

# Daily Current Affairs



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It's hard to beat a person  
who never gives up.

Babe Ruth



**A BREATHER**  
**Rain brings relief to North India**  
NEWS » PAGE 4



**A BREATHER**  
**Rain brings relief to North India**  
NEWS » PAGE 5



**AT THE HELM**  
**Mark Rutte set to be next NATO chief**  
WORLD » PAGE 14

**GOVT. SUBSIDIES**  
**Should EVs and Hybrids be treated equally?**  
**Policies must evolve to achieve the green goals**  
OPINION » PAGE 9



**DRIVING FORCE**  
**Surya Kumar, Bumrah star in India's big win**  
SPORT » PAGE 16

## INSIDE



### Darshan is not cooperating with probe, says police

**BENGALURU**  
Saying that actor Darshan and three other key accused in the Renukawamy murder case were not cooperating with the investigation, the police sought and got their custody extended by two more days. » PAGE 3

### Bhartuhari Mahtab named pro tem speaker

**NEW DELHI**  
President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Bhartuhari Mahtab, seven-time MP from Cuttack, the pro tem Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju said on Thursday. » PAGE 4

### Eastern Railway bans issuance of TA-912 paper

**CHENNAI**  
Three days after the tragic train crash in West Bengal that left 10 passengers dead, Eastern Railway has banned issuance of Travel Authority (TA-912) authorising loco pilots to cross signals in red during signal failures. » PAGE 4

### Minister reviews energy projects in Sri Lanka

**COLOMBO**  
External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday undertook a day-long visit to Colombo and discussed progress on key energy sector initiatives that India and Sri Lanka have agreed to jointly undertake. » PAGE 14

# Tamil Nadu hooch tragedy toll mounts to 39

As many as 82 people are currently undergoing treatment; of them, 16 persons in JIPMER are critical; Chief Minister Stalin constitutes one-man panel to probe the tragedy; the committee has been mandated to report within three months; the government has also moved out ADG of Police (Enforcement Bureau CID) Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal

**S. Prasad**  
KALLAKURICHI  
The death toll in one of the worst-ever hooch tragedies reported in Tamil Nadu climbed to 39 on Thursday, with five more persons losing their lives at Karunapuram in Kallakurichi district. While 34 victims had died by late Wednesday night, the remaining died on Thursday. The victims included four women and one transperson. In one house, three teenage siblings were orphaned by the tragedy. The toll is likely to go up with many victims undergoing treatment in hospitals. Of the total 120 persons admitted to government hospitals in Kallakurichi, Salem and Villupuram and at JIPMER in Puducherry, as many as



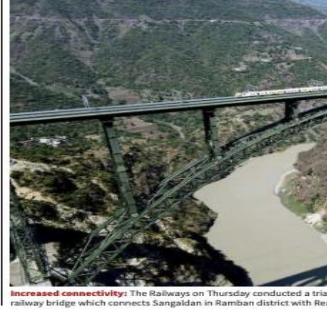
Pyres being readied for cremation of the hooch tragedy victims in Kallakurichi on Thursday. S.S. KUMAR

82 are currently undergoing treatment. Of them, 16 persons in JIPMER are critical. On Thursday, bodies were seen piled up next to one another on the Gokulki riverbed ready to be cremated or buried, even as relatives prepared for the last rites. The district administration had made the arrangements for the same. **HC to hear plea** Amid calls from the Opposition for his resignation on moral grounds, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin constituted a one-man commission headed by Justice R. Gokuldas, former judge of the Madras High Court, to conduct a thorough inquiry into the deaths in Kallakurichi. The committee has been mandated to submit its report to the government within three months. The Crime Branch CID has commenced its probe into the man-made tragedy. The government also moved out Additional Director-General of Police (Enforcement Bureau CID) Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal.

