

2024_10_07 DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

TOPICS COVERED

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Payments of Ladki Bahin being made in advance as poll code set to kick in: CM (7 October)

Opposition may create obstacles in women beneficiaries getting aid once the election schedule is announced: Shinde; vote for ruling alliance to ensure all welfare schemes continue, says Ajit

- Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde announced advance payments for the Ladki Bahin Yojana beneficiaries for October and November due to the impending model code of conduct for the Assembly elections.
- The **Assembly election is expected in November**, with the current State Assembly term ending on November 26.
- Shinde mentioned that the government is preemptively disbursing payments under the scheme to avoid obstacles from Opposition parties once the code of conduct is in effect.
- **Under the Ladki Bahin Yojana, women with an annual family income of less than ₹2.5 lakh receive ₹1,500 per month as aid.**
- Although ongoing schemes are typically unaffected by the model code, the government is being cautious.
- Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar urged voters to support the ruling alliance to ensure welfare schemes continue, framing the financial aid as a "Bhau Beej gift" for women.
- Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole expressed confidence that the upcoming Assembly election results will be more favorable for the Congress party than predicted outcomes in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir, where results will be announced on October 8.

माझी लाडकी बहीण योजना

जाणून घ्या

पात्र महिलांना दरमहा ₹१,५०० रुपये वर्षाला ₹१८,००० रुपये मिळतील

> पात्रता (नियम व अटी)
 > अर्ज कुठे करावा (Online / Offline)
 > आवश्यक कागदपत्रे
 > अर्ज / फॉर्म
 > अंतिम तारीख

Vayalar Award for Ashokan Charuvil's *Kattoorkadavu*

PCS

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Malayalam writer Ashokan Charuvil's novel *Kattoorkadavu* has been selected for the 48th Vayalar Ramavarma Memorial Literary Award. The novel captures the social and political upheavals in a village ravaged by floods. The award, instituted by the Vayalar Ramavarma Trust, carries a cash prize of ₹1 lakh and a sculpture designed by Kanayi Kunhiraman.

The committee comprising writers Benyamin and Gracy and literary critic K.S. Ravikumar chose Mr. Charuvil's work on Sunday. In its initial screening process, the committee considered nearly 300



Ashokan Charuvil

books. Six of them made it to the final round.

Writer Perumbadavom Sreedharan, the Trust president, presided over the committee meeting. The award will be presented at a function to be held at the Nishagandhi auditorium here on October 27.

Mr. Charuvil has written books such as *Oru Rathrikku Oru pakal*, *Amazon* and *Parichitha Gandhangal*.

Vayalar Award for Ashokan Charuvil's *Kattoorkadavu* (7 October)

- Malayalam writer Ashokan Charuvil's novel *Kattoorkadavu* has been selected for the 48th Vayalar Ramavarma Memorial Literary Award.

- The novel depicts the social and political upheavals in a village affected by floods.

- The award is instituted by the Vayalar Ramavarma Trust and includes a cash prize of ₹1 lakh and a sculpture designed by Kanayi Kunhiraman.

- The selection committee included writers Benyamin, Gracy, and literary critic K.S. Ravikumar.

- The committee reviewed nearly 300 books in the initial screening process, narrowing it down to six finalists.

- The committee meeting was presided over by writer Perumbadavom Sreedharan, the Trust president.

- The award ceremony is scheduled to

take place at the Nishagandhi auditorium on October 27.

- Ashokan Charuvil is also known for his works such as *Oru Rathrikku Oru Pakal*, *Amazon*, and *Parichitha Gandhangal*.

Excavations commence at Doddalathur megalithic burial site in Hanur taluk

GS Paper I: Ancient India, Art and Culture

MYSURU

A team of history and archaeology scholars and students from the University of Mysore have embarked on an excavation of megalithic burial sites in Chamarajanagar district.

The excavations are being conducted at Doddalathur village, located in a small valley formed by the Male Mahadeshwara Hill ranges in Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district, in association with the Mythic Society, Bengaluru.

V. Shobha, Chairperson of the Department of Studies in Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Mysore, who is involved with the project, said that to the west of the village was a small hillock and in



A megalithic burial site near Hanur in Chamarajanagar district will be excavated for research and further studies. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the adjacent fields were hundreds of burials of the megalithic period which corresponded to the Iron Age. The burials consisted of circles made of large boulders and hence the name "megalithic". Since iron technology came into use during this period, it was also known as Iron Age, and in South India,

this period had been broadly placed in the time bracket of 1200 BC to 300 CE, said Ms. Shobha.

She pointed out that Doddalathur megalithic burial site was discovered by C. Krishnamurti of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1961.

The site once had more than 1,000 burials, accord-

ing to the local villages but many had vanished in recent years owing to expansion of agriculture and cultivation activities, settlement and land development projects, Ms. Shobha added. But the site had potential for excavation as a majority of the burials are still intact despite disturbances, she said.

Superintending Archaeologist C.B. Patil (retd.), ASI, is the co-director of the excavation, and the project hopes to throw more light on the megalithic-iron age culture in the hilly regions of southern Karnataka.

Another purpose is to provide field training to the students of archaeology. The excavations, which began on October 3, will continue for two months.

Excavations commence at Doddalathur megalithic burial site in Hanur taluk (7 October)

- A team of history and archaeology scholars and students from the University of Mysore is excavating megalithic burial sites in Chamarajanagar district.
- The excavations are taking place at Doddalathur village, in a valley formed by the Male Mahadeshwara Hill ranges in Hanur taluk.
- The project is in association with the Mythic Society, Bengaluru.
- V. Shobha, Chairperson of the Department of Studies in Ancient History and Archaeology at the University of Mysore, is involved in the project.
- The site features hundreds of burials from the megalithic period, corresponding to the Iron Age, with burial circles made of large boulders.
- The Iron Age in South India is broadly placed between 1200 BC to 300 CE.

- The Doddalathur megalithic burial site was discovered by C. Krishnamurti of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1961.
- The site reportedly had over 1,000 burials, though many have been lost due to agricultural expansion and land development.
- Despite disturbances, the site still has a majority of burials intact, making it viable for excavation.
- Superintending Archaeologist C.B. Patil (retd.) is the co-director of the excavation.
- The project aims to shed light on the megalithic-Iron Age culture in southern Karnataka and provide field training for archaeology students.
- Excavations began on October 3 and will continue for two months.

Australian High Commissioner visits Arunachal Pradesh (7 October)

- Australian institutions can contribute to skilling programs for Arunachal Pradesh's economy, according to **Chief Minister Pema Khandu**.
- Khandu met Australian High Commissioner Philip Green in **Itanagar** to discuss skill development initiatives for Arunachali youth.
- The focus is on sectors such as construction, hydropower, and infrastructure.
- Khandu aims to empower youth with world-class skills and expressed gratitude for the High Commissioner's assurance of providing high-end skills training.
- The state has seen connectivity and infrastructural developments, highlighting its development potential.
- Recent concerns have been raised over reported Chinese incursions in the Anjaw district, with China often targeting foreign visitors to the region.
- Green's predecessor, Barry O'Farrell, clarified that **Canberra views Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of India**.
- In September, Khandu announced ongoing talks with a skill center in Australia to enhance programs and create job opportunities across multiple sectors.
- Green was accompanied by Hugh Boylan, Consul General of Australia in Kolkata, and Harriet White, Vice-Consul in Bengaluru.

Muizzu to meet Modi, request India's support over looming economic crisis (7 October)

- Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu arrived in New Delhi for a four-day state visit, expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday.
- Muizzu faces an economic crisis and imminent debt repayments in the Maldives.

