

02/05/2024

## TOPICS COVERED

1. April's gross GST takings power past ₹2.1 lakh cr. in new record (2 May)
2. IIA releases video of the moon occulting brightest star Antares
3. ISRO finds proof of enhanced possibility of water ice in polar craters of the moon
4. Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan is now Vice-Chief of Navy
5. EC brings out protocol on symbol loading units as mandated by top court
6. Particles called quarks hold the key to the final fate of some stars
7. Plastic treaty talks conclude in Ottawa with little progress
8. The services story
9. The wrong way to fight inequality
10. Animal protection Bill
11. Sea also rises
12. Budgets and Bills passed with little deliberation
13. Analysing labour on a warming planet
14. The memories of Partition in the contemporary imagination
15. 'Australia has laws to deal with foreign interference
16. U.S. expects accountability from India in Pannun case
17. AUKUS tech pact

## April's gross GST takings power past ₹2.1 lakh cr. in new record (2 May)

12.4% growth over previous highest tally due to strong momentum in the economy, says Finance Minister; April's GST revenues are usually the highest, as taxpayers meet compliance deadlines before end of Financial year

- India's gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues reached a record ₹2.1 lakh crore in April.
- This reflects a 12.4% growth compared to the previous highest collection of ₹1.87 lakh crore in April of the previous year.
- After considering refunds, the GST revenues for the month stood at ₹1.92 lakh crore, marking a 15.5% increase from April 2023.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman attributed the strong GST revenues to the momentum in the economy and efficient tax collections.
- She stated that there were no pending dues for IGST settlement to the states.

- Revenues from domestic transactions grew by 13.4%, while goods imports saw an 8.3% increase, contributing to the milestone of crossing ₹2 lakh crore in GST collections.
- This marks a recovery in revenues from goods imports, which had contracted by 5% in March.
- However, the growth in domestic transactions weakened slightly in April compared to the previous month.
- Overall, gross GST revenues grew at a slower pace of 11.5% in March, with net revenues rising by 18.4%.
- April typically sees the highest GST revenues of the year as taxpayers finalize their financial year's transactions and meet compliance deadlines.
- Experts project that GST revenues may moderate in the coming months following last month's record spike.
- Some growth is expected over the monthly average GST collection of ₹1.68 lakh crore in the fiscal year 2023-24.
- GST compensation cess collections reached an all-time high of ₹13,260 crore last month, including ₹1,008 crore collected on imported goods.
- The cess is levied on select goods such as automobiles and tobacco products, over and above the peak GST rate of 28%.
- Initially introduced for five years to compensate states for revenue losses due to the switch to the GST regime in 2017, the cess is now being used to repay loans taken during the pandemic.
- The Ministry highlighted positive performance across components, including Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) revenues of ₹43,846 crore, State GST revenues of ₹53,538 crore, and Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) inflows of ₹99,623 crore.
- The IGST collections included ₹37,826 crore collected on imported goods.
- The Central government settled ₹50,307 crore to CGST and ₹41,600 crore to SGST from the IGST collected, resulting in total revenues of ₹94,153 crore for CGST and ₹95,138 crore for SGST for April 2024 after regular settlement.
- Four states, including Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim, recorded a contraction in revenues last month.
- Eight states saw muted growth relative to the overall growth in domestic revenues, with Jharkhand (3%), Uttarakhand (4%), and Tamil Nadu (6%) experiencing the weakest growth.

## Cess

- **Definition:** A tax levied on top of the existing tax liability for a specific purpose. The collected revenue must be used only for that stated purpose.
- **Purpose:** Introduced to raise funds for specific government programs or developments, often related to social welfare, infrastructure, or environmental protection.
- **Examples:**
  - Education Cess
  - Health Cess
  - Swachh Bharat Cess
  - Krishi Kalyan Cess

## Surcharge

- **Definition:** An additional tax levied on top of the existing tax liability. Unlike cess, the collected revenue goes into the general government fund and can be used for any purpose.
- **Purpose:** Usually imposed to raise additional revenue or as a temporary measure to meet fiscal needs. Often targets higher-income groups.
- **Examples:**
  - Income Tax Surcharge (for high-income taxpayers)
  - Corporate Surcharge

