

**24 MAY 2024**

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# Heads of Iran-allied militant groups meet in Tehran; discuss Gaza 'political situation' (24 May)

## Meeting in Tehran:

- Leaders of the "axis of resistance" met in Tehran to discuss the war in Gaza.
- The meeting took place on the sidelines of President Ebrahim Raisi's funeral.
- State media reported the gathering, which included representatives from Iran's regional allies.

## Axis of Resistance:

- Composed of Iran's allies in the fight against Israel.
- Includes Hamas (Palestine), Hezbollah (Lebanon), Houthis (Yemen), and Iraqi Shia armed groups.

## Participants:

- Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas's Qatar-based political bureau.
- Naim Qassem, deputy of Hezbollah.
- Mohammed Abdulsalam, spokesperson for the Houthis.

## Iranian Officials:

- General Hossein Salami, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.
- General Esmail Qaani, commander of the Quds Force (the foreign operations branch of the guards).

## Context:

- The meeting followed ceremonies in Tehran honoring President Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash.
- Ismail Haniyeh also met with Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

**Purpose:**

- Discussion focused on the situation in Gaza and strengthening cooperation among the "axis of resistance" members.

**Resistance front****Discussion in Tehran:**

- Leaders of the "axis of resistance" met in Tehran to discuss the situation in Gaza and the Al-Aqsa Flood operation.
- The meeting focused on political, social, and military developments.

**Stated Goals:**

- Emphasized the continuation of jihad and struggle until the complete victory of Palestinian resistance in Gaza.
- Aimed at uniting all resistance groups and fronts in the region.

**Participants:**

- Ismail Haniyeh from Hamas, Naim Qassem from Hezbollah, and Mohammed Abdulsalam from the Houthis attended.
- Representatives from Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Iraqi groups were also present.

**Reports and Coverage:**

- State broadcaster IRIB, Hezbollah's Al-Manar channel, and Iran's Fars news agency reported on the meeting.
- Photos were broadcast, highlighting the event.

**Recent Activity:**

- Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who died in a helicopter accident, had increased visits to Lebanon and Syria amid the Gaza conflict.
- Iran supports Hamas but denies involvement in their recent attack on Israel.

## **Microplastics found in fish in Ashtamudi Lake: study (24 May)**

**Ashtamudi Lake**, also known as the "Gateway to the Backwaters of Kerala", is the second largest lake in Kerala, India

- The lake is located in the Kollam District of Kerala.
- The name Ashtamudi means "eight chanel" in Malayalam, referring to the eight branches of the lake.
- The lake is a palm-shaped water body with a unique wetland ecosystem.
- The Ashtamudi Wetland was designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention in 2002. is famous for its houseboat cruises and backwater resorts.
- The Kollam to Alappuzha route is considered one of the best backwater cruises in Kerala.
- The lake is a popular spot for birdwatching, with a variety of resident and migratory birds.
- The surrounding area is home to coconut groves, palm trees, and traditional villages.



- Ashtamudi Lake, a Ramsar wetland in Kollam district of Kerala, was the focus of a recent study on microplastic pollution.
- **Findings of the Study:**
  - The study found microplastics in fish, shellfish, sediment, and water of Ashtamudi Lake.
  - The highest percentage of microplastics was found in macrofauna, with fish accounting for 19.6% and shellfish for 40.9%.
- **Study Details:**
  - The study titled 'Microplastic contamination in Ashtamudi Lake, India: Insights from a Ramsar wetland' was conducted by the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala.
  - The research received support from the Ecomarine Project co-funded by the Erasmus program of the European Union.
  - The findings were published in Elsevier's Journal of Contaminant Hydrology.
- **Microplastics Definition:**
  - Microplastics are plastic fragments less than five millimeters in length.
- **Public Health Concerns:**

- The study underscores the need for continuous monitoring and addressing potential public health concerns related to microplastic pollution.
- **Global Context:**
  - The findings come at a time of increasing global concern over microplastic pollution in aquatic ecosystems worldwide.

### Hazardous metals

- Plastic polymers and hazardous heavy metals were found in microplastic samples from Ashtamudi Lake.
- Polymer composition included nylon, polyurethane, polypropylene, polyethylene, and polysiloxane.
- Hazardous heavy metals detected included molybdenum, iron, and barium, potentially absorbed from the environment.
- **Impact on Aquatic Life and Humans:**
  - The presence of plastic polymers and heavy metals poses risks to aquatic organisms and humans.
  - Consumers, including people who eat fish and shellfish, may ingest contaminated species.
- **Importance of Monitoring:**
  - The study emphasizes the importance of monitoring microplastics in lake water to protect vulnerable biota.
- **Significance of Ashtamudi Wetland:**
  - Designated a Ramsar site in 2002 for its hydrological functions, the Ashtamudi wetland is of extraordinary importance.
- **Call for Immediate Action:**
  - The study calls for immediate action to address the increasing threat of plastic pollution.
  - Strategies are needed to reduce the entry of microplastics into estuarine systems.
- **Conclusion:**

- Development of effective strategies is crucial to mitigate the future increase of microplastics in Ashtamudi Lake.

## An absconding MP, the colossal failure of the system (24 May)

Parliamentary proceedings mention 'zero tolerance of crimes against women', yet, when it comes to the crunch, punitive action in India fails spectacularly

**The Hoysala temples** are a group of Hindu temples located mainly in the modern-day state of Karnataka, India. Constructed between the 11th and 14th centuries by the Hoysala dynasty, these temples are considered to be some of the finest examples of Indian architecture.

### Architectural Style

Hoysala temples are known for their unique architectural style, which combines elements of Dravida and Nagara styles.

### Famous Hoysala Temples

There are numerous Hoysala temples scattered across Karnataka, each with its own unique features. Some of the most famous Hoysala temples include:

- **Chennakeshava Temple, Belur:** This temple is considered to be the pinnacle of Hoysala architecture and is renowned for its intricate carvings and elaborate sculptures.
- **Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebidu:** This partially incomplete temple complex is another masterpiece of Hoysala art and architecture.
- **Keshava Temple, Somanathapura:** Often referred to as the "Krishna Temple" due to the abundance of Krishna sculptures, this temple is known for its balanced proportions and harmonious design.

### UNESCO World Heritage Site

In 2004, a cluster of three Hoysala temples – the Chennakeshava Temple at Belur, the Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebidu, and the Keshava Temple at Somanathapura – were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in recognition of their outstanding universal value and exceptional artistic achievement.



- Hassan City is in Karnataka.
- Known for 11th-century Hoysala temples.
- Dominated by the influential Gowda family.
- The family has produced a Prime Minister, Chief Minister, MPs, and MLAs.
- Recently, crimes against women have been occurring since 2021.
- Victims were afraid to report due to the family's power.

- Crimes were exposed with political help.