eral secretary Premalatha Vijayakant, former interim general secretary of the AIADMK V.K. Saikaba, Tamil Maanila Congress (Mocapart) president G.K. Vasan, CPI(M) State secretary K. Balakrishnan and TNCC president K. Selvarajaperuthagali. Mr. Annamalai also visited Karunapuram, the epicentre of the tragedy. The Kallakurichi hospital, authorities found it difficult to cope with the rush of patients, who kept pouring in from the morning. Most of the patients were admitted to the emergency ward with anxious family members by their side. As the count of the dead kept rising, anger was palpable in Karunapuram against the district administration and the police. Locals at Karunapuram alleged that illicit liquor has been thriving in the locality. The police did little to clamp down on the dealers, they said. **Main accused held** The prime accused who supplied the killer brew was arrested on Thursday. Police said the accused Chinnadural of Sankarapuram, was arrested by a CI team at Kadampalayam in Cuddalore district. He is being brought to Kallakurichi for interrogation to identify the source of the brew. The police have already arrested bootlegger Govindaraj alias Kannukki, his wife Vidya, an brother Damodaran in connection with incident. **RELATED REPORTS** » PAGE 2 **KILLER MOONSHINE** » PAGE 8

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### Raising the bar



Increased connectivity: The Railways on Thursday conducted a trial run on the newly constructed Chenab Rail Bridge, the world's highest arch bridge which connects Sangrampur in Barnahal district with Beas of Jammu and Kashmir and reaches rail services on the line will start soon. ANI

### Patna High Court strikes down 65% quota in Bihar

**Amit Bhalari**  
PATNA  
The Patna High Court on Thursday set aside the amendments passed by the Bihar legislature in 2023 to increase the reservation for Backward Classes (BC), Extremely Backward Classes (EBC), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) from 50% to 65% in educational institutions and government jobs in the State. A Division Bench headed by Chief Justice K.V. Shahi, appearing for the State government, told the court that the government had increased the reservation due to lack of adequate representation of Backward Classes. Advocate Dinu Kumar, appearing for the petitioners, said that after the caste survey, this decision on reservation was taken based on the proportion of castes, and not on the basis of adequate representation in government jobs. He argued that the Supreme Court, in the Indra Sawney case, had imposed cap of 50% on reservation. The Bihar Assembly on November 9, 2023, unanimously passed a bill to increase reservation for Backward Classes, Extremely Backward Classes, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes from 50% to 65%. It together with the 10% Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) quota, the Bill has raised reservation in Bihar to 75%, well past the 50% ceiling set by the Supreme Court. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh asked whether the State government will now immediately increase the reservation.

### Delhi court grants bail to Kejriwal in excise policy case

**Ishita Mishra**  
NEW DELHI  
A Delhi court on Thursday granted bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was arrested in March by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy of 2021-22. Nitya Bindu Vaccation Bench judge of the Enforcement Directorate, passed the order after hearing Mr. Kejriwal and the ED at length. The bail order was dictated by the judge in open court in the evening, while the detailed written court order was awaited at the time of going to press. Soon after the pronouncement of the order, the

### Govt. to set up panel to help improve NTA, says Pradhan

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI  
Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday said the alleged irregularities in the recent held National Eligibility cum-Entrance Test (NET), and the cancellation of University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) were "an institutional failure of the National Testing Agency". Addressing a press conference here, he said that at 3 p.m. on Wednesday he had received information that the dark net has leaked questions from the UGC-NET exam. **FULL REPORT ON** » PAGE 5

