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A goal without a  
plan is just a wish.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry





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**INSIDE**  
**JD(U) says it is not dissatisfied with portfolios**  
NEW DELHI  
Amid Opposition remarks about the Janata Dal(J)'s dissatisfaction with the "inconsequential" portfolios that former national president Rajiv Ranjan Singh and Ramnath Thakur have got in the Union Cabinet, party leaders dismissed such conjectures. > PAGE 4

**Simultaneous polls: report may be tabled**  
NEW DELHI  
The report of the committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind on "one nation, one election" or simultaneous elections could be placed before the Union Cabinet as part of the 100-day agenda of the Law Ministry. > PAGE 4

## India's election results victory for democratic world, says PM

Modi meets leaders of U.K., France, Germany, Japan, and Italy at the G-7 Outreach Summit in Italy, promises support to Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy; briefly meets U.S. President Biden and shakes hands with Canadian PM Trudeau

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

India's election results were a "victory for the democratic world", Prime Minister Narendra Modi told G-7 countries and leaders of other nations invited to the Outreach Summit in Italy. He praised electronic voting machines for their "impartiality and transparency".

Speaking at a session that focused on artificial intelligence (AI) and other issues, including African development and the Mediterranean, with Pope Francis who addressed the G-7 session for the first time, Mr. Modi said technology must be used to reduce inequalities.

Mr. Modi embraced the Pope at the beginning of the event, held in Italy's Apulia region, and also met leaders of the U.K., France, Germany, Japan, and Italy during a brief 24-hour visit. Mr. Modi was expected to hold only a pull-aside meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden at the G-7 Summit in Italy on Friday.



At the forums: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Joe Biden at the G-7 Summit in Italy on Friday. REUTERS

between the two countries. "The PM conveyed that India continues to encourage peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy and reiterated that India would continue to do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

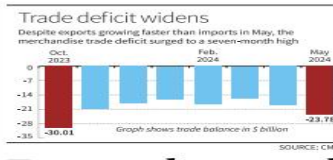
Sources told The Hindu that MEA Secretary (West) Pawan Kapoor would represent India at the conference in Buzenstock over the weekend, although Swiss and Ukrainian Ministers had travelled to Delhi to request Mr. Modi's presence.

Earlier, Mr. Modi met with U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, discussing strategic ties and the "India-UK Roadmap 2030" for bilateral relations. An MEA statement said they "expressed satisfaction with the progress made in the Free Trade Agreement negotiations between the two countries," although it is now unlikely to be taken forward until after the U.K. elections on July 4.

French President Emmanuel Macron also met with Mr. Modi on Friday. Sources told The Hindu that MEA Secretary (West) Pawan Kapoor would represent India at the conference in Buzenstock over the weekend, although Swiss and Ukrainian Ministers had travelled to Delhi to request Mr. Modi's presence.

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## Exports bounced 9% but trade gap widened in May

Vikas Dhoor  
NEW DELHI

India's goods exports grew 9.1% to \$38.13 billion in May, while imports rose 7.7% to \$61.91 billion, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said on Friday, stressing that things are looking "more optimistic for foreign trade this year". Even the textiles sector recorded a healthy growth of nearly 10% in May "after several months of sluggishness".

However, despite exports growing faster than imports, the merchandise trade deficit surged to a seven-month high of \$23.78 billion in May. "This was 5.5% higher than the deficit recorded in May 2023 and 24.5% over April's trade gap of \$19.1 billion, which in turn was the highest in four months. Compared with April, May's import bill was 14.4% higher, while the value of exports was up 8.9%."

Asked if the rising trade deficits could pose a problem, Mr. Barthwal told The Hindu that the trend must be seen in the context of India growing faster than the world and goods trade deficits should not be viewed in isolation.

"Higher demand" for India's goods is growing over 7%, while the global economy is growing at about 2.6% so there will always be higher demand from our country for imports of certain kinds of

items. When your economy is growing faster than the world, then obviously there will be these twin effects - higher domestic demand will mean less exportable surplus, and your requirements for imports from the rest of the world will be higher than the world's requirements from you," Mr. Barthwal pointed out.

"The deficit trends will depend on two factors - import substitution and the rate of economic growth. But I don't think a trade deficit per se as a bad thing, as long as you have foreign investment coming in through FDI, foreign equity investment, and you are balancing it through other means. Moreover, if our services exports are growing, we should not be unnecessarily worried about merchandise trade deficit alone," the Commerce Secretary asserted.

## SC asks NTA, govt. to reply to pleas seeking probe into NEET-UG

Krishnadas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) and the Centre to respond to pleas seeking a probe by a committee chaired by a retired Supreme Court or High Court judge of an investigation agency into allegations of question paper leak and discrepancies in the undergraduate National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) 2024.

Petitioners appearing before a Vacation Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta urged the "imminent need for a CBI investigation". "Perfect scores" One of the petitions, represented by advocate Charu Mathur, said there was a growing demand, even within the Indian Medical Association Junior Doctors Network, for a CBI probe into the "record number of students scoring perfect scores".

The petition represented by Ms. Mathur highlighted that the Opposition and other leaders of the country have demanded a probe into the NEET results. "This clearly shows there has been illegality and arbitrariness in the evaluations and results of the examination which need to be taken cognizance of and probe needs to be carried out," petitioners Aarsh Samir Vyasa and others pointed out.

## Aspirants step up stir seeking retest

NEW DELHI

Stepping up their protest against the NEET-UG 2024, several aspirants on Friday searched from the Central Secretariat to the Education Ministry office in New Delhi seeking a retest. > PAGE 3

their OMR sheets; unprecedented inflation of cut-off and average marks resulting in an unprecedented 67 candidates achieving a perfect score of 720/720; six of these toppers were from the same exam centre in Haryana; students having scored 718 and 719 marks, which is "statistically questionable"; no disclosure of methodology adopted for grant of compensatory marks for loss of time, etc.

Issuing formal notice to the NTA and the Centre, the court asked them to file their replies in two weeks. The petitions were scheduled for hearing on July 8, along with several others filed earlier.

A slew of petitions have been filed in the apex court on the NEET exam, including the award of grace marks. With burgeoning litigation and public furore about the exam, Justice Nath's Bench, in an order dated July 11, recommended a decision to conduct a retest for 1563 candidates who were given grace marks. > PAGE 3

## To greener pastures



Charting the course: Girls walk through a paddy field to attend school from the outskirts of Guwahati, Assam on Friday. REUTERS/ANWAR

## Mortal remains of 45 Indians killed in Kuwait brought back

The Hindu Bureau  
KOCHI/NEW DELHI

Mortal remains of 45 Indian migrant workers who had perished in a deadly fire in Kuwait were brought back in an Indian Air Force aircraft on Friday.

Meanwhile, one of the injured persons who was in a critical condition passed away taking the total number of Indians who died in the incident to 46. The news was confirmed by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya. The mortal remains of the men were first flown to the Kochi airport at 10:30 a.m., where a Kerala government delegation led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his Cabinet colleagues paid homage to the 31 victims who hailed

from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The C-130J Hercules of the IAF next flew to New Delhi where the bodies of the remaining 14 victims were received by officials of the Ministry of External Affairs and medical teams.

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## Final Journey: The victims of the Kuwait fire accident given a guard of honour in the presence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at the Kochi airport on Friday. THE HINDU



heartfelt condolences to the families of the people who lost their lives in this accident," said Mr. Singh speaking to the media in Kochi.

Mr. Vijayan, along with Mr. Singh, laid wreaths on the bodies laid out. Mr. Vijayan dubbed the incident the biggest tragedy involving expatriates and said steps should be taken to avert similar tragedies in the future. "Expatriates are the lifeline of

measures to avert a similar tragedy. The Centre should also make effective intervention," he said.

Mr. Vijayan declined to be drawn into the controversy surrounding the denial of clearance to Health Minister Venna George to fly to Kuwait as the state government representative on June 13.

Norfa Koots, the Kerala government's outreach agency for migrant Keralaites, had arranged ambulances for ferrying the bodies of all the 31 Malayali victims to their homes across the State. The Kerala Police also arranged dedicated an end-to-end pilot vehicle for 21 victims up to their homes and up to the border in the case of victims from Tamil Nadu.