### Many questions

- Janata Dal (Secular) MP Prajwal Revanna is allegedly involved in a crime plot.
- His case highlights issues in the criminal justice system and political influence.
- Despite the severity of the crimes, he remained beyond the law's reach for many days.
- Pen drives with evidence of rape and assault were found in public places on April 24.
- Police failed to act on this evidence immediately.
- Police should have restricted Prajwal Revanna's movement and issued a lookout circular.
- Prajwal Revanna escaped to Germany using his diplomatic passport after the polls.
- Police and Special Investigation Team (SIT) did not act promptly, possibly due to election activities or fear.
- High authorities knew about the videos but did not act immediately.
- CDs with evidence may have been released for political gain.
- Senior officials failed to take immediate action despite claims of supporting women's empowerment.
- Actions sped up after Prajwal Revanna escaped, with a case filed and SIT formed.
- Survivor statements were taken, and an LOC was issued.
- MLA H.D. Revanna, father of the accused, was arrested and then bailed.
- More women reported assaults, leading to multiple rape cases being registered.
- Prajwal Revanna remains missing and may not return before election results.
- In democracy, criminals can still have electoral success.

### Reaching out to Interpol

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) interfaces with Interpol in India.
- State police must work with CBI to contact Interpol for locating and apprehending suspects.
- Only a blue corner notice (BCN) has been issued by Interpol, not a red corner notice (RCN).
- Interpol notices share critical crime-related information between countries.
- BCN is for collecting information about a person's location or activities.
- RCN is for locating and arresting a person wanted for prosecution.
- BCN has not received any response yet.
- RCN requires a court arrest warrant, issued on May 19.
- The accused's passport can be cancelled.
- The accused may stay abroad by using legal options in Germany.
- Delays in criminal cases can harm investigations and witness reliability.

- Governments allocate funds for women's welfare and claim zero tolerance for crimes against women.
- Despite strong laws, punitive action often falls short.
- The JD(S) should have expelled the MP when the case was registered.
- The MP's passport should have been cancelled by the central government.
- State police failed to apprehend the MP.
- Senior officers were pressured and did not act.
- BJP and JD(S) supported the MP's election despite his criminal acts.
- There may have been an intelligence failure or disregard for the information.

#### **The plight of the survivors**

- It's uncertain when the situation will improve.
- SIT should include more women officers to support victims.
- Crimes must not go unpunished due to delays or poor investigation.
- The nation should have reacted strongly against the criminal.
- Media cannot cover the case due to a court gag order.
- Society must demand justice for the survivors.
- The nation awaits the trial of the accused in horrific crimes against women.
- A disturbing image shows a loyal household help pleading with the accused during an assault.
- No punishment will be enough for such a heinous crime.

## **A visit to preserve China's interests in Europe (24 May)**

- Chinese President Xi Jinping made his first trip to Europe (excluding Russia) in five years.
- The trip was carefully planned with visits to France, Serbia, and Hungary.
- France supports the idea of "strategic autonomy" for Europe.
- Serbia is not part of NATO or the EU and has close ties with Russia.
- Hungary is pro-Russian and has blocked many EU resolutions criticizing China.

#### **World events, visit's goals**

- The COVID-19 pandemic isolated China and forced it to rethink its global investment due to economic issues.
- Xi Jinping did not travel abroad for two and a half years and has been traveling infrequently even after restrictions lifted.

- The world has changed geopolitically, notably due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- The China-U.S. trade war has escalated into a technology war with intensified U.S. restrictions on China.
- Accusations of Chinese dumping of cheap goods, especially electric vehicles (EVs), have increased in the U.S. and Europe.

Xi Jinping's goals during his European trip:

- Prevent the EU from aligning too closely with the U.S.
- Avoid a trade standoff with the EU.
- Improve China's standing in Europe.
- The Russian invasion of Ukraine has strengthened the western alliance against Russia, affecting China indirectly and shaping negative EU views on China's trade policy.

French President Emmanuel Macron aimed to:

- Promote French trade interests.
- Push China to stop supplying weapon components to Moscow.
- Signaled his stance by meeting Tibetan Sikyong Penpa Tsering before Xi's visit.

Xi Jinping met European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Paris:

- Von der Leyen supports "de-risking" from China by reducing reliance on Chinese imports and technology.
- Both Macron and von der Leyen urged for more balanced trade with Europe.

France and the EU are concerned about:

- The cost advantage of Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) over European cars.
- Protecting their car manufacturers from Chinese competition.

In 2019, the EU redefined its stance on China as:

- A partner for cooperation.
- An economic competitor.
- A systemic rival.
- Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi skeptically described this stance as confusing, likening it to traffic lights showing green, yellow, and red simultaneously.

This formulation reflects Europe's attempt to balance:

- The economic opportunities with China.
- The risks from China's economic policies and national security postures.

## The focus on Hungary

- Xi Jinping received a warm welcome in Serbia and Hungary.
- Serbia and Hungary do not usually attract top-level visitors.
- Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Serbia:
  - Growing significantly.
  - \$5.5 billion invested, mainly in copper mining and a steel processing plant.
- Major investment projects in both countries:
  - Upgrading the Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway.
  - Future plans for more roads, tunnels, and bridges with Chinese investment.
  - Railways to link Chinese factories in eastern Hungary to western European markets.
- Key Chinese investments in Hungary:
  - CATL setting up a battery plant to supply German EV makers.
  - BYD establishing its first European factory in Szeged to capture the European EV market.
- Hungary is China's closest ally within the EU, providing access to the world's largest trading bloc.
- Hungary's worldview contrasts with its Eastern European neighbors, who are wary of Russian and Chinese aggression.

## Between eastern and western Europe

- China aimed to strengthen ties with Eastern European countries through the 17+1 China and Eastern Europe (CEE) initiative.
- The Ukraine war has strained China's relations with many Eastern European countries that support Ukraine.
- The CEE initiative was already losing momentum before the Ukraine invasion as China focused more on Western Europe.
- Europe is significant in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with key projects like railways linking China to Europe via Central Asia.
- China's goal with high-speed trains is to reduce the overland distance to Europe, targeting it as a market for sophisticated Chinese products.
- Xi Jinping's recent visit aimed to preserve Chinese interests in Europe amid challenging geopolitics.

- Visits to Hungary and Serbia emphasized friendship but are unlikely to change the increasingly skeptical views of the rest of Europe towards China.

## Mumbai girl is the youngest Indian to scale Everest (24 May)

- Kaamya Karthikeyan, a 16-year-old girl, became India's youngest and the world's second youngest to scale Mount Everest from the Nepal side.
- She climbed Mount Everest along with her father, Commander S. Karthikeyan, a naval officer.
- **Educational Background:**
  - Kaamya is a student of Navy Children School in Mumbai.
  - She is currently in Class 12.
- **Recognition and Titles:**
  - Commander Mehul Karnik, Chief Public Relations Officer of the Western Naval Command, announced her achievement.
  - Kaamya is recognized as the youngest Indian mountaineer to summit Mount Everest from the Nepal side.
  - She is also the second youngest girl in the world to achieve this feat.
- **Future Goals:**
  - Kaamya aims to summit Mount Vinson Massif in Antarctica in December.
  - Her goal is to become the youngest girl to complete the Seven Summits challenge, which involves scaling the highest peak on each continent.