- He expressed hope that India would "ease the Maldives' burden" and plans to request a currency swap arrangement and debt support.
- In September, **India announced a \$50 million subscription to Maldivian government bonds to help avert a crisis.**
- **China has agreed to defer loan repayments for five years, which Muizzu mentioned during his discussions.**
- On October 8, Maldives must make a \$25 million payment toward its \$500 million sukuk debt, with \$114 million still due this year and about \$1.5 billion in the next two years.
- **The Maldives has a high debt-to-GDP ratio of approximately 110% and declining foreign exchange reserves of about \$440 million,** prompting recent downgrades by credit agencies Moody's and Fitch.
- Any default on payments could lead to a crisis similar to Sri Lanka's in 2022.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and other officials met with Muizzu to prepare for talks, which may include MoUs on infrastructure, security cooperation, and other bilateral matters.
- Jaishankar stated that the talks would "give a new impetus" to India-Maldives relations.
- Muizzu's visit marks a turnaround in ties, moving past tensions that arose from his 'India Out' campaign and demands for the withdrawal of Indian military personnel.
- **He did not visit India first after his election, choosing Turkiye, UAE, and China instead.**
- Previous criticisms from Maldivian ministers led to a "Boycott Maldives" campaign by some Indian tour operators, reducing Indian tourist numbers.
- Ties have improved after the withdrawal of military personnel and the dismissal of ministers who made critical remarks.
- Economic challenges and a Cabinet reshuffle, including the **appointment of Moosa Zameer as Finance Minister, delayed Muizzu's visit.**
- After New Delhi, Muizzu and his delegation will travel to Agra, Mumbai, and Bengaluru.

Air Force plans to procure 12 early warning aircraft (7 October)

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) is seeking to procure **12 Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft** due to a shortage of these critical systems.
- The procurement involves two different programs:
 - A follow-on order for six AEW&C systems mounted on Embraer aircraft, similar to the existing three Netra systems.
 - An order for six AEW&C systems under development by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to be mounted on Airbus A-321 aircraft.

- **Air Chief Marshal A. P. Singh** indicated that the Embraer-based AEW&C systems, referred to as Mk1A, will have minor modifications and are a proven design.
- The IAF aims to have the Embraer order cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council soon.
- The AEW&C-Mk2, based on Airbus systems, is currently under contract negotiations between DRDO and Airbus.
- The IAF also operates three **Israeli Phalcon AWACS, providing 360-degree coverage, alongside the Netra systems, which offer 240-degree coverage.**

Five languages got classical tag after key provision dropped

GS Paper I: Art and Culture

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet's decision to accord classical language status to five new languages, including **Marathi and Bengali**, came after a key provision, which mandated that a language must have original literary tradition, was dropped.

"We discussed it in detail and understood that it was a very difficult thing to prove or disprove as all ancient languages borrowed from each other, but re-created the texts in their own way. On the contrary, archaeological, historical and numismatic evidence are tangible things," a senior member of the Linguistic Expert Committee told *The Hindu*.

The committee comprises representatives of the Union Ministries of Home and Culture and four or five linguistic experts at any given time. It is chaired by the president of the Sahitya Akademi.

The criteria were first formulated in 2004 when Tamil was declared a classical language and were revised in November 2005 when Sanskrit was included on the list.

According to the 2005 criteria which were followed till recently, to be designated as classical, a

The panel noted that it was difficult to prove the original literary tradition of these languages

language must have high antiquity of its early texts and recorded history over a period of 1,500-2,000 years, a body of ancient literature or texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers, the literary tradition must be original and not borrowed from another speech community and the classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

However, with demands for classical status to many languages pending, many of them with tangible political implications, the Linguistics Experts Committee, at a meeting on July 25, unanimously revised the criteria.

It is under these revised norms that the Union Cabinet on Thursday approved classical language status to Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali and Prakrit. A Gazette notification to this effect was issued on October 4.

- A shortage of these systems was noted during the **February 2019 aerial engagement** with the Pakistan Air Force following the **Balakot airstrike**.
- A proposal to procure two additional Israeli Phalcons has not yet materialized.
- Six Airbus A-321 passenger aircraft from Air India have been transferred to the IAF and are awaiting modifications.
- The required modifications for the Airbus aircraft are more extensive and complex than initially anticipated, causing delays in negotiations and the overall process.

Five languages got classical tag after key provision dropped (7 October)

- The Union Cabinet decided to grant classical language status to five new languages, including Marathi and Bengali.
- This decision followed the removal of a key provision requiring languages to have an original literary tradition.
- A senior member of the Linguistic Expert Committee explained that proving original literary tradition was challenging, as ancient languages often borrowed from one another.
- The committee includes representatives from the Union Ministries of Home and Culture and linguistic experts, chaired by the president of the Sahitya Akademi.

- The original criteria for classical language status were established in 2004 with Tamil and revised in **2005 when Sanskrit was included**.
- The 2005 criteria required a language to have:
 - High antiquity of early texts and recorded history over 1,500-2,000 years.
 - A body of ancient literature considered valuable heritage by generations of speakers.
 - An original literary tradition not borrowed from another community.
 - **Distinctness from modern forms and potential discontinuity with later forms or offshoots.**
- With many languages awaiting classical status, some with political implications, the criteria were revised unanimously by the Linguistics Experts Committee on July 25.
- The Union Cabinet approved classical language status for **Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit** under the revised norms.
- A Gazette notification regarding this approval was issued on October 4.

Centre makes U-turn on recruitment policy

GS Paper II: Governance

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Union government on Saturday restored the policy of recruiting railway officers through the Civil Services Examination (CSE) and the Engineering Services Examination (ESE) conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

Ending four years of confusion in the appointment of railway officers and difficulties in finding suitable manpower for technical wings, the Indian Railways made a U-turn on its 2019 decision of recruiting officers to the Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS) only through the CSE.

The move to restore the earlier system of recruitment comes weeks after Satish Kumar took charge as the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Railway Board. The decision would also remove the cap on the intake of officers



The Centre will now recruit railway officers through the Civil Service and Engineering Services examinations. FILE PHOTO

ers through the IRMS which was limited to 150 per year.

However, the Railways decided that the recruitment to various departments would be done under the banner of the IRMS through the CSE and the ESE. After the new recruitment policy came into existence, two batches of railway officers who got into service through the CSE were trained but have not been given a field posting yet.

Since recruitment through the ESE was dispensed with and engineering and non-engineering candidates competed for limited posts under the IRMS, the Railways found it difficult to find suitable officers for the technical categories such as Engineering, Mechanical, Electrical, and so on, resulting in more number of promotee or subordinate rank officers filling the vacancies.

On December 24, 2019, the government approved

organisational restructuring of the Indian Railways by unification of eight Group-A services of the Railways into a Central Service called the IRMS.

Endorsing the major reforms, the Centre said the Railways had departments of Traffic, Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Signal & Telecommunications, Stores, Personnel, and Accounts. These departments were vertically separated from top to bottom, each headed by a Secretary-level officer (Member) on the Railway Board.

The unification of services was recommended by various committees for reforming the Railways, including the Prakash Tandon Committee (1994), Rakesh Mohan Committee (2001), Sam Pitroda Committee (2012), and Bibek Debroy Committee (2015).

The unified Group-A Service called the IRMS was to enable the railways to recruit engineers or non-engineers as per need

and offer equality of opportunity to both categories in career progression.

Rules revised

On Saturday, the Ministry of Telecommunications, being the nodal agency for the ESE, in a letter to the UPSC, said it had notified the ESE-2025 Rules on September 18, 2024, with the last date for submission of application being October 8, 2024.

“It is requested that the participation of Ministry of Railways for recruitment of engineers in various disciplines through ESE-2025 to the IRMS may kindly be added to the existing notification by issuing an addendum to it. In order to provide ample opportunity to the candidates for applying, it is proposed that the last date of submission of application may be suitably extended and notified on the UPSC’s website,” the Secretary, Ministry of Telecommunications, said in the letter.