# Student groups demand NEET retest for all

**A day after retest is announced for 1,563 candidates, protesters march to Education Ministry to seek investigation and action: Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan says accountability will be financed in National Testing Agency (NTA) if lapses are discovered; protesters say they will continue their agitation till all demands are met**

**Ashna Bhatnagar**  
NEW DELHI

A day after the National Testing Agency (NTA) said that it would reconduct the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) 2024 for 1,563 candidates who were given grace marks on June 23, aspirants continued to protest in the national capital for their remaining demands, with some marching to the Education Ministry to put forth their request for retest.

The Indian Foreign Medical Students (IFMS), whose members went on the protest march on Friday, wrote to the centre demanding a retest, a CBI inquiry into the conduct of the exam, strict action against officials and individuals involved in the irregularities and malpractice, and transparency in the examination process in the future.

For greater transparency, the total number of questions attempted by each student, in total and categorized by subject, should be included on the OMR sheet. This must be duly verified by the invigilator to prevent any tampering or manipulation, they suggested. They also called for a provision of 15 minutes of extra time for students to do the same.

The protesting candidates and their parents who marched on the Central Secretariat to the Education Ministry were told that the NEET counselling should not be conducted as scheduled.

Bhupendra Chaurasiya, a doctor and activist who was part of this dele-



Some NEET candidates have demanded that the counselling process does not take place until the alleged irregularities in the conduct of the examination are dealt with. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

gation, said, "In our meeting with the [Education] Minister, we were told that the necessary steps will be taken following Supreme Court directions. However, the counselling process is to take place soon. If counselling takes place before all the issues are addressed, students who made it via a backdoor will benefit and those who have spent 16 hours study-

ing every day for years will suffer."

Candidates said that they would continue to protest until their demands were met. The Students' Association's

Delhi University (DU) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) units, issued a statement saying, "The momentary relief provided to the applicants by the SC in scrapping away the NEET retest for all India [is] not a solution to the loss of time and money suffered by the applicants. Justice can only be done once examination is conducted for all applicants of the exams."

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the NTA was committed to taking necessary action but also said that the counselling process would be under way soon.

Facts related to NEET examination are in cognisance of Hon'ble Supreme Court. Central govt. will take all necessary actions for the well-being of students as per the directions

of the Hon'ble Supreme Court," he said in a post on X.

Responding to the Congress's claims of rigging, corruption and paper leak in the NEET-UG 2024, Mr. Pradhan said that there was no concrete evidence of any such malpractice. More than 24 lakh students across the country had appeared for the entrance test, and 67 secured full marks — a first in the history of NEET. This was followed by allegations of irregularities and inflation of marks, after which the testing agency said that grace marks were given to those who lost time.

Candidates have been protesting in the national capital all week, from January. Marching to the NTA office in Okhla, saying that their ranks have been impacted drastically by the inflation.

# We will end 'fraudulent' NEET one day, says T.N. CM

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Pointing out that Tamil Nadu was the first to oppose the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to medical colleges, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday asserted that his government would end the "fraudulent" examination one day.

Addressing students and teachers at a felicitation function, the CM said "fraudulent" practices were being seen in NEET and hence, the government was opposing it. Mr. Stalin was referring to the recent allegations of large-scale malpractice in the conduct of NEET-UG 2024. "Tamil Nadu was the first to oppose the NEET. We see all of India is opposing it today. We will end this fraud one day," he said.

# Police unearth 'scam' at coaching centre in Godhra, arrest 5 persons

**The Hindu Bureau**  
AHMEDABAD

As the controversy over the alleged irregularities in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) continued, Gujarat Police arrested five persons connected to a NEET coaching centre in Godhra on charges of helping students cheat in the exam. As per the police complaint lodged in Godhra, around a dozen students and their parents and a Vadodra-based NEET coaching centre run by a group of teachers were involved in the scam.

Those students whose parents had paid money were reportedly asked to skip the questions for

**Coaching centre and exam centre colluded to help students pass in exchange for money, said police**

which they did not know the answers and later on those answers were to be filled in by the teachers as per their arrangement. The scam was allegedly set to be carried out at the Jay Jalaram School, an exam centre for Parvadi village in Godhra.

**Key accused**  
The Panchmahal district police has arrested Anand, an education consultant, Purushottam Sharma, the school principal, and Tushar Bhatt, a teach-

er at the school and the Deputy Superintendent of the NEET centre there. Mr. Bhatt was named the prime accused in the case. Another key accused was Parashuram Roy, owner of a Vadodra-based immigration agency that doubled as a coaching centre — Roy Overseas.

The FIR stated that the attempted malpractice was centred by an inspection squad of the Education Department, based on a report from the Godhra Collector.

The police said that four students had allegedly paid ₹6 lakh each, while three others gave blank cheques to the coaching centre. The

investigation revealed that parents had paid Mr. Roy and others, including Mr. Bhatt and one Godhra-based Arif Vora, who all together made ₹2.82 crore.

**Blank cheques**  
The police have recovered blank cheques with details of the students scribbled on the back and contact details of parents. They also found out about financial transactions made by the parents to the coaching centre of Mr. Roy.

"It's an open scam," said Gujarat Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi, who asked the State authorities to provide details of how it happened and who all were involved besides those arrested.

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday stepped up its attack on the Union government over irregularities in the conduct of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) by questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the matter. The opposition party said that only a forensic investigation under the supervision of the Supreme Court could protect the interests of lakhs of young students.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge claimed that the Modi-led government has started "covering up" the NEET scam. Education Minister Dhar-



Mallikarjun Kharge

mendra Pradhan and the National Testing Agency. "If the paper was not leaked in Bihar, why were 13 accused arrested in Bihar due to paper leak? Did the Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of Patna police not get the payment of ₹30 lakh to look into the education mafia and organised gangs involved in the racket in exchange for papers?" Mr. Kharge asked in a post on X.

"Has NEET-UG cheating racket not been busted in Godhra, Gujarat," he asked. Three people, including a person running a coaching centre, a teacher and another person were involved. According to Gujarat Police, transactions worth over ₹12 crore have come to light between the accused, he added.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh claimed that "NEET under this corrupt regime like CHEAT — Central Hyped Entrance Admission Test", said he also pointed out that the NEET-UG "paper scan-

dal" was not unique.

"Uttar Pradesh has witnessed more than 40 paper leaks under BJP rule and Gujarat has emerged as the racket hotbed in the capital, from where leaks are orchestrated across the country," he said in a post on social media.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also accused the new BJP government of attacking the dream of the youth. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said, "PM Modi has always remain a mute spectator. Why is he silent when the future of 24 lakh youngsters is at stake?"

# Manipur Naga body prescribes social boycott of MP-elect

**Babul Karmakar**  
GUWAHATI

An apex body of the Nagas in Manipur has prescribed a seven-year social boycott of Congress MP-elect Alfred Kangam S. Arthur and two others who contested the Lok Sabha election from the Outer Manipur constituency as independents.

Mr. Arthur bagged the Outer Manipur seat after defeating Kachul Timothy Zimik of the Naga People's Front (NPF) by 28,518 votes. Independent candidates, Kheo John and Abnomal finished third and fourth.

In a public notification on Thursday, the United Naga Council (UNC) said it took the action against Mr. Arthur, Mr. John, and Mr. Zimik as they "purposely defied and failed to respect the 'no-contest' position" of the organisation in the parliamentary polls.

The UNC also took note of the trio's "willful attempt to challenge the Naga people's position and its spirit of unity." The "position" where the candidates appealed to consider Mr. Zimik as a member of the coalition and declared support for him from most of the apex organisations representing the 21 Naga tribes of Manipur. Mr. Arthur and Mr. Zimik were among the 21 Naga tribes, while Mr.

John is a Pommai Naga and Mr. Abnomal is a Lishima Naga.

"They are hereby debarred from public platforms, and holding any position or leadership in the Naga society for a period of seven years with immediate effect," the notification signed by H. James Hau, the information and publicity secretary of the UNC, read.

The Naga body directed all its constituent units, subordinate or associate units and the Naga populace to uphold the resolution and enforce it in their respective jurisdiction accordingly.

**'Cheap and immature'**  
The notification is being seen as a reaction to the NPF's failure in retaining Outer Manipur, although the UNC said the decision was passed in respect and honour of the position it had adopted in its emergency assembly on May 29, a week before the election results were announced, which saw S. Pfoze had won the seat in 2019.

The UNC's action has been slammed on social media as "cheap and immature." "It also looks like a dictatorial statement out of frustration. After all, they failed to get their proposed candidate elected," one of the comments read.