## The 'chilling cover-up' of the U.K.'s contaminated blood scandal (24 May)

The Infectious Blood Inquiry led by former judge Brian Langstaff catalogues preventable failures by doctors and successive governments that led to decades of treatment disasters in the U.K. This was compounded by bureaucratic stonewalling. 'The disaster was not an accident,' said Langstaff in his report

- An inquiry report has revealed details of a medical tragedy in the U.K. that occurred between the 1970s and 1990s.
- More than 30,000 people were infected with HIV, Hepatitis C, and Hepatitis B after receiving contaminated blood and blood products imported from the U.S.
- This incident is described as the "worst treatment disaster" in the history of Britain's NHS.
- **Inquiry Findings:**
  - Inquiry chair Sir Brian Langstaff characterized the disaster as a result of negligence rather than an accident.
  - Doctors, blood services, and governments did not prioritize patient safety, committing a grave error in healthcare.
- **Nature of Cover-Up:**
  - The cover-up was described as more subtle, pervasive, and chilling than a conspiracy, done to save face and expense.
  - The government's defensiveness and refusal over decades to hold a public inquiry exacerbated the calamity.
- **Impact on Victims:**
  - Affected individuals and families have endured a long wait for justice.
  - The inquiry report is seen as vindication by many, acknowledging their suffering and the mistakes made.

### The Infected Blood Inquiry

- **Background of the Public Inquiry:**
  - The UK launched a public inquiry in 2017 to investigate how people treated by the NHS received infected blood and blood products since 1970.
- **Affected Groups:**
  - The affected included people with haemophilia and similar blood disorders, as well as individuals who received blood transfusions during surgeries and childbirth.
- **Impact and Casualties:**
  - More than 3,000 people died between the 1970s and 1990s due to receiving infected blood.

- Since the inquiry began, an estimated 680 additional deaths have occurred.
- Currently, an infected person in the UK dies every four days.
- **Global Impact:**
  - Deaths and infections related to tainted blood were reported in several countries, including Australia, Canada, China, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Portugal, and the US.
- **Treatment History:**
  - Haemophilia is a rare genetic condition where blood doesn't clot properly.
  - Cryoprecipitate was used until the 1970s, with low infection risk but difficult storage and administration.
  - Factor VIII, a concentrated plasma product from pooled donations, was introduced but carried a higher risk of infection.
- **Imported Blood Products:**
  - Rising demand led the NHS to import Factor VIII from the US.
  - These products often came from high-risk donors, including prisoners and drug addicts, increasing infection risks.

#### Understanding Infections:

- Hepatitis C agent identified in 1988; first case of AIDS in the UK in 1981.
- Research from the 1940s indicated transfusions or plasma use could transmit "serum hepatitis," potentially leading to fatal outcomes like liver failure and cancer.

#### Identification of Hepatitis B:

- Virus responsible for Hepatitis B identified by researchers in the 1970s.
- Risks associated with Hepatitis B were known; non-A non-B Hepatitis (Hepatitis C) also recognized as a risk by the WHO.

#### Warnings Against Imported Blood Products:

- WHO warned in 1974 and 1975 against importing blood products from countries with high hepatitis rates, like the US.

#### Concerns About HIV:

- HIV identified as a cause in 1984.
- Experts were concerned that recipients of Factor VIII blood concentrate were at risk of HIV infection.

### Failure to Act:

- Despite evidence, authorities did not switch to safer options.
- Sir Langstaff's review found evidence was discarded and authorities failed to take action.

### Why was tainted blood used?

- **Use of Contaminated Blood Products:**
  - Contaminated blood plasma products imported from the US were used to treat people with haemophilia.
  - These products were infected with HIV and hepatitis viruses.
- **Infamous Letter by Arthur Bloom:**
  - In January 1982, Arthur Bloom wrote a letter to haemophiliac centers suggesting using new treatments on patients previously unexposed to large-pool concentrates, including children.
  - This was considered a clearcut way to test the infectivity of the treatments.
- **Events at Treolar's College:**
  - Treolar's College in Hampshire, a specialist school for people with haemophilia, was involved.
  - Children were used as "objects of research" and treated unnecessarily with contaminated concentrates instead of safer treatments.
- **Outcome of the Treatment:**
  - A BBC investigation found that of the 122 pupils who attended Treolar's between 1974 and 1987, 75 died of HIV and hepatitis C infections.
  - These infections were due to the contaminated blood products used for treatment.

### Impact on People with Bleeding Disorders:

- Between 4,000 to 6,000 people with bleeding disorders in the UK were affected.
- Approximately 1,250 developed both HIV and Hepatitis C, with 380 of them being children.
- Three-quarters of these individuals have died due to infections.

### Blood Transfusion Recipients:

- People who received blood transfusions during surgeries also developed infections.

- An estimated 80 to 100 were infected with HIV.
- Approximately 27,000 were infected with Hepatitis C.

#### Death Toll:

- Reports indicate that the death toll rose among those infected with Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV for two decades.
- By the 1990s, almost 3,000 people had died due to these infections.

#### Government Actions:

- Government officials decided not to suspend the importation of commercially produced blood products on multiple occasions.
- They claimed that people received the best available treatment and that blood donations were tested when technology became available.
- The Inquiry found that both claims were untrue.

#### What did the report find?

- **Scope of the Inquiry:**
  - Lasted six years.
  - Reviewed evidence from government, NHS, pharmaceutical companies, and national blood services.
  - Considered over 4,000 oral and written statements.
  - 2,000 people appointed as "core participants."
- **Findings of the Inquiry:**
  - People were failed repeatedly, not just once.
  - Patient safety was ignored.
  - Decision-making was slow and protracted.
  - Autonomy and privacy of patients were neglected.
  - Clinical freedom was abused.
  - Governments and NHS officials were defensive.
  - Lack of transparency and accountability amplified the injustice.
- **Medical Failures:**
  - Missed opportunities to reduce risks and created new ones.
  - Failed to achieve self-sufficiency in blood clot treatments in England and Wales.

- Did not introduce surrogate screening for HIV or Hepatitis C.
- Delays in introducing screening despite evidence.
- **Responsibility of Parties:**
  - Doctors, haemophilia centres, and pharmaceutical companies were guilty of:
    - Administering too many transfusions unnecessarily.
    - Administering more transfusions than needed.
    - Overriding a patient's wish not to be transfused.