### 5,400 Myanmarese take refuge in Manipur

**Vijalita Singh**  
**Abhinay Lakshman**  
NEW DELHI  
Fearing "aerial bombardment and attacks", about 5,400 people from Myanmar have taken shelter in Kamjong district of Manipur, Assam Rifles Director-General Pradeep Chandran Nair told *The Hindu*. His prayer was rejected by the court, which announced that the bail bond would be produced before the duty judge on Friday. The Delhi Chief Minister was arrested by the ED on March 21. Earlier this month, Mr. Kejriwal filed two bail applications in the Rouse Avenue Court, one seeking seven days' bail for medical treatment, which was denied on June 5, and the other application for regular bail, which was granted on June 20. There is every likelihood that they would return once the situation normalises in the Myanmar region, now, there is a threat to their safety there. The State government is aware of their presence," he said. The issue of undocumented migrants in the Nagaland-dominated district has added another dimension to the ongoing ethnic conflict in the State between the tribal Kuki-Zo people and the majority Meitei community. Manipur's population includes people from 34 Scheduled Tribes, includes the Kuki-Zo-Hmar people and the Nagas. Kamjong district shares its eastern border with Myanmar. To its west are the Thoubal and Kangpokpi districts, dominated by Meiteis and Kuki-Zos respectively. Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, many people have crossed over to Mizoram and Manipur due to shared ethnic ties with the people of these States. India and Myanmar share an unfenced border; earlier this year, however, Lt. Gen. Nair said that the



Myanmar refugees at Kamjong in Manipur. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

### Govt. to set up panel to help improve NTA, says Pradhan

deployment of the Assam Rifles has been enhanced in Naga areas to prevent the smuggling of contraband, illegal arms, ammunition and weapons. "With the Moreh border sealed, the crimes pertaining to arms and narcotics smuggling has shifted considerably to Kamjong and nearby areas. The arrival of refugees is only one aspect, we are there to prohibit other illegal activities too," he said. While the Naga bodies acknowledged that over 5,100 of these immigrants had had their biometrics captured, they said, "Monitoring the activities of adult male inmates has become a huge challenge". The Naga bodies had submitted this memorandum after having conducted fact-finding visits to the Indo-Myanmar border areas. **FULL REPORT ON** » PAGE 5

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# **Bhartruhari Mahtab named *pro tem* speaker**

## **NEW DELHI**

President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Bhartruhari Mahtab, seven-time MP from Cuttack, the *pro tem* Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said on Thursday. » **PAGE 4**

## THIS WORD MEANS

### PRO TEM SPEAKER

A senior Lok Sabha MP who is temporarily appointed Speaker and administers oath to new Members

#### EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

THE 18TH LOK SABHA will hold its first session between June 24 and July 3, during which the new Speaker will be elected. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will move the motion for the election of the Speaker in the Lok Sabha on June 26. Congress leader K Suresh, an eight-term MP, is expected to be appointed *pro tem* Speaker.

#### Who is a *pro tem* Speaker?

As the Presiding Officer of Lok Sabha, the Speaker has to fulfil certain duties and is elected by a simple majority vote in the Lower House. Until the Speaker is elected, the *pro tem* Speaker is appointed to administer some important duties. '*Pro tem*' means 'for the time being' or 'temporarily'.

The Constitution does not mention the post, but the official 'Handbook on the Working of Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs' mentions the appointment and swearing in of Speaker *pro tem*.

#### How is the *pro tem* Speaker chosen?

The handbook states that when the Speaker's post is vacant before a new Lok Sabha meets, "the duties of the Speaker are to be performed by a Member of the House appointed for this purpose by the President as Speaker *pro tem*".

Normally, the seniormost MP is ap-

pointed as the Speaker *pro tem*. Three other MPs, the next in terms of seniority, are appointed to assist the Speaker *pro tem*.

As soon as the new government is formed, the Legislative I Section of the Legislative Department of the government prepares a list of the seniormost Lok Sabha members. It is then submitted to the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs or the Prime Minister for identifying an MP as Speaker *pro tem* and another three members for oath-taking.

#### How are oaths administered?

After the Prime Minister's approval, the Ministry gets the consent of these MPs. The Minister then submits a note to the President, seeking approval for their appointments. The date and time for the ceremony are also decided.