# Residents oppose allotment of flat under CM scheme to a Muslim woman in Gujarat

**The Hindu Bureau**  
AHMEDABAD

Several residents of a housing scheme built by the Vadodra Municipal Corporation (VMC) under the Gujarat government's housing project have launched protests against the allotment of a flat to a Muslim woman, saying the locality is meant "only for Hindus."

The protesters demanded the cancellation of the flat allotment to the woman. They told local media in Vadodra that if the allotment were not revoked, they would intensify their agitation and hold protests in Gandhinagar and Delhi.

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A video grab shows residents of the housing society protesting against the flat allotment in Vadodra. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

communities because Harni area, where the complex is located, is a locality of Hindu inhabitants and falls under the Disturbed Areas Act, which bans the sale of property by members of one religious community to the other. The community without the sanction of the District Collector.

Municipal Commissioner of Vadodra, Dilip Kansani said he has received a representation from the residents of Motnath Residency in Harni area and a decision will be taken after studying all the relevant documents.

"I have just received a representation. We have a provision under which Hindus and Muslims are given flats in their respective areas. This applies only to those housing projects which are situated in disturbed areas. We have to check if this society falls in that category," he said. With 460 flats, Motnath



Annual ritual: Devotees seen at the annual Kheer Bhawani festival at a temple in Tulumulla village in Ganderal district on Friday. NISAR AHMED

# Thousands gather for Kashmir's Kheer Bhawani temple festival

**Peernazda Ashiq**  
SRINAGAR

Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits converged at the Kheer Bhawani temple in Kashmir Valley's Ganderal district to attend the annual festival of Zyetsha Ashanti on Friday. Many of them had migrated to different parts of the country in the 1990s in the wake of raging militancy.

"My family has been here for the past four days. The Kheer Bhawani temple has been of great importance to Pandits for centuries. We all prayed for peace in Jammu and Kashmir," Ajay Ganjoo, now a resident of New Delhi, said. Scores of Muslims also

joined the Kheer Bhawani mela and set up stalls outside the temple to convey the message of 'Kashmiriyat'. "Muslims, like in the past, sold pulis paraphernalia to Pandit brethren," said Sheikh, a Valley resident, said.

The temple of Kheer Bhawani is located amid chinar trees and has a natural spring, which is considered auspicious by Pandits. "This time the water is nirmal (clean and transparent). It's a good omen. We are hopeful of peace returning to Kashmir and Pandits returning to their homes," Bitto Kaul, a devotee, said. J&K Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha said that

over 30,000 devotees paid obeisance during the Kheer Bhawani mela at Tulumulla on Friday. Security was tightened in the area as some pilgrims were killed and over 33 injured when a bus was attacked by militants in Reasi's Katra area on June 9. Several J&K political leaders, including National Conference president Feroz Abdullah and Itija Mufti, Peoples Democratic Party leader and daughter of the party president Mehbooba Mufti, visited the temple and greeted the Pandits on the occasion. The leaders, in separate statements, said they also prayed for the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley.





**Annual ritual:** Devotees seen at the annual Kheer Bhawani festival at a temple in Tullamulla village in Ganderbal district on Friday. NISSAR AHMAD

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## Historical and Religious Significance

### Goddess Ragnya Devi:

- The Kheer Bhawani Festival is dedicated to Goddess Ragnya Devi, a revered deity in the Kashmiri Hindu tradition.
- The goddess is also known as Mata Ragnya Bhagwati and is considered an incarnation of Goddess Durga.

## Temple and Sacred Spring:

The main temple associated with this festival is the Kheer Bhawani Temple, located in the village of Tul Mul, near Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir.

The temple is situated near a sacred spring, which is believed to change colors and is considered a divine manifestation. The color of the spring water is said to indicate the well-being of the local community.

## Kheer Bhawani Temple:

- The temple was originally built during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh in the 19th century and later renovated by Maharaja Hari Singh.
- The name "Kheer Bhawani" derives from the offering of 'Kheer' (a sweet rice pudding) made to the goddess by devotees.

## Annual Pilgrimage:

The Kheer Bhawani Festival is celebrated annually on the day of Jesht Ashtami, which falls on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Jyestha (May-June).

Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits, along with other devotees, gather at the temple to seek blessings from the goddess.





Against the tide, Abdul Aziz fins his tin shack built near the embankment near the in Kusakita sea beach.

## Rising sea swamps Bangladesh, millions will be forced to flee

Agence France-Presse  
PATUAKHALI

After cyclone Gales tore down his home in 2007, Bangladeshi fisherman Abdul Aziz packed up what was left of his belongings and moved about half a kilometre inland, further away from storm surge waves.

A year later, the sea swallowed the area where his old home had been. Now, 75-year-old Aziz fishes above his submerged former home and lives on the other side of a low earth and concrete embankment, against which roaring waves crash.

"The fish are swimming there in the water on my land", he said, pointing towards his vanished village. "It is part of the advancing ocean."

Government scientists say rising seas driven by climate change are drowning Bangladesh's densely populated coast at one of the fastest global rates, and at least a million people on the coast will be forced to relocate within a generation.

"Few countries experience the far-reaching and diverse effects of climate change as intensely as Bangladesh," Abdul Hamid, director general of the environment department, wrote in a report. The three-part study calculated the low-lying South Asian nation's sea level rise is 1.5 times higher than the global average. By 2050, at present rates of local sea level rise, "more than one million people may have to be displaced", it read, based on a quarter of a century of satellite data from the U.S. space agency NASA and its Chinese counterpart CNSA.

Sea levels are not rising at the same rate around the world, due chiefly to Earth's uneven gravity field and variations in ocean dynamics.

## 'China trying to promote authoritarian governance'

Agence France-Presse  
BEIJING

China has organised seminars and training courses for officials in African and Latin American countries, aimed at promoting its single-party system and President Xi Jinping's world view, a report said this week.

A central pillar of Mr. Xi's rule has been the Belt and Road initiative (BRI), a massive infrastructure project that China uses to expand its global influence by handing out onerous loans to developing countries.

A report released on Thursday by a Washington-based think tank details efforts to promote single-party rule and Mr. Xi's thinking to BRI partners in parts of Africa, Latin America and beyond, drawing on hundreds of publicly available documents from China's commerce ministry.

"The documents 'clearly highlight aspects of [China's] authoritarian model as central to the blueprint of successful development that others can emulate', wrote the author of the Atlantic Council report, non-resident fellow Nava Yau. Among the initiatives listed was a seminar held online for presidential aides and cabinet-level officials in developing countries, aimed at expanding 'the international influence of the governance model of China'.

Beijing's Foreign Ministry said on Friday that "China has always respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in independently choosing their development paths and social systems." "We have never, and will never, impose our own path or system on other countries," it added.

## Sacred ritual



Worshippers pray around Islam's holiest shrine at the Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca, ahead of the annual Hajj pilgrimage. After travelling from all parts of the world, the pilgrims will first perform the "tawaf" - walking seven times around the Kaaba. AFP

## NATO hones Arctic acoustic waves to track Russian submarines

Agence France-Presse  
TROMSO

In the icy waters of the Arctic, NATO scientists are detecting sound waves to improve the West's ability to track Russian submarines, as global warming alters acoustic underwater.

"The only reliable source of information is acoustic waves," Gaultier Rea, the head scientist on board the NATO research vessel Alliance, said during a stop in the northern Norwegian town of Tromso, on the eve of an expedition to the Barents Sea.

The oceanographic ship, operated by the Italian navy is transporting

## U.S. Navy faces its most intense combat since Second World War against Houthis

More than 50 vessels have been targeted by missiles and drones launched by the Iran-backed Shia rebels since November, shipping volume has dropped in the Red Sea corridor that leads to the Suez Canal and into the Mediterranean, Houthis say the attacks are aimed at ending the Gaza war

Associated Press  
ABOARD THE USS LABOON

The U.S. Navy prepared for decades to potentially fight the Soviet Union, then later Russia and China, on the world's waterways. But instead of a global power, the Navy finds itself locked in combat with a shadowy, Iran-backed rebel group based in Yemen.

The U.S.-led campaign against the Houthi rebels, overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, has turned into the most intense running sea battle the Navy has faced since Second World War, its leaders and experts said.