#### What next?

- **Background:** The Infected Blood Inquiry, led by Mr. Langsta, has made several recommendations.
- **Immediate Compensation:** Victims should be compensated without delay.
- **Public Memorials:** Create memorials to remember those affected.
- **Integration into Medicine, Government, and Civil Services:** Ensure the lessons from this tragedy are incorporated into policies and practices.
- **Safety of Blood Products:** Blood products must only be used when necessary and regularly screened for viruses.
- **Enabling Environment for Patient Voices:** Create a space where patients' voices are heard and their concerns acted upon.
- **Learning and Assessment:** Continuous learning and assessment in all aspects of care to prevent similar tragedies.

## At the upcoming World Health Assembly, a toolkit to prepare nations for pandemics (24 May)

**The World Health Assembly (WHA)** is the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO). It is the world's highest health policy setting body and is composed of health ministers from member states.

- **Founding:** Established in 1948.
- **Membership:** Comprises health ministers from 194 member states.
- **Frequency:** Meets annually.
- **Location:** Held in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Purpose of WHA:**
  - Determine policies of the WHO.
  - Appoint the Director-General of WHO.

- Supervise financial policies.
- Review and approve the proposed programme budget.
- **77th World Health Assembly (May 27 - June 1, 2024):**
  - **Theme:** "All for Health, Health for All".

**Focus:** Addressing global health challenges such as HIV, measles, polio, amidst the climate crisis, and rising non-communicable diseases.

- **Purpose:** The International Health Regulations (IHR) aim to manage public health events globally while minimizing disruption to travel and trade.
- **Adoption and Revision:** First adopted in 1969 and last revised in 2005, the IHR are key international laws.
- **State Parties:** There are 196 State Parties to the IHR, including all 194 WHO Member States, plus Liechtenstein and the Holy See.
- **Legal Framework:** The IHR provide a legal framework defining countries' rights and obligations in handling public health events that can cross borders.
- **Amendments:** At the upcoming World Health Assembly, a historic package of amendments based on 300 proposals will be discussed.
- **Focus of Amendments:** These amendments target improving countries' ability to respond to public health emergencies of international concern.
- **Safeguards:** The IHR include protections for travelers and others, such as safeguarding personal data, ensuring informed consent, and preventing discrimination.
- **Legally Binding:** The IHR are legally binding on all 196 countries, ensuring compliance with international health standards.
- **Surveillance systems:** All countries must have systems to detect and assess public health events promptly.
- **Reporting:** Countries must report potential international public health emergencies to the WHO.
- **Response:** Countries must respond to public health risks and emergencies.
- **Implementation Goal:** The aim is to limit the spread of health risks to neighboring countries and prevent unnecessary travel and trade restrictions.
- **WHO Director General's Statement:** Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus highlighted that while the IHR has been in place for 20 years, the COVID-19 pandemic showed areas where improvements are needed.

- **Strengthening:** The amendments aim to strengthen the IHR based on experiences during various public health emergencies, including COVID-19.
- **Historic Amendments:** The amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR) are seen as a historic achievement.
- **International Protection:** These changes aim to enhance international mechanisms to protect everyone from epidemics and pandemics.
- **Consensus and Importance:** There has been a long process to achieve consensus on the majority of amendments, demonstrating the world's commitment to effectively preparing for and responding to epidemic and pandemic threats.
- **International Public Health Protection:** There is strong international consensus on how to enhance international public health protection.
- **Intergovernmental Process:** The process to amend the IHR has run parallel to the development of an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.
- **Draft Pandemic Agreement:** This agreement, with its own Member State-led negotiating process, is also scheduled to be presented at the World Health Assembly.
- **Ashley Bloomfield's Perspective:** Ashley Bloomfield, the co-chair of the IHR Working Group, expressed hope that the amendments will be effective in improving global pandemic preparedness and response.

#### Building capacities

- **Complementary Agreements:** A potential new pandemic agreement and the amended International Health Regulations (IHRs) would complement each other.
- **IHR Focus:** The IHR aims to strengthen countries' abilities to detect and respond to public health events that could have international impacts.
- **Pandemic Agreement Focus:** The draft pandemic agreement focuses on coordinating an international response to pandemics.
- **Equitable Access:** The pandemic agreement emphasizes ensuring equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics globally.
- **International Dimensions:** The IHR deals with public health events that may cross borders, while the pandemic agreement aims for a coordinated international response.
- **Member State Negotiations:** Both instruments are being negotiated by Member States to enhance global pandemic preparedness and response efforts.

# Should doctors be kept out of the Consumer Protection Act? (24 May)

- The Supreme Court recently ruled that advocates cannot be held liable under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, for deficiency in service.
- The Court indicated that its 1995 decision holding medical professionals accountable under the Act may need to be reviewed.
- It suggested re-examining the definition of 'services' under the Act, which currently includes the medical sector.
- The matter will be referred to a larger Bench of the Supreme Court for further consideration.
- There is ongoing discussion whether doctors, like lawyers, should be exempt from the Consumer Protection Act.
- Is it appropriate for patients to take recourse to the Consumer Protection Act?
- The Supreme Court's decision to revisit the 1995 case on whether doctors fall under the Consumer Protection Act is welcomed.
- The case *Indian Medical Association v. V.P. Shantha* established that doctors and hospitals are service providers under the Act.
- Doctors are highly specialized professionals who provide a unique service due to the complexity of human bodies.
- Medical practice involves extensive research and high-tech surgeries, demanding careful patient care.
- Some misuse the Consumer Protection Act to avoid paying medical fees, causing problems for doctors and hospitals.
- When treatments fail, patients sometimes blame doctors and hospitals, which can be dangerous.
- Doctors often order numerous tests to protect themselves legally, increasing procedure costs.
- Documentation is crucial to prove the correctness of medical decisions in case of disputes.
- Patients should have the right to seek recourse under the Consumer Protection Act because it provides an effective way to resolve grievances.
- The Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, defines misconduct by doctors, but it doesn't directly benefit affected patients or families.
- The National Medical Council doesn't have the authority to award compensation to patients for injuries.
- Civil and criminal laws have provisions, but criminal law is typically only applicable in cases of patient death.

- Civil law provides a remedy but involves long trials, complex procedures, fees, and delays, which deter patients and families from approaching courts.
- The Consumer Protection Act is designed to protect consumer rights, defining anyone who buys a product or service as a consumer.
- The medical profession is a service that often involves costs but isn't strictly a business.
- The V.P. Shantha case established that the doctor-patient relationship is a service contract under the Act, ensuring patients are protected.
- This judgment should remain valid as it benefits affected patients who need avenues to seek justice and compensation.
- What are the problems and opportunities in using the Consumer Protection Act as the pathway for patients to challenge adverse outcomes?
- Doctors face challenges due to cases of alleged negligence, even when they have done their job well.
- Legal processes can take up to 10 years, causing significant stress and frustration for doctors.
- Delays and frivolous litigation are major issues that affect doctors' morale and well-being.
- Doctors suggest that associations should have authority to review cases with expert medical knowledge, avoiding lengthy court battles.
- Saroja Sundaram believes the Consumer Protection Act gives patients a fair opportunity to challenge malpractice and seek redressal.
- Remedies provided under the Act are advantageous to patients, and there have been few unfair judgments from redressal agencies.
- She suggests studying how many frivolous cases have been filed, as most cases likely involve genuine malpractice or misunderstanding.
- Delays in consumer commissions are a significant issue that undermines the Act's objective of providing speedy redressal.