Centre makes U-turn on recruitment policy (7 October)

- The Union government restored the policy of recruiting railway officers through the Civil Services Examination (CSE) and Engineering Services Examination (ESE) conducted by UPSC.
- This decision ends four years of confusion regarding railway officer appointments and challenges in finding suitable manpower for technical roles.
- The Indian Railways reversed its 2019 decision to recruit officers for the Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS) exclusively through the CSE.
- The restoration of the previous recruitment system follows Satish Kumar's recent appointment as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Railway Board.
- The change removes the cap on officer intake through the IRMS, which was previously limited to 150 per year.
- Recruitment for various departments will be conducted under the IRMS via both the CSE and ESE.
- Two batches of railway officers recruited through the CSE have undergone training but have not received field postings.
- The cessation of ESE recruitment made it difficult to find suitable officers for technical categories, leading to more vacancies being filled by promotee or subordinate rank officers.
- The government approved organizational restructuring of the Indian Railways on December 24, 2019, unifying eight Group-A services into the IRMS.
- The restructuring was supported by various committees, including the Prakash Tandon Committee (1994), Rakesh Mohan Committee (2001), Sam Pitroda Committee (2012), and Bibek Debroy Committee (2015).
- The IRMS aims to allow the Railways to recruit engineers or non-engineers as needed and provide equal opportunities for career progression.
- On Saturday, the Ministry of Telecommunications, the nodal agency for the ESE, notified the ESE-2025 Rules on September 18, 2024, with an application deadline of October 8, 2024.
- The Secretary of the Ministry of Telecommunications requested the inclusion of the Ministry of Railways for ESE-2025 recruitment in an addendum to the existing notification and proposed an extension of the application deadline.

Gold: what makes it so desirable? (7 October)

- Gold is a precious metal known for its use in jewellery and as an investment.
- **Atomic number: 79; Latin name: "aurum," symbol: Au.**
- Approximately 10% of global gold production is used in industry each year.
- Gold's desirable properties include **resistance to dissolution in strong nitric acid, distinguishing it from most metals.**
- **The term "acid test" refers to assessing someone's character, stemming from gold's properties.**
- **Among noble metals, only platinum is less reactive than gold.**
- Gold dissolves in a solution of nitric acid and hydrochloric acid (aqua regia) and in some alkaline solutions and mercury.
- **It is malleable, ductile, corrosion-resistant, and an excellent conductor of electricity, commonly used in computer connectors.**
- **South Africa has historically (19th Century) produced most of the world's gold, but China is currently the largest producer,** with Ghana also notable.
- **The cost of extracting and refining gold varies by location; gold nuggets are usually found in mountainous areas with quartz veins.**
- Each Nobel Prize awarded from October 7 includes a medal made of **electrum, an alloy of gold and silver, plated with 24-carat gold.**

Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and a travesty of justice

GS Paper IV: Ethics, GS Paper II: Justice System in India

Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, the leader of the sect Dera Sacha Sauda, who is a convicted rapist and murderer, was released on parole days before the Haryana Assembly elections. He was released on parole in the run-up to the Punjab Assembly elections in 2022 and the Rajasthan Assembly elections in 2023 as well. Singh has come out on parole 15 times. Several of these occasions have coincided with some election. In all, Singh has spent more than 250 days of his sentence outside jail.

Convicted for rape and murder

The ostensible reason for his release is that, as a leader of a sect, he commands pockets of support and influence beyond Haryana and Punjab, in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, in an estimated 30 Assembly constituencies. His political clout aside, the fact that he has been convicted for raping two female disciples and also for murder by a special Central Bureau of Investigation court needs to be reiterated.

It is a travesty that such special treatment is made available to convicts such as him, especially since journalist Ramchander Chhatrapati had put his life in danger by exposing Singh and his crimes. Chhatrapati's newspaper, *Poora Sach* (The Whole Truth), had carried an anonymous letter by a Dera follower, who had accused Singh of rape. In 2002, Chhatrapati was shot dead at



Hamid Dabholkar

State working committee member with MANS, an anti-superstition movement in Maharashtra

That the bureaucracy-political class nexus has gone out of its way to facilitate a murder and rape convict is a poor reflection of our society

his residence. It was only in 2019 that Singh was convicted for his role in the murder. This means that it took nearly 17 years for Chhatrapati's son, Anshul Chhatrapati, to battle several odds to obtain justice. That the bureaucracy-political class nexus has gone out of its way to facilitate a murder and rape convict after all these years of struggle is a poor reflection of our society and raises disturbing questions.

The role of political parties and the ECI

The first question relates to the role of political parties. The incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime in Haryana has been unapologetic and brazen about the decision to grant parole. It seems to suggest that due procedure has been followed for the parole to be granted and that is all that matters. While the Congress in the Opposition objected to the grant of parole, the sad reality is that the previous Congress leadership's views on the matter were no different from the views of the current regime. These parties must take their cue from former Prime Ministers, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, who showed courage in allowing the rule of law to take its course on the matter of conviction. Parties should not stoop so low as to seek political support through someone who has been convicted of heinous crimes such as murder and rape.

The role of the Election Commission of India (ECI) also comes under scrutiny. Mr. Anshul Chhatrapati had sought the intervention of the ECI, urging it to direct the Haryana government to cancel the parole application. He had insisted that the granting of parole ahead of the Assembly elections would be a violation of democratic values. It is hard to believe that the ECI has not taken note of the curious pattern of paroles given to Singh before specific elections.

The courts had played an important role in bringing justice in cases related to Singh – from taking suo moto cognisance of the letters by anonymous victims to ensuring that the cases were properly heard and punishment meted out. The hope is that the judiciary will again take a proactive role in preventing this travesty of justice being played out in the form of paroles being handed out liberally to Singh.

My father, Narendra Dabholkar, a rationalist who lost his life in fighting against forces promoting superstition, used to emphasise that the war against superstition, irrational practices, and crimes had to be waged not over decades but over centuries. As Singh's saga – the crimes committed by him and the punishment meted out to him – completes nearly a quarter of a century, we need to show solidarity and wish more power to those in the fight such as Mr. Anshul Chhatrapati.

Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and a travesty of justice (7 October)

- Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, leader of Dera Sacha Sauda, is a convicted rapist and murderer.
- Released on parole just days before the Haryana Assembly elections.
- Previously released on parole before the Punjab Assembly elections in 2022 and Rajasthan Assembly elections in 2023.
- Has come out on parole 15 times, with several releases coinciding with elections.
- Singh has spent over 250 days of his sentence outside jail.
- His release is justified as he commands support and influence in multiple states, including Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, across an estimated 30 Assembly constituencies.
- Singh was convicted for raping two female disciples and for murder by a special CBI court.
- His special treatment as a convict raises concerns, especially considering journalist Ramchander Chhatrapati was murdered for exposing his crimes.
- Chhatrapati's newspaper published an anonymous letter accusing Singh of rape, leading to his murder in 2002.
- Singh was convicted for his role in Chhatrapati's murder only in 2019, taking nearly 17 years for justice to be served.
- The facilitation of parole for a convicted murderer and rapist reflects poorly on society and raises disturbing questions about the bureaucracy-political class nexus.

The role of political parties and the ECI

- The incumbent BJP regime in Haryana is unapologetic about granting parole to Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh.
- The BJP suggests that due procedure was followed for the parole.
- The Congress party, in opposition, also previously held views similar to the current regime regarding parole decisions.
- Political parties should take inspiration from former Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, who upheld the rule of law.
- It is deemed inappropriate for parties to seek political support from a convicted individual guilty of heinous crimes.
- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is scrutinized for its inaction regarding Singh's parole.
- Anshul Chhatrapati urged the ECI to cancel Singh's parole application, arguing it violates democratic values.