Once the President approves, the Ministry informs the appointed members. Finally, the President administers the oath to the Speaker *pro tem* at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The other three members appointed by the President are administered the oath by the Speaker *pro tem* in the Lok Sabha.

The Speaker *pro tem* then administers the oath or affirmation to the newly elected MPs with the help of the other three members. Since the session of the Lok Sabha starts at 11 am, the time generally fixed for swearing in of the Speaker *pro tem* is on the morning of the same day at 9.30 am, subject to the convenience of the President.



The Pro Tem Speaker is indeed appointed by the President of India.



The primary duty of the Pro Tem Speaker is to administer the oath to new members of the Lok Sabha.



The Pro Tem Speaker can also conduct the election of the new Speaker of the Lok Sabha



- Consider the following statements regarding the Pro Tem Speaker of the Lok Sabha:

1. The Pro Tem Speaker is appointed by the President of India.

2. The primary duty of the Pro Tem Speaker is to administer the oath to new members of the Lok Sabha.

3. The Pro Tem Speaker can also conduct the election of the new Speaker of the Lok Sabha.





- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only

- b) 2 and 3 only

- c) 1 and 3 only

- d) 1, 2 and 3



# Patna High Court strikes down 65% quota in Bihar

**Amit Bhelari**

PATNA

The Patna High Court on Thursday set aside the amendments passed by the Bihar legislature in 2023 to increase the reservation for Backward Classes (BC), Extremely Backward Classes (EBC), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) from 50% to 65% in educational institutions and government jobs in the State.

A Division Bench headed by Chief Justice K.V. Chandran passed the orders on a bunch of petitions challenging the legislation.

Advocate-General P.K. Shahi, appearing for the State government, told the court that the government had increased the reserva-



The Nitish Kumar government got the Bill passed in November last year. PTI



tion due to lack of adequate representation of these classes.


Advocate Dinu Kumar, appearing for the petitioners, said that after the caste survey, this decision on reservation was taken based on the proportion of castes, and not on the basis of adequate representation

in government jobs. He argued that the Supreme Court, in the Indira Sawhney case, had imposed a cap of 50% on reservations.

The Bihar Assembly on November 9, 2023, unanimously passed a Bill to increase reservation for Backward Classes, Extremely Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes from the existing 50% to 65%. Together with the 10% Economically Backward Class (EWS) quota, the Bill had pushed reservation in Bihar to 75%, well past the 50% ceiling set by the Supreme Court.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh asked whether the State government will now immediately move Supreme Court.

- 
- **Event:** Patna High Court set aside amendments by the Bihar legislature to increase reservations.
  - **Reservations Affected:** Backward Classes (BC), Extremely Backward Classes (EBC), Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST).
  - **Previous Quota:** 50%. **Proposed Quota:** 65% in educational institutions and government jobs.
  - **Legislation Date:** Bill passed on November 9, 2023.
- 

- 
- **Court Decision:** Division Bench headed by Chief Justice K.V. Chandran.
  - **Government's Argument:** Increase based on caste survey indicating the proportion of castes.


**Petitioner's Argument:** Increase not based on adequate representation.

**Supreme Court Precedent:** Indira Sawhney case imposed a 50% cap on reservations.

**Total Proposed Quota with EWS:** 75%, exceeding Supreme Court's 50% ceiling.

**Political Response:** Congress questioned the next move of the State government.



- 
- Consider the following statements regarding the recent decision by the Patna High Court on reservations in Bihar:

1. The Patna High Court upheld the Bihar legislature's decision to increase the reservation for BC, EBC, SC, and ST from 50% to 65%.

2. The Supreme Court's Indira Sawhney case imposed a 50% cap on reservations.

3. The proposed total reservation in Bihar, including EWS quota, was 75%.

- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3



## *Raising the bar*



**Increased connectivity:** The Railways on Thursday conducted a trial run on the newly constructed Chenab Rail Bridge, the world's highest railway bridge which connects Sangaldan in Ramban district with Reasi of Jammu and Kashmir. Rail services on the line will start soon. ANI





# CHENAB BRIDGE

World's highest railway bridge.