**What would an alternate mechanism look like, were consumer forums deemed to be an inappropriate way of dealing with medical complaints?**

- Addressing malpractice and compensating aggrieved consumers are separate issues.
- Like the ombudsman for insurance, banking, and electricity sectors, there could be an independent authority to handle medical issues initially.
- This authority could serve as a first step before approaching consumer courts.
- Mediation options exist under the Consumer Protection Act but currently do not cover medical negligence.
- There is a suggestion to expand the Act to include provisions for medical negligence.

**Do grievance redressal forums actually draw a distinction between explicit malpractice and adverse outcomes that follow a risk that was present in some way or the other? How can**

physicians safeguard themselves against litigation in cases where they genuinely did everything that they could to prevent a specific outcome?

- A strong regulatory authority is needed to monitor and control the activities of medical professionals.
- Many doctors subscribe to medical indemnity insurance to protect themselves in case of legal issues, but the court process can still be difficult.
- Not every case against a doctor results in a judgment favoring the consumer; many judgments have been decided in favor of doctors.
- Consumer commissions handle cases diligently, ensuring fairness in decisions.
- To safeguard their interests, doctors should ensure diligent service delivery and maintain proper records of patient history.
- Obtaining proper consent for treatment and following checklist protocols for medical records are crucial.
- Doctors should clearly communicate risks and procedure outcomes to patients and make timely referrals in case of complications to avoid litigation.

## Rising debt strains household savings (24 May)

Household net financial savings to GDP ratio have declined due to increased borrowing and structural shifts rather than a mere change in savings pattern; there's a need for macroeconomic policies to support household income growth to reduce its own financial stress and stabilise the macroeconomy

- Recent debate focuses on the significant drop in the household net financial savings to GDP ratio during 2022-23.
- The decline is due to a higher borrowing to GDP ratio.
- The Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) of India suggests this trend is just a shift in the composition of household savings.
- According to the CEA, households are borrowing more or reducing net financial savings to increase physical savings (investment).
- The authors of the article argue that this interpretation is inconsistent with broader economic trends.
- They highlight signs of structural shifts in the Indian economy that contradict the CEA's explanation.

### Not a mere change in savings pattern

- The household savings to GDP ratio includes net financial savings, physical savings, and gold/ornaments.
- If there was only a shift in the composition of savings, the overall household savings to GDP ratio would remain unchanged.
- In 2022-23, the net financial savings to GDP ratio decreased by 2.5 percentage points.

- Physical savings to GDP ratio increased by only 0.3 percentage points.
- Household borrowing to GDP ratio increased by 2 percentage points, more than the increase in physical savings.
- Gold savings to GDP ratio remained largely unchanged.
- Overall, the household savings to GDP ratio declined by 1.7 percentage points.
- This decline cannot be solely explained by a shift in savings composition.
- The decrease in net financial savings and increase in borrowing reflect households needing to finance greater interest payments due to higher interest rates and debt-income ratios, causing financial distress.
- The Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) argues using absolute nominal numbers of household total savings.
- The CEA claims the nominal value of household total savings increased because the rise in physical savings' nominal value exceeded the fall in net financial savings' nominal value.
- This argument shows positive nominal (inflation-unadjusted) growth of total household savings in 2022-23.
- Positive nominal growth does not address the decline in the net financial savings to GDP ratio.
- It also does not refute the explanation of higher borrowing to GDP ratio and the increased interest payment burden on households.
- The post-COVID increase in households' interest payment burdens and debt-income ratio raises two questions:
  - Does this indicate a qualitative change in the macroeconomy's structure recently?
  - How does this situation differ from previous periods of increased household borrowing?

### Signs of structural shift

- Interest payment burden is the share of household income spent on interest payments.
- It is determined by the interest rate and the debt-income ratio.
- Recent period saw a sharp rise in both interest rates and debt-income ratios.

### Two factors can change the debt-income ratio:

#### 1. Higher Net Borrowing-Income Ratio:

- $\text{Net borrowing} = \text{Total borrowing} - \text{Interest payments}$ .
- If households increase net borrowing for more investment or consumption, debt increases.

#### 2. Exogenous Factors:

- Interest rate on outstanding debt.
- Nominal income growth rate.

- Increase in interest rates or a decrease in nominal income growth rate raises the debt-income ratio.
- If interest payments grow faster than income, the debt-income ratio will rise.
- This phenomenon is known as "Fisher dynamics," named after Irving Fisher, who explained it in terms of interest rate changes and nominal income growth rates.

#### Pre-COVID Growth Slowdown (2019-20):

- Indian economy slowed down in growth.

#### Post-COVID Period:

- Significant rise in the ratio of nominal debt to nominal income of households.
- Mainly due to lower nominal income growth rates.

#### Fisher Dynamics:

- Refers to increasing debt-income ratio due to changes in interest rates and nominal income growth rates.

#### Key Structural Feature in Recent Period:

- Nominal income growth rate has often been lower than the weighted average lending rate.
- This has increased household interest payment burden and debt-income ratio.

#### Indicators:

- Debt-income ratio used to measure household leverage and repayment capacity.
- Scrutinized particularly since the global financial crisis.

#### Impact of Lending Rate:

- Recent increases in lending rate contributed to rising debt-income ratio.

#### Macroeconomic challenges

- **Debt Servicing Ratio in India:**
  - Still lower than many other countries.
- **Emergence of Fisher Dynamics:**
  - Poses two unique challenges for the Indian economy.
- **First Challenge:**
  - Decreasing the gap between interest rate and income growth.
  - Slowing down the growth of the debt-income ratio of households.

- Current debt-income ratio is low, but income growth lagging behind lending rate can increase household interest payment burdens.
- **Second Challenge:**
  - Stemming the possibility of downward adjustment of aggregate demand.
  - High interest payment and debt commitments may lead households to reduce consumption expenditure.
  - Sharp decline in consumption to GDP ratio in 2023-24 indicates this possibility.
- **Policy Recommendation:**
  - Need to include an additional macroeconomic policy target.
  - Aimed at stimulating and supporting household income growth.