- There is skepticism about the ECI not noticing the pattern of Singh's paroles preceding elections.
- The courts have previously played a crucial role in bringing justice in Singh's cases.
- There is hope that the judiciary will proactively prevent unjust paroles being granted to Singh.
- The author reflects on their father, Narendra Dabholkar, a rationalist who fought against superstition and irrational practices.
- As Singh's saga spans nearly 25 years, there is a call for solidarity in supporting the fight against such injustices, exemplified by Mr. Anshul Chhatrapati.

A learning curve (7 October)

The outcomes of the PM Internship Scheme's pilot project need monitoring

- On October 3, the Centre launched an online portal for the PM Internship Scheme.
- The scheme is part of a five-scheme package aimed at **creating jobs and imparting skills to 4.1 crore youth over five years**.
- The portal will match companies offering year-long on-the-job training with unemployed youth.
- The **scheme addresses the gap between education and the practical skills employers seek**.
- Well-known firms may provide certification for interns, enhancing their job market prospects.
- The **first batch of 1.25 lakh interns will start their internships on December 2**.
- The **government has consulted industry bodies regarding the scheme and is cautious about scaling it up**.
- Insights from a pilot project will inform the final scheme design.
- Full assessment of outcomes will occur after December 2025, when interns re-enter the job market.
- Dropout rates and grievances will be monitored closely during the scheme.
- **Challenges include placing interns within or near their district or within their state, which may be difficult in less industrialized states like Bihar**.
- **Five states account for over half of India's manufacturing output, while youth unemployment is higher in states with lower business presence**.
- The **scheme should also focus on digital and soft skills essential for modern workplaces**.
- The pilot project's evaluation should be diligent and candid to ensure intended outcomes are met.

Maharashtra's populist gamble

Ladki Bahin scheme risks worsening the fiscal crisis, reflecting a troubling trend

STATE OF PLAY

Piyush Zaware

In a bold but perilous move, the Maharashtra government has introduced the 'Ladki Bahin' scheme, a populist initiative brimming with promises of financial aid and incentives. However, this well-intentioned but flawed programme highlights a grim reality: the State's leadership is sacrificing long-term fiscal stability for short-term electoral gains. While the scheme offers financial relief, its execution may worsen Maharashtra's precarious financial situation.

Maharashtra is grappling with a revenue deficit of ₹20,151 crore and a fiscal deficit of ₹1,10,355 crore, with its debt burden exceeding seven lakh crore. Amid this, the government has introduced seven new flagship schemes estimated to cost nearly one lakh crore. The reallocation of funds for these schemes has placed immense pressure on essential services and existing programmes.

A consequence of this mismanagement is the suspension of aid to families of farmers who have died by suicide – a critical support measure of one lakh per family. Additionally, contractors across the Public Works Department are awaiting payments totaling approximately ₹500 crore for completed projects. These delays and suspensions underscore the significant strain on Maharashtra's fiscal health.

The Ladki Bahin scheme exemplifies a broader trend in Indian politics: the reliance on populist schemes for immediate electoral gains. Financial aid may offer temporary relief, but these programmes rarely address the root causes



of poverty and economic inequality. Such initiatives lead to unsustainable fiscal practices, failing to generate long-term growth or job creation.

During the UPA-II tenure, India experienced a period of fiscal stability, with a focus on employment creation through programmes such as MNREGA. This approach, prioritising sustainable job creation and infrastructure development, laid the foundation for long-term economic stability rather than opting for quick fixes.

Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have set valuable examples with their cash transfer schemes for women. Tamil Nadu's Kalaingar Magalir Urimai Thogai offers ₹1,000 per month to women above 21, with stringent eligibility criteria based on income and land ownership. West Bengal's Lakshmi Bhandar Scheme provides ₹500 to ₹1,000 per month based on caste and enrollment in the Swasthya Sathi health scheme. The Ladki Bahin scheme, however, appears to be a hasty imitation rather than a thoughtful adaptation of these models.

Flawed execution

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar once said, "However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad. However bad a Constitution may be, if those implementing it are good, it will prove to be good."

This wisdom is particularly relevant to Maharashtra's current schemes. Despite noble intentions, the Ladki Bahin initiative is hampered by poor planning and execution, leading to diverted resources, broader financial distress, and ineffective outcomes.

The increasing reliance on freebie culture in Indian politics is reaching dangerous levels, posing risks to the country's fiscal health. While direct bank transfers are often promoted as solutions to poverty, they come with considerable costs. Other segments of society ultimately bear these financial burdens, especially when such schemes lack complementary strategies for employment generation or sustainable development.

Economists warn that India could face a fiscal collapse similar to Sri Lanka's if such trends continue. In countries such as Turkmenistan, subsidies have been curtailed to target only those in genuine need. As neighbouring nations retreat from excessive subsidies, India's political landscape appears to be moving in the opposite direction.

The current situation demands a critical reassessment of welfare schemes. States must shift from short-term freebies to sustainable solutions that offer long-term benefits. Expanding successful programmes, enhancing employment opportunities, and ensuring the efficient execution of welfare schemes can provide more substantial and lasting benefits to society. A strategic shift towards sustainable, employment-focused policies is essential to balance immediate relief with the State's long-term fiscal health.

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GS Paper III: Issues related to Planning and Mobilisation of Resources

Question: The growing dependence on freebies in Indian politics has raised concerns about the long-term fiscal sustainability and economic health of the country. Critically analyze the impact of freebie culture on India's fiscal management and suggest viable policy measures to address the issue. **(250 Words/15 Marks)**

Answer Approach

Introduce your answer with bringing "freebie culture" and its growing trend in Indian politics. Then in **Main Body** bring the **Impact on Fiscal Health** and **Development Goals**

- Strain on state and central government finances.
- Increase in fiscal deficit, affecting public investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare.
- Threat to credit ratings of states.

Impact on Development Goals:

- Skewing budget allocations towards populist schemes rather than long-term economic growth.

Further discuss the Social and Economic Imbalance caused by it: Encouraging dependency rather than promoting skill development and employment generation.

Substantiate your answer with Recent Data/Reports:

- Mention the **RBI's Fiscal Stability Report** and observations by economists and financial institutions like **NITI Aayog** regarding unsustainable subsidies and welfare schemes.

Then bring the Policy Suggestions:

- **Promote targeted welfare schemes** over blanket freebies.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act** should be strictly adhered to.
- Encourage **public awareness** about fiscal discipline.
- Use **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** for better targeting of welfare.

Finally Conclude by bringing Balance between welfare support and fiscal discipline is essential for sustainable growth.

ANSWER

The increasing trend of providing freebies in Indian politics has sparked concerns regarding the country's long-term fiscal health and economic sustainability.

"Freebie culture" refers to populist schemes where governments offer short-term benefits such as cash incentives, subsidies, or free utilities to win electoral support, often without considering their broader financial impact.

Impact on Fiscal Health

Strain on State and Central Finances:

- Populist schemes such as the "Ladki Bahin" initiative introduced by the Maharashtra government exemplify this issue.
- While the program aims to provide financial relief, Maharashtra's fiscal deficit of ₹1,10,355 crore and debt exceeding ₹7 lakh crore reveals the danger of such spending .
- Reallocation of funds toward these schemes strains other essential services, as evidenced by the suspension of aid to farmers' families and delayed payments to contractors.
- This mismanagement disrupts both immediate public services and long-term fiscal sustainability .

Increased Fiscal Deficit and Reduced Investments:

- The diversion of funds towards freebie-based schemes leads to a reduction in public investments in critical sectors such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare.
- This affects long-term economic growth and productivity as resources are spent on consumption rather than asset creation.
- The fiscal imbalance could also worsen, increasing the risk of default and damaging the credit ratings of states .

Impact on Development Goals

Skewed Budget Allocations:

- Freebies distort budget priorities by emphasizing short-term gains over long-term growth.
- Programs that prioritize immediate financial relief, while politically attractive, often fail to address deeper issues like poverty alleviation, education, or job creation.
- The "Ladki Bahin" scheme, which mirrors the Kalaighar Magalir Urimai Thogai in Tamil Nadu and Lakshmi Bhandar in West Bengal, does not incorporate sustainable development aspects like employment generation, worsening fiscal distress .