## Key Differences

Feature	Cess	Surcharge
Purpose	Specific, pre-defined purpose	General revenue purposes
Fund Allocation	Earmarked for the specific purpose it's collected for	Consolidated Fund of India (general government revenue)
Calculation	Levied on the total tax amount (including any existing surcharge)	Levied on the base tax amount only
Target	Applies to all taxpayers	May be applied selectively (such as on high-income earners)

## IIA releases video of the moon occulting brightest star Antares (2 May)

- The Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) in Bengaluru filmed the passing of the moon in front of Antares, a bright red star.
- This event occurred on April 27 and lasted approximately 40 minutes, during which the moon obscured Antares.
- The event was visible only from southern India.
- IIA captured the event using a camera mounted on an eight-inch telescope at its Bengaluru campus.
- Occultations, where the moon hides stars or planets behind it as it orbits the Earth, happen occasionally.
- Antares, also known as Jyeshtha, is the brightest star in the constellation of Scorpius.
- Such occultations are visible only from specific locations on the globe due to the moon's proximity to Earth.
- The last occultation of Antares visible from India occurred on February 5 of the same year.
- The next occultation is expected to happen in June 2027.
- From Bengaluru's perspective, Antares disappeared behind the bright side of the gibbous moon around 1:13 a.m. and reappeared on the darker side around 1:53 a.m.

## ISRO finds proof of enhanced possibility of water ice in polar craters of the moon (2 May)

- Indian space scientists, including those from ISRO's Space Applications Centre (SAC), collaborated with researchers from IIT Kanpur, University of Southern California, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad.
- Their study found evidence suggesting an increased likelihood of water ice occurrence in the polar craters of the moon.
- The amount of sub-surface ice within the first couple of meters is estimated to be five to eight times larger than surface ice in both lunar poles.
- Drilling on the moon to access this ice for sampling or excavation is deemed essential for future missions and sustained human presence.
- The study indicates that the northern polar region has approximately twice as much water ice as the southern polar region.
- It confirms the hypothesis that sub-surface water ice in lunar poles originates from out-gassing during volcanism in the Imbrian period.
- The distribution of water ice is influenced by mare volcanism and preferential impact cratering.
- Accurate knowledge of water ice distribution and depth in lunar poles is crucial for selecting future landing and sampling sites for missions exploring lunar volatiles.
- This study supports ISRO's future plans for in-situ volatile exploration on the moon.

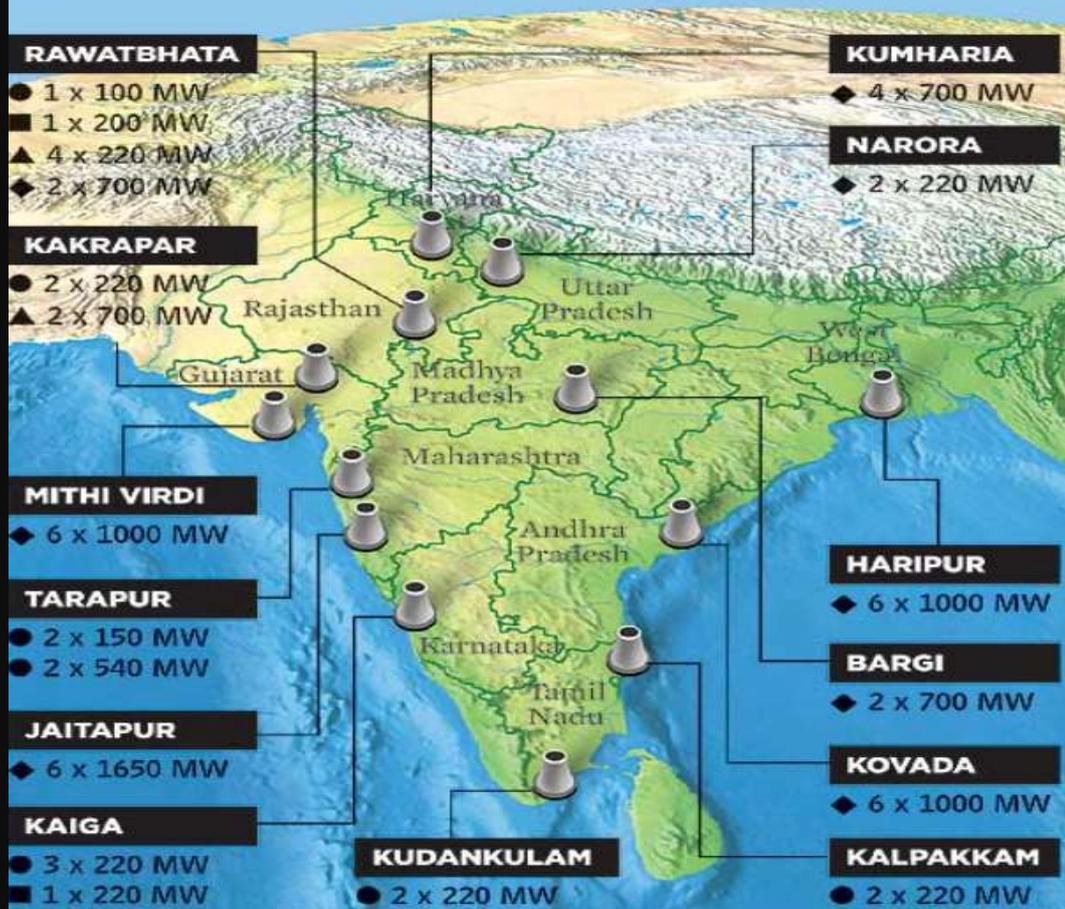
## Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan is now Vice-Chief of Navy (2 May) (Prelims)

- Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan assumed the role of Vice Chief of the Indian Navy.
- He previously served as the Chief of Personnel.
- Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor took over as the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) of the Training Command of the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Bengaluru.
- Vice-Admiral Swaminathan joined the Navy on July 1, 1987, specializing in communication and electronic warfare.
- Upon assuming charge, he paid homage at the National War Memorial and inspected a Guard of Honour on South Block lawns.
- He is an alumnus of prestigious institutions including the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, and the United States Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, U.S.
- Throughout his naval career, Vice-Admiral Swaminathan held various significant operational, staff, and training positions.
- He commanded several vessels, including missile vessels like INS Vidyut and INS Vinash, and the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.

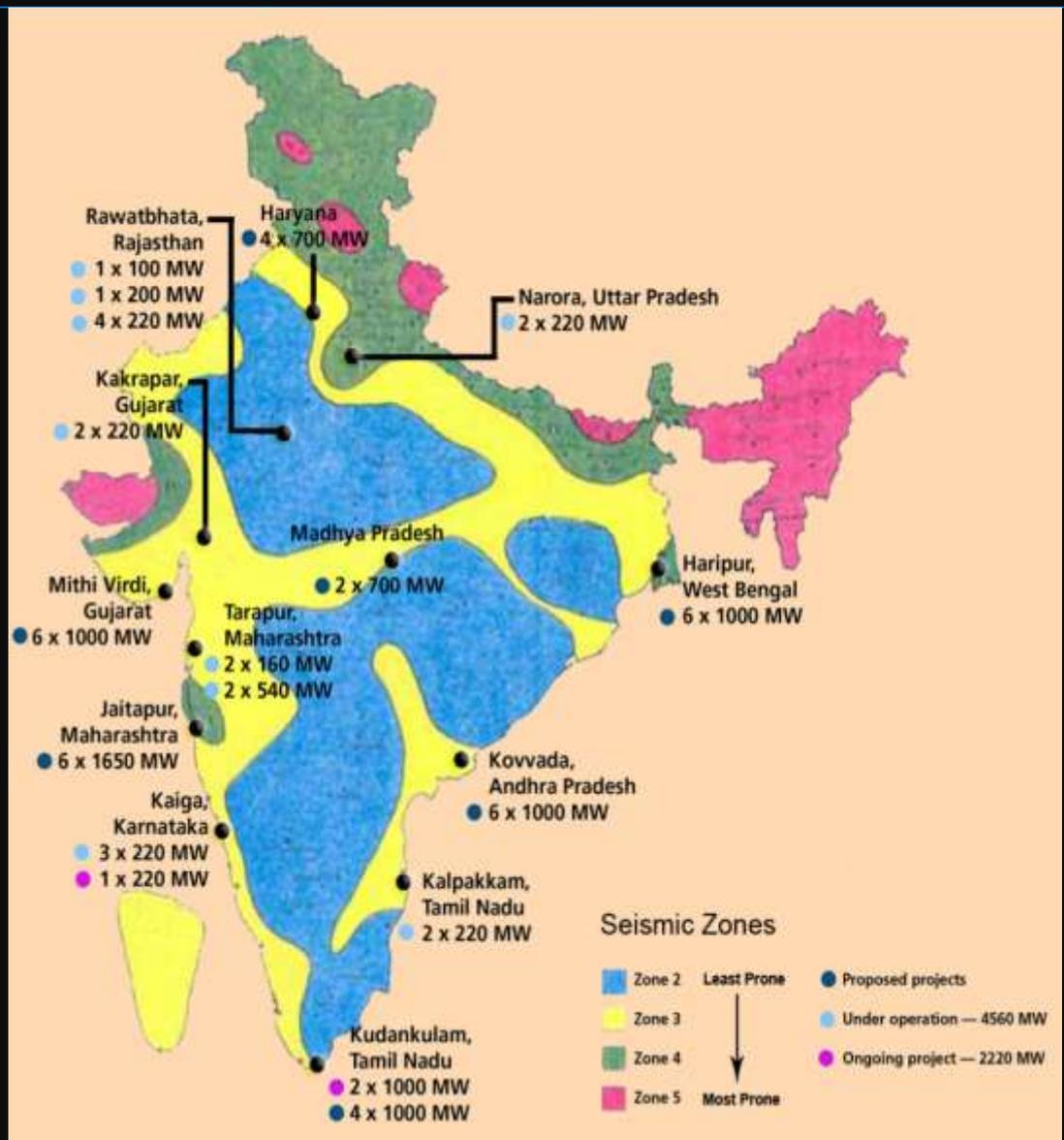
### Nuclear power plant in Jaitapur

- **Location:** Madban village, Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra, India.

# THE NUCLEAR ENERGY SPREAD



Patric



- **Operator:** Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), a government-owned company.
- **Technology Partner:** Électricité de France (EDF), a French energy company.
- **Status:** Proposed, with framework agreements signed but land acquisition and construction yet to begin extensively.
- **Capacity:** Planned to be the world's largest nuclear power plant, initially with six European Pressurized Reactors (EPRs) with a combined capacity of 9,900 MW.

#### Key Features

- **EPR Technology:** The EPR is a Generation III+ reactor design that is considered an advanced and safer technology.
- **Electricity Generation:** The JNPP is projected to generate enough electricity to power millions of homes.
- **Economic Impact:** The project is expected to create significant employment opportunities during construction and operation, as well as stimulate the local economy.