## Sensex, Nifty hit all-time high on RBI's bonanza to Centre (24 May)

Key indices surged 1.6% to closing and intraday highs after buying momentum in auto, banking stocks on Thursday, following the RBI's ₹2.11 lakh crore dividend payout to Govt. on Wednesday

- **Key Stock Indices Surge:**
  - Benchmark stock indices surged 1.6% to all-time closing highs on Thursday.
  - This surge was driven by buying momentum in auto and banking stocks.
  - The RBI's decision on Wednesday to transfer ₹2.11 lakh crore as surplus to the Centre boosted market sentiment.
- **Sensex Performance:**
  - The S&P BSE Sensex gained 1,196.98 points, or 1.61%, to close at 75,418.04, marking its all-time closing high.
  - Intraday, the Sensex touched an all-time high of 75,499.91.
  - Top gainers in the Sensex included L&T (3.64%), M&M (3.55%), Axis Bank (3.30%), Maruti (2.82%), UltraTech Cement (2.74%), and IndusInd Bank (2.29%).
- **Nifty-50 Performance:**
  - The NSE Nifty-50 index surged 369.85 points, or 1.64%, to close at 22,967.65, also reaching its all-time closing high.

- Intraday, the Nifty-50 touched an all-time high of 22,993.60.
- **Market Analyst's Comment:**
  - Neeraj Chadawar, Head of Fundamental and Quantitative Research at Axis Securities, stated that the market showed enthusiasm after the RBI's approval of a ₹2.11 lakh crore dividend to the government.
  - This move indicates a better fiscal position and expectations of softer bond yields in the future.
  - Mr. Chadawar noted that the positive sentiment led to short covering in the market.

### About: Diplomatic passports

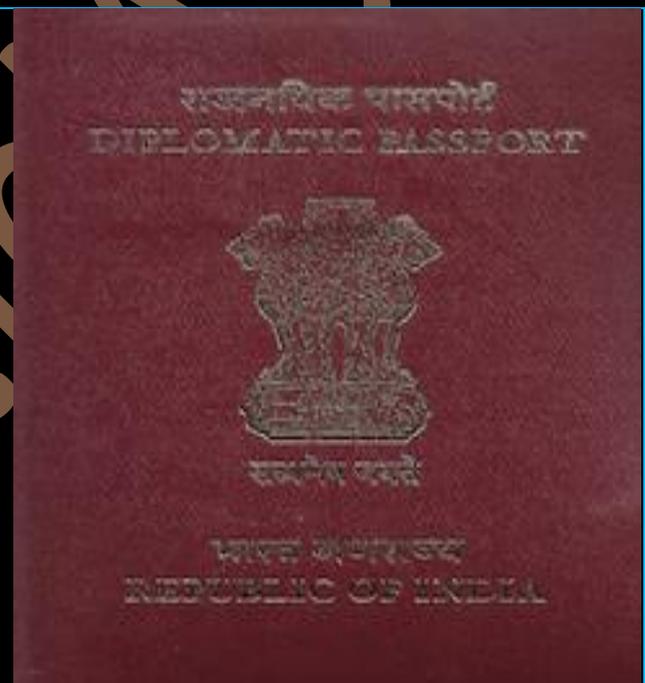
- Diplomatic passports are for individuals on official diplomatic missions or government business.
- Used by diplomats, government officials, and sometimes their immediate family members.
- Provide identification with legal privileges and immunities under international law, such as immunity from arrest, detention, and certain legal proceedings.
- They are Type D passports and have a distinct maroon cover, unlike regular dark blue passports.

### Eligibility:

- Issued by the Ministry of External Affairs' Consular, Passport & Visa Division in India.
- Categories eligible:
  - Government-appointed individuals and officers in branches A and B of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) on official business.
  - Select individuals on official travel, including union ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs).

### Revoking Power:

- The passport authority can revoke a diplomatic passport.
- The government can revoke it only after a court order.
- Under the Passport Act of 1967, reasons for revocation include:
  - Wrongful possession.
  - Obtaining it through suppression of material information.
  - Necessity for India's interests.
  - Conviction or pending criminal proceedings in India.



**The European Commission (EC)** is the executive branch of the European Union (EU), acting as the EU's "guardian of the treaties" and ensuring the enforcement of European Union law. It is an independent supranational body, meaning it operates above the national governments of the EU member states.

- **Founded:** 16 January 1958
- **Headquarter:** Brussels, Belgium
- **Functions:**
  - **Proposing New Legislation:**
    - The Commission drafts new laws and regulations for the EU.
    - Considers the best interests of the entire EU.
  - **Implementing EU Policies:**
    - Oversees the implementation of existing EU laws and policies.
    - Ensures effective compliance by member states.
  - **Enforcing EU Law:**
    - Monitors compliance with EU legislation.
    - Takes action against member states that do not comply.
  - **Representing the EU Internationally:**
    - Negotiates international trade agreements.
    - Represents the EU in international organizations.
  - **Managing the EU Budget:**
    - Drafts the EU budget proposal.
    - Oversees the implementation of the EU budget.
- **Structure:**
  - Consists of 27 Commissioners, one from each EU member state.
  - Each Commissioner has a specific policy portfolio and works with experts and civil servants.
  - The President of the Commission leads the college of Commissioners and sets the overall direction.
- **Leadership:**
  - The European Commission is led by its President and 26 Commissioners, one from each country.

#### **Blue Corner Notice (BCN):**

- Issued to locate, identify, or obtain information about a missing suspect.
- Issued to the country of the criminal and other member countries.
- Mandatory for member countries to share the suspect's whereabouts.
- Can be issued against multiple persons at once.

#### **Red Corner Notice (RCN):**

- Issued to seek the arrest or provisional arrest of wanted criminals for extradition.
- A request to locate an individual convicted in a criminal case.
- The individual is not automatically guilty; guilt must be proven by the court.
- Interpol cannot force member countries to arrest an individual served with an RCN.
- Issued in Interpol's four official languages: English, French, Arabic, and Spanish.
- Issued by the General Secretariat at the request of a member country.

## Powerful symbolic value: On the recognition of Palestine (24 May)

The recognition of Palestine by more nations is an indictment of Israel

- Ireland, Norway, and Spain plan to recognize the state of Palestine next week.
- This reflects a shift in international opinion that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cannot ignore.
- Recently, 143 countries, including India, passed a UN General Assembly resolution for the UN Security Council to recognize Palestine, but the US has vetoed it.
- The International Criminal Court Prosecutor has applied for arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for Gaza operations and Hamas leadership for attacks on Israel, calling these "war crimes."
- On May 24, the International Court of Justice will rule on a South Africa petition for more prosecution measures against Israel for "genocide."
- Ireland, Norway, and Spain's recognition of Palestine, joining eight other EU countries, is symbolic but significant.
- Ireland's leader, Simon Harris, calls it a powerful political message, urging Israel to consider the legitimate Palestinian government.
- Norway's leader, Jonas Gahr Støre, says the move supports moderate forces in the conflict.
- Spain recently denied port access to a Danish ship carrying explosives for Israel, indicating a firm policy stance.
- Israel has responded by recalling its envoys and summoning those of Ireland, Norway, and Spain.
- The international community aims to push Israel to reconsider its actions in Rafah, reduce civilian casualties, and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.
- Long-term, the goal is to remind Netanyahu of the two-state solution as the path to peace.
- Ignoring these messages may further isolate Netanyahu, despite initial global sympathy on October 7.

