोर्ट की कुल स्वीकृत न्यायिक संख्या 34 से बढ़कर 38 हो जाएगी।
- Parliament had **last amended Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 in 2019, raising the sanctioned strength from 30 to 33**, excluding the Chief Justice of India.
संसद ने आखिरी बार 2019 में सुप्रीम कोर्ट (न्यायाधीशों की संख्या) अधिनियम, 1956 की धारा 2 में संशोधन किया था, जिसमें भारत के मुख्य न्यायाधीश को छोड़कर स्वीकृत संख्या 30 से बढ़ाकर 33 की गई थी।
- The Framers of the Constitution had originally in **Article 124(1) envisaged a Supreme Court consisting of the Chief Justice of India and “not more than seven judges” until “Parliament by law prescribes a larger number”**.
संविधान निर्माताओं ने मूल रूप से अनुच्छेद 124(1) में भारत के मुख्य न्यायाधीश और “सात से अधिक नहीं



न्यायाधीशों" वाले सुप्रीम कोर्ट की परिकल्पना की थी, जब तक कि "संसद कानून द्वारा बड़ी संख्या निर्धारित न कर दे।"

- The **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act 1956**, as originally enacted, provided for the maximum number of judges (excluding the CJI) to be 10.

मूल रूप से लागू किए गए **सुप्रीम कोर्ट (न्यायाधीशों की संख्या) अधिनियम 1956** में न्यायाधीशों की अधिकतम संख्या (मुख्य न्यायाधीश को छोड़कर) 10 निर्धारित की गई थी।

- This number was increased to 13 by the **Supreme Court (Number of Judges), Amendment Act, 1960**, and to 17 by another amendment to the law.

इस संख्या को **सुप्रीम कोर्ट (न्यायाधीशों की संख्या) संशोधन अधिनियम, 1960** द्वारा बढ़ाकर 13 किया गया और बाद में एक अन्य संशोधन द्वारा 17 किया गया।

- The **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1986**, augmented the strength of the Supreme Court judges from 17 to 25, excluding the CJI.

सुप्रीम कोर्ट (न्यायाधीशों की संख्या) संशोधन अधिनियम, 1986 ने मुख्य न्यायाधीश को छोड़कर सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीशों की संख्या 17 से बढ़ाकर 25 कर दी।

- Subsequently, a fresh amendment in 2009 further augmented the strength of top court judges from 25 to 30.

इसके बाद 2009 में एक नए संशोधन द्वारा शीर्ष अदालत के न्यायाधीशों की संख्या 25 से बढ़ाकर 30 कर दी गई।

- This was followed by the previous amendment in 2019.

इसके बाद 2019 में पिछला संशोधन किया गया।

18M. Shah to chair Central Zonal Council meet in Bastar

शाह बस्तर में केंद्रीय क्षेत्रीय परिषद की बैठक की अध्यक्षता करेंगे

- Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** arrived in **Raipur** on Sunday on a three-day visit to **Chhattisgarh** during which he will attend a series of programmes and chair a meeting of the **Central Zonal Council** in **Bastar** region.

केंद्रीय गृह मंत्री **अमित शाह** रविवार को **छत्तीसगढ़** के तीन दिवसीय दौरे पर **रायपुर** पहुंचे, जहां वह कई कार्यक्रमों में भाग लेंगे और **बस्तर** क्षेत्र में **केंद्रीय क्षेत्रीय परिषद** की बैठक की अध्यक्षता करेंगे।

- It is Mr. Shah's first visit to **Chhattisgarh** after the State was declared free from **Maoists** on March 31.

31 मार्च को राज्य को **माओवादियों** से मुक्त घोषित किए जाने के बाद यह श्री शाह की **छत्तीसगढ़** की पहली यात्रा है।

- On Tuesday, the Union Home Minister will **chair the meeting of the Central Zonal Council** in Jagdalpur from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., which will be attended by the Chief Ministers of **Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand** and **Chhattisgarh**.

मंगलवार को केंद्रीय गृह मंत्री सुबह 11 बजे से दोपहर 2 बजे तक जगदलपुर में **केंद्रीय क्षेत्रीय परिषद** की बैठक की अध्यक्षता करेंगे, जिसमें **मध्य प्रदेश, उत्तर प्रदेश, उत्तराखंड** और **छत्तीसगढ़** के मुख्यमंत्री शामिल होंगे।

Shah to chair Central Zonal Council meet in Bastar

GS II: Polity
Press Trust of India
RAIPUR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived in Raipur on Sunday on a three-day visit to Chhattisgarh during which he will attend a series of programmes and chair a meeting of the Central Zonal Council in Bastar region.

It is Mr. Shah's first visit to Chhattisgarh after the State was declared free from Maoists on March 31.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said Mr. Shah's visit will give new momentum to development works in the State and further strengthen the government's resolve for a safe and prosperous Bastar.

Mr. Shah landed at Swami Vivekananda Airport here shortly after 8 p.m. and was received by Mr. Sai, Deputy CM Vijay Sharma, State Ministers and other leaders of the party.

Mr. Shah left for a hotel in Nava Raipur Atal Nagar, where he will stay overnight, officials said.

On Monday, at around 10.40 a.m., Mr. Shah will flag off new vehicles for the State police emergency response service 'Dial 112' and mobile forensic science laboratory from the parade ground of Police Training School in Raipur, a government official said.

He will then leave for Bastar district and visit Natanar village, where he will inaugurate a 'Jan Suvidha Kendra' aimed at providing easier access to government and digital services in remote areas, the official said.

Mr. Shah will then go to Amar Vatika in Jagdalpur at 1.30 p.m. to pay tribute to security personnel who laid down their lives in the service of the nation, the official said.

On Tuesday, the Union Home Minister will chair the meeting of the Central Zonal Council in Jagdalpur from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., which will be attended by the Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh.

He will address a press conference in Jagdalpur later before leaving for Delhi, the official informed.



One-horse races are no triumph for democracy

GS II Polity

There was an industrialist whose company was doing exceptionally well. In a decade since its inception, it captured over 40% of the market share. When I asked him, "Having reached thus far, what do you perceive as your biggest challenge going forward?", he paused for a while, his eyes gazing into the distant future, and replied gravely: "Lack of competition."

Ask cricketing legends who have been successful batsmen and they will tell you that their finest innings were those played against formidable bowling attacks, not the centuries scored against minnows. Even spectators enjoy a seesaw, hard-fought contest more than a tame one-sided affair, even if it involves their favourite player trouncing a neophyte.

As in business and sports, competition is the haemoglobin of a democracy. It gives meaning to the precept of "rule by the people" by allowing citizens to "fire" incumbents and choose alternatives, thereby liberating them from the TINA ("there is no alternative") trap. However, that presupposes the existence of rivals with the capacity to contest, and challengers who aspire to win against the odds because they believe in the fairness of the system.

Mandates require genuine contest

It is ironic that the rules of the game, as far as elections are concerned, do not consider competition essential to an electoral outcome. Section 53(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, provides for "unopposed" winners, which means that competition takes place only when enough players enter the fray. Otherwise, one can have a contestant but no contest, a winner without a game, and a people's representative without a single vote cast in his favour – a walkover "killing" both the game and its spirit.

For a player to tout his victory there should have been a contest. For a government to claim legitimacy, the electorate must believe that those elected 'earned' (pun unintended) their position through a fair process. You can win power without a contest; not a mandate. Competition also gives 'losers' hope that they can try to win in the future, making them accept fair electoral outcomes. Peaceful transition of power is one of the healthiest achievements of any electoral democracy.

Competition and contestation enable differing ideologies and social classes to flourish. Going by the economic logic of competition breeding efficiency, it would be reasonable to expect political parties to refine their policies as opponents always look to highlight failures.



Ashok Lavasa

Former Election Commissioner of India and former Union Finance Secretary

Political scientist Robert Dahl referred to a system with high participation but low contestation (like one-party States with high voter turnout) as a "plebiscitary autocracy" rather than a true democracy.

However, competition also presupposes a level playing field and a neutral referee to ensure that. The absence of either tilts the scales against challengers, minimising their chances of success while also denting their morale and undermining the people's confidence. In fact, the partisanship of a referee tends to rob the victor of the sweet taste of success, even if deserved. One might be seeded higher, have played better than the opponent, enjoy spectators' support, and even deserve to win, but if the referee is seen as partial, the triumph appears tainted.

In West Bengal

Take the example of the West Bengal Assembly elections. Anti-incumbency could well have influenced the voters' choice, and the winning party may have run an effective campaign for its resounding victory. And yet, its performance stands tarnished by accusations of favouritism against the constitutionally designated umpire mandated to provide the "superintendence, direction, and control" of the electoral process.

The outcome is being linked to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls (ER), and analysts have presented constituency-wise data showing deletions of electors that exceed the victory margins, suggesting that the result might have been different but for the SIR.

That the SIR was unwarranted is established by the inability of the process to identify those "ineligible" in terms of Article 326, which was the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s war cry when it commenced the SIR in Bihar in June 2025. Neither at the end of the Bihar SIR nor for the States in the second round has the ECI released figures on the "ineligible" electors weeded out for not meeting the eligibility conditions under Article 326. There have, no doubt, been deletions through the SIR, but these pertain to "permanently shifted, dead, or duplicate" entries, which could have been removed through the normal revision process mandated before every poll.

What we had instead in West Bengal was over 60 lakh electors included in the electoral rolls under the "under adjudication" category, with 27.16 lakh of them deleted after a lightning exercise carried out by judicial officers hastily appointed by the Supreme Court of India. Over 700 judicial officers sprinted through a marathon in their 'supreme' effort to accomplish the impossible task of disposing these cases in a short

span of time. Those whose claims were rejected were asked to appear before non-existent Appellate Tribunals.

How, when, and even whether their appeals will be heard is hard to tell, going by the experience of those placed on the doubtful voters (D-voter) list a few years ago in Assam. No official data is in the public domain to indicate whether their voting rights have been restored or whether they remain in limbo. Soon, the 27 lakh affected in West Bengal may join those "missing in action". The cruel irony is that the ECI excluded Assam from the current SIR process, even though the National Register of Citizens prepared there a few years ago classified over 19 lakh people as "non-citizens", yet their voting rights remain unaffected.

A neutrality that faces scrutiny

The ECI has invited an indelible taint by engineering a system that made such omission possible under its 'superintendence'. What sanctity does its slogan, "No voter to be left behind", hold if 27 lakh electors were treated as jetsam? How could the ECI "direct" the use of the illogical "logical discrepancy" tool that created discrepancies of its own? Why did it allow the legitimate functions of the Electoral Registration Officer to be exercised by a system beyond its "control"? Why did it announce the election schedule if it was not confident of finalising the electoral rolls on time? Why did it abdicate the legal provision that allowed the existing rolls to remain valid in the case of "under adjudication" electors who could not go through the full process because of a paucity of time? Why did the ECI not seek the Court's permission to defer the schedule when a mandatory process could not be completed? That the Court did not think it worthwhile to ask the ECI to "tarry a little", and was willing to "suspend" the voting rights of 27 lakh electors, is inexplicable and unfortunate.

With the gradual fading away of political rivals in the States and at the national level, will we witness more "victories" without a fight because the arena is either bereft of competitors, the challengers are too weak, or the umpire's decisions tilt the balance? Interestingly, the umpire himself would become an "extra" if there were no competition. Neither the "pathbreaking" constitutional reform of One Nation, One Election nor the idea of an Opposition-mukt Bharat is aimed at fostering competition, and that does not augur well. There will be little thrill left in a one-horse race.

That it strikes at the very roots of the democratic character of the nation may be a minor matter.

Democracy demands not merely elections, but also meaningful and fair competition

18M. One-horse races are no triumph for democracy

एकतरफा चुनाव लोकतंत्र की विजय नहीं होते

- **Section 53(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, provides for "unopposed" winners, which means that competition takes place only when enough players enter the fray.** जन प्रतिनिधित्व अधिनियम, 1951 की धारा 53(3) "निर्विरोध" विजेताओं का प्रावधान करती है, जिसका अर्थ है कि प्रतिस्पर्धा तभी होती है जब पर्याप्त खिलाड़ी मैदान में उतरें।

- **Going by the economic logic of competition breeding efficiency, it would be reasonable to expect political parties to refine their policies as opponents always look to highlight failures.** प्रतिस्पर्धा से दक्षता उत्पन्न होने के आर्थिक तर्क के अनुसार, यह अपेक्षा करना उचित होगा कि राजनीतिक दल अपनी नीतियों को परिष्कृत करें, क्योंकि विपक्ष सदैव उनकी विफलताओं को उजागर करने का प्रयास करता है।
- **Political scientist Robert Dahl referred to a system with high participation but low contestation (like one-party States with high voter turnout) as a "plebiscitary autocracy" rather than a true democracy.**

राजनीतिक वैज्ञानिक **रॉबर्ट डहल** ने उच्च भागीदारी किन्तु निम्न प्रतिस्पर्धा वाली व्यवस्था (जैसे उच्च मतदान प्रतिशत वाले एक-दलीय राज्य) को वास्तविक लोकतंत्र के बजाय "जनमताधारित निरंकुशता" कहा था।



- Neither at the end of the Bihar SIR nor for the States in the second round has the ECI released figures on the “ineligible” electors weeded out for not meeting the eligibility conditions under Article 326.

न तो बिहार SIR की समाप्ति पर और न ही दूसरे चरण के राज्यों के लिए ECI ने उन “अयोग्य” मतदाताओं के आँकड़े जारी किए हैं जिन्हें अनुच्छेद 326 की पात्रता शर्तें पूरी न करने के कारण हटाया गया हो।

Voting patterns of government employees in recent elections

In the three States where the ruling parties lost the elections, their vote share among postal votes came down compared with their performance in 2021

DATA POINT

Harish Venkatchalapathi

The Election Commission (EC) allows postal ballots for certain sections of voters, including government employees who are on poll duty, those who are serving in the armed forces, elders aged 85 years or above and persons with disabilities. Among these groups, it is government employees who exercise their franchise through postal votes the most.

Postal votes account for only a minuscule percentage of the total votes cast in the elections (Table 1). However, it serves as a useful proxy to understand how the people who are part of the ruling establishment, that is, the government employees voted in the elections. Consequently, it can also serve as an indicator to gauge the anti-incumbency sentiment against the ruling party among the State's administrative workforce.

An analysis of the recently concluded Assembly elections in the States of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and the Union Territory (UT) of Puducherry reveal certain interesting patterns. Of these, the incumbent governments were voted out in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, while they were retained in the other two.

In the three States where the ruling parties lost the elections, their vote share among postal votes came down compared to their performance in 2021 (Table 2). This was true in Puducherry as well even though the All India National Congress (AINRC)-led National Democratic Alliance returned to power in the U.T. Assam was the only place where the ruling BJP saw a noticeable increase in its vote share among those who used postal ballots.

The Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, which had won the previous three elections, saw its share in postal votes dropping

sharply than the drop it witnessed in the remaining votes polled through Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), indicating strong anti-incumbency among government employees. The Trinamool, which secured 41.1% of the EVM votes, took 33.7% of the postal ballots, which was a fall of 13.2 percentage points compared to 2021. The State government employees' sustained protests over delays in disbursement of arrears in Dearness Allowance could have played a role in the Trinamool's performance.

In Kerala, the voting pattern in the postal votes was largely reflective of how the State's overall electorate voted. The Left Democratic Front (LDF), which lost the elections, secured 38.9% in postal votes and 36.8% in votes polled via EVMs. The United Democratic Front (UDF), which won the elections secured 45% in postal votes and 46.1% in EVM votes (Chart 1).

The unusual case is, however, Tamil Nadu. It is the only State where the alliance led by the ruling party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which lost the elections, secured the highest share of postal votes (Chart 1). The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, which emerged as the single largest party, secured the third spot by securing 24.5% votes, which is roughly 10 percentage points lower than its overall vote share. This was DMK's lowest performance among the postal ballots, at least since 2006 (Chart 2). The party has traditionally enjoyed more support among government employees than the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

It is important to note that though there were protests by several sections of government employees during the previous DMK rule, the government also fulfilled a number of promises including the Tamil Nadu Assured Pension Scheme, which remained an unfulfilled demand for over 20 years.

The author is a student of the Chennai Institute of Journalism. The views expressed are personal

Decoding postal ballots

The data for the charts were sourced from the Election Commission of India's results for the Assembly elections of the States of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and the Union Territory of Puducherry



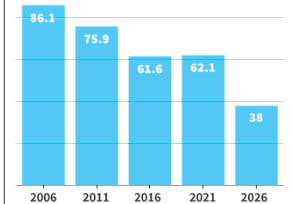
TABLE 1: The share of postal votes in the four States and the Union Territory of Puducherry

State	EVM votes (in cr.)	Postal votes (in lakh)	Total votes (in cr.)	% of postal votes
West Bengal	6.33	4.66	6.38	0.7
Tamil Nadu	4.88	5.22	4.93	1.1
Kerala	2.12	3.52	2.16	1.6
Assam	2.15	1.31	2.17	0.6
Puducherry	0.09	0.12	0.09	1.4

TABLE 2: The vote shares secured by incumbent alliances or parties in postal votes and EVM votes

State / UT	Incumbent party/alliance	% of postal votes (Change since 2021)	% of EVM votes
West Bengal	TMC+	33.7 (-13.2)	41.1
Tamil Nadu	DMK+	38 (-24.2)	31.3
Kerala	LDF	36.3 (-9.6)	36.8
Assam	BJP+	58.3 (+5.6)	47.6
Puducherry	AINRC+	46.3 (-1.22)	38.6

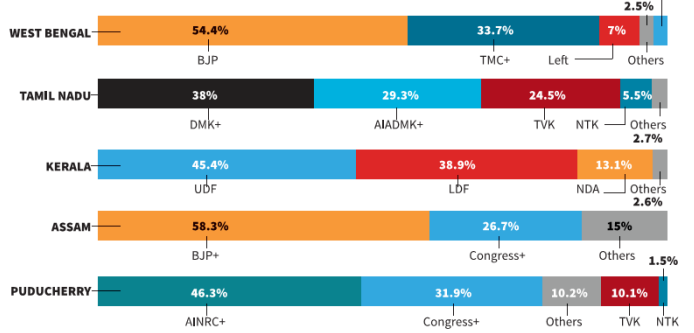
CHART 2: The performance of the DMK-led alliance in the Assembly elections since 2006 in terms of postal votes (in %)



The 2021-to-2026 drop of 24 percentage points is a stark departure from the overwhelming support the DMK had enjoyed, especially after the 2002-2003 mass protests of government employees, which was brutally crushed by the then AIADMK government led by Jayalalithaa, which dismissed around 1.7 lakh employees

**Party and candidate-wise data on postal votes are unavailable for years prior to 2006

CHART 1: How different alliances and parties fared in their shares of postal votes in the four States and the Union Territory of Puducherry



18M. Voting patterns of government employees in recent elections

हालिया चुनावों में सरकारी कर्मचारियों के मतदान पैटर्न

- The Election Commission (EC) allows postal ballots for certain sections of voters, including government employees who are on poll duty, those who are serving in the armed forces, elders aged 85 years or above and persons with disabilities.

निर्वाचन आयोग (EC) कुछ विशेष मतदाता वर्गों को डाक मतपत्र (पोस्टल बैलेट) की सुविधा प्रदान करता है, जिनमें चुनाव ड्यूटी पर तैनात सरकारी कर्मचारी, सशस्त्र बलों में कार्यरत व्यक्ति, 85 वर्ष या उससे अधिक आयु के वरिष्ठ नागरिक तथा दिव्यांगजन शामिल हैं।



GS Paper II: Governance		18 May 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
18M	In Bihar, a plate of woe बिहार में, दुख की एक थाली	
18M	NEET row: Congress ups the ante against Education Minister नीट विवाद: कांग्रेस ने शिक्षा मंत्री के खिलाफ हमला तेज किया	
18M	Centre defends on-screen marking system for Class 12 केन्द्र ने कक्षा 12 के ऑन-स्क्रीन मूल्यांकन प्रणाली का बचाव किया	

SPOTLIGHT

Amarnath Tewary

Instances of contaminated food served to children under the government mandated midday meal in Bihar no longer make the media's big font news. Their regularity numbs the reader into indifference. On May 7, up to 150 students of a government middle school in Bihar's Baluaha village in Saharsa district fell sick and were hospitalised. The children had allegedly spotted a dead baby snake in their watery dal. They were treated at a government hospital and the local Primary Health Centre. The district administration suspended two teachers and all the nine cooks of the school and lodged an FIR against them.

Bharat Kumar Singh, who functions as both the Block Education Officer (BEO) and Block Development Officer (BDO) of Mahishi block, says it is the overall responsibility of the staff to make checks. "We have started our confidence building measures. I, along with the cooks of the school and other teachers, taste the food first to build confidence among students. But they have

been refusing the food, saying their parents have told them not to eat it," rues Anupama Kumari Jha, the school headmistress.

The parents are nervous. "They have told us not to eat the food, so we carry food from home," says one student, with many echoing her.

What was earlier the six days-a-week midday meal scheme in schools was rechristened the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman scheme in 2021.

Bihar Finance Minister Bijendra Prasad Yadav said in his 2026-27 budget speech that 68,812 schools in the State and 1.04 crore students from Class 1-8 are covered under the scheme. Children are given hot cooked meals, either prepared on campus or brought in by an NGO.

Many incidents

Over the years, there have been at least five incidents of food contamination in children's food in the State. In February 2025, about 100 children in Lakhisarai district had symptoms of food poisoning after they complained of a lizard in the food. In April that year, over 100 children in Patna district fell ill and a snake was allegedly found in the food. Later, in September, about 85 children fell sick,

In Bihar, a plate of woe

A week after a suspected snake was found in a midday meal, students in Saharsa district are too scared to eat lunch at school. Teachers, cooks, and education officials insist that the food is safe, but fear continues to linger among the children and their parents

GS II: Governance: Government Scheme



Under lens: The cooking facility of the NGO that supplied food to the school at Baluaha village in Bihar's Saharsa district. Over 150 students allegedly fell ill after consuming the midday meal. AMARNATH TEWARY

again after a lizard was allegedly found in the cooked vegetable.

For Baluaha village, the base kitchen is located a kilometre away. It is run by an NGO, which states it takes all "hygiene precautions" in preparing food

for school students.

"In two blocks of the district, Mahishi and Nauhata, our Delhi-headquartered organisation supplies food to about 18,000 students every day in over 150 government schools," says project coordinator Mo-

hammed Ejaz from the Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Dalit Uthhan Eram Siksha Samiti.

He says 67 staff members, including 16 cooks, work at the NGO to supply food to students in a 10-km radius. The meal is typical-

ly served at 9 a.m. during the morning shift of schools in summer.

"Why was the FIR filed against me? It was the NGO that was supplying food," says the headmistress.

The school principal, Vikas Kumar, was on casual leave that day, she says, making her the in-charge.

The school at Baluaha, some 170 km north of Patna, from where the alleged food contamination report had come on May 7, was established in 1949. It has 828 students with more girls than boys. There are 16 teachers and nine cooks.

"That day [May 7], 543 students had come to school. A school cook, Kaili Devi, asked the students not to eat the food, when she saw something in the dal," says Jha.

By then, some children had started vomiting and complaining of stomach pain. "We called the local Primary Health Centre and police," she says.

Kaili Devi says, "One of the middle-school students started crying out, 'Chilla-chilla (earthworm, earthworm)'. I spotted it too and asked the children not to eat the food."

Saharsa District Programme Officer Shalini Jagriti says the forensics team is determining whether it was snake,

earthworm, or something else. "They have taken a sample of the food and the 'creature' for testing."

Jha is grateful the children were all discharged from the healthcare units.

Even the parents of students who were not in school that day gathered on the school campus and shouted slogans against the administration. "We were panicked," says the headmistress.

One parent says, philosophically, "Life is the only thing that can never be replaced when lost."

Another says, angrily, that the poor were condemned to eat whatever was handed out to them. "Poverty is an injustice," the parent adds.

Delivery shortcomings

The Poshan scheme is shared in cost by the Central and State governments in a ratio of 60:40. As of May 2026, it is running in all 38 districts of Bihar.

In May 2025, a month after over 100 children had fallen sick after eating contaminated school food, the National Human Rights Commission issued a notice to the Bihar government seeking a detailed report on the matter.

In July 2013, in Dharmasati Gandaman Primary school in Masrakh block of

Saran district, 23 students had died after eating a contaminated midday meal.

The incident had hit national and international headlines and the school principal, Meena Devi, was later sentenced to 17 years in jail, 10 years of which are on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and seven years for criminal negligence, though both sentences were to run consecutively and not concurrently.

Trade union report

In 2023, Jan Jagriti Shakti Sangathan, a trade union of unorganised sector workers, released a report titled, 'Where are the Kids? The Curious Case of Government Schools in Bihar'. It was based on a survey of 81 schools in two districts in north Bihar, and offers glimpses into the state of education in the rural parts of the State.

"While it is not clear why NGOs are involved in the first place, the lack of a uniform system for cooking midday meals causes confusion. There have been numerous reports from Bihar where children have fallen sick after eating the midday meal..." the report states.

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18M. In Bihar, a plate of woe

बिहार में, दुख की एक थाली

- What was earlier the six-days-a-week midday meal scheme in schools was rechristened the **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman scheme** in 2021.

जो पहले स्कूलों में सप्ताह में छह दिन चलने वाली मिड-डे मील योजना थी, उसका 2021 में नाम बदलकर **प्रधानमंत्री पोषण शक्ति निर्माण योजना** कर दिया गया।

- The **Poshan scheme** is shared in cost by the Central and State governments in a ratio of 60:40.

पोषण योजना की लागत केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों द्वारा 60:40 के अनुपात में साझा की जाती है।

- As of May 2026, it is running in all 38 districts of Bihar. मई 2026 तक यह बिहार के सभी 38 जिलों में चल रही है।

- In May 2025, a month after over 100 children had fallen sick after eating contaminated school food, the **National Human Rights Commission** issued a notice to the Bihar government seeking a detailed report on the matter.

मई 2025 में, दूषित स्कूल भोजन खाने के बाद 100 से अधिक बच्चों के बीमार पड़ने के एक महीने बाद, **राष्ट्रीय मानवाधिकार आयोग** ने बिहार सरकार को इस मामले में विस्तृत रिपोर्ट मांगी थी।



NEET row: Congress ups the ante against Education Minister

GS II: Governance, Education
The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan must be sacked from the Cabinet for the failures of his Ministry, including the recent paper leak of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has demanded. "He [Mr. Pradhan] has failed every single age group of India's students at once," Mr. Gandhi said in a social media post on Sunday.

At the first instance, the NEET paper leak had affected 22 lakh students, he said. "Then CBSE Class 12 students receiving unexpectedly low marks from a broken OSM [On-Screen Marking] system — many losing their college eligibility. Now lakhs of CBSE Class IX students suddenly asked to learn a new language from July 1, with no teachers, no textbooks, and Class VI books being handed to 14-year-olds as a 'transitional' fix," he said.

There were three exams, three age groups, and one Minister, Mr. Gandhi said.

"Every announcement plunges children deeper into uncertainty. Every failure goes unpunished. The Education Ministry has become a department of disasters," he said, urging



Accused in NEET paper leak case, being escorted to court. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "at least apologise" to the lakhs of children whose futures had been destroyed by the Ministry's actions.

He said the NEET paper leak in 2024 did not lead to the cancellation of exam or the Minister's resignation, with CBI probes and panels in both cases and questioned why leaks keep recurring and the government remains silent. In 2024, the NEET paper was leaked, but the exam was not cancelled, Mr. Gandhi said.

"Mr. Modi, the country is asking you some questions — answer them! Why are paper leaks happening repeatedly? Why are you silent time and again on this 'exam paper discussion'?" he said.

18M. NEET row: Congress ups the ante against Education Minister

नीट विवाद: कांग्रेस ने शिक्षा मंत्री के खिलाफ हमला तेज किया

• "Then **CBSE Class 12** students receiving unexpectedly low marks from a broken **OSM (On-Screen Marking) system** — many losing their college eligibility."

"फिर सीबीएसई कक्षा 12 के छात्रों को खराब ओएसएम (ऑन-स्क्रीन मार्किंग) प्रणाली के कारण अप्रत्याशित रूप से कम अंक मिले — जिससे कई छात्रों की कॉलेज पात्रता समाप्त हो गई।"

Centre defends on-screen marking system for Class 12

New system introduced to improve transparency and with OSM, evaluation can be done even outside the regional office area, says official; mark sheet re-evaluation fee reduced to ₹100

GS II: Governance, Education
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Amid concerns expressed by students and parents over the on-screen marking (OSM) system to evaluate Class 12 answer sheets, the Union Education Ministry and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) defended the method on Sunday.

Union Secretary of School Education Sanjay Kumar and CBSE Chairman Rahul Singh told presspersons here that the aim of OSM was to improve transparency of the system and that students could go for revaluation at a reduced cost.

The officials, when asked if any study was conducted before launching the new system, said the only change in the system was that evaluators, rather than evaluating hard copies of mark sheets, are doing the marking process



Technical upgrade: As a remedial measure, the answer sheets are manually evaluated and fed in the systems, official says. ANI

on-screen. "So, it is not a difference. That has to be appreciated," Mr. Singh said.

OSM for transparency
Mr. Kumar said OSM was a practice followed by various national universities, educational institutions, and many foreign universities too. Seeking to dispel anxieties over the new system among students and parents, he said it would improve evaluation and transparency.

The Union Secretary said that earlier evaluation was generally done within the geographical jurisdiction of the respective regional offices: "However, with OSM, it has now become possible to have answer sheets evaluated even outside the regional office area."