#### Current Situation

- **Land Acquisition:** Land acquisition for the project has been a significant challenge with some local opposition. However, a significant portion of the land has been acquired.

- **Financing:** The financing mechanism for the project is still under discussion between India and France.
- **Environmental Clearances:** The project received environmental clearance in 2010, but further approvals may be needed as the project progresses.

#### Controversies and Concerns

- **Cost:** The estimated project cost is very high, causing concerns about its economic feasibility.
- **Safety:** Nuclear power always carries some safety risks, and there are apprehensions among some local communities.
- **Environmental Impact:** Concerns exist about the project's potential impacts on marine ecosystems and the local environment.
- **Local Opposition:** Some local groups and fishers oppose the project, citing concerns about displacement and damage to traditional livelihoods.

## EC brings out protocol on symbol loading units as mandated by top court (2 May)

- The Election Commission (EC) released a detailed protocol for handling and storing symbol loading units (SLUs) in compliance with the Supreme Court's order from April 26.
- According to the Supreme Court's directive, SLUs must be sealed and stored in containers along with electronic voting machines (EVMs) for a minimum of 45 days after result declaration.
- SLUs are devices that upload the names and symbols of candidates onto Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) or paper trail machines.
- Previously, SLUs were given to local election officials by engineers from Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL) or the EC before voting. After polling, they were returned to these engineers.
- The EC instructed all State Chief Electoral Officers to establish necessary infrastructure for handling and storing SLUs in EVMs as per the new protocols starting May 1.
- Adequate SLU containers, usually two to four per Assembly constituency, are to be prepared in advance based on requirements.
- These revised protocols apply to all instances of symbol loading in VVPATs conducted on or after May 1.
- Additionally, the Supreme Court allowed verification of micro-controllers embedded in the EVMs.