Height: 359m



35 meters higher than the iconic Eiffel Tower in Paris (France).



Connect Baramulla and Srinagar to Jammu via Udhampur-Katra-Qazigund

◆ Opening: December 2022

◆ Inaugurated: 13 August 2022



Length: 1315m



Built over Chenab River between Bakkal and Kauri, Reasi district, J&K



Arch Length : 480m



Maximum permissible speed 100 kmph



Arch Span : 467m



Can withstand temperatures up to - 20 degrees Celsius.



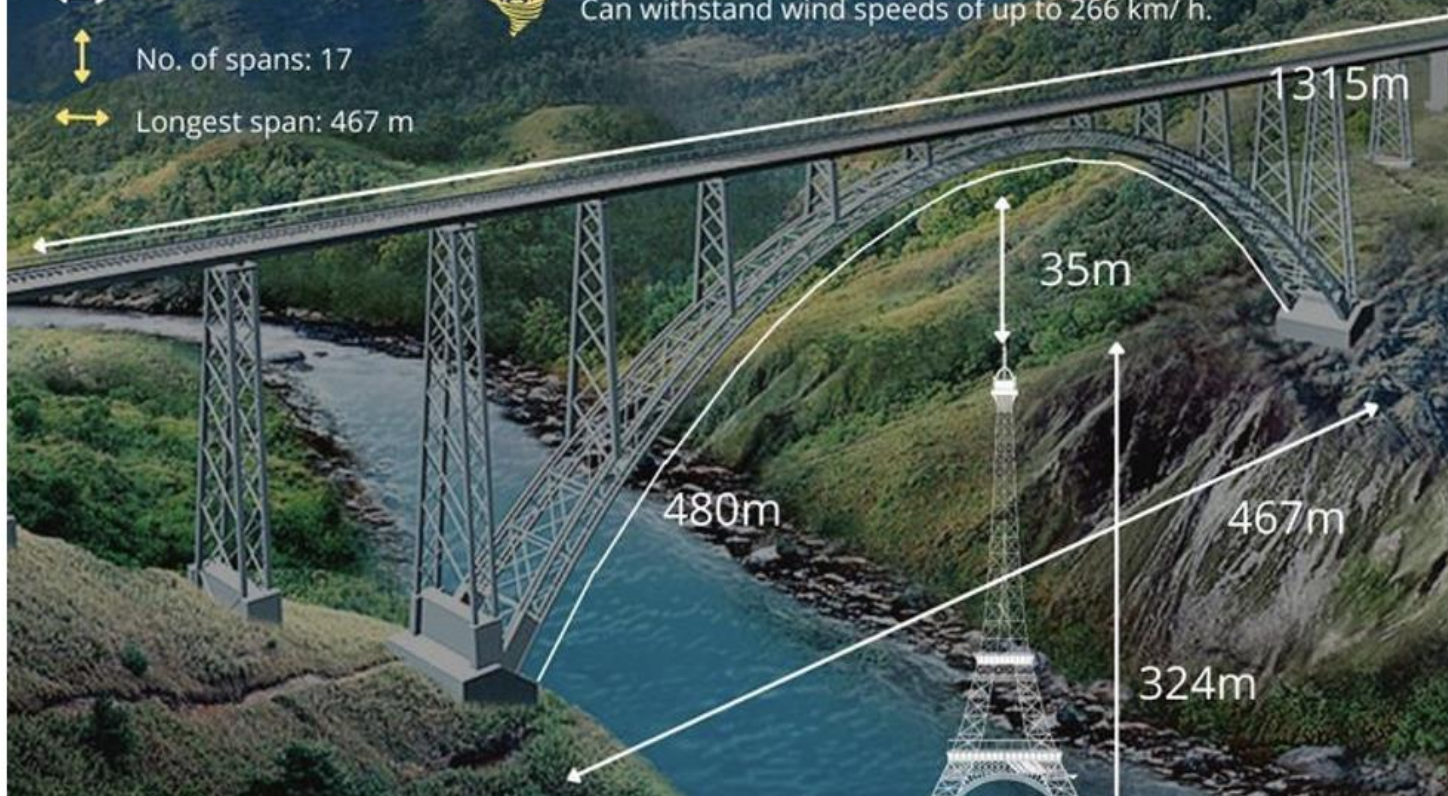
No. of spans: 17


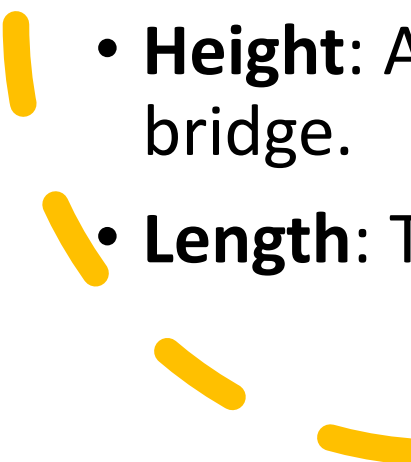



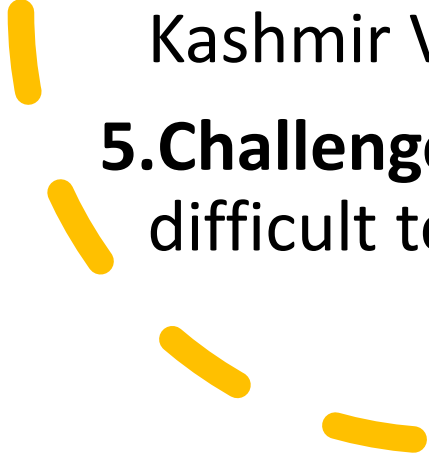
Can withstand wind speeds of up to 266 km/ h.



Longest span: 467 m



- 
- **Location:** The Chenab Rail Bridge is located in the Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, India.
  - **River:** It spans the Chenab River.
  - **Project:** Part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project.
  - **Height:** At 359 meters above the river bed, it is the world's highest rail bridge.
  - **Length:** The bridge is 1,315 meters long.
- 

- 
- 
- 1. Engineering Feat:** Designed to withstand earthquakes of magnitude 8 on the Richter scale.
  - 2. Materials:** Constructed using steel and concrete.
  - 3. Completion Date:** The bridge was completed in 2022.
  - 4. Purpose:** Aimed at improving connectivity and development in the Kashmir Valley.
  - 5. Challenges:** Construction faced numerous challenges including difficult terrain and harsh weather conditions.

- 
- Consider the following statements regarding the Chenab Rail Bridge:

1. The Chenab Rail Bridge is located in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir.

2. It is part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Roadi Rail Link project.

3. At 359 meters above the river bed, it is the world's highest rail bridge.


- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3



**IN BRIEF**

**Malaysian Airlines flight makes emergency landing**

A Malaysian Airlines flight from Hyderabad to Kuala Lumpur – Flight MH 1959 – made an emergency landing at Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in the wee hours of Thursday due to engine failure. A video posted by a passenger from inside the plane shows sparks coming from the aircraft's engine while in the air. The aircraft was carrying 131 passengers and seven crew. All the passengers and crew disembarked safely.

**A.P. to release White Paper on Polavaram project soon**

Palakollu MLA-elect Nimmala Rama Naidu, who took charge as the Minister for Water Resources on Thursday, said the Andhra Pradesh government would soon release a White Paper on the Polavaram project which made little progress during the YSRCP regime.