The officials said 98 lakh answer sheets were scanned for Class 12 and three levels of security were followed during the process.

"It was found that despite repeated scanning, there were still some legibility issues because the ink used in some answer sheets was of a very light colour. Even after scanning, those scripts could not be made fully legible," Mr. Kumar said.

When asked about the remedial measures, he said examiners were instructed to evaluate the scripts manually and award marks accordingly. "More than 13,000 such answer sheets were separately identified and manually checked. After manual evaluation, the marks obtained were entered into the system," he said.

Fee for re-evaluation
The officials informed that the CBSE has reduced the fee for viewing mark sheets from ₹700 to ₹100. Fee for verification or validation of the answer sheet, that too will cost ₹100 instead of ₹500.

18M. Centre defends on-screen marking system for Class 12

केंद्र ने कक्षा 12 के ऑन-स्क्रीन मूल्यांकन प्रणाली का बचाव किया

- New system introduced to improve **transparency** and with **OSM**, evaluation can be done even outside the regional office area, says official.

अधिकारी ने कहा कि **पारदर्शिता** बढ़ाने के लिए नई प्रणाली लागू की गई है और **ओएसएम** के माध्यम से क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय क्षेत्र के बाहर भी मूल्यांकन किया जा सकता है।

- **Mark sheet re-evaluation fee reduced to ₹100.**

मार्कशीट पुनर्मूल्यांकन शुल्क घटाकर **₹100** कर दिया गया है।

- Union Secretary of School Education **Sanjay Kumar** and **CBSE Chairman Rahul Singh** told presspersons here that the **aim of OSM was to improve transparency of the system and that students could go for revaluation at a reduced cost.**



स्कूल शिक्षा के केंद्रीय सचिव संजय कुमार और सीबीएसई अध्यक्ष राहुल सिंह ने यहां पत्रकारों से कहा कि ओएसएम का उद्देश्य प्रणाली की पारदर्शिता बढ़ाना है और छात्र कम लागत पर पुनर्मूल्यांकन कर सकते हैं।

- The officials, when asked if any study was conducted before launching the new system, said the only change in the system was that evaluators, rather than evaluating hard copies of mark sheets, are doing the marking process on-screen.
जब अधिकारियों से पूछा गया कि नई प्रणाली लागू करने से पहले कोई अध्ययन किया गया था या नहीं, तो उन्होंने कहा कि प्रणाली में केवल इतना बदलाव हुआ है कि मूल्यांकनकर्ता अब मार्कशीट की हार्ड कॉपी की बजाय ऑन-स्क्रीन मूल्यांकन कर रहे हैं।
- “It was found that despite repeated scanning, there were still some legibility issues because the ink used in some answer sheets was of a very light colour.”
“यह पाया गया कि बार-बार स्कैनिंग के बावजूद कुछ पठनीयता संबंधी समस्याएं बनीं रहीं क्योंकि कुछ उत्तर पुस्तिकाओं में इस्तेमाल की गई स्याही का रंग बहुत हल्का था।”
- “Even after scanning, those scripts could not be made fully legible,” Mr. Kumar said.
“स्कैनिंग के बाद भी उन उत्तर पुस्तिकाओं को पूरी तरह पढ़ने योग्य नहीं बनाया जा सका,” श्री कुमार ने कहा।

GS Paper II: International Relations		18 May 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
18M	Trade, energy, and global conflicts at top of agenda during PM's Norway visit प्रधानमंत्री की नॉर्वे यात्रा के दौरान व्यापार, ऊर्जा और वैश्विक संघर्ष एजेंडे में सबसे ऊपर	
18M	At UN, India flags attacks on vessels in Hormuz strait संयुक्त राष्ट्र में भारत ने होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य में जहाजों पर हमलों का मुद्दा उठाया	
18M	India, Netherlands upgrade bilateral ties, sign 17 pacts भारत और नीदरलैंड ने द्विपक्षीय संबंधों को उन्नत किया, 17 समझौतों पर हस्ताक्षर किए	
18M	Oslo summit must mark India's northward turn	
18M	ओस्लो शिखर सम्मेलन भारत के उत्तरमुखी रुख का संकेतक बनना चाहिए	
18M	U.S., China, and the search for stability अमेरिका, चीन और स्थिरता की खोज	
18M	Philippines asks top court to allow ICC's drug war arrest of senator फिलीपींस ने शीर्ष अदालत से आईसीसी द्वारा सीनेटर की ड्रग युद्ध गिरफ्तारी की अनुमति मांगी	



Trade, energy, and global conflicts at top of agenda during PM's Norway visit

GS II: IR

Suhasini Haidar
OSLO

Trade and energy supplies will top the agenda as Prime Minister Narendra Modi lands here on Monday for the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 43 years to Norway, one of the world's major oil and gas exporters.

Mr. Modi is scheduled to hold talks with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, and both leaders will address a business summit as both countries seek new markets and new technological collaborations.

The visit will also include the 3rd Nordic-India summit, bringing together leaders of the five Nordic Countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark on Tuesday. The summit had to be cancelled last year after the Pahalgam terrorist attack and the four-day India-Pakistan conflict. In addition, discussions on the conflicts in Ukraine, Iran, and Gaza are expected to come up in both bilateral and multilateral discussions.

India and Norway are expected to announce three government-to-government MoUs which will focus on health cooperation, digital infrastructure and space ties. At least 18 MoUs are expected between businesses during the visit, many of which will be in the field of energy. "We are discussing more and more what we can do together on energy, and we are expecting several business-to-business MOUs on the energy side," Norwegian Ambassador to India May-Elin Stener told *The Hindu*, citing a big consignment of LNG delivered to India last week, part of a 15-year deal with Norwegian energy major Equinor.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed in Gothenburg, Sweden. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson is present. PTI

India upgrades bilateral ties with the Netherlands

Suhasini Haidar
OSLO

India and the Netherlands upgraded bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership and signs 17 pacts and MoUs

during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country on Saturday and Sunday.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 4

India hopes to discuss more investment from Norwegian pension funds, the world's wealthiest, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a briefing last week. According to Ministry of External Affairs figures, over 700 Nordic firms operate in India, and around 150 Indian firms have a presence in Nordic regions. India's bilateral trade in goods and services is well below potential, say experts, with about \$19 billion with Nordic countries, and both sides are seeking more collaborations.

The timing of Mr. Modi's visit to Norway and the Nordic Summit is significant, given that the leaders are converging for the first time since 2022, and the Russia-Ukraine war, Israel's attack on Gaza after the October 7 attacks and the U.S.-Israel war with Iran, all are having an impact on the global economy. "The world has changed a lot since [the last Nordic-India Summit].

So, all five Nordic countries are really looking forward to discussing geopolitical issues with the leader of the most populous country, and there will also be a lot of discussions on climate, on green future sustainability and how we can work closely together as democracies," Ambassador Stener said.

Focus will also be on India's response to U.S. sanctions waivers on Russian oil, which lapsed on Saturday.

Mr. Modi held also wide-ranging talks with his Swedish counterpart Ulf Kristersson on Sunday, focusing on trade, technology, defence, and other key sectors. Mr. Modi, who arrived on Sunday, was also awarded the 'Royal Order of the Polar Star, Degree Commander Grand Cross' in recognition of his exceptional contribution to India-Sweden relationship and his visionary leadership.

(With PTI inputs)

18M. Trade, energy, and global conflicts at top of agenda during PM's Norway visit

प्रधानमंत्री की नॉर्वे यात्रा के दौरान व्यापार, ऊर्जा और वैश्विक संघर्ष एजेंडे में सबसे ऊपर

- The visit will also include the **3rd Nordic-India summit**, bringing together leaders of the five Nordic Countries of **Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark** on Tuesday.

इस यात्रा में तीसरा नॉर्डिक-भारत शिखर सम्मेलन भी शामिल होगा, जिसमें मंगलवार को नॉर्वे, स्वीडन, फिनलैंड, आइसलैंड और डेनमार्क के नेताओं को एक साथ लाया जाएगा।

- According to Ministry of External Affairs figures, over **700 Nordic firms** operate in India, and around **150 Indian firms** have a presence in Nordic regions.

विदेश मंत्रालय के आंकड़ों के अनुसार, भारत में **700 से अधिक नॉर्डिक कंपनियां** कार्यरत हैं, और लगभग **150 भारतीय कंपनियों** की नॉर्डिक क्षेत्रों में उपस्थिति है।

- India's bilateral trade in goods and services is well below potential, say experts, with about **\$19 billion** with Nordic countries, and both sides are seeking more collaborations.

विशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि वस्तुओं और सेवाओं में भारत का द्विपक्षीय व्यापार अपनी क्षमता से काफी कम है, जो नॉर्डिक देशों के साथ लगभग **19 अरब डॉलर** है, और दोनों पक्ष अधिक सहयोग की तलाश कर रहे हैं।

- Mr. Modi, who arrived on Sunday, was also awarded the '**Royal Order of the Polar Star, Degree Commander Grand Cross**' in recognition of his exceptional contribution to **India-Sweden relationship** and his visionary leadership.

रविवार को पहुंचे श्री मोदी को **भारत-स्वीडन संबंधों** में उनके असाधारण योगदान और दूरदर्शी नेतृत्व के सम्मान में '**रॉयल ऑर्डर ऑफ द पोलर स्टार, डिग्री कमांडर ग्रैंड क्रॉस**' से भी सम्मानित किया गया।



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

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

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At UN, India flags attacks on vessels in Hormuz strait

GS II: IR

Press Trust of India
UNITED NATIONS

Targeting commercial shipping, endangering civilian crew, and impeding freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz is “un-acceptable”, India’s Permanent Representative to the UN Parvathaneni Harish has said.

The remarks at a special meeting of the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC)** on safeguarding energy and supply flows came days after an India-flagged commercial vessel came under attack off the coast of Oman. Omani authorities rescued all 14 crew members of the vessel sailing from Somalia, but it was not immediately known who carried out the strike.

In a post on X on Sunday, Mr. Harish said that at the meeting, he shared India’s approach to the recent energy and fertilizer crisis caused by the West Asia conflict. “A combination of short-term and structural measures alongside international cooperation are essential to respond to the crisis,” he said.

“Reiterated that targeting of commercial shipping, endangering civilian crew and impeding freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, are unacceptable. International law in this regard must be fully respected,” he added.

18M. At UN, India flags attacks on vessels in Hormuz strait संयुक्त राष्ट्र में भारत ने होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य में जहाजों पर हमलों का मुद्दा उठाया

- The remarks at a special meeting of the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC)** on safeguarding energy and supply flows came days after an India-flagged commercial vessel came under attack off the coast of Oman.

ऊर्जा और आपूर्ति प्रवाह की सुरक्षा पर संयुक्त राष्ट्र आर्थिक और सामाजिक परिषद (UN ECOSOC) की विशेष बैठक में यह टिप्पणी उस घटना के कुछ दिनों बाद आई, जब ओमान के तट के पास भारत के ध्वज वाले एक वाणिज्यिक जहाज पर हमला हुआ था।



India, Netherlands upgrade bilateral ties, sign 17 pacts

Deals inked cover areas of water, agriculture, health, renewable energy, critical minerals and a semiconductor project; govt. pushes back on Dutch concerns over press freedom, minority rights

GS II: IR

Suhasini Haidar
OSLO

India and the Netherlands upgraded bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country on Saturday and Sunday. The two sides signed 17 agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in areas of "WAH" (water, agriculture, and health), renewable energy, critical minerals, and a semiconductor fabrication project between TATA Electronics and Dutch company ASML.

Recently elected Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten said he had raised "sensitive topics" with Mr. Modi, including a legal custody and abduction case involving a Dutch-born child, Insiya. Besides, a number of Dutch media outlets reported that Mr. Jetten spoke about concerns over "press freedoms and minority rights in India", which the External Affairs Ministry later pushed back on.

'New momentum'

Mr. Modi said the meetings had added a "new momentum" to the India-Netherlands ties. "From elevating our relationship to a Stra-



Diplomatic visit: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Dutch counterpart Rob Jetten at a meeting in The Hague on Saturday. ANI

tegic Partnership to expanding cooperation in water resources, semiconductors, innovation, defence, sustainability and mobility, we have charted an ambitious road map for the future," he said in a social media post after leaving the Netherlands. Mr. Modi flew to Sweden on Sunday for a half-day stop as part of his five-nation week-long visit, which will bring him to Oslo on Monday for bilateral talks and the Nordic-India Summit.

"The strategic partnership we are entering into today between India and the Netherlands also offers us opportunities to discuss sensitive topics more frequently," said Prime Minister Jetten during press statement at his official re-

sidence, the Catshuis, where he met with Mr. Modi, Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* reported.

'Lack of understanding'

Mr. Jetten also reportedly said that "the Netherlands and the European Union are worried about press freedom and minority rights, among them the Muslim community and smaller communities". At an External Affairs Ministry briefing on Sunday, two Dutch journalists sought the Ministry's response to the comments and also asked why the Prime Minister had not joined the press conference.

"This question comes because of the lack of understanding," retorted Ministry Secretary (West) Sibi

George in a lengthy response about India's diversity in culture, language, food, and religion to a question from Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant*. "Today we are 1.4 billion people, diverse, living in peace and harmony. And a democratically elected government where peaceful transition of power happens," he said. However, he added that he had not seen the statement by Mr. Jetten that the journalists had referred to, but was giving the "factual position". "You need to have more understanding of India to appreciate what India is," he told another journalist from NRC.

The spokesperson also told *The Hindu* that the Dutch PM "didn't raise anything like that in the bilateral meetings or any other engagement with PM".

Mr. George acknowledged Mr. Jetten raised the case of Insiya, allegedly abducted by her father (an Indian) in 2016, as her mother protested during Mr. Modi's visit, seeking India's help to trace and extradite the child and bring the father to justice. "A case is in the court, it is *sub judice*, so I would not like to comment on this at this stage, but it was raised [by the Dutch PM]," he said.

18M. India, Netherlands upgrade bilateral ties, sign 17 pacts

भारत और नीदरलैंड ने द्विपक्षीय संबंधों को उन्नत किया, 17 समझौतों पर हस्ताक्षर किए

- India and the **Netherlands** upgraded bilateral ties to a **Strategic Partnership** during Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's** visit to the country on Saturday and Sunday.



प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की शनिवार और रविवार को हुई यात्रा के दौरान भारत और नीदरलैंड ने अपने द्विपक्षीय संबंधों को रणनीतिक साझेदारी तक उन्नत किया।

- The two sides signed **17 agreements** and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in areas of “WAH” (water, agriculture, and health), renewable energy, critical minerals, and a **semiconductor fabrication project between TATA Electronics and Dutch company ASML**. दोनों पक्षों ने “WAH” (जल, कृषि और स्वास्थ्य) क्षेत्रों, नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा, महत्वपूर्ण खनिजों और टाटा इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स तथा डच कंपनी ASML के बीच सेमीकंडक्टर निर्माण परियोजना से जुड़े 17 समझौतों और समझौता ज्ञापनों (MoUs) पर हस्ताक्षर किए।

Oslo summit must mark India's northward turn

ESMIR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Oslo on May 18-19 for the third India-Nordic Summit comes as the logic of India's engagement with Northern Europe has fundamentally changed. When India first met the Nordics – Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland – in Stockholm in 2018, and again in Copenhagen in 2022, the relationship was anchored largely in climate cooperation, innovation, digitalisation and the blue economy. Those priorities remain important, but a transformed geopolitical landscape is giving the partnership strategic depth and economic purpose.