Economic Imbalance and Dependency:

- Such schemes promote dependency on the state rather than encouraging skill development and entrepreneurship.
- Instead of creating opportunities for employment and wealth generation, they cultivate a culture of entitlement, further straining the state's financial resources .

Substantiated Data and Reports

- The **RBI's Fiscal Stability Report** and findings from **NITI Aayog** emphasize that reliance on unsustainable subsidies can cause fiscal stress.
- Similar warnings have been echoed by economists who point to international cases like Sri Lanka's fiscal collapse due to excessive subsidies and unsustainable welfare schemes .

Policy Suggestions

- **Promote Targeted Welfare Schemes:** The focus should shift from blanket subsidies to targeted schemes that cater to genuinely needy sections of society.
- Examples like Tamil Nadu's Kalaighar Magalir Urimai Thogai show how eligibility criteria based on income and land ownership can limit the scope of freebies to the most vulnerable populations .

- **Adherence to Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act:** Strict compliance with the FRBM Act is essential to ensure fiscal discipline.
- This Act mandates the reduction of fiscal deficits and limits the total public debt, crucial for the overall health of the economy.
- **Public Awareness and Fiscal Education:** There is a need to educate the public about the long-term dangers of freebie politics and promote an understanding of fiscal discipline. Without public accountability, populist schemes may continue to flourish.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for Better Targeting:** DBT ensures that welfare benefits reach the intended beneficiaries directly, minimizing leakage and ensuring efficient resource use. By doing so, governments can offer targeted support without risking fiscal stability .

A balance between welfare support and fiscal discipline is essential for sustainable economic growth. While freebie culture provides temporary relief, it poses significant risks to long-term fiscal health if unchecked. A shift towards employment-focused, sustainable policies will ensure both immediate and enduring benefits for society.

The status of the civil war in Sudan

What is the extent of the war? Where did the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces begin? How have ethnic tensions and rivalries played a part in the war? From where are conflicting parties sourcing their weapons and arms?

GS Paper II: IR

EXPLAINER

Anu Maria Joseph

The story so far:

In September 26, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) launched a major offensive against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum and Bahri. Thus, the war which was quiet for a few months has gained momentum again. Eighteen months into the civil war, the UN said that more than 20,000 people have been killed. Additionally, the International Organization for Migration has recorded an estimated total of 10,890,722 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of October 1. All ceasefire efforts and peace talks have failed so far. The latest offensive comes ahead of the U.S.-led ceasefire talks on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Who are the actors in the civil war?

The civil war in Sudan between two military factions, the SAF and the RSF has crossed 18 months. It started as a power rivalry between the military heads of the SAF and the RSF, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Hamdan Dagalo respectively. What began as a conflict in the capital city of Khartoum has spread to Omdurman, Bahri, Port Sudan, El Fasher and the Port Sudan cities, as well as the Darfur and Kordofan states.

The RSF has an upper hand in multiple war zones. However, since August, the SAF has been carrying out frequent airstrikes and has captured pocket regions around Khartoum. The humanitarian crisis is worsening countrywide amidst limited and restricted access to aid and health care, especially in the Darfur states. The warring sides are also accused of carrying out war crimes including sexual violence and extrajudicial killings in several regions. In August, the UN declared famine in the Zamzam camp in North Darfur which hosts nearly 5,00,000 IDPs. The UN-Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Famine Review Committee says that 14 regions in the Greater Darfur, South and North Kordofan, and Jazeera states face conditions similar to Zamzam. According to the latest UN-backed IPC initiative, 25.6 million people, more than half of Sudan's population, face "crisis or worse" levels of food insecurity. Conditions have further worsened amidst heavy rains and floods and the subsequent spread of cholera. The outbreak has killed more than 200 people.

Why is the war continuing?

There is no sign of an end to the war. Firstly, both warring parties are adamant about gaining ground and legitimising their power. The SAF claims to be the legitimate government, with the UN just about recognising their claims, although it came to power through a coup in 2021. However, the RSF has territorial gains around the capital and other war zones. It opposes the SAF's efforts to represent Sudan internationally, claiming legitimacy. The RSF, a former Arab militia known as Janjaweed, seeks alliances from several Arab countries to support its claim to power.

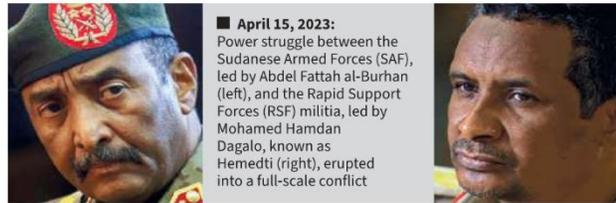
Secondly, Sudan has been under the UN arms embargo, since the 2004 Darfur crisis, which has recently been extended for another year. However, the embargo has not blocked the flow of weapons. A Human Rights Watch report in July claimed that the warring parties have been using armed drones, drone jammers, anti-tank guided missiles,

A multifaceted war

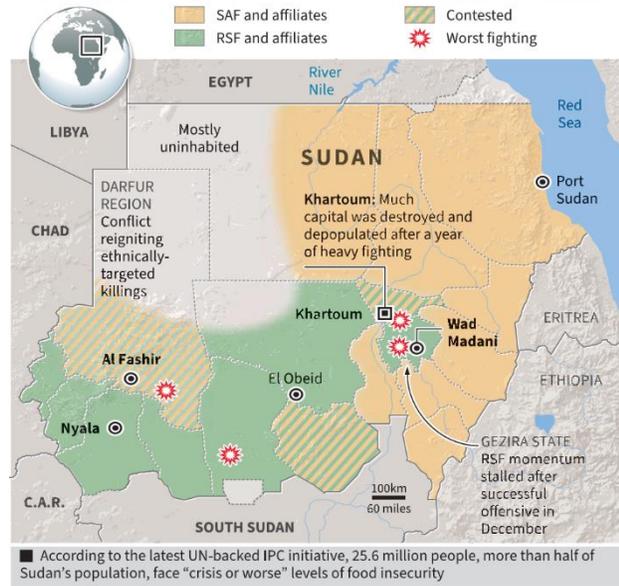
The ongoing civil war in Sudan has killed more than 20,000 people, according to the United Nations. Additionally, the International Organization for Migration has estimated a record 10,890,722 internally displaced people in Sudan



To the brink: Displaced people queue for food aid at a camp in Gedaref, Sudan on September 23. AFP



■ April 15, 2023:
Power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (left), and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti (right), erupted into a full-scale conflict



truck-mounted multi-barrel rocket launchers, and mortar munitions produced by companies registered in China, Iran, Russia, Serbia, and the UAE. Easy weapon procurement and use have aided the continuation of the war.

Thirdly, the war has become complex with the involvement of multiple actors and issues. What began as a military rivalry has now evolved through ethnic lines, involving several regional ethnic militias. Arab and non-Arab militias have taken sides with the RSF and the SAF respectively. The rebel group Sudanese People's Liberation Movement has been fighting alongside the SAF. The RSF and

its allied Arab militias have been targeting the Masalit community and other non-Arabs in Darfur states. Ethnic tensions have intensified the war.

Fourthly, the SAF has accused the UAE and previously Russia's Wagner Group of supporting the RSF. Although the Wagner group and the RSF have rejected any direct military engagement, the group is allegedly supporting the RSF by facilitating the supply of UAE's weapons through the Central African Republic. At the same time, Russia has been supplying weapons to the SAF as well. With abundant external support, both parties have little motive to end the war.

Have there been peace talks?