## Particles called quarks hold the key to the final fate of some stars (2 May)

- Matter is composed of atoms, which consist of protons, neutrons, and electrons.
- Protons and neutrons are found inside the nucleus of an atom, while electrons orbit around the nucleus.
- Protons and neutrons are composite particles made up of smaller particles called quarks.
- Quarks cannot exist in isolation and are always found in groups of two or three, forming what are called hadrons.
- Hadrons, such as protons and neutrons, are examples of groups of quarks.

- Physicists study quarks primarily based on the behavior of hadrons and are interested in understanding how quarks combine to form different types of hadrons.

## When quarks clump

- A recent study published on February 20 found that three-quark clumps are more likely to form than two-quark clumps in certain particle environments.
- This finding challenges conventional particle-physics models that suggest quark consolidation is independent of the particle environment.
- Another study published on March 15 observed clumps made entirely of heavier quarks, unlike protons and neutrons which consist of lighter quarks.
- Heavy-quark clumps are short-lived and require advanced tools and computing power to study.
- Understanding heavy-quark clumps is crucial for comprehending all types of quarks and their impact on nuclear fusion and the fate of stars.
- In the case of quark stars, understanding quarks could have a direct impact.

## The tension of every star

- Stars achieve balance between gravity and nuclear force, preventing collapse or explosion.
- Gravity, from the star's mass, tends to collapse the star, while nuclear force from fusion reactions pushes it outward.
- When a star exhausts its fusion material, nuclear fusion weakens, and gravity dominates, leading to collapse.
- The fate of a star after collapse depends on its mass, resulting in a white dwarf, neutron star, or black hole.
- If the Sun were 20 times more massive, it might collapse into a black hole upon death.
- A star about eight times heavier than the Sun could become a neutron star.
- There's speculation about stars too heavy to form a neutron star but not heavy enough to form a black hole, possibly forming a quark star.

## Enter 'quark matter

- Neutron stars form when the core of a massive star collapses, fusing protons and electrons into neutrons.
- Physicists lack direct experimental data on neutron stars due to their inaccessible nature.
- Understanding neutron stars is crucial, but their masses and radii remain unknown for most.
- Neutron star matter is incredibly dense, packing two Suns' worth of mass into a sphere just 25 km wide.
- This extreme pressure may force neutrons into a new state of matter, possibly quark matter, where only quarks exist.
- A study in December 2023 from the University of Helsinki suggested that most massive neutron stars likely contain quark matter.
- The study combined astrophysical observations with theoretical calculations run on a supercomputer.

- However, the reliability of the result is limited due to the small number of astrophysical observations.
- More observational data is needed to understand quark matter formation and its implications.

## The need for quarks

- Equations of state are used to calculate the bulk properties of materials based on known physical properties.
- For neutron stars, the Tolman-Oppenheimer-Volkoff equation is used, which assesses the probability of quarks' presence.
- Quarks, the building blocks of protons and neutrons, come in six types or 'flavours', with quirky names like charm and strange.
- The term 'quark' was coined by physicist Murray Gell-Mann, inspired by James Joyce's "Finnegan's Wake".
- Neutrons, despite being neutral, exhibit a magnetic moment, indicating they are composed of smaller particles with electric charges that cancel out.
- Gell-Mann proposed these smaller particles as 'quarks' in the 1960s, and their existence was confirmed in the 1970s, revolutionizing our understanding of particle physics.

## Setting quarks free

- Quarks are elementary particles that come in six types: up, down, top, bottom, strange, and charm.
- Each quark has one of three types of color charge, and there are also corresponding antiquarks.
- When a quark and antiquark combine, they form a meson, while three quarks together form a baryon.
- Quarks are bound together by gluons, which are another set of particles.
- Nuclear forces are strong, keeping quarks tightly bound even in empty space.
- Quantum chromodynamics is the theory explaining the nuclear force holding quarks together.
- At extremely high energies, nuclear matter can undergo "deconfinement," forming a new phase where quarks exist independently.
- Evidence of deconfinement has been obtained by smashing lead ions at high energies, creating a quark-gluon plasma, resembling conditions in the early universe.
- This plasma existed shortly after the Big Bang before particles clumped to form matter.
- The clumping process may release energy or modify surroundings, potentially leading to the discovery of quark stars in astrophysics, remaining an open problem in physics.