The change underway reflects developments beyond bilateral ties. The war in Ukraine has transformed Europe's security order, while strains within the trans-Atlantic alliance have unsettled long-standing assumptions. Denmark, current chair of the Arctic Council, faces renewed pressure from the United States and strategic interest over Greenland.

The spotlight on the Arctic

The Arctic, once insulated from geopolitical rivalry, is emerging as a theatre of competition over shipping routes, energy resources, critical minerals and strategic infrastructure. Finland and Sweden's respective accessions to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have rewired Nordic security architecture, leaving Russia as the Arctic Council's sole non-NATO member. The Russia-China partnership has acquired a polar dimension through cooperation on Arctic shipping and energy. These shifts shape the agenda Mr. Modi will encounter in Oslo.

India and the Nordics now matter more to each other than before, with converging interests in technology, supply chains, maritime security and green energy.

Norway's revised High North strategy balances scientific cooperation with rising security concerns. Denmark, through Greenland, occupies a pivotal position in emerging Arctic sea routes and critical mineral networks. Sweden and Finland contribute advanced defence technologies, innovation ecosystems and Arctic capabilities. Iceland offers geothermal expertise



Ajai Malhotra

Distinguished Fellow and Senior Adviser (Climate Change), TERI, and former Indian Ambassador to Russia, Kuwait, UN/New York, and Romania

directly relevant to India's Himalayan regions.

The Arctic, once defined by scientific cooperation, is increasingly shaped by deterrence, energy rivalry and military positioning. New technologies, from autonomous underwater vehicles to satellite-enabled seabed mapping, are reshaping Arctic security, even as vulnerabilities in undersea cables and critical infrastructure grow.

India joined the Arctic Council as an observer in 2013. Its Himadri research station, IndARC underwater observatory and Gruevbadet atmospheric laboratory, in Norway, give India a meaningful Arctic footprint. But science alone cannot safeguard Indian interests in a region increasingly shaped by geopolitics.

As a stakeholder

India is not an Arctic nation, but it is undeniably an Arctic stakeholder. The Arctic is warming more than three times faster than the global average. Ice loss in the Barents-Kara Sea has been linked to variability in India's summer monsoon, while rising polar melt threatens India's coastline, ports and island territories through sea-level rise.

The commercial and strategic stakes are equally important. Accelerating ice melt is opening Arctic waters to shipping, resource extraction and military deployment. The Northern Sea Route along Russia's Arctic coast is becoming more navigable, with implications for trade and maritime connectivity. Extending the Chennai-Vladivostok corridor to Murmansk and onward to the Nordics would create a maritime link connecting India, Japan, Russia and Northern Europe. India's Arctic engagement with the Nordics can proceed alongside its partnership with Russia; the two are not a zero-sum game.

India must construct a small fleet of five Arctic-capable, ice-class tankers under its Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy by 2030-31. Delay in building such capacity risks locking India out of early-mover advantages in Arctic shipping and energy logistics. An India-Arctic Economic Forum could connect Indian industry with opportunities in manpower, shipping, energy and infrastructure. It could champion an “Arctic-Himalaya Climate Data

Corridor” with the Nordics for joint monitoring of climate linkages affecting monsoons and sea-level rise. India should appoint a Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs. Unlike the four other Asian observer states in the Arctic Council, it lacks one.

Focus areas

Nordic countries lead globally in offshore wind, hydrogen, electric mobility and green shipping, while India's clean-energy ambitions require technology, investment and trusted partnerships. Cooperation must move beyond buyer-seller arrangements towards co-development and production in offshore wind manufacturing, green hydrogen and grid-balancing technologies.

Norway's deep-sea mining ambitions, Sweden's rare earths and iron ore, and Denmark's Greenland link offer supply-chain diversification amid concerns over China's processing dominance. Nordic strengths in telecommunications, semiconductors, batteries, artificial intelligence and advanced materials complement India's scale, engineering talent and manufacturing ambitions, supporting more resilient supply chains.

Maritime cooperation deserves equal attention. India's economic future depends on secure sea lanes, resilient ports and efficient logistics, while Nordic countries lead globally in shipping technology, maritime digitisation, shipbuilding innovation and sustainable port infrastructure. Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have exposed maritime vulnerabilities, making route and partnership diversification strategically valuable. Deeper India-Nordic maritime cooperation would advance the economic and geopolitical interests of both.

For the Nordics, a re-emerging India offers scale, growth and a trusted democratic partner in the Indo-Pacific; for India, the Nordics provide technology, capital and expertise, without hegemonic pressures. As the Arctic becomes more contested and consequential, the Oslo summit should mark the point at which episodic engagement gives way to sustained strategic partnership.

The views expressed are personal

18M. Oslo summit must mark India's northward turn

ओस्लो शिखर सम्मेलन भारत के उत्तरमुखी रुख का संकेतक बनना चाहिए

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Oslo on May 18-19 for the third India-Nordic Summit comes as the logic of India's engagement with Northern Europe has fundamentally changed.

तीसरे भारत-नॉर्डिक शिखर सम्मेलन के लिए 18-19 मई को ओस्लो की यात्रा पर जा रहे प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी का यह दौरा ऐसे समय हो रहा है जब उत्तरी यूरोप के साथ भारत के जुड़ाव का स्वरूप मूलभूत रूप से बदल चुका है।

- When India first met the Nordics — Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland — in Stockholm in 2018, and again in Copenhagen in 2022, the relationship was anchored largely in climate cooperation, innovation, digitalisation and the blue economy.

जब भारत ने पहली बार 2018 में स्टॉकहोम में तथा पुनः 2022 में कोपेनहेगन में नॉर्डिक देशों — नॉर्वे, स्वीडन,



फिनलैंड, डेनमार्क और आइसलैंड — के साथ बैठक की थी, तब यह संबंध मुख्यतः जलवायु सहयोग, नवाचार, डिजिटलीकरण और नीली अर्थव्यवस्था पर आधारित था।

- **Finland and Sweden's** respective accessions to the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** have rewired Nordic security architecture, leaving **Russia** as the Arctic Council's sole non-NATO member.

फिनलैंड और **स्वीडन** के उत्तर अटलांटिक संधि संगठन (NATO) में शामिल होने से नॉर्डिक सुरक्षा संरचना पुनर्गठित हो गई है, जिससे **रूस** आर्कटिक परिषद का एकमात्र गैर-NATO सदस्य रह गया है।

- India and the **Nordics** now matter more to each other than before, with **converging interests in technology, supply chains, maritime security and green energy.**

भारत और **नॉर्डिक देश** अब पहले की तुलना में एक-दूसरे के लिए अधिक महत्वपूर्ण हो गए हैं, क्योंकि प्रौद्योगिकी, आपूर्ति श्रृंखला, समुद्री सुरक्षा और हरित ऊर्जा में उनके हित अभिसारित हो रहे हैं।

- **Denmark, through Greenland, occupies a pivotal position in emerging Arctic sea routes and critical mineral networks.**

डेनमार्क, ग्रीनलैंड के माध्यम से, उभरते आर्कटिक समुद्री मार्गों और महत्वपूर्ण खनिज नेटवर्क में केंद्रीय स्थिति रखता है।

- **Sweden and Finland** contribute advanced defence technologies, innovation ecosystems and Arctic capabilities.

स्वीडन और **फिनलैंड** उन्नत रक्षा प्रौद्योगिकियाँ, नवाचार पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र तथा आर्कटिक क्षमताएँ प्रदान करते हैं।

- **Iceland** offers geothermal expertise directly relevant to India's Himalayan regions.

आइसलैंड भू-तापीय विशेषज्ञता प्रदान करता है, जो भारत के हिमालयी क्षेत्रों के लिए प्रत्यक्ष रूप से प्रासंगिक है।

- The **Arctic, once defined by scientific cooperation, is increasingly shaped by deterrence, energy rivalry and military positioning.**

जो **आर्कटिक** कभी वैज्ञानिक सहयोग से परिभाषित होता था, वह अब प्रतिरोध क्षमता, ऊर्जा प्रतिस्पर्धा और सैन्य तैनाती से अधिक प्रभावित हो रहा है।

- **India joined the Arctic Council as an observer in 2013.**

भारत **2013** में **आर्कटिक परिषद** में पर्यवेक्षक सदस्य के रूप में शामिल हुआ था।

- **Its Himadri research station, IndARC underwater observatory and Gruebadet atmospheric laboratory, in Norway, give India a meaningful Arctic footprint.**

नॉर्वे में स्थित भारत का **हिमाद्रि अनुसंधान केंद्र, IndARC जलमग्न वेधशाला** तथा **Gruebadet वायुमंडलीय प्रयोगशाला** भारत को आर्कटिक क्षेत्र में एक महत्वपूर्ण उपस्थिति प्रदान करते हैं।

- **India is not an Arctic nation, but it is undeniably an Arctic stakeholder.**

भारत एक **आर्कटिक राष्ट्र** नहीं है, किन्तु वह निस्संदेह एक महत्वपूर्ण **आर्कटिक हितधारक** है।

- The **Arctic is warming more than three times faster than the global average.**

आर्कटिक क्षेत्र वैश्विक औसत की तुलना में **तीन गुना अधिक तीव्र गति** से गर्म हो रहा है।

- **Ice loss in the Barents-Kara Sea has been linked to variability in India's summer monsoon, while rising polar melt threatens India's coastline, ports and island territories through sea-level rise.**

बारेन्ट्स-कारा सागर में बर्फ के क्षरण को भारत के **ग्रीष्मकालीन मानसून** में परिवर्तनशीलता से जोड़ा गया है, जबकि ध्रुवीय बर्फ के बढ़ते पिघलाव से समुद्र-स्तर वृद्धि के माध्यम से भारत के तटीय क्षेत्रों, बंदरगाहों और द्वीपीय क्षेत्रों को खतरा उत्पन्न हो रहा है।

- The commercial and strategic stakes are equally important.

व्यावसायिक और रणनीतिक हित भी समान रूप से महत्वपूर्ण हैं।

- **Accelerating ice melt is opening Arctic waters to shipping, resource extraction and military deployment.**

तेजी से पिघलती बर्फ आर्कटिक जलक्षेत्र को समुद्री परिवहन, संसाधन दोहन और सैन्य तैनाती के लिए खोल रही है।



- The **Northern Sea Route** along Russia's Arctic coast is becoming more navigable, with implications for trade and maritime connectivity.
रूस के आर्कटिक तट के साथ स्थित **नॉर्डर्न सी रूट** अधिक नौवहन योग्य बनता जा रहा है, जिसका प्रभाव व्यापार और समुद्री संपर्क पर पड़ेगा।
- Extending the **Chennai-Vladivostok corridor to Murmansk and onward to the Nordics** would create a maritime link connecting India, Japan, Russia and Northern Europe.
चेन्नई-व्लादिवोस्तोक गलियारे को **मुरमान्स्क** और आगे **नॉर्डिक देशों** तक विस्तारित करने से भारत, जापान, रूस और उत्तरी यूरोप को जोड़ने वाला समुद्री संपर्क स्थापित होगा।
- India must construct a small fleet of **five Arctic-capable, ice-class tankers** under its **Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy by 2030-31**.
भारत को **2030-31** तक अपनी **जहाज निर्माण वित्तीय सहायता नीति** के अंतर्गत **पाँच आर्कटिक-सक्षम आइस-क्लास टैंकरों** का एक छोटा बेड़ा तैयार करना चाहिए।
- An **India-Arctic Economic Forum** could connect Indian industry with opportunities in manpower, shipping, energy and infrastructure.
एक **भारत-आर्कटिक आर्थिक मंच** भारतीय उद्योगों को मानव संसाधन, समुद्री परिवहन, ऊर्जा और अवसंरचना के अवसरों से जोड़ सकता है।
- It could champion an **"Arctic-Himalaya Climate Data Corridor"** with the Nordics for joint monitoring of climate linkages affecting monsoons and sea-level rise.
यह नॉर्डिक देशों के साथ मिलकर मानसून और समुद्र-स्तर वृद्धि को प्रभावित करने वाले जलवायु संबंधों की संयुक्त निगरानी हेतु **"आर्कटिक-हिमालय जलवायु डेटा कॉरिडोर"** का समर्थन कर सकता है।
- **India should appoint a Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs**.
भारत को **आर्कटिक मामलों के लिए विशेष दूत** नियुक्त करना चाहिए।
- Unlike the four other Asian observer states in the **Arctic Council**, it lacks one.
आर्कटिक परिषद के अन्य चार एशियाई पर्यवेक्षक देशों के विपरीत, भारत के पास ऐसा कोई विशेष दूत नहीं है।

Focus areas

मुख्य फोकस क्षेत्र

- **Nordic countries lead globally in offshore wind, hydrogen, electric mobility and green shipping, while India's clean-energy ambitions require technology, investment and trusted partnerships.**
नॉर्डिक देश वैश्विक स्तर पर **ऑफशोर पवन ऊर्जा, हाइड्रोजन, विद्युत गतिशीलता और हरित नौवहन** में अग्रणी हैं, जबकि भारत की स्वच्छ ऊर्जा महत्वाकांक्षाओं के लिए प्रौद्योगिकी, निवेश और विश्वसनीय साझेदारियों की आवश्यकता है।
- **Cooperation must move beyond buyer-seller arrangements towards co-development and production in offshore wind manufacturing, green hydrogen and grid-balancing technologies.**
सहयोग को केवल क्रेता-विक्रेता व्यवस्था से आगे बढ़कर ऑफशोर पवन निर्माण, हरित हाइड्रोजन तथा ग्रिड-संतुलन प्रौद्योगिकियों के संयुक्त विकास और उत्पादन की दिशा में ले जाना चाहिए।
- **Norway's deep-sea mining ambitions, Sweden's rare earths and iron ore, and Denmark's Greenland link offer supply-chain diversification amid concerns over China's processing dominance.**
नॉर्वे की गहरे समुद्र में खनन महत्वाकांक्षाएँ, **स्वीडन** के दुर्लभ मृदा तत्व और लौह अयस्क, तथा **डेनमार्क** के **ग्रीनलैंड** से जुड़े संसाधन चीन के प्रसंस्करण प्रभुत्व को लेकर चिंताओं के बीच आपूर्ति श्रृंखला विविधीकरण के अवसर प्रदान करते हैं।



- **Nordic strengths in telecommunications, semiconductors, batteries, artificial intelligence and advanced materials** complement India's scale, engineering talent and manufacturing ambitions, supporting more resilient supply chains.
दूरसंचार, सेमीकंडक्टर, बैटरियों, कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता और उन्नत सामग्री में नॉर्डिक देशों की क्षमताएँ भारत के विशाल पैमाने, इंजीनियरिंग प्रतिभा और विनिर्माण महत्वाकांक्षाओं का पूरक बनती हैं, जिससे अधिक सुदृढ़ आपूर्ति श्रृंखलाओं को समर्थन मिलता है।

U.S., China, and the search for stability

Why did Trump visit China amid its war with Iran? What were the key issues discussed between Trump and Xi? What were the major achievements of the meeting? What does this visit portend for their bilateral relations?