There were nine rounds of ceasefire efforts led predominantly by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia; all failed in their primary phase. On August 14, the latest round of U.S.-led peace talks were held in Geneva, Switzerland. But, neither of the warring parties attended. SAF boycotted the meeting, blaming the RSF for not adhering to the Jeddah Declaration 2023, including the withdrawal of forces from civilian regions. RSF also pulled out from the talks at the last moment.

The UN, the African Union, the U.S., the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the EU have all urged the parties to end the violence and work together to de-escalate the crisis. Egypt initiated a draft resolution on May 1 at the Arab League meeting in Cairo, calling for an "immediate and comprehensive cessation" of hostilities. Until now, any and all efforts at a long-lasting ceasefire have been ineffective.

The RSF and the SAF claim they are open to negotiations but have shown little commitment to comply. They attempt to gain a military advantage during the ceasefire, owing to mistrust between the parties. Both sides have not reached a possible bargaining stage for an effective mediation.

Another reason is that international media attention to the war on the ground is limited. International organisations' access to war zones is also restricted. With a limited understanding of the conflict on the ground, mediators like the U.S. and Saudi Arabia are challenged to formulate a ceasefire or peace talk which fit the multifaceted war situation.

What are the regional implications?

More than two million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries including Chad, South Sudan and Ethiopia. The refugee camps are overflowed and have raised concerns in Europe that many will attempt to reach the continent. In February, dozens of Sudanese drowned when a migrant boat capsized along the Tunisia-Italy route. A lack of state apparatus and institutions has triggered ethnic clashes along the South Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea borders. Since January, ethnic violence in the Abiye region, a disputed land between Sudan and South Sudan, has increased, with the UN reporting more than 100 casualties. Frequent clashes over agricultural land are reported in the El Fashaga region on the Sudan-Ethiopia border. The war has jeopardised an oil pipeline from South Sudan to the Red Sea.

What next?

The involvement of multiple actors and extended geography has made the war complex, challenging international actors to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table.

Multiple failed ceasefire attempts and peace talks imply the need to revisit international actors' approach to the war in Sudan. Although SAF has been gaining pockets in Khartoum, defeating the RSF is a long road. The RSF lacks international support to claim legitimacy. And, a RSF-SAF compromise is highly unlikely. The war will likely be prolonged until a major breakthrough.

There is an increasing fear that the military rivals will divide the country, leading to a plight similar to that of Libya's. Sudanese people have started to live with the war, and with much attention given to Gaza and Ukraine, the war in Sudan will continue to rage on the sidelines.

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THE GIST

▼ The civil war in Sudan between two military factions, the SAF and the RSF has crossed 18 months. It started as a power rivalry between the military heads of the SAF and the RSF, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Hamdan Dagalo respectively.

▼ The war has become complex with the involvement of multiple actors and issues. What began as a military rivalry has now evolved through ethnic lines, involving several regional ethnic militias.

▼ There were nine rounds of ceasefire efforts led predominantly by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia; all failed in their primary phase.

The status of the civil war in Sudan (7 October)

What is the extent of the war? Where did the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces begin? How have ethnic tensions and rivalries played a part in the war? From where are conflicting parties sourcing their weapons and arms

- On September 26, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) launched a major offensive against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum and Bahri.
- The civil war, quiet for a few months, has gained momentum again.
- Over 20,000 people have been killed during the 18 months of civil war, according to the UN.
- The International Organization for Migration reported 10,890,722 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of October 1.
- All ceasefire efforts and peace talks have failed thus far.
- The latest offensive precedes U.S.-led ceasefire talks at the UN General Assembly.
- The conflict is between two military factions: the SAF led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the RSF led by Hamdan Dagalo.
- The conflict began as a power rivalry and has spread to multiple regions, including Omdurman, Bahri, Port Sudan, El Fasher, and Darfur and Kordofan states.
- The RSF has gained an upper hand in various war zones, but the SAF has conducted airstrikes and captured regions around Khartoum since August.
- The humanitarian crisis is worsening, with limited access to aid and healthcare, particularly in Darfur.
- Both warring factions are accused of war crimes, including sexual violence and extrajudicial killings.
- In August, the UN declared famine in the Zamzam camp in North Darfur, which hosts nearly 500,000 IDPs.
- The UN-Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reported 14 regions facing conditions similar to those in Zamzam.
- An estimated 25.6 million people, over half of Sudan's population, face "crisis or worse" levels of food insecurity.
- Conditions have deteriorated due to heavy rains, floods, and a cholera outbreak, which has resulted in over 200 deaths.

Why is the war continuing?

- There is no sign of an end to the war in Sudan.
- Both warring parties, the SAF and RSF, are determined to gain ground and legitimize their power.

- The SAF claims to be the legitimate government, with limited UN recognition, despite coming to power through a coup in 2021.
- The RSF, which has territorial gains around the capital and other war zones, opposes the SAF's representation of Sudan internationally.
- The RSF, formerly known as the Janjaweed, seeks alliances from various Arab countries to bolster its legitimacy.
- Sudan has been under a UN arms embargo since the 2004 Darfur crisis, recently extended for another year.
- Despite the embargo, weapons flow has continued, with both parties using advanced weaponry sourced from countries like China, Iran, Russia, Serbia, and the UAE.
- The availability of arms has facilitated the ongoing conflict.
- The war has become more complex with the involvement of various actors and issues, evolving along ethnic lines.
- Arab and non-Arab militias have aligned with the RSF and SAF, respectively.
- The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement is fighting alongside the SAF.
- The RSF and allied Arab militias have targeted the Masalit community and other non-Arabs in Darfur, intensifying ethnic tensions.
- The SAF has accused the UAE and Russia's Wagner Group of supporting the RSF, although direct military engagement has been denied.
- The Wagner Group is allegedly aiding the RSF by facilitating weapon supplies from the UAE through the Central African Republic.
- Concurrently, Russia has been supplying weapons to the SAF.
- With significant external support, both parties have little incentive to end the war.

Have there been peace talks?

- Nine rounds of ceasefire efforts led predominantly by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have failed.
- The latest U.S.-led peace talks were held on August 14 in Geneva, but neither warring party attended.
- The SAF boycotted the meeting, blaming the RSF for not adhering to the Jeddah Declaration 2023, including the withdrawal from civilian areas.
- The RSF also withdrew from the talks at the last moment.
- Various organizations, including the UN, African Union, and EU, have urged an end to the violence and a collaborative approach to de-escalation.
- Egypt initiated a draft resolution at the Arab League meeting on May 1, calling for an “immediate and comprehensive cessation” of hostilities.
- All efforts for a long-lasting ceasefire have been ineffective so far.
- Both the RSF and SAF claim to be open to negotiations but show little commitment to compliance.

- Mistrust between the parties prevents them from reaching a bargaining stage for effective mediation.
- Limited international media attention and restricted access for international organizations hinder understanding of the conflict on the ground.
- More than two million people have sought refuge in neighboring countries, including Chad, South Sudan, and Ethiopia.
- Overcrowded refugee camps raise concerns in Europe about potential migration attempts.
- Ethnic clashes have increased along the South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea borders due to a lack of state apparatus.
- The Abiey region has seen rising ethnic violence, with over 100 casualties reported.
- Frequent clashes over agricultural land are occurring in the El Fashaga region on the Sudan-Ethiopia border.
- The war jeopardizes an oil pipeline from South Sudan to the Red Sea.
- The involvement of multiple actors complicates the situation, making it challenging for international actors to negotiate.
- Multiple failed ceasefire attempts suggest the need for a reassessment of international approaches to the conflict.
- While the SAF has gained ground in Khartoum, defeating the RSF will be difficult.
- The RSF lacks international support for legitimacy, making a compromise between the RSF and SAF unlikely.
- The war is expected to prolong until a significant breakthrough occurs.
- There are fears that the military rivals may divide the country, resembling the situation in Libya.
- The Sudanese population is beginning to adapt to life with ongoing conflict, with global attention focused elsewhere, such as Gaza and Ukraine.