## Plastic treaty talks conclude in Ottawa with little progress

(2 May)

- Activist and environmentalist groups are disappointed with the outcome of the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations in Ottawa, Canada.
- The negotiations aimed to create a legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution, with 192 member countries participating.
- This was the fourth round of talks since the resolution in 2022 to eliminate plastics, led by an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC).
- The connection between plastics and the oil economies, along with the vast manufacturing businesses involved, pose significant challenges to elimination efforts.
- Plastics' widespread use in various applications and the lack of affordable alternatives further complicate the issue.
- Plastics are known for their environmental harm as they do not easily degrade and pollute marine and terrestrial ecosystems.
- The negotiations failed to address the unsustainable production of plastics, according to Jacob Kean-Hammerson of the Environmental Investigation Agency.
- Although countries agreed to conduct more detailed assessments of emissions, a timeline to halt primary plastic production was not established in this round of talks.
- The Global Plastics Treaty negotiations addressed various aspects including production, product design, waste management, problematic plastics, financing, and a just transition.
- The goal was to make progress on the treaty text and agree on inter-sessional work to advance further before the next official session.
- Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP, expressed satisfaction with achieving these goals but emphasized that the work is ongoing due to the continued plastic pollution crisis.
- Inter-sessional work involves expert meetings between official sessions to facilitate agreement on key issues.
- The next meeting, expected to be the final one, is scheduled for November 2024 in Busan, South Korea.
- India opposed restrictions on primary plastic polymers, arguing that production reductions exceed the scope of UNEA resolutions.
- India acknowledged the chemicals used in plastic manufacturing but highlighted that some are already subject to prohibition or regulation.

## The services story (2 May)

- Goldman Sachs released a detailed report titled 'India's Rise as the Emerging Services Factory of the World', analyzing India's recent success in global services and predicting growth prospects and risks.
- India's IT services sector has experienced significant growth since economic reforms in 1991, but the report takes a broader view, considering various service exports over the last 18 years.
- Professional consulting services have grown the fastest, while travel services have shown slower growth, and financial services could benefit from initiatives like the GIFT City.
- India's intangible exports grew at twice the pace of global services exports, reaching nearly \$340 billion last year.

- India's share in global services outflows increased from under 2% in 2005 to 4.6% in 2023, while its share in goods exports also rose.
- Services exports have helped balance India's external account against shocks like costly oil imports, with Goldman Sachs projecting exports to reach \$800 billion by 2030.
- However, immediate outlook remains tentative, with top IT firms shedding employees and growth guidance being conservative.
- Global capability centers offer some comfort, but challenges remain, including the need to train graduates for job readiness and address stress on natural resources in growth regions like Bengaluru.
- Protectionist tendencies in destination countries and domestic policy interventions could hinder exports, requiring a calibrated approach to sustain services growth.
- Recommendations include pushing for global market access, promoting opportunities for all professional services, and adopting a light-touch regulatory approach to foster innovation in areas like AI, manufacturing-linked services, and blockchain applications.

## Sea also rises (2 May)

### India must collaborate with Indian Ocean countries for data on warming

- A recent study led by scientists at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and other international institutions forecasts the impact of global carbon emissions on the Indian Ocean.
- The study predicts that the Indian Ocean has warmed by 1.2°C and could heat up by 1.7°C to 3.8°C from 2020 to 2100.
- Marine heatwaves in the Indian Ocean, linked to the rapid formation of cyclones, are expected to increase tenfold from an average of 20 days per year to 220–250 days per year.
- This could lead to a "near-permanent heatwave state" in the tropical Indian Ocean, accelerate coral bleaching, and harm the fisheries sector.
- The ocean's heat content is increasing not just at the surface but also down to 2,000 meters below, with a current rate of 4.5 zetta-joules per decade and a predicted future rate of 16–22 zetta-joules per decade.
- Warming of the Indian Ocean will affect mainland India, with the frequency of severe cyclones rising and the monsoon becoming more erratic, leading to long spells of drought followed by intense rainfall and flooding.
- Global commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are unlikely to significantly impact the ocean's warming due to its slower response to external changes.
- India should collaborate with countries bordering the Indian Ocean to invest in data gathering and projections to guide infrastructure development and protection measures, as current efforts in this area are insufficient compared to those in the Pacific Ocean region.