GS II: IR

WORLD INSIGHT

Anand V.

Donald Trump, U.S. President, visited China during May 13-15 to meet with his counterpart, Xi Jinping, after a nine-year gap. The visit was dominated by symbolism and lacked immediate tangible deliverables. Nonetheless, there was a clear acknowledgment from both sides about the need to restore stability after a decade of trade war.

What is the context and significance of Trump's visit to China?

To understand the motivations behind Mr. Trump's visit to China, it is important to look back at the trajectory of U.S.-China relations over the past decade. Mr. Trump's first presidency initiated America's trade war against China in 2018. This was aimed at decoupling the two countries from four decades of economic interdependence, which was increasingly strained by strategic competition.

After Mr. Trump's return as President in 2025, he escalated tariffs on China, prompting equal retaliation from Beijing. Eventually, a one-year trade war truce was announced in South Korea in October 2025 during the APEC summit in Busan – the first and only other time Mr. Trump met Mr. Xi during the former's second term. Though this meeting led to a freeze in the deterioration of U.S.-China ties, a thaw was pending. The recent visit was primarily aimed at initiating this thaw.

The visit is happening at a time when the world is facing an energy crisis resulting from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz during the ongoing Iran-U.S. war. Simultaneously, cross-strait ties between China and Taiwan are under mounting strain, with Taiwan's pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party government facing off against Beijing, which has become increasingly assertive about reunifying the island with the mainland. Given Taiwan's defence ties with the U.S., any cross-strait conflict can flare up into one involving the U.S. Consequently, cooperation between the U.S. and China has become imperative to safeguard global stability.

The visiting delegation was marked by the presence of the most high-profile American business executives representing the key private players in the American economy. The selection of the CEOs in Mr. Trump's business delegation indicated that technology, semiconductors, aerospace, and agriculture were the key focus of the trade discussions. The inclusion of Pete Hegseth was unprecedented, as it marked the first time a sitting U.S. Defence Secretary (now Secretary of War) accompanied an American President on a state visit to China. His presence highlighted the U.S. efforts to dial down the military tensions with China amid the rising cross-strait volatility. By receiving U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio as an official state guest despite its own existing sanctions against him, Beijing underscored its commitment to restoring stability to the bilateral relationship.

What were the expectations from both sides?

Mr. Trump's expectations from the visit seem to be based on three important objectives: salvaging ties with China at a time of global tumult, expanding market access in China amidst domestic challenges, and securing Beijing's support



Strengthening ties: U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, in Beijing on Friday. ANI

to end the war with Iran.

It has to be noted that U.S. mid-term elections are due this year, which will decide the fate of the Trump administration's remaining term. With energy costs climbing, Mr. Trump clearly aimed to use the visit to clinch a trade deal and open the Chinese market to American businesses. He desperately wanted China to buy more chips, aircraft, agricultural produce, and energy. Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, was added to the business delegation at the last minute as Washington sought to convince China to purchase Nvidia's H200 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) in return for easing technology restrictions. The U.S. was also awaiting three deals – the three Bs (beans, beef, and Boeing). China had earlier targeted soybeans and beef during the trade war to inflict pain on the U.S., while purchases of Boeing aircraft had stopped since 2017 amid worsening ties.

Meanwhile, Mr. Xi's expectations centred on keeping the U.S. away from Taiwan and bringing back a much-needed sense of normalcy in bilateral relations with the U.S.

In return for China's diplomatic support towards winding down the Iran-U.S. war, Beijing may have expected Mr. Trump to formally denounce any efforts by the Taiwanese government towards Taiwanese independence. The visit by Cheng Li-wun, opposition leader from the pro-Beijing Kuomintang Party in Taiwan, may also have been timed to strengthen China's negotiating position on Taiwan.

China has high stakes in Iran and the Strait of Hormuz – its ability to resolve the West Asian crisis diplomatically would not just secure its economic interests, but also deepen its strategic foothold in the region. As such as Mr. Xi would like to get some relief from technology restrictions, he may also have wanted to utilise the pageantry of the visit to bolster his image in the domestic political milieu,

where power struggles within the Communist Party of China have reached levels of intensity unseen in decades.

What were the major outcomes of the visit?

The visit turned out to be more symbolic than substantial, with no joint statements published or agreements signed during the visit, contrary to expectations. Likely, the deals are still in process, and the details may emerge in the coming days and weeks.

What stood out during the visit was the personal chemistry between the two leaders, as they indulged in both formal and informal exchange of views for several hours in the Great Hall of the People, the Temple of Heaven, and the Zhongnanhai leadership compound in Beijing. At these venues, Mr. Xi projected China's political and civilisational might in front of Mr. Trump. Some of the remarks and statements made during the interactions offered vague indications about where the two countries wanted to take the bilateral relations.

At the state banquet, Mr. Xi said that China and the U.S. should be "partners rather than rivals" and stressed that both countries "must make it work and never mess it up". According to Chinese readouts, Mr. Xi said that Mr. Trump had agreed on a new vision of a "constructive China-U.S. relationship of strategic stability" for the next three years – the remaining period of Mr. Trump's presidency. Mr. Xi also signalled openness to American exports, telling business leaders accompanying Mr. Trump that "China's doors to the outside world will open wider and wider."

However, Mr. Xi was very categorical about Taiwan to the American delegation. He warned that "the two countries will have frictions or even confrontation" if the U.S. does not handle the Taiwan issue "with great caution".

Mr. Trump, meanwhile, expressed

hope to usher in the "best U.S.-China relationship in history", even using the controversial term "G2". According to him, China had offered to buy 200 Boeing aircraft and 450-500 aircraft engines from the U.S. China's commerce ministry later on confirmed that such arrangements were reached, without details.

As per Mr. Trump, Mr. Xi expressed interest in buying more oil from the U.S. to reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz, and in resolving the regional crisis. He further mentioned that China had agreed to buy American soybeans. It has to be noted that during the visit, China restored the licenses for hundreds of American beef plants.

Although Mr. Trump acknowledged that China is serious about developing its own chip capability, he retained hope about the sales of Nvidia's H200 chips. Mr. Trump held on to America's traditional "strategic ambiguity" about Taiwan during the visit, but he did mention to the American media after the visit that "the last thing we need now is a war 9,500 miles away". Further, he remained vague about going ahead with arms sales to Taiwan.

Even though the visit gave an impression of a likely thaw unfolding, the questions posed by Mr. Xi to his guests remains, and perhaps may remain, unanswered – "can China and the United States overcome the Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major country relations? Can we meet global challenges together and provide greater stability for the world? Can we build a bright future together for our bilateral relations in the interest of the well-being of the two peoples and the future of humanity?"

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THE GIST

The visit was largely symbolic, aimed at initiating a "thaw" in U.S.-China relations after a decade of trade war and strategic competition, with both sides acknowledging the need to restore stability amid global tumult.

Discussions centred on expanding market access, technology and trade issues, including chips, aircraft, soybeans, beef, and energy, while also addressing wider geopolitical pressures such as the Iran crisis and the Taiwan question.

Despite expectations, no major agreements or joint statements were signed, though both Trump and Xi signalled interest in a "constructive China-U.S. relationship of strategic stability" while key tensions and risks of confrontation remain unresolved.



18m. U.S., China, and the search for stability

अमेरिका, चीन और स्थिरता की खोज

- **Mr. Trump's** first presidency initiated America's **trade war** against China in **2018**.
श्री ट्रंप के पहले राष्ट्रपति कार्यकाल के दौरान **2018** में अमेरिका ने चीन के विरुद्ध **व्यापार युद्ध** आरंभ किया था।
- This was aimed at decoupling the two countries from four decades of economic interdependence, which was increasingly strained by strategic competition.
इसका उद्देश्य दोनों देशों को चार दशकों से चली आ रही आर्थिक परस्पर निर्भरता से अलग करना था, जो रणनीतिक प्रतिस्पर्धा के कारण लगातार तनावपूर्ण होती जा रही थी।
- After **Mr. Trump's** return as President in **2025**, he escalated tariffs on **China**, prompting equal retaliation from **Beijing**.
2025 में राष्ट्रपति के रूप में श्री ट्रंप की वापसी के बाद उन्होंने **चीन** पर शुल्क बढ़ा दिए, जिसके प्रत्युत्तर में **बीजिंग** ने भी समान प्रतिक्रिया दी।
- Eventually, a **one-year trade war truce** was announced in **South Korea in October 2025** during the **APEC summit in Busan** — the first and only other time **Mr. Trump** met **Mr. Xi** during the former's second term.
अंततः **अक्टूबर 2025** में **दक्षिण कोरिया के बुसान** में आयोजित **APEC शिखर सम्मेलन** के दौरान एक **एक-वर्षीय व्यापार युद्ध विराम** की घोषणा की गई — यह श्री ट्रंप और श्री शी की ट्रंप के दूसरे कार्यकाल में पहली और एकमात्र अन्य मुलाकात थी।
- Simultaneously, cross-strait ties between **China** and **Taiwan** are under mounting strain, with **Taiwan's** pro-independence **Democratic Progressive Party** government facing off against **Beijing**, which has become increasingly assertive about reunifying the island with the mainland.
साथ ही, **चीन** और **ताइवान** के बीच संबंधों में तनाव लगातार बढ़ रहा है, जहाँ **ताइवान** की स्वतंत्रता समर्थक **डेमोक्रेटिक प्रोग्रेसिव पार्टी** सरकार का सामना **बीजिंग** से हो रहा है, जो द्वीप को मुख्यभूमि के साथ पुनः एकीकृत करने को लेकर अधिक आक्रामक हो गया है।
- Given **Taiwan's** defence ties with the **U.S.**, any cross-strait conflict can flare up into one involving the **U.S.**.
ताइवान के **अमेरिका** के साथ रक्षा संबंधों को देखते हुए, कोई भी चीन-ताइवान संघर्ष अमेरिका को भी सीधे शामिल कर सकता है।
- The selection of the CEOs in **Mr. Trump's** business delegation indicated that **technology, semiconductors, aerospace, and agriculture** were the key focus of the trade discussions.
श्री ट्रंप के व्यावसायिक प्रतिनिधिमंडल में शामिल मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारियों के चयन से यह स्पष्ट हुआ कि **प्रौद्योगिकी, सेमीकंडक्टर, एयरोस्पेस और कृषि** व्यापार वार्ताओं के मुख्य केंद्र थे।
- He desperately wanted **China** to buy more chips, aircraft, agricultural produce, and energy.
वे चाहते थे कि **चीन** अधिक मात्रा में चिप्स, विमान, कृषि उत्पाद और ऊर्जा संसाधनों की खरीद करे।
- **Jensen Huang**, CEO of **Nvidia**, was added to the business delegation at the last minute as **Washington** sought to convince **China** to purchase **Nvidia's H200 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs)** in return for easing technology restrictions.
एनविडिया के मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी **जेनसन हुआंग** को अंतिम समय में व्यावसायिक प्रतिनिधिमंडल में शामिल किया गया, क्योंकि **वाशिंगटन** चीन को तकनीकी प्रतिबंधों में ढील के बदले **एनविडिया** के **H200 ग्राफिक्स प्रोसेसिंग यूनिट्स (GPUs)** खरीदने के लिए राजी करना चाहता था।
- The **U.S.** was also awaiting three deals — the three Bs (**beans, beef, and Boeing**).
अमेरिका तीन प्रमुख समझौतों — तीन B अर्थात् **बीन्स, बीफ और बोइंग** — की भी प्रतीक्षा कर रहा था।
- **China** had earlier targeted soybeans and beef during the trade war to inflict pain on the **U.S.**, while purchases of **Boeing** aircraft had stopped since **2017** amid worsening ties.



चीन ने पहले व्यापार युद्ध के दौरान अमेरिका पर दबाव डालने के लिए सोयाबीन और बीफ को निशाना बनाया था, जबकि संबंधों के बिगड़ने के बीच 2017 से बोइंग विमानों की खरीद भी बंद हो गई थी।

- **Mr. Trump**, meanwhile, expressed hope to usher in the “best U.S.-China relationship in history”, even using the controversial term “G2”. इस बीच, श्री ट्रंप ने “इतिहास के सर्वश्रेष्ठ अमेरिका-चीन संबंध” स्थापित करने की आशा व्यक्त की और यहाँ तक कि विवादास्पद शब्द “G2” का भी उपयोग किया।
- According to him, **China had offered to buy 200 Boeing aircraft and 450-500 aircraft engines from the U.S.** उनके अनुसार, चीन ने अमेरिका से 200 बोइंग विमान तथा 450-500 विमान इंजन खरीदने का प्रस्ताव दिया था।

Philippines asks top court to allow ICC's drug war arrest of senator



GS II: IR

REUTERS

The Philippines said it has asked the country's Supreme Court to allow it to arrest **ex-President Rodrigo Duterte's chief drug war enforcer** to stand trial in the **International Criminal Court**. The ICC last week unsealed an arrest warrant against Senator Ronald Dela Rosa, accusing him of the “crime against humanity of murder”. AFP

“crime against humanity of murder”.

18M. Philippines asks top court to allow ICC's drug war arrest of senator

फिलीपींस ने शीर्ष अदालत से आईसीसी द्वारा सीनेटर की ड्रग युद्ध गिरफ्तारी की अनुमति मांगी

- The **Philippines** said it has asked the **country's Supreme Court** to allow it to arrest **ex-President Rodrigo Duterte's chief drug war enforcer** to stand trial in the **International Criminal Court (ICC)**.

फिलीपींस ने कहा कि उसने देश के सुप्रीम कोर्ट से अनुरोध किया है कि वह पूर्व राष्ट्रपति रोड्रिगो दुतेर्ते के ड्रग युद्ध अभियान के प्रमुख प्रवर्तक को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आपराधिक न्यायालय (आईसीसी) में मुकदमे का सामना करने के लिए गिरफ्तार करने की अनुमति दे।

- The **ICC last week unsealed an arrest warrant against Senator Ronald Dela Rosa**, accusing him of the

आईसीसी ने पिछले सप्ताह सीनेटर रोनाल्ड डेला रोजा के खिलाफ गिरफ्तारी वारंट सार्वजनिक किया, जिसमें उन पर “हत्या के मानवता विरोधी अपराध” का आरोप लगाया गया।

Ebola outbreak in Congo is a global emergency, says WHO

GS II: IR
Associated Press
ABUJA

The World Health Organization on Sunday declared the Ebola disease outbreak caused by a rare virus in Congo and neighbouring Uganda a public health emergency of international concern, after more than 300 suspected cases and 88 deaths.