How has Telegram changed its stance on content moderation policy? (7 October)

On September 24, Telegram CEO Pavel Durov announced definitive changes to Telegram's privacy policy, saying they will now provide authorities with user data including phone numbers and IP addresses in response to valid legal requests.



- In the **first week of September, Telegram edited its FAQ page, removing claims that private chats were protected and that they “do not process any requests related to them.”**
- The FAQ section on reporting illegal content was updated to include directions for users to report illegal content and messages.
- **Telegram turned off the ‘People Nearby’ feature, replacing it with a “Businesses Nearby” feature for legitimate, verified businesses to display products and accept payments.**
- On September 24, **Telegram CEO Pavel Durov** announced significant changes to the platform’s privacy policy.
- The **new policy allows Telegram to provide authorities with user data, including phone numbers and IP addresses, in response to valid legal requests.**
- Durov stated that the move aims to **deter criminals from abusing the platform’s search function for selling illegal goods.**
- **Previously, Telegram had only supplied information on terror suspects, but now it covers general criminal activities.**
- The company will disclose user information provided to authorities in its quarterly transparency reports.
- Moderators on the platform will use AI to identify and remove “problematic content” from Telegram’s search feature.

How do other end-to-end messaging apps moderate content?

- In 2021, after the January 6 riots at the U.S. Capitol, Signal app employees raised concerns about the app's ability to prevent abuse, noting a surge in users on Telegram and Signal.
- Signal is owned by a non-profit and does not sell ads or user data, nor does it collect demographic or personal details except for phone numbers.
- All groups and direct messages on Signal are encrypted, and the company has taken a similar approach to Telegram regarding content moderation, preferring not to know how the app is being used.
- Telegram offers more features than Signal, allowing groups of up to 200,000 members, which has made it a hotspot for exchanging child sex abuse media, terror-related content, and misinformation.
- In contrast, Signal and WhatsApp limit group sizes to 1,000 members.
- Signal does not advertise groups within the app, while Telegram has a search feature that facilitates finding publicly visible forums using specific hashtags or terms.
- This feature makes it easier to locate groups that post hateful content.
- The **influx of users to these apps has drawn criticism from activists, with Telegram amplifying such groups more than others.**

- Despite being marketed as a messaging app, Telegram's features make it function more like a social media platform.
- WhatsApp's end-to-end encryption claims have been questioned, as it hands over metadata to law enforcement and collects user data.
- WhatsApp has at least 1,000 content moderators who can view some messages if users report them.
- When an account is reported, WhatsApp can access the most recent messages and interactions with the reported user, potentially including the user's IP address, mobile phone number, profile photos, and linked Facebook and Instagram accounts.

What are the obligations imposed on intermediaries operating in India?

- Intermediaries like social media or messaging platforms in India must comply with national regulations and respond to complaints about unlawful content.
- **Section 79 of The Information Technology Act, 2000, provides a safe harbor for tech or social media platform executives against legal action.**
- This section states that **network service providers are not liable for third-party information if they can prove they were unaware of the offense or exercised due diligence to prevent it.**
- In simpler terms, platform **providers are not responsible for unlawful content if they can demonstrate they did not know about it or tried to stop it.**
- For example, Telegram CEO Pavel Durov could argue he is not responsible for unlawful content posted by others on his platform.
- **However, he must promptly remove such content once he becomes aware of it and implement preventive measures.**
- The **IT Act empowers the government to notify intermediaries about unlawful content, requiring quick action to disable access to it.**
- This provision is beneficial for removing **explicit deepfakes or leaked media**, as tech companies are mandated to act swiftly.
- Concerns exist regarding censorship and undue government pressure on tech companies to remove critical content.
- To comply with India's IT regulations, Telegram has appointed a designated grievance officer to address public content that violates applicable IT regulations.

Get rich or die trying: A marketer's guide to day

Get rich or die trying: A marketer's guide to day trading in stock markets

Indian markets are volatile and offer opportunities for day traders to exploit short-term price movements; the mythical stories of college students and housewives becoming rich overnight are alluring too, but do not get carried away by market euphoria, as the late Rakesh Jhunjhunwala advised

GS Paper III: Capital Market

COMMENT

Shubho Sengupta

What keeps housewives, college students and corporate leaders glued to screens from 9.15 am to 3.30 p.m. on days the stock market is open? And what lessons are there in this for marketers?

Middle-class India is in the grip of a pandemic, and it's called **intraday trading**, or **day trading** – buying and selling financial instruments such as stocks or commodities, within the same trading day, with the aim of profiting from short-term price movements. It's a high-risk, high-reward activity that requires knowledge, discipline, and access to real-time market data.

I first got to know about it from my cousins. One of the cousins had retired, done a course in stock market trading and was consistently trading since. He said the idea was to earn the same as his monthly salary once fetched him. I was impressed enough to open a **Zerodha account** the next day.

My cousin isn't the only one. Students are dropping out of college, housewives are locking themselves in bedrooms, and corporates are taking leave to stare at screens half the day.

And most fail badly, los-



New peaks: At \$5.7 trillion, India's market capitalisation is fourth highest in world. GETTYIMAGES/STOCK

ing their savings: statistically, **80% of day traders quit within two years, and nearly 40% quit within a month.** The average individual investor underperforms the market by 1.5% annually, while active day traders underperform by 6.5% annually.

'Risky behaviour'

The government, meanwhile, is increasingly jittery at the prospect of this new class of micro retail traders plunging their lifetime savings into speculative, short-term instruments. Reports say SEBI, the capital market regulator, will implement new measures governing **futures and options (F&O) trading to curb the risks faced by retail traders.**



It has been recommended that a newbie shouldn't even start day trading before a year, and should stick to mutual funds initially

(Day trading, however, is different from F&O, which is relatively longer term.) So, why this foolishness?

Here's why. **At \$5.7 trillion, India's market capitalisation is the fourth highest in the world. Benchmark indices Nifty 50 and Sensex are trading near all-time highs.** Companies, large and small, are going public like never before. It's a great time for story-

telling, and narrative-building – of the three percent who make money in day trading.

Also, compared to long-term investing, day trading can be started with smaller amounts of capital. And with advanced trading platforms like Zerodha, Upstox, and others, day traders have access to real-time data, charts, and tools to help them make informed decisions.

Indian markets are also very volatile, influenced by both domestic and global news, and create opportunities for day traders to exploit short-term price movements. Add to that the mythical stories of college students and housewives who became crore-patis overnight.

So why not take the plunge? You can start with as little as ₹1,000 at a trading website, after all.

Prepared plunge

But before you jump in, some strategy lessons from the marketer's playbook, which frowns upon short-term plans and quick gains as these tend to be ephemeral. Unless backed by top-notch market research, emotional maturity, pilot testing, and platform knowledge, they can pivot quickly. Here's a ready reckoner, so you don't end up with an empty wallet:

Do a course. I would recommend an offline, not online course. Online simply doesn't get the nuances of something new. Also, the power of networking – your peers, your teachers. It's not cheap, though; do your homework and get something that suits your best aspirations within your budget.

Says Arvind Wable, a Chennai college student dabbling in retail trading, "When I first started, I relied heavily on free resources online, but the offline trading course I took really helped me understand market psychology and risk management better. The in-person interaction with experienced traders gave me insights that books and videos couldn't. It wasn't just about the technical stuff, but also how to control emotions

during volatile sessions."

Do market research. Take subscriptions to the best business papers, go after both hard news and soft news. Hard on cash? The newsletters then... they're free. Watch YouTube videos and podcasts on everything, including podcasts of top management. Do ₹199 DIY courses on Zoom... lots around. Always be in learning mode.

Mukta Dhamankar, a homemaker from Mumbai who's a successful trader, says it took at least a year or two to gather a full synopsis of the stock market.