## The wrong way to fight inequality (2 May)

**Wealth Tax**

- An annual tax levied on an individual's or household's net wealth above a certain threshold. Net wealth typically includes assets like real estate, financial holdings, vehicles, and other valuable possessions.
- **Current Global Status:** Wealth taxes are relatively uncommon. Only a few countries, such as Norway, Spain, and Switzerland, currently implement them.
- **Historical Use in India:** India had a wealth tax from 1957 to 2015 when it was abolished.

#### Arguments for Wealth Taxes

- **Reducing Inequality:** Proponents argue that wealth taxes address extreme wealth concentration and help reduce economic inequality.
- **Generating Revenue:** Wealth taxes, especially on the very wealthy, can be a significant source of government revenue.
- **Encouraging Productive Investment:** Some argue that wealth taxes might encourage wealthy individuals to shift their assets into more productive investments rather than hoarding wealth.

#### Arguments Against Wealth Taxes

- **Administrative Complexity:** Determining the true value of diverse assets and ensuring compliance can be difficult and costly.
- **Capital flight:** Wealth taxes could lead to wealthy individuals moving to countries with lower taxes.
- **Disincentive to Saving and Investment:** Critics argue that wealth taxes could discourage saving, investment, and consequently, economic growth.

### Inheritance Tax

- **Definition:** A tax levied on the value of assets transferred to beneficiaries upon the death of the asset owner.
- **Current Global Status:** Inheritance taxes are more common than wealth taxes, implemented by countries including the United Kingdom, France, Japan, and South Korea.
- **Historical Use in India:** India abolished inheritance taxes (then called Estate Duty) in 1985.

#### Arguments for Inheritance Taxes

- **Addressing Intergenerational Inequality:** Inheritance taxes can help level the playing field by reducing the transfer of vast wealth across generations.
- **Encouraging Charitable Donations:** Tax benefits may encourage individuals to leave a portion of their estates to charity.
- **Relatively Easy Administration:** Compared to wealth taxes, determining the value of assets upon transfer due to death is considered administratively simpler.

#### Arguments Against Inheritance Taxes

- **Double Taxation:** Some argue that income has already been taxed when the assets were acquired, leading to double taxation when they're inherited.
- **Impact on Family Businesses:** High inheritance taxes may make it difficult for family-run businesses to pass from one generation to the next.
- **Potential for Avoidance:** Tax avoidance strategies may be pursued to transfer wealth before death.

- French economist Thomas Piketty and other economists published findings on economic inequality trends in India.
- They authored a paper titled "Income and Wealth Inequality in India, 1922-2023: The Rise of the Billionaire Raj."
- The study suggests that current inequality in India surpasses that during the inter-war British colonial rule.
- In 2022, the top 1% of the Indian population owned 40.1% of total wealth and earned 22.6% of total income.
- In contrast, the bottom 50% owned 6.4% of total wealth and earned 15% of total income.

- Comparatively, the top 10% owned 65% of total wealth and earned 57.7% of total national income.
- The authors argue that India's tax system, mainly based on people's incomes, is regressive.
- They propose implementing a wealth tax on the rich to address inequality.
- While Piketty's data may be alarming, there's debate over whether wealth redistribution is the best solution.

## The economic pie has grown

- Piketty and co-authors observed two key trends in income and wealth inequality in India:
  1. Inequality surged from the 1980s when India embraced market-oriented policies.
  2. Economic growth was stagnant during socialist decades but accelerated after 1990.
- Despite the decline in the bottom 50%'s share of national income, their real income and standard of living increased.
- The total real income of the bottom 50% grew over four-fold between 1991 and 2022.
- Income shares in a market economy depend on groups' ability to compete for a share of national income.
- Top earners in India make significantly more than those in the bottom 50%.
- In a free market, such income disparities should prompt more people to pursue high-paying professions.
- However, barriers like limited access to capital and expensive education hinder this in reality.
- Liberalizing the financial and medical education sectors could empower the poor to pursue lucrative careers.
- Heavy taxes on high earners may discourage labor movement towards high-paying jobs and shrink their supply.