The combat pits the Navy's mission to keep international waterways open against a group whose former arsenal of assault rifles and pickup trucks has grown into a seemingly inexhaustible supply of drones, missiles and other weaponry. Near-daily attacks by the Houthis since November have seen more than 50 vessels clearly targeted, while shipping volume has dropped in the vital Red Sea corridor that leads to the Suez Canal and into the Mediterranean.

"The Houthis just have to get one through," the Houthis said the attacks are aimed at stopping the war in Gaza and supporting the Palestinians, where the paint around the hatches of its missile



The Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Laboon sails in the Red Sea on Wednesday. AP

pod in Yemen. All signs suggest the warfare will intensify — putting U.S. sailors, their allies and commercial vessels at more risk.

### 'Deadly serious'

"I don't think people really understand just kind of how deadly serious it is what we're doing and how under threat the ships continue to be," Cmdr. Eric Blomberg with the USS Laboon said on a visit to his warship on the Red Sea. "We only have to get it wrong once," he said. "The Houthis just have to get one through."

The pace of the fire can be seen on the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, where the paint around the hatches of its missile pods has been burned away from repeated launches. Its sailors sometimes have seconds to confirm a launch by the Houthis, confer with other ships and open fire on an incoming missile barrage that can move near or beyond the speed of sound.

"It is every single day, every single watch, and some of our ships have been out here for seven-plus months doing that," said Captain David Wroe, the commodore overseeing the guided missile destroyers.

One round of fire on January 9 saw the Laboon, other vessels and F/A-18s from the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower shoot down its drones, two anti-ship cruise missiles

and a ballistic missile launched by the Houthis. Nearly every day — aside from a slow-down during the month of Ramadan — the Houthis launch missiles, drones or some other type of attack in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait that connects the waterways and separates Africa from the Arabian Peninsula.

**Direct attacks on ships**  
The Navy saw periods of combat during the "Tanker Wars" of the 1980s in the Persian Gulf, but that largely involved ships hitting mines. The Houthi assaults involve direct attacks on commercial vessels and warships.

"This is the most sustained combat that the U.S. Navy has seen since Second World War — easily, no question," said Bryan Clutz, a former Navy submariner and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

"We're not of on the verge of the Houthis being able to mount the kinds of attacks that the U.S. can't stop every time, and then we will start to see substantial damage. ... If you let it fester, the Houthis are going to get to be a much more capable, competent, experienced force."

While the Eisenhower appears to largely stay at a distance, destroyers like the Laboon spend six out of seven days near or off Yemen — the "weapons engagement zone," in Navy speak.

Sea combat in the Mideast remains risky, so the Navy knows well. In 1987, an Iraqi fighter jet shot down the USS Stark, a frigate on patrol in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war, killing 37 sailors and British soldiers on board. There's also the USS Cole, targeted in 2000 by a suicide bomber during a refueling stop in Yemen's port city of Aden, which killed 17 on board.

The Houthis say the Cole was the last of the ships they launched a drone-bomb at-

tack against a commercial ship there that disabled the vessel.

Rear Admiral Marc Miguez, the Navy's commander for its Carrier Strike Group Two, which includes the Eisenhower and supporting ships, said the Navy had taken out one underwater bomb-carrying drone launched by the Houthis as well during the campaign.

"We currently have pretty high confidence that not only is Iran providing financial support, but they're providing intelligence support," Miguez said. "We know for a fact the Houthis have also gotten training to target maritime shipping and target U.S. warships."

The risk isn't just on the water. The U.S.-led campaign has carried out numerous airstrikes targeting Houthi positions inside Yemen, including one that struck the USS Stark, a frigate on patrol in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war, killing 37 sailors and British soldiers on board.

There's also the USS Cole, targeted in 2000 by a suicide bomber during a refueling stop in Yemen's port city of Aden, which killed 17 on board. The Houthis say the Cole was the last of the ships they launched a drone-bomb at-

## French left vows 'total break' with Macron's policies

Agence France-Presse  
PARIS

France's left put up a united front on Friday, vowing a "total break" with President Emmanuel Macron's policies if it wins historic elections in June.

Head Marine Le Pen pledged a "national unity government" if her party emerges victorious. President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday stunned France by calling snap legislative elections for June 30, with a second round on July 7, after Le Pen's far-right National Rally (NR) scored more than double the number of votes of his centrist alliance in last week's European elections.

After four days of intense negotiations, left-wing leaders including the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI), the Socialist, Com-

**The left-wing leaders agreed on an election alliance called the New Popular Front**

unist and Green parties said late on Thursday they had agreed on an election alliance called the New Popular Front.

President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday stunned France by calling snap legislative elections for June 30, with a second round on July 7, after Le Pen's far-right National Rally (NR) scored more than double the number of votes of his centrist alliance in last week's European elections.

After four days of intense negotiations, left-wing leaders including the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI), the Socialist, Com-

The coalition also proposed sending peacekeepers to oversee nuclear power plants in Ukraine.

Earlier on Friday, leading left-wing French politician Raphael Glucksmann threw his weight behind the coalition despite remaining differences between its parties — saying it was the "only way" to prevent a far-right victory.

"We can't leave France to the Le Pen family," 44-year-old Glucksmann, who led the Socialist-backed list in the European elections, told broadcaster France Inter.

"The name of the alliance is a nod to the Popular Front, a political alliance founded in France in 1936 to combat fascism.

Opinion polls suggest Le Pen's party will massively increase its parliamentary presence from its current 88 out of 577 seats.

er climate, Mr. Rea said, making it more complex to predict and track the trajectory of soundwaves.

**Changing landscape**  
In addition, with the melting of ice, the Arctic's sound landscape, or soundscape, is also changing. The Arctic's silent world no longer exists, due to the increasing presence of people and craning of the sea ice. And in the noise, the sound of ships sailing on the newly-opened maritime routes.

"Everything needs to be soundtracked through the terms of salinity and temperature," Mr. Rea said.

The knowledge and data hold strategic value when it comes to developing sensors capable of detecting enemy subs. They also make it possible to manufacture autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) to identify surface vessels by the sound of their propellers, and minesweeping.

Mr. Rea said it was too early and "impossible" to draw any general conclusions about the impact of climate change on submarine hunting.

The threat to the West lurks nearby.



# NATO hones Arctic acoustic waves to track Russian submarines

**Agence France-Presse**  
TROMSO

In the icy waters of the Arctic, NATO scientists are dissecting sound waves to improve the West's ability to track Russian submarines, as global warming alters acoustics underwater.

"The only reliable source of information is acoustic waves," Gaultier Real, the head scientist on board the NATO research vessel Alliance, said during a stop in the northern Norwegian town of Tromsø, on the eve of an expedition to the Barents Sea.

The oceanographic ship, operated by the Italian navy is transporting

Real's team of scientists to the polar front, where the waters of the Atlantic and Arctic meet. The aim of the scientific mission is to understand how climate change, which is warming the Arctic faster than the rest of the planet, is affecting the movement of underwater soundwaves.

Over the course of three weeks, the vessel will spread sounds underwater, which its hydrophones, or microphones in the sea, will pick up. The data will then be analysed.

## Noise pollution

There are strict rules to protect the Arctic's fragile ecosystem.



**On the trail:** Captain of the ship Manuel Fantinati (L) and Gaultier Real, chief scientist of the mission in Tromsø. AFP

If the team hears animals, they'll halt work immediately.

Oceanographic instruments will be submerged to measure the water's

temperature, salinity and pressure, parameters that affect the speed at which sound travels through water. These parameters are changing due to the warm-

er climate, Mr. Real said, making it more complex to predict and track the trajectory of soundwaves.

## Changing landscape

In addition, with the melting of the sea ice, the Arctic's sound landscape, or soundscape, is also changing. The Arctic's once silent world no longer exists, due to the increasing presence of people and cracking of the sea ice. And in the future, the noise made by the rising number of ships sailing on the newly opened maritime routes.

"Everything needs to be re-evaluated, especially in terms of salinity and temperature," Mr. Real said.

The knowledge and data hold strategic value when it comes to developing sonars capable of detecting enemy subs. They also make it possible to manufacture autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), identify surface vessels by the sound of their propellers, and facilitate minesweeping.

Mr. Real said it was too early and "impossible" to draw any general conclusions about the impact of climate change on submarine hunting.

The threat to the West lurks nearby.

In the Arctic, "the Russian navy ... has developed significant capabilities over

the last decades," explained CMRE director Eric Pouliquen.