Do Zerodha, Upstox, Groww, whatever. Look around, understand the technology behind the dashboard, and what data it gathers from where. Play around with small sums of money – it's been recommended that a newbie shouldn't even start day trading before a year, and should stick to mutual funds initially.

Do set limits. I've spoken to about a dozen successful day traders and all have told me it's best to set ironclad limits for both profit and loss. This builds a disciplined investor mentality. As the big bull Rakesh Jhunjhunwala once said, "Do not get carried away by market euphoria. Have an exit strategy and stick to it."

(Shubho Sengupta is a digital marketer with an analogue past)

trading in stock markets (7 October)

Indian markets are volatile and offer opportunities for day traders to exploit short-term price movements; the mythical stories of college students and housewives becoming rich overnight are alluring too, but do not get carried away by market euphoria, as the late Rakesh Jhunjhunwala advised

- Housewives, college students, and corporate leaders are increasingly engaged in intraday trading, or day trading, during market hours.
- Day trading involves buying and selling financial instruments within the same trading day, aiming to profit from short-term price movements.
- It's a high-risk, high-reward activity that requires knowledge, discipline, and access to real-time market data.
- The author's interest in day trading was sparked by a cousin who had retired and completed a course in stock market trading.
- Many individuals are dropping out of college, locking themselves in bedrooms, or taking leave from work to focus on trading.
- Most day traders fail, with 80% quitting within two years and nearly 40% within a month.
- On average, individual investors underperform the market by 1.5% annually, while active day traders underperform by 6.5% annually.
- The government is concerned about retail traders risking their savings in speculative trading, prompting SEBI to consider new regulations for futures and options trading.
- India's market capitalization is \$5.7 trillion, making it the fourth highest in the world, with benchmark indices like Nifty 50 and Sensex trading near all-time highs.
- There is a surge in companies going public, creating opportunities for narrative-building around day trading success stories.
- Day trading can be initiated with smaller capital compared to long-term investing, appealing to many new traders.
- Advanced trading platforms like Zerodha and Upstox provide real-time data, charts, and tools for informed trading decisions.
- Indian markets are volatile, influenced by domestic and global news, providing opportunities for exploiting short-term price movements.
- The allure of success stories of individuals becoming wealthy overnight further encourages participation in day trading.
- Entry into day trading can be as low as ₹1,000 at trading websites, making it accessible to many.

Prepared plunge

Before starting day trading, consider strategic lessons from marketing, which warns against short-term plans and quick gains.

Ensure your approach is backed by thorough market research, emotional maturity, pilot testing, and knowledge of trading platforms.

Do a course:

- Opt for an offline course to grasp nuances better than online options.
- Networking with peers and instructors enhances learning.
- Example: Arvind Wable, a college student, found in-person trading courses invaluable for understanding market psychology and risk management.

Do market research:

- Subscribe to top business publications for both hard and soft news.
- Utilize free resources like newsletters, YouTube videos, and podcasts for ongoing learning.
- Mukta Dhamankar, a successful trader, took at least one to two years to fully understand the stock market.

Understand trading platforms:

- Familiarize yourself with platforms like Zerodha, Upstox, or Groww, and the technology behind their dashboards.
- Experiment with small sums of money; beginners should avoid day trading for at least a year and focus on mutual funds initially.

Set limits:

- Successful day traders advise setting strict profit and loss limits to cultivate a disciplined investor mentality.
- Rakesh Jhunjhunwala emphasizes not getting carried away by market euphoria and sticking to an exit strategy.

Telangana's dry port logistics drive

GS Paper III:
Infrastructure

G. Naga Sridhar

Land-locked Telangana will soon have dry port facilities to boost logistics services for its industries.

A dry port is an inland terminal that is meant to provide connectivity to a sea port by rail or road, thus serving as trans-shipment hub for sea cargo.

An exporter can complete all customs formalities at the dry dock, saving time and cost.

"Logistics has been the backbone of industrial development. The State government is working on developing a dry port in the northern corridor of the state. The modalities are being worked out and this will be developed in

public-private partnership mode," says a senior official of Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIC).

The government is exploring the feasibility of setting up a few more dry ports to facilitate more exports. Currently exports from Telangana are routed through ports in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

The idea for a major dry port in Telangana is not new. In July 2021, the K. Chandrasekhar Rao-led Bharata Rastra Samithi (BRS), formerly Telangana Rashtra Samithi, government approved a proposal to set up a 1,400-acre multi-modal logistics park near Nalgona on a public-private-partnership basis.

It decided to set up two new integrated container depots (ICDs), on the lines



Ease of doing business: An exporter can complete all customs formalities at the dry dock, saving time and cost. (picture for representational purpose only). FILE PHOTO

of Concor ICD at Sanathnagar in Hyderabad, in collaboration with the Customs department to promote exports.

The Cabinet has also approved a proposal to set up 10 additional integrated logistics parks across the State. However, none of

these projects, including the dry port, have got off the ground yet.

The current Congress government, under CM Re-

Given Telangana's industrial strengths, need for well developed logistics infra becomes vital

vanth Reddy, plans to fast-track the dry port project.

Given Telangana's industrial strengths, especially in pharmaceuticals, food processing, textiles, and defence and aerospace, the need for well-developed logistics infrastructure becomes vital.

As per government data, the State's logistics sector is growing annually at 12%. Upcoming new industrial corridors are expected to further boost the logistics demand.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Telangana's dry port logistics drive (7 October)

- Telangana will soon have dry port facilities to enhance logistics services for its industries.
- A dry port is an inland terminal providing connectivity to a sea port by rail or road, serving as a trans-shipment hub for sea cargo.
- Exporters can complete all customs formalities at the dry port, saving time and costs.
- The Telangana government is developing a dry port in the northern corridor of the state in public-private partnership mode.
- The government is also exploring the feasibility of setting up additional dry ports to facilitate exports.
- Currently, exports from Telangana are routed through ports in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- The proposal for a major dry port in Telangana was approved in July 2021, under the K. Chandrasekhar Rao-led BRS government.
- A 1,400-acre multi-modal logistics park is planned near Nalgona, also on a public-private partnership basis.
- The government plans to establish two new integrated container depots (ICDs) in collaboration with the Customs department to promote exports.
- The Cabinet has approved the establishment of 10 additional integrated logistics parks across the state, but none of these projects have commenced yet.

- The current Congress government, led by CM Revanth Reddy, aims to fast-track the dry port project.
- Given Telangana's industrial strengths in pharmaceuticals, food processing, textiles, and defence and aerospace, well-developed logistics infrastructure is crucial.
- The logistics sector in Telangana is growing annually at 12%, and new industrial corridors are expected to further boost logistics demand.

Kazakhs vote on the first nuclear power station in country (7 October)

- **Kazakhstan held a referendum on building its first nuclear power station to boost power generation capacity.**
- The result, expected to be announced on Monday, is anticipated to be in favor of the project despite concerns over past radiation exposure from Soviet-era nuclear tests.
- **China, France, Russia, and South Korea are competing to construct the new power station**, planned for the shores of **Lake Balkhash**.
- The issue of nuclear power is sensitive in Kazakhstan due to approximately 450 nuclear tests conducted by the USSR between 1949 and 1989, which **exposed 1.5 million people to radiation**.
- **President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev** called the project “the biggest project in the history of independent Kazakhstan.”
- The "Yes" campaign has been dominant leading up to the vote in a country with a history of authoritarianism, although civil society pressures have eased under Tokayev.
- To encourage high voter turnout, Kazakhs could vote without being enrolled on electoral registers, and public transport in major cities was free on referendum day.
- Opponents fear environmental disasters if accidents occur at the power plant, but they have faced challenges in spreading their message.
- Reports indicate that dozens of opponents were arrested in the weeks leading up to the referendum, according to local private media.