The WHO said the outbreak did not meet the criteria of a pandemic emergency like COVID-19, and advised against the closure of International Borders.

The WHO said on the X that a laboratory-confirmed case has also been reported in Congo's capital, Kinshasa, which is about 1,000 km from the



Matter of concern: A staff member checks a visitor's temperature, before allowing her inside a hospital in Goma on Sunday. AFP

outbreak's epicentre in the eastern province of Ituri, suggesting a possible wider spread. Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. The disease it causes is rare, but severe and of

ten fatal. By the WHO's standards, it shows the event is serious, there is a risk of international spread and it requires a coordinated response.

Authorities say the current outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo virus.

18M. Ebola outbreak in Congo is a global emergency, says WHO

कांगो में इबोला प्रकोप एक वैश्विक आपातस्थिति है, WHO ने कहा

- The **World Health Organization** on Sunday declared the **Ebola disease outbreak** caused by a rare virus in **Congo** and neighbouring **Uganda** a public health emergency of international concern, after more than 300 suspected cases and 88 deaths.

विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (WHO) ने रविवार को कांगो और पड़ोसी युगांडा में एक दुर्लभ वायरस से फैले इबोला रोग प्रकोप को अंतरराष्ट्रीय चिंता की सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य

आपातस्थिति घोषित किया, जहां 300 से अधिक संदिग्ध मामले और 88 मौतें हुई हैं।



- The WHO said on X that a laboratory-confirmed case has also been reported in Congo's capital, Kinshasa, which is about 1,000 km from the outbreak's epicentre in the eastern province of Ituri, suggesting a possible wider spread.
WHO ने X पर कहा कि कांगो की राजधानी किंशासा में भी एक प्रयोगशाला-पुष्ट मामला सामने आया है, जो पूर्वी प्रांत इटुरी में स्थित प्रकोप के केंद्र से लगभग 1,000 किमी दूर है, जिससे इसके व्यापक फैलाव की आशंका बढ़ गई है।
- Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen.
इबोला अत्यधिक संक्रामक है और यह उल्टी, खून या वीर्य जैसे शारीरिक द्रवों के माध्यम से फैल सकता है।
- The disease it causes is rare, but severe and often fatal.
इससे होने वाली बीमारी दुर्लभ है, लेकिन गंभीर और अक्सर जानलेवा होती है।
- Authorities say the current outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo virus.
अधिकारियों का कहना है कि वर्तमान प्रकोप बंडिबुग्यो वायरस के कारण हुआ है।

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GS III: Economy

Diversification gains

India needs to improve export competitiveness in terms of cost, quality

India's export performance in April 2026 has been commendable, underscoring the attempts by the government and industry to diversify in times of crisis. Despite the various trade disruptions, merchandise exports grew nearly 14% in April 2026 to \$43.6 billion. Some of this, as even the Commerce Secretary has acknowledged, is due to the overall rise in prices. Another significant factor has been the increase in the number of markets served by Indian exporters. According to government data, at least 20 exporting sectors have added 17 or more new destinations in the last year. For example, handloom products are now exported to 29 more countries than in 2024-25. The additional exports thus generated are still small, but establishing these pathways is vital progress. The data also show that several of India's key export sectors – engineering goods, petroleum products, electronic goods, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and organic and inorganic chemicals – exported more in April 2026 than in the same month last year. This suggests resilience in these supply chains, and the establishment of new ones. Another test of the strength of India's export growth is to remove the effect of petroleum products and their inflated prices from the mix. Here, too, India has performed reasonably well. India's non-oil exports grew 9% in April 2026 to about \$40 billion. Notably, India's merchandise export growth also outpaced the growth of its imports at 9.9%.

That said, the impact of the West Asia crisis is clear. Exports to West Asia fell by 28% in April, following up on an even larger contraction in March. Imports from the region, too, fell about 32%. This is a vital trade link for India and gains in other regions are not yet enough to outweigh the losses here. Imports of the safe-haven asset gold jumped 82% in April, which is perhaps what prompted the Prime Minister to urge Indians to stop buying gold, and the government to hike the import duty. Another highlight of the data is the continued rise in the significance of the services sector. The share of services in total exports has risen to about 49% compared to 39% in 2014. Rather than a reason for complacency, this should make the government take note. Any loss of a competitive edge in IT services, especially, due to the rise of Artificial Intelligence, will be an increasingly costly loss to India. Overall, however, the government's push for diversification of export destinations – including through concerted activity to seal various trade deals – seems to be bearing fruit. Now, if only it could also improve export competitiveness in terms of cost, scale, and quality, India would really become a global contender.

गिरावट दर्ज की गई थी।

- Imports of the safe-haven asset gold jumped 82% in April, which is perhaps what prompted the Prime Minister to urge Indians to stop buying gold, and the government to hike the import duty.

सुरक्षित निवेश संपत्ति सोने के आयात में अप्रैल में 82% की वृद्धि हुई, संभवतः इसी कारण प्रधानमंत्री ने भारतीयों से सोना खरीदना बंद करने का आग्रह किया तथा सरकार ने आयात शुल्क बढ़ा दिया।

18M. Diversification gains

विविधीकरण से प्राप्त लाभ

- Despite the various trade disruptions, merchandise exports grew nearly 14% in April 2026 to \$43.6 billion.

विभिन्न व्यापारिक व्यवधानों के बावजूद, वस्तु निर्यात अप्रैल 2026 में लगभग 14% बढ़कर 43.6 अरब डॉलर तक पहुँच गया।

- According to government data, at least 20 exporting sectors have added 17 or more new destinations in the last year.

सरकारी आँकड़ों के अनुसार, कम से कम 20 निर्यात क्षेत्रों ने पिछले वर्ष में 17 या उससे अधिक नए गंतव्य जोड़े हैं।

- For example, handloom products are now exported to 29 more countries than in 2024-25.

उदाहरण के लिए, हथकरघा उत्पादों का निर्यात अब 2024-25 की तुलना में 29 अधिक देशों को किया जा रहा है।

- The data also show that several of India's key export sectors – engineering goods, petroleum products, electronic goods, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and organic and inorganic chemicals – exported more in April 2026 than in the same month last year.

आँकड़े यह भी दर्शाते हैं कि भारत के कई प्रमुख निर्यात क्षेत्र – इंजीनियरिंग वस्तुएँ, पेट्रोलियम उत्पाद, इलेक्ट्रॉनिक वस्तुएँ, औषधियाँ एवं फार्मास्यूटिकल्स तथा कार्बनिक एवं अकार्बनिक रसायन – ने अप्रैल 2026 में पिछले वर्ष के समान माह की तुलना में अधिक निर्यात किया।

- This suggests resilience in these supply chains, and the establishment of new ones.

यह इन आपूर्ति श्रृंखलाओं की लचीलापन क्षमता तथा नई आपूर्ति श्रृंखलाओं की स्थापना को दर्शाता है।

- Another test of the strength of India's export growth is to remove the effect of petroleum products and their inflated prices from the mix.

भारत की निर्यात वृद्धि की मजबूती का एक अन्य परीक्षण यह है कि इसमें से पेट्रोलियम उत्पादों तथा उनकी बढ़ी हुई कीमतों के प्रभाव को अलग कर दिया जाए।

- Here, too, India has performed reasonably well.

इस संदर्भ में भी भारत का प्रदर्शन संतोषजनक रहा है।

- India's non-oil exports grew 9% in April 2026 to about \$40 billion.

भारत का गैर-तेल निर्यात अप्रैल 2026 में 9% बढ़कर लगभग 40 अरब डॉलर तक पहुँच गया।

- Exports to West Asia fell by 28% in April, following up on an even larger contraction in March.

पश्चिम एशिया को निर्यात अप्रैल में 28% घट गया, जबकि मार्च में इससे भी अधिक



- The share of services in total exports has risen to about 49% compared to 39% in 2014. कुल निर्यात में सेवाओं की हिस्सेदारी 2014 के 39% की तुलना में बढ़कर लगभग 49% हो गई है।
- Rather than a reason for complacency, this should make the government take note. इसे आत्मसंतोष का कारण मानने के बजाय सरकार को इस पर गंभीर ध्यान देना चाहिए।



ILLUSTRATION: SAAI

Your avenues for investments abroad

Over the past few years, multiple avenues have opened up for resident Indians to invest overseas; However, each avenue comes with its own regulatory framework and limits

TCS III: Economy

GLOBAL INDIAN

Joydeep Sen

India accounts for 3- to 4% of global market capitalisation. A portfolio invested entirely in domestic assets is therefore structurally under-diversified, ignoring the other 96-97%. Global investing is about diversification across geographies, currencies, and economic cycles. Exposure to dollar-denominated assets also provides the benefit of long-term rupee depreciation when you redeem and bring the money back home. When currency depreciates and you redeem (sell) investments abroad, it gets converted back to INR at a higher rate.

Over the past few years, multiple avenues have opened up for resident Indians to invest overseas. However, each avenue comes with its own regulatory framework, limits, and practical considerations. Understanding these routes is essential before allocating your investible capital abroad.

MFs investing abroad

The simplest route is Indian mutual funds (MFs) investing internationally - either directly in foreign equities or via feeder structure. The MFs are regulated by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and available in rupees. Investors need not deal with foreign exchange, remittances or overseas accounts.



Exposure to dollar-denominated assets provides the benefit of long-term rupee depreciation when you redeem and bring money back home.

However, there is a limitation. SEBI (in coordination with RBI) has fixed an industry-wide cap on MFs' overseas investments - \$7 billion plus a separate \$1 billion for ETFs. This limit is overall for the MF industry. This has led to a stop-start pattern - periods when funds accept inflows, followed by sudden closures. For investors, this creates uncertainty.

Despite this constraint, the route is attractive for first-time global investors, those preferring systematic investment plan (SIP) abroad in rupees or not preferring Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) and converting INR to any other foreign currency.

GIFT City products

Funds set up in GIFT IFSC (international financial services centre) invest directly in global securities and are not subject to SEBI's overseas MF caps. This removes the "window opening and closing" problem. Outbound products are subject to the LRS limit of \$2,50,000/financial year.

Products available are equity-focused funds and fixed income funds.

Historically, GIFT City



India accounts for 3-4% of global market capitalisation; portfolio invested entirely in local assets is structurally under-diversified, ignoring other 96-97%

products required large ticket size. Earlier, the minimum was \$1,50,000. Now it is cut to \$75,000 for accredited investors (AIs) who satisfy some conditions of net worth and income. Recently, retail-oriented products have emerged with entry level at \$5,000. For investments via LRS, there is tax collected at source (TCS) of 20% on remittances above \$10 lakh/year. TCS is adjustable against final tax liability. This route is emerging as a structurally cleaner option for fund-based global investing.

Direct investing via LRS

The most flexible route under LRS is direct investment in foreign securities. However, you need the bandwidth for doing it. You can invest in global equities (e.g. U.S. stocks), ETFs (equity and bond) abroad, foreign MFs, government and corporate bonds (via platforms), etc. You have to open an overseas brokerage account, transfer funds under LRS, and invest in securities of your choice. There are Indian fintech platforms who simplify account opening, KYC and compliance. Re-

tail investors can begin with as low as \$100.

For LRS investments, the forex cost (spread kept by the bank/money changer) is often the biggest expense. No leverage, derivatives or speculative instruments are allowed in direct investments abroad. Portfolio management responsibility lies with the investor. This route is suitable for experienced investors, those wanting specific global exposures and investors building customised portfolios.

Global access platform

Another channel is via platforms operating in GIFT IFSC. These offer access to multiple global markets, stocks, ETFs, derivatives, currencies and bonds. A notable feature is the ability to invest via instruments representing foreign securities such as receipts linked to U.S. stocks. It combines global exposure with Indian regulatory familiarity. However, it is evolving in terms of retail adoption and awareness.

Conclusion

The choice of the route for global investments depends on investment size, comfort with foreign exchange and compliance, desire for control vs. delegation, time horizon and sophistication. The real challenge is not access, but selection of the right route, managing costs, compliance and aligning exposure with portfolio goals.

(Joydeep Sen is a corporate trainer (financial markets) and author)

18M. Your avenues for investments abroad

विदेशों में निवेश के आपके विकल्प

- The simplest route is Indian mutual funds (MFs) investing internationally either directly in foreign equities or via feeder structure.

सबसे सरल तरीका भारतीय म्यूचुअल फंड (एमएफ) हैं, जो सीधे विदेशी शेयरों या फीडर संरचना के माध्यम से अंतरराष्ट्रीय निवेश करते हैं।

- The MFs are regulated by **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** and available in rupees.

ये म्यूचुअल फंड भारतीय प्रतिभूति और विनियम बोर्ड (सेबी) द्वारा विनियमित होते हैं और रुपये में उपलब्ध होते हैं।

- Investors need not deal with foreign exchange, remittances or overseas accounts.

निवेशकों को विदेशी मुद्रा, रেমिटेंस या विदेशी खातों से नहीं जूझना पड़ता।

- However, there is a limitation.

हालांकि, इसमें एक सीमा है।

- SEBI (in coordination with RBI) has fixed an industry-wide cap on MFs' overseas investments — **\$7 billion** plus a separate **\$1 billion** for ETFs.