**Lost polls as 'radicals' backed UDF, Ezhavas chose BJP: CPI(M)**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
 THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The consolidation of Muslim "fundamentalists" or organisations behind the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) and the shift of the backward Ezhavas votes, a core CPI(M) constituency, to the BJP were the key factors in

the Left Democratic Front's (LDF) defeat in the Lok Sabha election. Capping five days of parliament deliberations to ferret out the reasons for the LDF's dismal showing at the hustings, CPI(M) State secretary M.V. Govindan said the SDPI, Welfare Party, and the Congress-Islami had not fielded can-

didates and channelled their votes to help the UDF. "These are radical Islamic organisations that aspire to transform India into an Islamic theocracy. They conducted themselves as UDF's ally during the Lok Sabha campaign", Mr. Govindan said. He said the Congress-IUML-Jamaat-e-Islami-SDPI

axis posed an insidious problem for Kerala's secular legacy. The illicit confederacy would fuel majority and minority communalism and erode Kerala society's secular and progressive fabric, he said. Mr. Govindan said the Sangh Parivar swore by the retrogressive and casteist

principles. Its tack in Kerala was to nurture identity politics among people of different castes to undermine progressive and renaissance values championed by social reformers. He said a section of the Christian community, which overwhelmingly supported the UDF and op-

posed Hindutva, backed the BJP, especially in Thrissur. Mr. Govindan said some bishops, possibly intimidated by central agencies and pressured by questions regarding forward rights of the BJP and BJP functions. The CPI(M) would fight caste-based identity politics and Hindu majoritarianism, he said.

**Central, north Kerala may get heavy rain from today**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
 THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Central and north Kerala is likely to witness an intense spell of rain in the coming days, triggered by a trough of low pressure that moves off the Karnataka and Kerala coasts.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert for three districts – Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Kannur – on Friday, warning of very heavy rainfall, and a yellow alert for seven districts.

An orange alert has been issued for five districts from Malappuram to Kasaragod on Saturday and six districts from Palakkad to Kasaragod on Sunday.



An artist's impression of the proposed cargo ropeway between Pampa and Sabarimala temple.

**Sabarimala ropeway: Forest Department gets alternative land**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
 PATHANAMTHITTA

In a significant boost for the long-pending proposal to construct a ropeway project in Sabarimala, the Revenue Department is all set to compensate the Forests Department with alternative land at Chinnakkal in Idukki. Official sources stated that the department had identified 4.53 hectares of revenue land adjacent to the forests in the Chinnakkal region. While the procedures for transferring 3.74 hectares of land have been completed, the transfer of goods from Pampa remaining 0.78 acres is awaiting approval from the District Revenue Authority in Idukki.

**PARIVESH portal** "Both files pertain to land under the same survey number, and once the property is handed over for compensatory afforestation, an application can be

uploaded in the PARIVESH portal for clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests," said an official. The 2.7-kilometre-long ropeway, intended for transporting goods from the Sabarimala base station to the Sabarimala Sannidhanam, requires the diversion of about 4.53 hectares of land. This includes a 1-hectare property for constructing the lower terminal at Pampa hilltop and 0.6 hectare for the upper terminal near the Sannidhanam. The ropeway aims to streamline the transportation of goods from Pampa to the Sannidhanam, replacing the tractors currently in use, and will feature ambulance cars for emergency patient transport. Operating under a bulk, operate, and transfer model, the project is slated for completion within 24 months of commencement of the works.

**Karnataka govt. clears Centre's proposal on reviving gold mining at Kolar Gold Fields**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
 BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Thursday cleared a proposal of the Centre for reviving gold mining and auctioning of 13 tailing dumps spread over 1,000.4 acres at the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) under the Bharat Gold Mines Ltd. (BGML). The mines located at the KGF are owned by BGML, a PSU, which was established in 1972, under the Department of Mines with its office at the KGF. As much as 33 million tonnes of gold on processing, and one gram of gold on processing. A Cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah cleared the proposal submitted to

**Array of colours**



Line up: Women drying clothes on the bank of the Munneru river, a tributary of the Krishna, in Vijayawada on Thursday. S.N. RAO

**Chandrababu Naidu seeks suggestions to develop Amaravati**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
 AMARAVATI

While welcoming suggestions from people on how to develop the Amaravati capital of the nation in the view of the "devastation caused to the infrastructure projects in the last five years under the YSRCP regime" by the Bharat Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said he "is not able to understand what to do, where to start and how to proceed." He visited the capital region on Thursday.