The region is home to the powerful Northern Fleet, the Russian navy's biggest, which includes numerous submarines equipped with nuclear warheads.

Which explains why NATO has made this project a priority.

"We are also looking at how NATO, naval forces in particular, will have to operate up in the North with this melting ice cap," Mr. Pouliquen said.

Russia has also invested in military materiel enabling it to operate in conditions of extreme cold.

**Objective:** The mission focuses on dissecting sound waves in the icy waters of the Arctic to enhance the West's ability to detect Russian submarines, particularly as global warming alters underwater acoustics.

**Research Team:** Led by scientist Gaultier Real, the team is using the NATO research vessel Alliance to conduct studies. The vessel will spread sounds underwater, which hydrophones will pick up for analysis.






**Climate Impact:** The mission aims to understand how climate change, which is warming the Arctic faster than other regions, affects underwater soundwaves.

**Changing Landscape:** Melting sea ice and the increasing presence of ships are altering the Arctic's soundscape, complicating the tracking of submarines.

**Strategic Value:** The data collected will help develop better sonar systems, autonomous underwater vehicles, and improve mine-sweeping operations.

**Environmental Protection:** There are strict rules to protect the Arctic's ecosystem, and the team will halt work if animals are detected nearby.

- 
- **Geopolitical Context:** The Arctic is strategically significant, hosting the powerful Russian Northern Fleet. NATO's mission underscores the need to adapt to changing conditions and maintain security in the region.



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## Delhi L-G sanctions prosecution under UAPA of Arundhati Roy, former professor

Saxena acts on FIR lodged in 2010 that alleged 'provocative speeches in public'

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

DELHI LIEUTENANT Governor Vinod Kumar Saxena has sanctioned the prosecution of author-activist Arundhati Roy and Dr Sheikh Showkat Hussain, former professor at the Central University of Kashmir, under Section 45(1) of the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in connection with a 2010 FIR over "provocative speeches in public" at a New Delhi auditorium.

The FIR, registered on a complaint by social activist Sushash Pandit in 2010, accused Roy and Hussain of delivering provocative and speeches at a conference or-



FIR over speeches on J&K in Delhi auditorium

## UAPA bypasses statute of limitations, top court stay on sedition law

**APURVA VISHWANATH**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

THE INVOCATION of stringent UAPA charges, 14 years after an FIR was first registered against author-activist Arundhati Roy and Dr Sheikh Showkat Hussain, former professor at the Central University of Kashmir, for "provocative speeches in public," allows the state to bypass the statute of limitations.

In October last year, the Delhi LG Governor had in the same case granted sanction to prosecute Roy and Hussain under IPC sec-

tions 153A, 153B and 505. These provisions, the trifecta often invoked to deal with hate speech cases, all carry a maximum sentence of up to three years.

However, under Section 48B of the Code of Criminal Procedure, courts are barred from taking cognizance of offences which are brought after an undue delay or after the lapse of the period of limitation.

The period of limitation, if the offence is punishable with imprisonment for a term exceeding one year but not exceeding three years, is three years under the statute. This

**EXPRESS NETWORK**

**PAWAN KALYAN IS ANDHRA DY CM, 3 WOMEN MINISTERS GET KEY PORTFOLIOS**

**SHAH REVIEWS J&K SECURITY, CAL MEETING ON JUNE 16**

**HC STAYS ARREST WARRANT AGAINST YEDIYURAPPA**

PAGES 9, 6 & 10

## MEETS BIDEN, TRUDEAU, OTHERS ON G7 SUMMIT SIDELINES Victory of the entire democratic world: PM to G7 on election win

Pitches India as Global South's voice, bringing its priorities and concerns to world



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Pope Francis at the G7 Outreach Summit in Apulia, Italy, on Friday. In a post on X, Modi said he invited the Pope to visit India. ANI

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi met US President Joe Biden and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in pull-out meetings Friday on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy. This was their first meeting since the G20 Summit in New Delhi last year and allegations of the Indian government's involvement in assassination plots of Khalistan separatists in the US and Canada.

On his meeting with the US President, Modi, in a post on X, said it's "always a pleasure to meet" Biden. "India and USA will keep working together to further global good," he said.

US NSA Jake Sullivan is expected in New Delhi early next week to iron out differences over the alleged assassination plot against a Khalistan separatist, and move forward in bilateral relations.

On his meeting with Trudeau, it was a cryptic one line with a photograph of the two leaders shaking hands. "Met Canadian PM @JustinTrudeau at the G7 Summit," Modi said in his post.

Hours before these meetings, Modi showcased the scale of Indian elections as "the biggest festival of democracy in the world," and framed his "historic victory" as a "victory of democracy" and "victory of the entire democratic world".

This is an important framing.

## Way to peace is through dialogue and diplomacy: PM to Ukraine President

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

EIGHT DAYS after they spoke on phone, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Friday on the sidelines of the G7 Summit.

Modi said India continues to encourage peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict through dialogue and diplomacy, and reiterated that Delhi will continue to do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution.

The two leaders were meeting



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Ukraine President Joe Biden in Apulia on Friday. ANI

to encourage peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict through dialogue and diplomacy, and reiterated that Delhi will continue to do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution.

The two leaders were meeting

## WAS FOUND DEAD IN HOSTEL IN OCT 2022 Death of student at IIT Kharagpur was not suicide, autopsy confirms murder

**SWEETY KUMAR**  
KOLKATA, JUNE 14

ALMOST TWO years after IIT Kharagpur student Faizan Ahmed was found dead in a hostel room on campus, it has now emerged that he was murdered. A gunshot wound and a stab wound have been found on his neck, according to a report of a forensic expert who conducted a second autopsy of the body on Monday at a High Court.

The expert's analysis along with the second autopsy report were submitted in the court in May this year. The expert is expected to file his final report when



Faizan Ahmed, 23, was a third-year student

the court takes up the case for hearing again next week.

According to the report prepared by Dr A K Gupta, Faizan's neck showed signs of a gunshot wound in the upper part.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## 'I could never have imagined that my boy was tortured like this'

**SUKRITA BARIJAH**  
FAIZANAPUR, JUNE 14

ALBOW TWO years after the first got a call that her 23-year-old son Faizan had been found dead on the IIT Kharagpur campus, Rehana Ahmed's life still revolves around trying to get justice for her only son.

Faizan's partially decomposed body had been found in a hostel room on the IIT Kharagpur campus — not the one allotted to him — on October 14, 2022, and initial reports suggested that he died by suicide.



Faizan's mother Rehana had alleged foul play, ragging

But Rehana and the rest of her family alleged foul play right from the start, saying that he had been subjected to ragging on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**PAGE 1 ANCHOR**

**SHAJU PHILIP**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 14

**KNIFECRIME RISE IN STUDENT MIGRATION, INDICATIONS OF SATURATION IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF RETURNING EMIGRANTS, GROWTH IN FEMALE EMIGRATION AND SURGE IN REMITTANCE TO KERALA AFTER THE 2019 PANDEMIC ARE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE Kerala Migration Survey (KMS) 2023.**

The report of the KMS-2023,

## More students and women emigrating from Kerala, survey reveals

by the International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMD)-Thiruvananthapuram, was presented Friday at the Loka Kerala Sabha, an event hosted by the state government of Kerala to bring Malayali people living around the globe.

The study said the number of emigrants from Kerala is estimated to be 2.2 million, closely aligning with the 2.1 million recorded in the KMS 2018. This indicates a saturation of international migration over the last five years is interesting given the overall de-



The global Malayali diaspora is estimated to be 5 million, rise

clining trend observed over the past decade in the previous rounds of KMS.

The global Malayali diaspora is estimated to be 5 million, whereas the Malayali diaspora outside Kerala but within India is estimated at 3 million.

Although there is a slight increase of 32,388 emigrants in 2023, 9 out of the 14 districts in Kerala observed a considerable decline in the number of emigrants when compared to 2018, indicating a saturation of international migration. Despite ex-

pectations of a further decline in this round of KMS, a significant rise in student emigration has substantially contributed to maintaining emigration levels.

The survey said the number of student emigrants has doubled from 129,763 in 2018 to about 250,000 in 2023. "This notable increase in student emigration underscores a significant shift in the demographic of emigrants from Kerala, wherein students are now a major portion of emigrants leaving at a young age, as early as 17

years," said the report.

The KMS 2023 shows that students constitute 11.3 percent of total emigrants from Kerala, indicating that a growing number of younger individuals are leaving the state, particularly for education abroad.