सेबी ने (आरबीआई के समन्वय से) म्यूचुअल फंडों के विदेशी निवेश पर उद्योग-स्तरीय सीमा तय की है — 7 अरब डॉलर तथा ईटीएफ के लिए अलग से 1 अरब डॉलर।

- Despite this constraint, the route is attractive for first-time global investors, those preferring systematic investment plan (SIP) abroad in rupees or not preferring Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) and converting INR to any other foreign currency.
इस सीमा के बावजूद, यह तरीका पहली बार वैश्विक निवेश करने वालों, रुपये में एसआईपी पसंद करने वालों तथा लिबरलाइज्ड रेमिटेंस स्कीम (एलआरएस) के तहत विदेशी मुद्रा में परिवर्तन से बचने वालों के लिए आकर्षक है।

GIFT City products गिफ्ट सिटी उत्पाद

- Funds set up in **GIFT IFSC** (international financial services centre) invest directly in global securities and are not subject to SEBI's overseas MF caps.
गिफ्ट आईएफएससी (अंतरराष्ट्रीय वित्तीय सेवा केंद्र) में स्थापित फंड सीधे वैश्विक प्रतिभूतियों में निवेश करते हैं और वे सेबी की विदेशी म्यूचुअल फंड सीमा के अधीन नहीं होते।
- This removes the “window opening and closing” problem.
इससे “खुलने और बंद होने वाली विंडो” की समस्या समाप्त हो जाती है।
- Outbound products are subject to the **LRS limit of \$2,50,000/financial year**.
विदेशी निवेश उत्पाद प्रति वित्तीय वर्ष 2,50,000 डॉलर की एलआरएस सीमा के अधीन होते हैं।
- Products available are equity-focused funds and fixed income funds.
उपलब्ध उत्पादों में इक्विटी आधारित फंड और फिक्स्ड इनकम फंड शामिल हैं।
- Historically, GIFT City products required large ticket size.
ऐतिहासिक रूप से, गिफ्ट सिटी उत्पादों के लिए बड़े निवेश की आवश्यकता होती थी।
- Earlier, the minimum was **\$1,50,000**.
पहले न्यूनतम निवेश 1,50,000 डॉलर था।
- Now it is **cut to \$75,000 for accredited investors (AIs) who satisfy some conditions of net worth and income**.
अब इसे मान्यता प्राप्त निवेशकों (एआई) के लिए घटाकर 75,000 डॉलर कर दिया गया है, जो आय और संपत्ति संबंधी कुछ शर्तें पूरी करते हैं।
- Recently, **retail-oriented products have emerged with entry level at \$5,000**.
हाल ही में खुदरा निवेशकों के लिए ऐसे उत्पाद आए हैं जिनकी शुरुआती सीमा 5,000 डॉलर है।
- Another channel is via platforms operating in **GIFT IFSC**.
एक अन्य विकल्प गिफ्ट आईएफएससी में संचालित प्लेटफॉर्म हैं।

GS Paper III: Science and Technology		18 May 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
18M	Q: What is the best way to get to the moon from the earth? प्रश्न: पृथ्वी से चंद्रमा तक पहुँचने का सर्वोत्तम तरीका क्या है	
18M	The predictability pandemic: how your keyboard is stealing the soul of language पूर्वानुमेयता की महामारी: आपका कीबोर्ड किस प्रकार भाषा की आत्मा को छीन रहा है	
18M	Europe-China mission to probe how earth fends o raging solar winds	



पृथ्वी सौर तूफानों से कैसे बचाव करती है, इसकी जांच करेगा यूरोप-चीन मिशन

Tough to plan for this trip

GS III: S&T



Q: What is the best way to get to the moon from the earth?

A: There is no one 'best' way to reach the moon because space travel always trades off

between time, fuel, and payload mass.

If a mission carries a human crew, mission designers will prioritise speed to minimise the astronauts' exposure to space radiation, at the expense of burning more fuel. Conversely, a robotic cargo mission can take a longer, more winding path to save fuel and carry more mass. Missions have different goals and budgets, so the 'best route' depends on what the spacecraft is carrying and how quickly it needs to travel.

A recent study by researchers from Brazil, France, and Portugal, published in *Astrodynamics*, has reported a new 'best' route while reducing fuel use. Using a mathematical tool called theory of functional connections (TFC), they used the L1 Lagrangian point — a strategic point located between the earth and the moon — as the route's midpoint.

Then they designed a trajectory where a spacecraft would flyby the moon to reach an orbit around the L1 point, before making a final descent to the moon's surface. To move the spacecraft, the team took advantage of invariant



Former ISRO chairman K. Sivan explains the Chandrayaan 2 moon-landing process, which Chandrayaan 3 used successfully. FILE PHOTO

manifolds, which are like natural gravitational currents in space. Using TFC, the team was able to evaluate tens of millions of potential paths to find the most efficient one.

According to the team's results, the new route can reduce fuel use by at least 58.8 m/s compared to previous options. On the other hand, it takes nearly 32 days to get to the moon.

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

18M. Q: What is the best way to get to the moon from the earth?

प्रश्न: पृथ्वी से चंद्रमा तक पहुँचने का सर्वोत्तम तरीका क्या है?

A: There is no one 'best' way to reach the moon because space travel always trades off between **time, fuel, and payload mass.**

उत्तर: चंद्रमा तक पहुँचने का कोई एकमात्र

'सर्वोत्तम' तरीका नहीं है क्योंकि अंतरिक्ष यात्रा में सदैव समय, ईंधन और पेलोड द्रव्यमान के बीच संतुलन स्थापित करना पड़ता है।

If a mission carries a human crew, mission designers will prioritise speed to minimise the astronauts' exposure to space radiation, at the expense of burning more fuel.

यदि किसी मिशन में मानव चालक दल सम्मिलित हो, तो मिशन डिज़ाइनर अंतरिक्ष यात्रियों के अंतरिक्ष विकिरण के संपर्क को कम करने हेतु गति को प्राथमिकता देंगे, भले ही इसके लिए अधिक ईंधन व्यय करना पड़े।

Conversely, a robotic cargo mission can take a longer, more winding path to save fuel and carry more mass.

इसके विपरीत, एक रोबोटिक कार्गो मिशन ईंधन बचाने तथा अधिक भार वहन करने के लिए अधिक लंबा और घुमावदार मार्ग अपना सकता है।

- Missions have different goals and budgets, so the 'best route' depends on what the spacecraft is carrying and how quickly it needs to travel.

मिशनो के उद्देश्य और बजट अलग-अलग होते हैं, इसलिए 'सर्वोत्तम मार्ग' इस बात पर निर्भर करता है कि अंतरिक्ष यान क्या वहन कर रहा है और उसे कितनी शीघ्रता से यात्रा करनी है।

- A recent study by researchers from Brazil, France, and Portugal, published in *Astrodynamics*, has reported a new 'best' route while reducing fuel use.

ब्राज़ील, फ्रांस और पुर्तगाल के शोधकर्ताओं द्वारा *Astrodynamics* में प्रकाशित एक हालिया अध्ययन ने ईंधन की खपत को कम करते हुए एक नया 'सर्वोत्तम' मार्ग प्रस्तुत किया है।

- Using a mathematical tool called **theory of functional connections (TFC)**, they used the **L1 Lagrangian point** — a strategic point located between the earth and the moon — as the route's midpoint.

उन्होंने **थ्योरी ऑफ फंक्शनल कनेक्शन्स (TFC)** नामक गणितीय उपकरण का उपयोग करते हुए **L1 लैग्रेंजियन बिंदु** — जो पृथ्वी और चंद्रमा के बीच स्थित एक रणनीतिक बिंदु है — को मार्ग के मध्य बिंदु के रूप में प्रयोग किया।

- Then they designed a trajectory where a spacecraft would flyby the moon to reach an orbit around the **L1 point**, before making a final descent to the moon's surface.

इसके बाद उन्होंने ऐसा प्रक्षेप पथ तैयार किया जिसमें एक अंतरिक्ष यान चंद्रमा के निकट से गुजरते हुए **L1 बिंदु** के चारों ओर कक्षा में पहुँचेगा, और फिर अंतिम अवतरण करते हुए चंद्रमा की सतह पर उतरेगा।



- To move the spacecraft, the team took advantage of **invariant manifolds**, which are like natural gravitational currents in space.
अंतरिक्ष यान को संचालित करने के लिए टीम ने **इनवेरिएंट मैनिफोल्ड्स** का उपयोग किया, जो अंतरिक्ष में प्राकृतिक गुरुत्वीय धाराओं के समान कार्य करते हैं।
- Using **TFC**, the team was able to evaluate tens of millions of potential paths to find the most efficient one.
TFC का उपयोग करते हुए टीम लाखों संभावित मार्गों का मूल्यांकन करने में सक्षम हुई ताकि सबसे अधिक दक्ष मार्ग का चयन किया जा सके।
- According to the team's results, the new route can reduce fuel use by at least **58.8 m/s** compared to previous options.
टीम के परिणामों के अनुसार, यह नया मार्ग पूर्ववर्ती विकल्पों की तुलना में कम से कम **58.8 m/s** तक ईंधन की खपत को कम कर सकता है।
- On the other hand, it takes nearly **32 days** to get to the moon.
दूसरी ओर, इस मार्ग से चंद्रमा तक पहुँचने में लगभग **32 दिन** लगते हैं।

PATRIOTIC IAS



The predictability pandemic: how your keyboard is stealing the soul of language

Predictive keyboards, AI systems are not just helping us communicate faster; they may slowly shape how humans think and write; as people select rather than construct language, the diversity and unpredictability that give communication its human 'soul' risk shrinking into statistical averages

GS III: S&T
Saumya

Type "I feel..." on your phone. Before you finish the sentence, three suggestions may appear: happy, sad, tired. Your keyboard is already guessing how the sentence might end. Predictive keyboards today do far more than correct spelling. Systems like Gboard or Microsoft SwiftKey are trained on massive language data, looking at patterns across billions of sentences to suggest the most likely next word. In a way, your phone is not just fixing your sentence; it is completing it.

At first, this feels harmless, even helpful. You type faster, and conversations flow easily. But if you pause, an uncomfortable question emerges: Are these tools just helping us communicate, or are they slowly shaping how we think as well? The relationship is not one-sided. While we train these systems with our words, by using them every day, we might also be letting them train us back.

Humans have always been looking to outsource thinking, a concept psychologists call cognitive offloading. We shift mental effort to tools around us like calculators for math, GPS for routes, and search engines for facts.

Consequently, instead of remembering everything, we remember where to find it. A study by Betsy Sparrow, a psychology professor at Columbia University, in 2011 showed that when people knew information would be saved, they were less likely to remember the information itself, focusing instead on its location. This became known as the "Google Effect."

Now, apply this to language. Forming a sentence involves searching your memory, choosing words, and arranging them carefully to convey what we intended. It is an active, constructive process. Increasingly now, we just look at suggestions on a phone screen and let them complete our thoughts and

sentences. The effort has shifted from creating to selecting.

This might seem like a small change, but the brain does not treat repetition as small. Through neuroplasticity, the brain physically changes based on what it repeatedly does. A famous study by Neuroscientist Eleanor Maguire looked at London taxi drivers who had to memorise complex street maps. Over time, the part of their brain linked to spatial memory actually grew larger, meaning their daily practice reshaped their physical biology.

The same pattern appears everywhere, from musicians to mathematicians. What you practice, your brain strengthens. If we slowly practice selecting words instead of constructing them, we must wonder what kind of brain patterns we are strengthening. These systems do not understand meaning; they work on probability. They analyse datasets to learn which words usually follow others, suggesting what is most common, expected, and average.

This is where something subtle begins to happen. Common phrases appear more often, while unusual or creative ones appear less. If millions of people keep selecting the same suggestions, language starts moving toward those patterns, not because we are forced to, but because it is easier and faster. Humans have always picked up language from their surroundings, borrowing phrases from books or memes. However, there is a difference here. While we debate how AI is trained on our data, we often ignore how we are being trained in return.

Every time we accept a suggestion, we are exposed to specific patterns and sentence flows. Over time, these patterns settle into how we naturally write. This could explain why human-written text is increasingly flagged as AI-generated. It's not always that the tool is wrong but that human writing is starting to resemble the machine's statistical averages. The gap between how machines write and how

humans write is shrinking.

This matters because language is not just for communication. It shapes how we think and understand the world. Take emotions, for example. Research by psychologist Lisa Feldman Barrett shows that people who can distinguish between specific emotions like feeling "overwhelmed" versus just "sad" are better at regulating them. This is called emotional granularity. More words mean more clarity. Yet, predictive systems suggest simpler, high-probability phrases like "I'm fine" or "I'm okay." If we choose these more often because they are right there, our emotional vocabulary may shrink. And when vocabulary shrinks, our thinking shrinks with it.

Words are tools for thought. If you only have a few words, you can only make a few distinctions. Subtle differences blur together, and complex feelings become harder to explain, even to yourself. This also affects our outward communication. When everyone uses similar words and structures, conversations may become smoother, but they also become flatter. Nuance is reduced, and it becomes harder to express unique disagreement because language becomes more general and less precise.

Writing has always been a way for people to leave a signature of themselves. You could tell who wrote something just by the rhythm of their prose. But if suggestions nudge us toward the same patterns, those unique edges soften. There is also a cultural layer to consider. Language carries identity, slang, regional phrases, and personal quirks reflecting where we come from. Systems trained on global datasets favour what is most common across the majority. Less common expressions appear less often, and local diversity in language might become less visible in everyday life.

None of this happens overnight. It is slow and almost invisible, which makes it easy to ignore. It is also important to stay balanced; language has always evolved

with technology. The printing press standardised spelling, and the typewriter shaped sentence structure. Predictive AI may just be the next step in this evolution. However, the scale is different. For the first time, billions of people are in a constant, daily conversation with systems that learn from them and instantly suggest language back.

This brings us to a technical warning known as "Model Collapse." As more AI-generated text fills the internet, future models are trained on that synthetic, average data. If humans also start writing like the models to save time, we enter a loop of diminishing returns where the diversity of the dataset shrinks. If we optimise entirely for speed, we might accidentally delete the unpredictability that makes human communication valuable.

Language is how we think, remember, and feel. Predictive systems make life easier, but they also create a feedback loop where we train the machine and the machine shapes us back.

We should treat predictive text like a "suggested route" rather than a mandatory path. We need to maintain a critical "scientific temper," as suggested by the principles of staying curious and analytical about the tools we use. Science communication isn't just about making things simple, it's about making them clear without losing the complexity of the human experience.