## Wealth inequality is inevitable

- Wealth inequality in India is stark, with the top 1% owning significantly more wealth than the bottom 50%.
- On average, the net wealth of the top 1% is ₹5.4 crore, while the bottom 50% only possess ₹1.7 lakh.
- In a market economy, wealth inequality is natural as it rewards those who are better at investing or allocating capital.
- Entrepreneurs who innovate and create products benefiting many people see their wealth increase.
- The market ensures capital goes to the best investors and resources are used efficiently to grow the economy.

- However, extreme wealth inequality in India is largely due to special privileges enjoyed by the top 1%, not just entrepreneurial success.
- Government protection from competition allows the wealthy to maintain their positions without merit.
- The solution lies in removing these special privileges and fostering more competition in the economy.
- Increased competition would naturally reduce the wealth share of the top 1% while benefiting the wider economy.
- Free competition ensures that the best investors rise to the top and continuously innovate, enlarging the economic pie for everyone.

### Impact of a wealth tax

- A wealth tax could have unintended consequences.
- Investors may lower capital investment to offset higher taxes, impacting worker wages and landowner income.
- This would indirectly affect ordinary workers, mostly from the bottom 50% or middle 40% income groups, reducing their income and output.
- Ultimately, a wealth tax on the rich could become a tax on lower income groups.
- Most of the wealth held by the top 1% is in the form of capital assets like factories and real estate, not consumer goods.
- Taxing the rich won't necessarily improve living standards for the poor as it's their capital assets that boost productivity and improve output of consumer goods and services.
- A wealth tax may negatively impact economic growth and living standards.
- Instead of taxing the rich, providing more economic freedom to the poor to compete in the marketplace for a larger share of the economic pie could be a better approach to reduce inequality and help the poor.

## An animal protection Bill that must be moved in June (2 May)

- Countries worldwide are updating their animal cruelty laws and increasing penalties.
- Croatia recently implemented stricter penalties for acts of cruelty and abandonment of domestic pets.
- Amendments to the Croatian Penal Code enhance punishments for causing unnecessary pain or suffering to animals, and for killing or severely abusing them.
- In India, an incident involving the killing of a community dog named Jai in Mumbai sparked demands for stricter punishments for animal cruelty.
- The incident led to the #JusticeForJai movement on social media, along with prayer meets and candlelight vigils, urging for stronger criminal laws against animal cruelty.

### On punishment theories

- **The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act (1960)** is the primary law in India that criminalizes cruelty toward animals.
- However, there have been discussions about its inadequacies, including poor enforcement and low penalties.
- When analyzed through the lens of punishment theories, the PCA Act appears ineffective.
- Punishment theories suggest that punishment serves three main goals: retribution, deterrence, and reformation.
- Retribution refers to punishment imposed to avenge the committed crime.
- Deterrence involves punishment to discourage both the perpetrator and the general public from committing similar crimes in the future.
- Reformation or rehabilitation aims to shape the future behavior of the perpetrator through punishment.

### **Bailable offences, weak fines**

- The current Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act has several shortcomings that hinder its effectiveness.
- Many offenses under the Act are bailable and non-cognizable, making it easy for accused individuals to seek bail and evade police investigation.
- The fines prescribed by the PCA Act have remained unchanged for over 130 years, rendering them insignificant in deterring animal cruelty.
- The law allows courts to choose between imposing imprisonment or fines, enabling perpetrators to avoid severe punishment by paying fines.
- There is no provision for community service as a form of punishment, which could potentially reform perpetrators.
- In November 2022, the Draft PCA (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was published for public comments but was not tabled in Parliament.
- The Draft Bill proposes significant amendments, including the inclusion of fundamental freedoms for animals, increased punishments and fines, and new cognizable offenses.
- However, the Draft Bill still allows courts to choose between imprisonment and fines for certain offenses, potentially enabling perpetrators to avoid imprisonment by paying fines.

### **Words to heed**

- Despite its limitations, enacting the Draft Bill would mark a significant advancement in animal law in India.
- In 1954, Rukmini Devi Arundale advocated for replacing the outdated PCA Act (1890) with a new law.
- Arundale emphasized India's responsibility to lead by example in practicing ahimsa (non-violence) due to its cultural emphasis on the concept.
- The new government, expected to come into power in June, should acknowledge this responsibility.
- By accepting this responsibility, the government can ensure that the proposed amendments