## Snap poll: On the surprise election announcement for the U.K. (24 May)

Rishi Sunak seems to have sensed a small window of opportunity for his party

- Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a surprise election for July 4 in the UK.
- The Conservative Party wasn't required to call an election until January 2025.

- Polls indicate the Conservatives could lose the next election by more than 20%.
- Sunak's decision may have been influenced by recent positive developments:
  - UK's inflation rate dropped to 2.3%, the lowest in three years.
  - Sunak's cabinet received positive feedback for stabilizing the economy post-COVID-19.
  - A legal victory allowed the government to proceed with immigration reforms, including sending asylum seekers to Rwanda for processing.
- Rishi Sunak stated the UK election is happening during a period he believes is more dangerous than any since the end of the Cold War.
- The conclusion of the Russian invasion of Ukraine could impact Europe and the UK, posing questions about territorial sovereignty and affecting energy security and economic stability.
- Unrest in West Asia, including the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and tensions around Iran, will have repercussions for the region and the UK.
- The Sunak government's immigration reforms, including sending asylum seekers to Rwanda, received legal approval, but their impact on small boat crossings remains unclear.
- Government data shows that although small boat arrivals decreased by 33% in 2022 and 2023, they are at a record high in 2024, with over 9,800 people crossing the UK's border by this means from January 1 to May 21.
- Sunak questioned Labour's confidence that the election is already decided, suggesting his team should understand where the opposition's optimism is coming from.

## Fear gives way to election fervor (24 May 2024)

While violence and fear marred elections in Kashmir earlier, this time the region recorded a relatively high turnout as well as many firsts

- Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has seen parliamentary elections dominated by mainstream political parties and separatists over the past 34 years.
- This year marks a significant change as the electoral contest is solely between mainstream parties.
- Some parties advocate for semi-autonomous status for J&K, while others support complete integration with India.
- This shift in electoral dynamics follows the revocation of J&K's special status and its division into two Union Territories in 2019.
- In 1999, Kashmir was experiencing high levels of violence, with militants active and security forces on alert.

- Journalists had to prepare for days to cover the general election, obtaining special passes and planning coverage from safer locations.
- Militant outfits and separatist groups called for a boycott of the parliamentary elections in Kashmir's Anantnag, Baramulla, and Srinagar seats.
- This boycott was aimed at rejecting India's rule in Kashmir and drawing international attention to the Kashmir issue.
- The election run-up saw attacks on security forces and party workers, with 'Fidayeen' or suicide attacks by militants becoming common.
- Mainstream leaders faced challenges in campaigning, with many areas like Srinagar's old city and Baramulla's Old Town being no-go zones.
- On polling day, bullet-proof vehicles and heavy security were visible everywhere, but voter turnout was extremely low.
- Voters feared retaliation from militants and protesters, who checked for indelible ink marks and punished those who had voted.
- Many voters remained anonymous, covering their faces, and were referred to as "traitors" by locals.
- Srinagar recorded a voter turnout of 11.8% and Baramulla 27.8% that year, highlighting the effectiveness of the boycott.
- In the recent elections, voter turnout in Kashmir's Baramulla and Srinagar reached 59% and 38%, respectively.
- The National Conference vice president, a candidate from Baramulla, made his first election speech in Srinagar's old city.
- The Peoples Democratic Party president, a candidate from Anantnag, also campaigned in Srinagar's old city, near significant historical sites.
- Late evening rallies and door-to-door campaigns were held in previously volatile areas of south Kashmir.
- Parties hired lyricists and singers to enhance their election campaigns.
- On polling day, stone-pelters, families of militants, and hardline Jamaat-e-Islami cadres queued at polling booths alongside former boycotters.
- High turnouts were seen in Pulwama and Sopore, which historically had high numbers of militant recruits.
- In Sopore, turnout increased to 44%, a stark contrast to less than 4% in previous elections.
- Voters discussed Article 370, jobs, mining rights, and police verifications outside polling booths.
- This election marked a shift where ideology rather than basic amenities dominated the campaign focus.

## PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS:

<p><b>Question 1:</b> Which of the following statements about Ashtamudi Lake are true?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. It is a Ramsar site.</li><li>2. The lake drains into the Arabian Sea.</li><li>3. It is the largest freshwater lake in Kerala.</li></ol> <p>Select the correct answer using the code given below:</p> <p>a) 1 and 2 only      b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only      d) 1, 2, and 3</p>	<p><b>Answer: a) 1 and 2 only</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>Statement 1: It is a Ramsar site.</b> <b>Correct:</b> Ashtamudi Lake is a designated Ramsar site, which means it is recognized as a wetland of international importance.</p> <p><b>Statement 2: The lake drains into the Arabian Sea.</b> <b>Correct:</b> Ashtamudi Lake ultimately drains into the Arabian Sea through the Ashtamudi Estuary.</p> <p><b>Statement 3: It is the largest freshwater lake in Kerala.</b> <b>Incorrect:</b> Ashtamudi Lake is not the largest freshwater lake in Kerala; Vembanad Lake is the largest in Kerala and is a brackish water lake.</p>
<p><b>Question 2:</b> Ashtamudi Lake has been designated as a Ramsar site. What does this designation signify?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) It is a protected area for tigers.</li><li>b) It is recognized for its wetland importance.</li><li>c) It is a World Heritage Site.</li><li>d) It is a site of historical importance.</li></ol>	<p><b>Answer: b) It is recognized for its wetland importance.</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>Correct:</b> Being designated as a Ramsar site means Ashtamudi Lake is recognized as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.</p> <p><b>Incorrect:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) The Ramsar designation is specific to wetlands, not tiger conservation.</li><li>c) A Ramsar site designation is different from a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.</li><li>d) The Ramsar designation is for ecological importance rather than historical significance.</li></ol>
<p><b>Question 3:</b> Which two Hoysala temples have been proposed for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Chennakesava Temple, Belur and Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebidu</li><li>b) Meenakshi Temple, Madurai and Brihadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur</li><li>c) Jagannath Temple, Puri and Konark Sun Temple</li><li>d) Lingaraja Temple, Bhubaneswar and Khajuraho Group of Monuments</li></ol>	<p><b>Answer: a) Chennakesava Temple, Belur and Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebidu</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>Correct:</b> The Chennakesava Temple at Belur and the Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebidu have been proposed for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list due to their architectural significance.</p> <p><b>Incorrect:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>b) Meenakshi Temple and Brihadeeswarar Temple are significant but belong to different dynasties and architectural styles.</li><li>c) Jagannath Temple and Konark Sun Temple are in Odisha and belong to the Kalinga architecture.</li><li>d) Lingaraja Temple and Khajuraho Group of Monuments are significant but unrelated to Hoysala architecture.</li></ol>