The proportion of female emigrants increased from 15.8 per cent in 2018 to 19.3 per cent in 2023. Female migration has further seen a shift from GCC countries to Europe and other Western nations as destination countries, accounting for 40.5 per cent.

**BUSINESS AS USUAL**  
By UNNY

**THE WORLD**

**PUTIN VOWS TRUCE IF UKRAINE GETS OCCUPIED AREAS, DROPS NATO BID**

**SC SEEKS CENTRE, NTA RESPONSE**

**FAIZAN**



## INDIA'S TRADE DATA FOR MAY

# Exports jump 9% YoY amid demand revival; trade deficit at 7-month high

RAVIDUTTA MISHRA  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

DRIVEN BY demand revival in India's traditional exports markets such as Europe and the United States (US), India's goods exports in May logged a sharp 9 per cent year-on-year jump, even as country's trade gap swelled to a seven-month high of \$24 billion due to higher oil imports, as per data released by the commerce and industry ministry on Friday.

New Delhi's goods exports in May jumped 9.10 per cent to \$38.13 billion in May from \$34.96 billion the year-ago month. The growth was led by electronics, petroleum, and engineering goods. Meanwhile, imports rose at a relatively slower pace of 7.6 per cent to \$61.91 billion from \$57.49 billion in May 2023, official data showed.

"The merchandise trade deficit widened to a seven-month high driven by a jump in the net oil imports. On sequential terms, 71 per cent of the enlargement in the merchandise trade deficit in May 2024 relative to April 2024 was driven by the net oil balance, with a sharp rise in volumes amidst some cooling in prices," Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and

### TRADE GAP WIDENS TO \$24 BILLION

| Month          | Exports | Imports | Trade balance |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------------|
| April 2023     | 34.61   | 49.05   | -14.44        |
| May 2023       | 34.96   | 57.49   | -22.53        |
| June 2023      | 34.32   | 53.51   | -19.19        |
| July 2023      | 34.49   | 53.49   | -19           |
| August 2023    | 38.3    | 62.29   | -23.99        |
| September 2023 | 34.4    | 54.47   | -20.07        |
| October 2023   | 33.43   | 63.44   | -30.01        |
| November 2023  | 33.74   | 54.48   | -20.74        |
| December 2023  | 38.39   | 56.45   | -18.06        |
| Jan 2024       | 37.32   | 53.34   | -16.02        |
| Feb 2024       | 41.4    | 60.1    | -18.7         |
| March 2024     | 41.7    | 57.28   | -15.58        |
| April 2024     | 34.99   | 54.09   | -19.1         |
| May 2024       | 38.13   | 61.91   | -23.78        |

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry, figures in (\$bn)

Head of Research and Outreach, ICRA said.

Services exports rose to \$30.16 billion in May from \$26.99 billion in the corresponding month of last year, logging a healthy 11 per cent increase. Services imports rose 8.81 per cent year-on-year to \$17.28 billion. In May 2023, services imports were at \$15.88 billion.

"Overall exports have grown in double digits and goods exports have also registered a healthy 9 per cent growth which is a reflection of the fact that inflation in ma-

nor advanced economies has gone down. This augurs well of our exports as purchasing power in these markets improve with inflationary pressure coming down," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal told reporters.

Exports to the US rose by over 13 per cent from year-ago levels to \$7.42 billion in May. Outbound shipments to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) jumped nearly 19 per cent year-on-year to \$3.06 billion. Shipments to the Netherlands, an export hub in

Europe, jumped 44 per cent over May 2023 to \$2.19 billion.

This comes after the US economy is recovering at a faster-than-expected pace, which resulted in the World Bank upgrading its outlook for the global economic growth to 2.6 per cent this year from its earlier projection of 2.4 per cent. The World Bank earlier this month revised its outlook for the US economy to 2.5 per cent growth in 2024 compared to 1.6 per cent it predicted earlier.

However, India's exports to Australia in May slipped by 3.52 per cent to \$519 million compared to \$538 million. The India-Australia free trade agreement (FTA) came into force in December 2022. Moreover, India's imports from the UAE, another nation that India has an FTA with, jumped by a sharp 50 per cent to \$5.2 billion.

In May, India's exports continued to surge in the electronic and engineering exports category. The month also marked a recovery for textile exports. While electronic goods exports jumped 22 per cent year-on-year, engineering exports rose 7.39 per cent. Exports of the labour-intensive readymade garments of all textiles were 9.84 per cent higher in May.

"Goods exports with a growth of 9 per cent compared to May

2023 is not only a good sign but also goes to show efforts and hard work, which the exporters are putting together. We further expect exports to show better growth numbers with improved demand coming in from the European Union, UK, West Asia, and the US, which has given a boost to the order bookings by over 10 per cent and has come as a sign of recovery for the labour-intensive sectors of exports," Federation of Indian Export Organisations President Ashwani Kumar said.

Engineering Export Promotion Council of India (EEPC) Chairman Arun Kumar Garodia said that the upturn in shipments reflects improvement in demand in India's key markets. According to him, the global economic outlook is expected to improve in the ongoing fiscal, giving Indian exporters enough reason to remain optimistic. "While both near- and medium-term outlooks remain positive, exporters are facing the challenge of high ocean freight rates on some key routes. This could affect exports. Also, it has been seen that China is shipping large volumes to the US in the wake of additional import duties that could be applicable to Chinese goods from August this year," Garodia added.



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India's Trade Data for May" highlights a 9% year-on-year (YoY) jump in India's goods exports, reaching \$38.13 billion in May 2023 from \$34.96 billion in May 2022. This growth was driven by demand revival in traditional export markets like Europe and the United States, particularly in electronics, petroleum, and engineering goods.

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Imports also rose by 7.6% YoY to \$61.91 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of \$24 billion, the highest in seven months. The increase in imports was influenced by a surge in volumes and a cooling in prices.

- The article also mentions:
- Exports to the US increased significantly due to improved economic outlook and demand.
- Exports to Australia slightly decreased by 3.52% YoY.
- The India-Australia free trade agreement (FTA) came into effect in December 2022.
- The global economic outlook by the World Bank has been upgraded, predicting better growth rates.



Exporters are optimistic due to improved demand from the European Union, UK, West Asia, and the US, despite facing challenges such as inflation and high ocean freight rates.

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations and the Engineering Export Promotion Council of India noted that this recovery indicates robust efforts by exporters, especially in labour-intensive sectors.

# 47% of urban Indians faced financial frauds in last 3 years: Report

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU**

MUMBAI, JUNE 14

AS MANY as 47 per cent of urban Indians said either themselves or someone in their family have been a victim of financial frauds in the last three years, said a survey. Among the urban Indians who have experienced financial fraud in the last 3 years, 43 per cent experienced fraud with their credit card while 30 per cent experienced fraud via UPI transactions, the survey conducted by LocalCircles said. "Nearly 1 in 2 credit card fraud victims experienced unauthorised charges by domestic and international merchants and websites," it said.

In the case of UPI frauds, 4 in 10 of those who experienced it said that the link/ QR code sent to them to accept a payment instead led to money being debited from their account, the survey said.

The study shows that the RBI,

UPI and banks issuing credit cards need to put in place more safeguards to help prevent such financial frauds, it said. The survey received over 23,000 responses from household consumers located in 302 districts of India. 62 per cent respondents were men while 38 per cent respondents were women, it said.

"Consumer awareness needs to be created on priority for both UPI and credit card users. In addition, safeguards must be built so no Indian credit cards can be charged without an OTP authentication," it said. For UPI, increased consumer awareness is critical. In addition to these steps, there is also a strong need to sensitise local police stations so staff their can guide citizens to file an online complaint within minutes as opposed to the current scenario where majority of the staff even in urban India is not capable of guiding a victim of online financial fraud, the survey said.

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**Prevalence of Financial Fraud:** 47% of urban Indians reported that either they or someone in their family had experienced financial fraud in the past three years.

**Types of Fraud:** Among the victims, 43% faced credit card fraud, and 30% encountered fraud through UPI transactions.

**Details of Credit Card Fraud:** Nearly half of the credit card fraud cases involved unauthorized charges by domestic and international merchants and websites.

**Details of UPI Fraud:** 40% of UPI fraud victims experienced fraud through links or QR codes sent to accept payments, which led to unauthorized debits from their accounts.