If we let our language converge to the point of total predictability, we aren't just making writing faster; we're blurring the line between who is teaching whom. Are we training the AI to be more human, or is the AI training us to be more like a model? In that blur, the most important thing we can hold onto is the "low-probability" word, the one the keyboard didn't see coming. That is where the soul of communication lives. (Saumya is an undergraduate student at Plaksha University majoring in Computer Science and artificial intelligence)

18M. The predictability pandemic: how your keyboard is stealing the soul of language

पूर्वानुमेयता की महामारी: आपका कीबोर्ड किस प्रकार भाषा की आत्मा को छीन रहा है

- **Predictive keyboards** today do far more than correct spelling. आज के प्रेडिक्टिव कीबोर्ड केवल वर्तनी सुधारने तक सीमित नहीं हैं।
- **Systems like Gboard or Microsoft SwiftKey** are trained on massive language data, looking at patterns across billions of sentences to suggest the most likely next word. Gboard या Microsoft SwiftKey जैसी प्रणालियाँ विशाल भाषाई डेटा पर प्रशिक्षित होती हैं और अरबों वाक्यों के पैटर्न का विश्लेषण करके अगले संभावित शब्द का सुझाव देती हैं।



- Through **neuroplasticity**, the brain physically changes based on what it repeatedly does.
न्यूरोप्लास्टिसिटी के माध्यम से मस्तिष्क उन कार्यों के आधार पर भौतिक रूप से बदलता है जिन्हें वह बार-बार करता है।
- A famous study by **Neuroscientist Eleanor Maguire** looked at **London taxi drivers** who had to memorise complex street maps.
तंत्रिका वैज्ञानिक एलेनोर मैग्वायर के एक प्रसिद्ध अध्ययन में लंदन के टैक्सी चालकों का अध्ययन किया गया, जिन्हें जटिल सड़क मानचित्र याद रखने पड़ते थे।
- Over time, the part of their brain linked to spatial memory actually grew larger, meaning their daily practice reshaped their physical biology.
समय के साथ उनके मस्तिष्क का वह भाग, जो स्थानिक स्मृति से जुड़ा था, वास्तव में बड़ा हो गया, जिससे यह स्पष्ट हुआ कि दैनिक अभ्यास ने उनकी जैविक संरचना को भी परिवर्तित कर दिया।
- The same pattern appears everywhere, from musicians to mathematicians.
यही पैटर्न संगीतकारों से लेकर गणितज्ञों तक हर क्षेत्र में दिखाई देता है।
- **What you practice, your brain strengthens.**
जिसका आप अभ्यास करते हैं, मस्तिष्क उसी को अधिक मजबूत बनाता है।
- Research by psychologist **Lisa Feldman Barrett** shows that **people who can distinguish between specific emotions like feeling "overwhelmed" versus just "sad" are better at regulating them.**
मनोवैज्ञानिक लीसा फेल्डमैन बैरेंट के शोध से पता चलता है कि जो लोग "अत्यधिक दबाव महसूस करना" और केवल "उदास होना" जैसी विशिष्ट भावनाओं के बीच अंतर कर सकते हैं, वे अपनी भावनाओं को बेहतर ढंग से नियंत्रित कर पाते हैं।
- **This is called emotional granularity.**
इसे भावनात्मक सूक्ष्मता (Emotional Granularity) कहा जाता है।
- **We need to maintain a critical "scientific temper," as suggested by the principles of staying curious and analytical about the tools we use.**
हमें अपने उपयोग किए जाने वाले उपकरणों के प्रति जिज्ञासु और विश्लेषणात्मक बने रहने के सिद्धांतों के अनुरूप एक आलोचनात्मक "वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोण" बनाए रखना चाहिए।
- **Science communication isn't just about making things simple, it's about making them clear without losing the complexity of the human experience.**
विज्ञान संचार का उद्देश्य केवल चीजों को सरल बनाना नहीं है, बल्कि मानव अनुभव की जटिलता को बनाए रखते हुए उन्हें स्पष्ट बनाना भी है।



Europe-China mission to probe how earth fends off raging solar winds

GS III: S&T

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

A joint European-Chinese spacecraft is set to blast off on Tuesday to investigate what happens when extreme winds and giant explosions of plasma shot out from the sun slam into the earth's magnetic shield.

Particularly fierce solar storms can knock out satellites and threaten astronauts – and create colourful auroras in the skies of northern and southern latitudes.

To find out more about this little-understood space weather, the van-sized SMILE spacecraft is tasked with making the first-ever X-ray observations of the earth's magnetic field.

The spacecraft is scheduled to launch on a Vega-C rocket at 0352 GMT on Tuesday from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, on the



The Smile spacecraft in preparation for liftoff at Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. AFP

northeastern coast of South America. Lift-off was originally planned for April 9, but was postponed due to a technical issue.

SMILE – or the Solar Wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer – is a joint mission between the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

“What we want to study with SMILE is the relation-

ship between the earth and the sun,” explained Philippe Escoubet, an ESA scientist working on the project.

Solar wind is a stream of charged particles shot out from the sun. Sometimes this wind is kicked up into a huge storm by massive eruptions of plasma called coronal mass ejections.

Hurting at around two million kilometres an hour,

these powerful blasts take a day or two to reach the earth. When they arrive, the earth's magnetic field acts as a shield, deflecting most of the charged particles. However, during particularly intense events, some particles can penetrate the atmosphere, where they have the potential to take out power grids or communication networks. They also create dazzling auroras known as the northern or southern lights.

The spacecraft will observe this phenomenon from several important locations, including the magnetopause – where the magnetic shield deflects solar particles.

It will also soar above the earth's poles, where X-ray photons are visible, according to Dimitra Koutroumpa of France's CNRS institute who is working on the mission.

18M. Europe-China mission to probe how earth fends off raging solar winds पृथ्वी सौर तूफानों से कैसे बचाव करती है, इसकी जांच करेगा यूरोप-चीन मिशन

- A joint **European-Chinese spacecraft** is set to blast off on Tuesday to investigate **what happens when extreme winds and giant explosions of plasma shot out from the sun slam into the earth's magnetic shield**.
एक संयुक्त **यूरोपीय-चीनी अंतरिक्ष यान** मंगलवार को प्रक्षेपित होने जा रहा है, ताकि यह जांच की जा सके कि जब सूर्य से निकलने वाली तीव्र हवाएं और प्लाज्मा के विशाल विस्फोट पृथ्वी की चुंबकीय ढाल से टकराते हैं तो क्या होता है।
- **Particularly fierce solar storms can knock out satellites and threaten astronauts — and create colourful auroras in the skies of northern and southern latitudes**.
विशेष रूप से तीव्र **सौर तूफान** उपग्रहों को निष्क्रिय कर सकते हैं और अंतरिक्ष यात्रियों के लिए खतरा बन सकते हैं — साथ ही उत्तरी और दक्षिणी अक्षांशों के आकाश में रंग-बिरंगे ऑरोरा भी पैदा कर सकते हैं।
- To find out more about this little-understood **space weather**, the **van-sized SMILE spacecraft** is tasked with making the first-ever X-ray observations of the earth's magnetic field.
इस काम समझे गए **अंतरिक्ष मौसम** के बारे में अधिक जानने के लिए, वैन के आकार के **SMILE अंतरिक्ष यान** को पृथ्वी के चुंबकीय क्षेत्र का पहली बार एक्स-रे अवलोकन करने का कार्य सौंपा गया है।
- The spacecraft is scheduled to launch on a **Vega-C rocket** at 0352 GMT on Tuesday from Europe's spaceport in **Kourou, French Guiana**, on the northeastern coast of South America.



यह अंतरिक्ष यान मंगलवार को 0352 GMT पर दक्षिण अमेरिका के उत्तर-पूर्वी तट पर स्थित कुरु, फ्रेंच गयाना में यूरोप के अंतरिक्ष केंद्र से वेगा-सी रॉकेट द्वारा प्रक्षेपित किया जाएगा।

- Lift-off was originally planned for April 9, but was postponed due to a technical issue. प्रक्षेपण मूल रूप से 9 अप्रैल को निर्धारित था, लेकिन तकनीकी समस्या के कारण इसे स्थगित कर दिया गया।
- **SMILE — or the Solar Wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer — is a joint mission between the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.**
SMILE — अर्थात सोलर विंड मैग्नेटोस्फीयर आयनोस्फीयर लिंक एक्सप्लोरर — यूरोपीय अंतरिक्ष एजेंसी (ESA) और चीनी विज्ञान अकादमी का संयुक्त मिशन है।
- “What we want to study with **SMILE** is the relationship between the earth and the sun,” explained **Philippe Escoubet**, an ESA scientist working on the project.
“हम **SMILE** के माध्यम से पृथ्वी और सूर्य के बीच संबंध का अध्ययन करना चाहते हैं,” परियोजना पर कार्य कर रहे ESA वैज्ञानिक **फिलिप एस्कूबे** ने कहा।
- **Solar wind is a stream of charged particles shot out from the sun.**
सौर पवन सूर्य से निकलने वाले आवेशित कणों की एक धारा होती है।
- **Sometimes this wind is kicked up into a huge storm by massive eruptions of plasma called coronal mass ejections.**
कभी-कभी यह पवन प्लाज्मा के विशाल विस्फोटों, जिन्हें **कोरोनल मास इजेक्शन** कहा जाता है, के कारण एक बड़े तूफान में बदल जाती है।
- **Hurling at around two million kilometres an hour, these powerful blasts take a day or two to reach the earth.**
लगभग 20 लाख किलोमीटर प्रति घंटे की गति से चलने वाले ये शक्तिशाली विस्फोट पृथ्वी तक पहुंचने में एक या दो दिन लेते हैं।
- **When they arrive, the earth’s magnetic field acts as a shield, deflecting most of the charged particles.**
जब ये पृथ्वी तक पहुंचते हैं, तो पृथ्वी का चुंबकीय क्षेत्र ढाल की तरह कार्य करता है और अधिकांश आवेशित कणों को मोड़ देता है।
- **However, during particularly intense events, some particles can penetrate the atmosphere, where they have the potential to take out power grids or communication networks.**
हालांकि, अत्यधिक तीव्र घटनाओं के दौरान कुछ कण वायुमंडल में प्रवेश कर सकते हैं, जिससे बिजली ग्रिड या संचार नेटवर्क प्रभावित हो सकते हैं।
- **They also create dazzling auroras known as the northern or southern lights.**
ये उत्तरी या दक्षिणी रोशनी के रूप में जाने जाने वाले चमकदार ऑरोरा भी उत्पन्न करते हैं।
- **The spacecraft will observe this phenomenon from several important locations, including the magnetopause — where the magnetic shield deflects solar particles.**
यह अंतरिक्ष यान इस घटना का अवलोकन कई महत्वपूर्ण स्थानों से करेगा, जिनमें **मैग्नेटोपॉज़** भी शामिल है — जहां चुंबकीय ढाल सौर कणों को मोड़ देती है।

GS Paper III: Environment	18 May 2026
TOPICS COVERED	
18M	



This aerial photo taken on April 29, 2026 shows a rescued humpback whale in a special barge along the Danish coastline enroute back to the North Sea after it beached on a sandbank near the city of Luebeck, in late March. AFP

This aerial photo taken on April 29, 2026 shows a rescued **humpback whale** in a special barge along the Danish coastline enroute back to the North Sea after it beached on a sandbank near the city of Luebeck, in late March.

GS Paper III: Internal Security

18 May 2026

TOPICS COVERED

18M Kingpin of India-Myanmar drug syndicate arrested by NCB in Delhi
भारत-म्यांमार ड्रग सिंडिकेट का सरगना दिल्ली में एनसीबी द्वारा गिरफ्तार

Kingpin of India-Myanmar drug syndicate arrested by **NCB** in Delhi

GS III: Internal Security

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** has arrested the kingpin of one of the biggest transnational drug trafficking networks operating along the India-Myanmar border.

In a statement on Sunday, the NCB said Thachintuang, also known as Chintuang and Tluanga, was caught in Delhi recently following surveillance, intelligence gathering, interstate coordination, and follow-up operations.

“Chintuang emerged as one of the most significant traffickers operating along

the Myanmar-Mizoram-Manipur-Assam-Tripura corridor and was identified as a major international supplier of methamphetamine and heroin operating from Myanmar,” an NCB officer posted in the north-east said.

Chintuang was wanted in multiple cases registered under the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act** by the NCB and several drug law enforcement agencies.

Identifying associates

“Investigations indicate his involvement in illicit drug trafficking networks valued at approximately ₹115

crore. He is linked to seven NDPS cases connected with the Myanmar-Mizoram-Tripura/Assam corridor and is also suspected in five additional cases associated with the Myanmar-Manipur-Assam route,” the NCB statement read.

During the investigation, the NCB identified and apprehended several syndicate members and close associates of Chintuang. Among them, Vungkhanthawna, identified as a close associate and key facilitator, played a major role in coordinating movement and delivery of narcotic consignments

linked to the Myanmar-based trafficking network.

The investigation revealed hawala transactions amounting to nearly ₹100 crore linked to the network, following which the matter was shared with the Enforcement Directorate. Properties suspected to have been acquired through proceeds of drug trafficking were frozen.

“Investigation in the cases revealed the existence of a highly organised interstate and international drug trafficking network extending from Myanmar to Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Tripura, and Bangladesh,” the statement said.

18M. Kingpin of India-Myanmar drug syndicate arrested by NCB in Delhi
भारत-म्यांमार ड्रग सिंडिकेट का सरगना दिल्ली में एनसीबी द्वारा गिरफ्तार



- The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** has arrested the kingpin of one of the biggest transnational drug trafficking networks operating along the **India-Myanmar border**.
नारकोटिक्स कंट्रोल ब्यूरो (NCB) ने भारत-म्यांमार सीमा पर सक्रिय सबसे बड़े अंतरराष्ट्रीय ड्रग तस्करी नेटवर्क में से एक के सरगना को गिरफ्तार किया है।
- In a statement on Sunday, the **NCB** said **Thachintuang**, also known as **Chintuang** and **Tluanga**, was caught in **Delhi** recently following surveillance, intelligence gathering, interstate coordination, and follow-up operations.
रविवार को जारी एक बयान में एनसीबी ने कहा कि थाचिनुआंग, जिसे चिनुआंग और टलुआंगा के नाम से भी जाना जाता है, को निगरानी, खुफिया जानकारी जुटाने, अंतर-राज्यीय समन्वय और अनुवर्ती अभियानों के बाद हाल ही में दिल्ली में पकड़ा गया।
- “Chintuang emerged as one of the most significant traffickers operating along the **Myanmar-Mizoram-Manipur-Assam-Tripura corridor** and was identified as a major international supplier of methamphetamine and heroin operating from Myanmar,” an NCB officer posted in the northeast said.
पूर्वोत्तर में तैनात एक एनसीबी अधिकारी ने कहा, “चिनुआंग म्यांमार-मिजोरम-मणिपुर-असम-त्रिपुरा कॉरिडोर में सक्रिय सबसे महत्वपूर्ण तस्करों में से एक के रूप में उभरा और उसे म्यांमार से संचालित होने वाले मेथामफेटामाइन और हेरोइन के बड़े अंतरराष्ट्रीय सप्लायर के रूप में पहचाना गया।”
- Chintuang was wanted in multiple cases registered under the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act** by the NCB and several drug law enforcement agencies.
चिनुआंग नारकोटिक ड्रग्स एंड साइकोट्रॉपिक सब्सटेंसेज (NDPS) एक्ट के तहत एनसीबी और कई मादक पदार्थ कानून प्रवर्तन एजेंसियों द्वारा दर्ज कई मामलों में वांछित था।

Identifying associates

सहयोगियों की पहचान

- Among them, **Vungkhathawna**, identified as a close associate and key facilitator, played a major role in coordinating movement and delivery of narcotic consignments linked to the Myanmar-based trafficking network.
इनमें वुंगखानथावना, जिसे करीबी सहयोगी और प्रमुख सहायक के रूप में पहचाना गया, ने म्यांमार आधारित तस्करी नेटवर्क से जुड़े मादक पदार्थों की खेपों की आवाजाही और डिलीवरी के समन्वय में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई।
- The investigation revealed **hawala transactions** amounting to nearly **₹100 crore** linked to the network, following which the matter was shared with the **Enforcement Directorate**.
जांच में नेटवर्क से जुड़े लगभग **₹100 करोड़** के हवाला लेनदेन का खुलासा हुआ, जिसके बाद यह मामला प्रवर्तन निदेशालय को सौंपा गया।
- “Investigation in the cases revealed the existence of a **highly organised interstate and international drug trafficking network extending from Myanmar to Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Tripura, and Bangladesh**,” the statement said.
बयान में कहा गया, “मामलों की जांच में म्यांमार से लेकर मिजोरम, मणिपुर, असम, त्रिपुरा और बांग्लादेश तक फैले एक अत्यधिक संगठित अंतरराज्यीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय ड्रग तस्करी नेटवर्क के अस्तित्व का खुलासा हुआ।”