<p><b>Question 4:</b> What is the significance of the intricate carvings found in Hoysala temples?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) They represent the Mughal influence.</li><li>b) They depict scenes from daily life and Hindu epics.</li><li>c) They follow a minimalist architectural style.</li><li>d) They primarily feature Islamic motifs.</li></ul>	<p><b>Answer: b) They depict scenes from daily life and Hindu epics.</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>Correct:</b> The intricate carvings in Hoysala temples often depict scenes from daily life, Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and various deities.</p> <p><b>Incorrect:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) The Mughal influence is not present in Hoysala temples, which predate the Mughal period.</li><li>c) The Hoysala architectural style is known for its elaborate and detailed carvings, not minimalism.</li><li>d) Islamic motifs are not characteristic of Hoysala temples, which are primarily Hindu in nature.</li></ul>
<p><b>Question 5:</b> Which of the following statements about diplomatic passports is correct?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Diplomatic passports are issued to all government employees.</li><li>b) Diplomatic passports provide visa-free travel to all countries.</li><li>c) Diplomatic passports are issued to diplomats and certain government officials.</li><li>d) Diplomatic passports are the same as ordinary passports but have different covers.</li></ul>	<p><b>Answer: c) Diplomatic passports are issued to diplomats and certain government officials.</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>Correct:</b> Diplomatic passports are issued to diplomats, high-ranking government officials, and their dependents who are engaged in international diplomatic missions.</p> <p><b>Incorrect:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Diplomatic passports are not issued to all government employees but to specific individuals involved in diplomatic duties.</li><li>b) Diplomatic passports do not necessarily provide visa-free travel to all countries; visa requirements vary by country and bilateral agreements.</li><li>d) Diplomatic passports have distinct features and privileges that differ from ordinary passports, not just different covers.</li></ul>
<p><b>Question 6:</b> What is a key feature of a diplomatic passport that differentiates it from other types of passports?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Unlimited travel without restrictions</li><li>b) Contains diplomatic immunity clauses</li><li>c) Does not require renewal</li><li>d) Enhanced security features</li></ul>	<p><b>Answer: b) Contains diplomatic immunity clauses</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>Correct:</b> Diplomatic passports include specific clauses or markings that indicate the holder is entitled to diplomatic immunity and privileges.</p> <p><b>Incorrect:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Diplomatic passports do not guarantee unlimited travel without restrictions; visa requirements still apply based on bilateral agreements.</li><li>c) Diplomatic passports, like other passports, have an expiration date and require renewal.</li><li>d) While they may have security features, these are not unique to diplomatic passports; all modern passports include enhanced security features.</li></ul>

<p><b>Question 7:</b> Who is the youngest Indian to scale Mount Everest?</p> <p>A. Arjun Vajpai B. Malavath Purna C. Kaamya Karthikeyan D. Poorna Malavath</p>	<p><b>Answer: C.</b> Kaamya Karthikeyan <b>Explanation:</b> Kaamya Karthikeyan, a girl from Mumbai, became the youngest Indian to scale Mount Everest at the age of 16. Option A: Arjun Vajpai was one of the youngest Indians to scale Everest at the age of 16 but not the youngest. Option B and D: Malavath Purna (sometimes referred to as Poorna Malavath) was one of the youngest girls to scale Everest at the age of 13, but Kaamya Karthikeyan achieved this feat at an even younger age.</p>
<p><b>Question 8:</b> Which of the following statements about the European Commission (EC) is correct?</p> <p>A) The European Commission is the executive body of the European Union (EU). B) The European Commission is headquartered in Paris, France. C) The European Commission is composed of representatives appointed by the national governments of EU member states. D) The European Commission is responsible for monetary policy in the EU.</p>	<p><b>Answer: A)</b> The European Commission is the executive body of the European Union (EU). <b>Explanation:</b> A) Correct. The European Commission is indeed the executive body of the European Union. B) Incorrect. The European Commission's headquarters is located in Brussels, Belgium. C) Incorrect. The European Commission is composed of Commissioners who are appointed, not directly by national governments, but based on nominations from member states. D) Incorrect. The European Central Bank (ECB) is responsible for monetary policy in the EU, not the European Commission.</p>
<p><b>Question 9:</b> Which of the following statements about the European Commission's College of Commissioners is correct?</p> <p>A) Each Commissioner is appointed for a term of 6 years. B) The College of Commissioners is chaired by the President of the European Parliament. C) Commissioners are selected based on nominations from the European Parliament. D) The College of Commissioners is responsible for the day-to-day running of the European Central Bank.</p>	<p><b>Answer: A)</b> Each Commissioner is appointed for a term of 6 years <b>Explanation:</b> A) Correct. Each Commissioner is appointed for a term of 5 years, corresponding with the term of the European Parliament. B) Incorrect. The College of Commissioners is chaired by the President of the European Commission, not the President of the European Parliament. C) Incorrect. Commissioners are selected based on nominations from member states and then appointed by the European Council, not the European Parliament. D) Incorrect. The day-to-day running of the European Central Bank is not the responsibility of the College of Commissioners; it is independent.</p>
<p><b>Question 10:</b> Who can request the issuance of a Blue Corner Notice?</p> <p>A) Any individual citizen. B) Member countries of INTERPOL. C) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).</p>	<p><b>Answer: B)</b> Member countries of INTERPOL. <b>Explanation:</b> A) Incorrect. Individual citizens cannot request the issuance of a Blue Corner Notice.</p>

<p>D) Private investigation firms.</p>	<p><b>B)</b> Correct. Only member countries of INTERPOL can request the issuance of a Blue Corner Notice. <b>C)</b> Incorrect. NGOs do not have the authority to request Blue Corner Notices. <b>D)</b> Incorrect. Private investigation firms cannot request the issuance of Blue Corner Notices.</p>
<p><b>Question 11:</b> Which of the following best describes a Blue Corner Notice issued by INTERPOL?</p> <p>A) It is a request to locate, identify, or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation.</p> <p>B) It is an international arrest warrant.</p> <p>C) It is a request for the provisional arrest of a person with a view to extradition.</p> <p>D) It is a notice to warn about potential threats from terrorist activities.</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> A) It is a request to locate, identify, or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation.</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p><b>A)</b> Correct. A Blue Corner Notice is used by INTERPOL to collect additional information about a person's identity, location, or activities in relation to a crime.</p> <p><b>B)</b> Incorrect. An international arrest warrant is typically a Red Corner Notice.</p> <p><b>C)</b> Incorrect. A request for the provisional arrest of a person with a view to extradition is a Red Corner Notice.</p> <p><b>D)</b> Incorrect. A notice to warn about potential threats from terrorist activities is a Green Notice</p>

Patriotism