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**Survey Scope:** The survey received over 23,000 responses from household consumers across 302 districts in India. The respondents were predominantly men (62%), with women making up 38%.

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**Recommendations:** The report suggests that banks and UPI service providers need to implement stronger safeguards, such as OTP authentication for credit card transactions. Additionally, there is a need for increased consumer awareness and education on financial fraud prevention.

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**Role of Authorities:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and banks should focus on enhancing consumer awareness and ensuring local police stations are equipped to assist victims of online financial fraud promptly.



# No outcome in Bonn: why money is key to climate action

AMITABH SINHA  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

A CLIMATE meeting in Bonn, Germany, has failed to make much headway on the crucial issue of defining a new climate finance goal. By the end of 2024, countries have to finalise a new sum of money — above the existing figure of \$100 billion per year — that the developed world must mobilise for the developing countries to help them fight climate change.

The Bonn talks, an annual fixture in June, were expected to give at least some indicative numbers. They could have been worked upon before COP29 — scheduled to take place in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November — where they have to be finalised.

But this did not happen. All that came out was a 35-page, 428-paragraph, “input paper”, which was a broad description of the wish lists of different countries. The lists per-

tained to not just the quantum of climate finance, but also other associated issues such as who should be contributing, what should this money be spent on, and how the finance flows should be monitored. The paper is likely to be developed into a formal negotiating draft that can be agreed upon at COP29.

## Search for a new NCQG

Money is central to climate action. It is needed not just for facilitating mitigation or adaptation works — mundane tasks of collecting and reporting climate data, mandatory under the 2015 Paris Agreement, also require substantial sums of money, especially in developing and poor countries, where there is a large capacity gap for this kind of work.

Under the international climate architecture set by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), rich and developed countries are obliged to provide money to developing countries to fight cli-

mate change. This is because the rich and developed countries are primarily responsible for causing climate change.

In 2009, the developed countries promised to mobilise \$100 billion every year from 2020 towards this purpose. A report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a grouping of rich countries, two weeks ago claimed that this \$100 billion target had been met for the first time in 2022.

However, developing countries contest these claims, citing double-counting and innovative accounting, and have often blamed the developed world for not keeping its promise on climate finance.

The 2015 Paris Agreement says that developed countries must periodically increase this sum after 2025, considering the rapidly growing requirements for climate finance. The increased target, or the New Collective

Quantified Goal (NCQG), for the post-2025 period, is to be finalised this year.

## The adequate amount

It is widely acknowledged that developing countries now need trillions of dollars, not billions, annually. A UNFCCC assessment last year said these countries needed about \$6 trillion between now and 2030 just to im-

plement their promised climate actions. Only for their adaptation needs, some of which are part of their climate actions, developing countries require between \$215 billion and \$387 billion annually, it said. The assessment also said the global transition to clean energy (not just in developing countries) needed investments of about \$4.3 trillion every year till 2030, and about \$5 trillion annually after that till 2050 to reach a global net zero status.

These are assessments of a few specific

needs. The overall requirement for climate finance is much greater.

A few months back, India formally proposed that developed countries should commit themselves to providing at least \$1 trillion every year after 2025. The Arab countries have said this figure should be at least \$1.1 trillion. African countries have demanded \$1.3 trillion.

The developed countries have not made any offer publicly. They have just acknowledged that the new amount has to be higher than \$100 billion per year.

## Debate over contribution

According to the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, only the countries listed in Annexure 2 of UNFCCC — 25 of them and the European Economic Community — are responsible for providing climate finance to developing countries. The listed countries, however, have been trying to shift the responsibility to others as well. They argue that many other countries are

now economically better off than in the early 1990s when the list was made. They also argue that the requirements are too huge for the original group of listed countries to meet. China, the world's second-largest economy, oil-rich Gulf countries, and others like South Korea are not part of Annexure 2. In Bonn, China said it was playing its part in the global fight against climate change, but had “no intention” of taking additional responsibility.

## All eyes on Baku

NCQG is the biggest thing on the climate change agenda this year. An agreement on this has to happen at COP29. The \$100 billion figure was not a negotiated outcome. The offer was made in a statement by then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at COP15 in Copenhagen. It was later agreed upon by all the other Annexure 2 countries.

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**Lack of Progress:** The meeting did not yield any definitive outcome on setting a new sum of money that developed countries should mobilize annually to help developing countries combat climate change. The current target is \$100 billion per year, but this figure is expected to be increased.

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**Input Paper:** Instead of a concrete decision, the outcome was a 35-page "input paper" outlining different views without a consensus.



- **Importance of Finance:** Adequate climate finance is crucial for both mitigation and adaptation efforts, especially in developing countries. An assessment by the UNFCCC indicated that developing countries need about \$6 trillion between now and 2030.
- **Developed Countries' Responsibility:** Developed countries, responsible for most historical emissions, have a significant role in providing financial support. However, there are disputes over the actual contributions and the methods of accounting.

- **Future Goals:** India proposed that developed countries should commit to providing at least \$1 trillion annually post-2025. Arab countries have demanded \$1.3 trillion.
- **COP29 Expectations:** The next major discussion on this topic is expected to take place at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November. A firm financial commitment is anticipated by the end of 2024.
- **Debate Over Contributions:** There is an ongoing debate about which countries should contribute and how the funds should be utilized. Some countries argue that the list of contributing countries should be updated to reflect current economic realities.

## KAVLI PRIZE

Like the Nobel Prize in cutting edge fields of astrophysics, neuroscience, and nanoscience

### ANAGHA JAYAKUMAR

NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

EIGHT SCIENTISTS will be awarded with the Kavli Prize this year.

“The prizes are awarded in three areas: astrophysics, nanoscience and neuroscience — the largest, the smallest, and the most complex,” Fred Kavli (1927-2013), after whom the prizes are named, said.

Kavli was a Norwegian-American scientist, businessman and philanthropist, who founded Kavlico in 1958. The company is a leading manufacturer of pressure transducers (devices which convert pressure into an electric signal) used in a wide variety of industries, from aviation to home appliances.

After selling Kavlico for \$340 million in 2000, Kavli established the Kavli Foundation, which awards the Kavli Prize, in partnership with the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.



### 2024 winners

All eight winners are professors at leading American universities.

**ASTROPHYSICS:** David Charbonneau of Harvard University and Sara Seager of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are this year’s winners. They have been recognised for discoveries of exoplanets, and the characterisation of their atmosphere. The citation states that contributions of Charbonneau and Seager included pioneering “methods for the detection of atomic species in planetary atmospheres and the measurement of their thermal infrared emission”.

**NANOSCIENCE:** Robert Langer of MIT, Armand Paul Alivisatos of the University of Chicago, and Chad Mirkin of Northwestern University were given the prize.

Langer was recognised for his idea of nano-engineering a material for the controlled release of therapeutic biomolecules, which could help development of controlled drug delivery systems to treat diseases like



## Nobel comparisons

Since 2008, 73 scientists from 19 countries have been honoured with the biennial Kavli Prizes. Ten of them have gone on to win the Nobel Prize.

While designed to be like the Nobel for its fields, the Kavli Prize is not restricted to recent work, meaning it is wider in its scope. The Nobel is only awarded for achievements made “during the preceding year”.

Three independent five-member committees select the winners. These comprise nominees by top science institutes the world, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the French Academy of Sciences, Germany's Max Planck Society, the National Academy of Sciences in the US, and the Royal Society in the UK.

The Kavli Prize comprises a \$1 million cash prize (per field), a scroll, and a medal (*in picture*). The award ceremony is more fancy than the one for the Nobel Prizes, with a red carpet rolled out for invitees. This year, it will take place on September 3 in the Oslo Concert Hall. The Norwegian Royal Family will hand out the prizes.



schizophrenia.

Alivisatos devised semiconductor crystals or “quantum dots” which could be used as multi-colour fluorescent probes in bio-imaging. Today, these are used for diagnostic imaging of patients, and helping research in medicine and biology.

Mirkin introduced the concept of the spherical nucleic acid (SNA), a new class of nucleic acids that are densely functionalised and oriented spherically around a nanoparticle core. SNAs have wide-ranging use in areas like intracellular detection, gene regulation and immunotherapy.

**NEUROSCIENCE:** This year's winners are Nancy Kanwisher of MIT, Winrich Freiwald of Rockefeller University, and Doris Tsao of the University of California at Berkeley. They have been awarded for their effort to map the linkage between facial recognition and the brain. While Kanwisher identified the exact brain centre for face processing, Tsao and Freiwald took this knowledge forward using functional imaging and recording from individual brain cells to map out the neural architecture of the human brain.

# ISRO's Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) Programme

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- Recently, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) informed that it is all set to carry out the **third and final RLV Landing Experiment (RLV LEX)** under the Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) Programme.



RLV-LEX missions involve taking an unmanned winged prototype, christened Pushpak, to a designated height and releasing it to land safely under varying conditions.

The configuration of RLV-TD is similar to that of an aircraft and combines the complexity of **both launch vehicles and aircraft.**

The winged RLV-TD has been configured to act as a flying test bed to evaluate various technologies, namely, *hypersonic flight, autonomous landing, and powered cruise flight.*

In the future, this vehicle aims to be scaled up to become the **first stage of India's reusable two-stage orbital launch vehicle.**

- **Third and Final RLV LEX**

- The unmanned winged prototype, christened **Pushpak**, will be carried to a height of 4.5 km and 500 metres to one side of the runway using an IAF Chinook helicopter and released.








- **Global Demonstration**



- **NASA:** Reusable space vehicles have been in existence for a long time with NASA space shuttles carrying out dozens of human space flight missions.

- **SpaceX:** The use case for reusable space launch vehicles has revived with the **private space launch services** provider SpaceX demonstrating partially reusable launch systems with its **Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy** rockets since 2017.

- a. SpaceX is also working on a fully reusable launch vehicle system called Starship.




# Mercy Petition

- 
- President Droupadi has turned down the mercy petition of a terrorist who was sentenced to death in the December 2000 Red Fort attack.
  - **About Mercy Petition**
  - **Article 72:** Grants the President of India the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites, or remissions of punishment, or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offense.
- 



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- In all cases where the punishment or sentence is by a Court Martial.
  - In all cases where the punishment or sentence is for an offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the Union extends.
  - In all cases where the sentence is a sentence of death.

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- **Article 161:** Provides similar powers to the Governor of a state.
    - There is no time limit given in these two Articles for Mercy Plea.
    - These Articles have no binding effect on the President and the Governors of the states to accept all the Mercy Petitions.

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## FATE OF PETITIONS

➤ At 45, **R Venkataraman** rejected the maximum number of mercy petitions



➤ President **Pranab Mukherjee** comes second as he has rejected **31 of the 33 petitions** he has received from convicts



➤ **S Radhakrishnan, Zakir Husain** and **V V Giri** received **57, 22 and 3 mercy petitions**, respectively, and all **deaths** were **commuted to life**

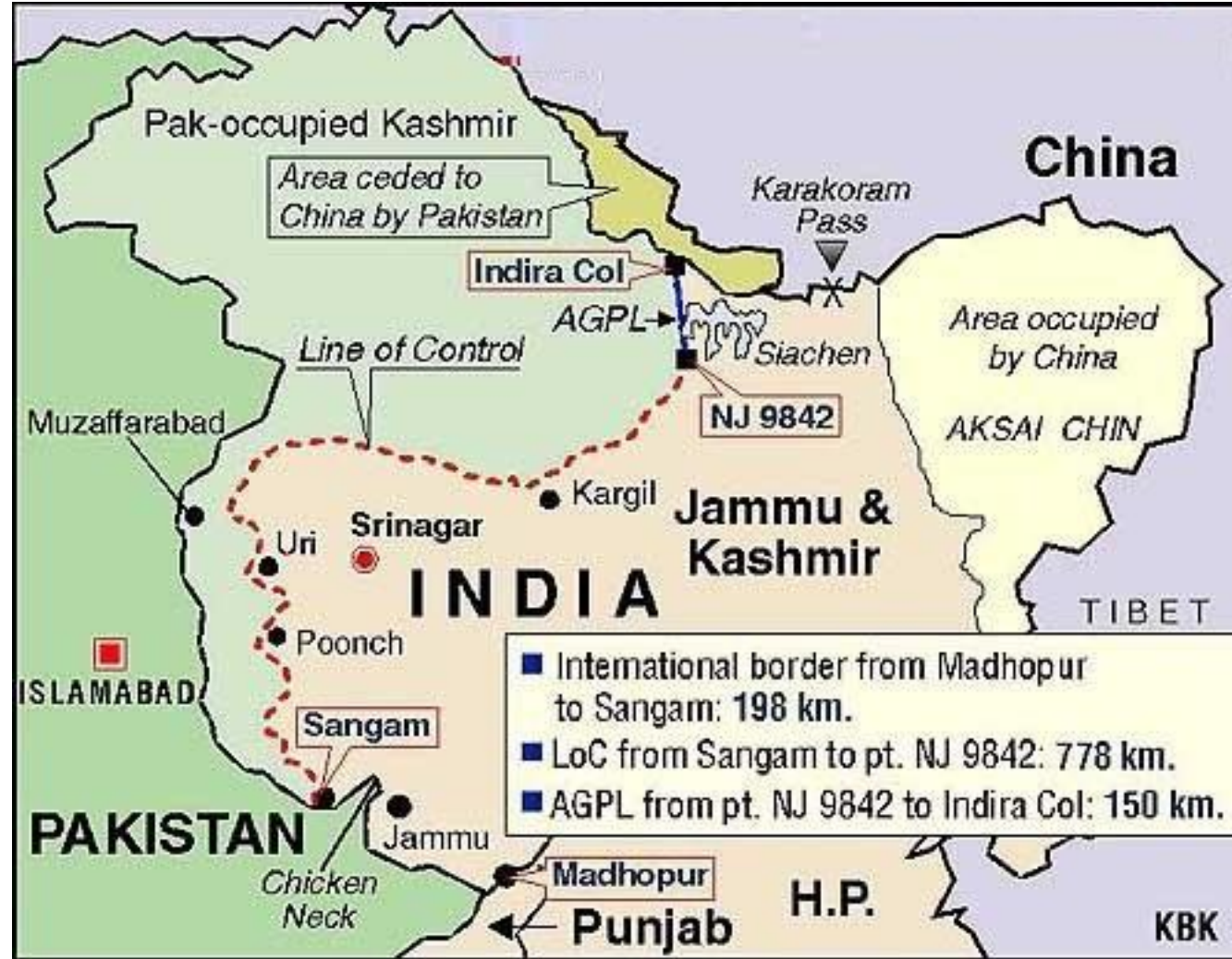
➤ **K R Narayanan** and **A P J Abdul Kalam** **kept pending almost all** pleas they received





# 25 years of Kargil War

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- To honour the 25th anniversary of the Kargil War victory, the Indian Army has launched a Pan-India Motorcycle Expedition
  - **After the Indo-Pak War of 1971**, several military conflicts occurred between India and Pakistan. Both countries conducted nuclear tests in 1998, escalating tensions that led to the **Kargil War in 1999**. The Kargil War **fought between May and July 1999** in the Kargil district of Jammu and Kashmir (now part of Ladakh), resulted in an Indian victory.
- 





## Factors Leading to the Kargil War:

Strategic Objectives: Pakistan aimed to internationalize the Kashmir issue and cut off Ladakh from India by capturing strategic points in Kargil.

Vacated Border Posts: Pakistan exploited India's strategy of vacating border posts during winter, infiltrating troops and militants.

**India-Pakistan Rivalry**: Long-standing animosity over Jammu and Kashmir fueled the conflict.

**Ignoring Past Treaties**: Pakistan's actions defied the Simla Agreement of 1972, which prohibited unilateral changes to the Line of Control (LoC).

**Hope for International Mediation**: Pakistan hoped the conflict would prompt international mediation, especially by the U.S., favouring their stance on Kashmir.

- **Operation Vijay:**

- In 1999 **Pakistani troops infiltrated the Indian side** of the Line of Control (LoC) under **Operation Badr**, aiming to cut off Indian troops in Siachen. In response, the **Indian Army** **launched Operation Vijay.**



- We celebrate 'Kargil Diwas' on 26th July 2023.
- It is a stark reminder of the valour of the armed forces and the evolving dynamics of India's security concerns.
- The Kargil War is a testament to the nation's resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to protecting its sovereignty against all odds.



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A group of people are clapping in a dimly lit room. The focus is on the hands and forearms of several individuals, some wearing suits. The background is blurred, showing more people and a window. The overall mood is celebratory and professional.

Thank you  
guys.

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