**Interacts with farmers** Mr. Naidu was addressing the media and the Amaravati farmers at under-con-

**Eyeing Assembly poll in 2027, SP plans PDA panchayats in U.P.**



SP aims to sensitise the PDA communities about their rights and the 'discrimination' BJP has done against them. FILE PHOTO

**Mayank Kumar**  
 LUCKNOW

Encouraged by its success in the Lok Sabha election, courtesy its 'Pachha, Dauli, alpasankhya' (PDA), [Backwards, Dalits and minorities], plank, the Samajwadi Party is planning to hold PDA panchayats across villages in Uttar Pradesh with an eye on the next Assembly election due in 2027.

With these panchayats, the party aims to sensitise the communities about their rights and the alleged discrimination the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has done against them.

**'Attacks on rights'** "We are planning to hold PDA panchayats to educate the backwards, Dalits and minorities about attacks on their rights by the BJP and how they (the BJP) are planning to play with the Constitution. It is going to be our first major exercise

after the Lok Sabha polls and is focused on the Assembly elections. We will be aiming to reach maximum villages with senior leaders addressing the public," said Sunil Singh Yadav, party's national and close aide of party president Akhilesh Yadav.

He said the dates of the panchayats "will be finalised soon". In January, the SP had organised a "PDA fortnight" in all the 403 Assembly constituencies of the State. The PDA plank dominated the Lok Sabha election campaign of the party with Mr. Akhilesh highlighting that the deprived sections need to be united against the BJP.

The SP had given roughly 70% tickets to candidates from these communities. The strategy paid off with the party winning 37 out of the 62 LS seats it contested, limiting the BJP's tally to only 33 seats.

**HC declines to quash voyeurism case against electrician**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
 BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has refused to quash a criminal case registered against a 51-year-old electrician on charges of voyeurism for recording private movements of a woman inside her house by hiding electronic devices and a mobile phone while carrying out some electrical work in the house.

Justice M. Nagaprassanna passed the order while rejecting a petition filed by Veerabhadra Swamy S. of Shivamogga district.

It was alleged in the complaint that the petitioner-accused had become close to the 53-year-old woman and her husband as he had carried out electrical works for their newly built house several years ago in Shivamogga.

However, he had misused the friendly relationship with her and told the woman that he was in love with her. As she rejected his proposal, he started sending her private photos and videos to her relatives. It was then revealed that he had taken those photos and videos by hiding certain electronic gadgets and a mobile phone behind the switch box when he was called to some do electrical work in her house.

The woman had lodged a complaint against him. The petitioner had claimed that the mobile phone seized by the police had no capacity to capture images and there was no possibility for recording videos. However, the court said that it was a case for trial and the petitioner had to come out clean in the trial.



# Karnataka govt. clears Centre's proposal on reviving gold mining at Kolar Gold Fields

**The Hindu Bureau**

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Thursday cleared a proposal of the Centre for reviving gold mining and auctioning of 13 tailing dumps spread over 1,003.4 acres at the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) by the Bharat Gold Mines Ltd. (BGML).

The mines located at the KGF are owned by BGML, a PSU, which was established in 1972, under the Department of Mines with its office at the KGF. As much as 33 million tonnes of tailing dumps (extraction waste) is estimated to be lying at the 13 tailing dumps at the KGF. It is esti-



As much as 33 million tonnes of extraction waste is estimated to be lying at the 13 tailing dumps at the KGF. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

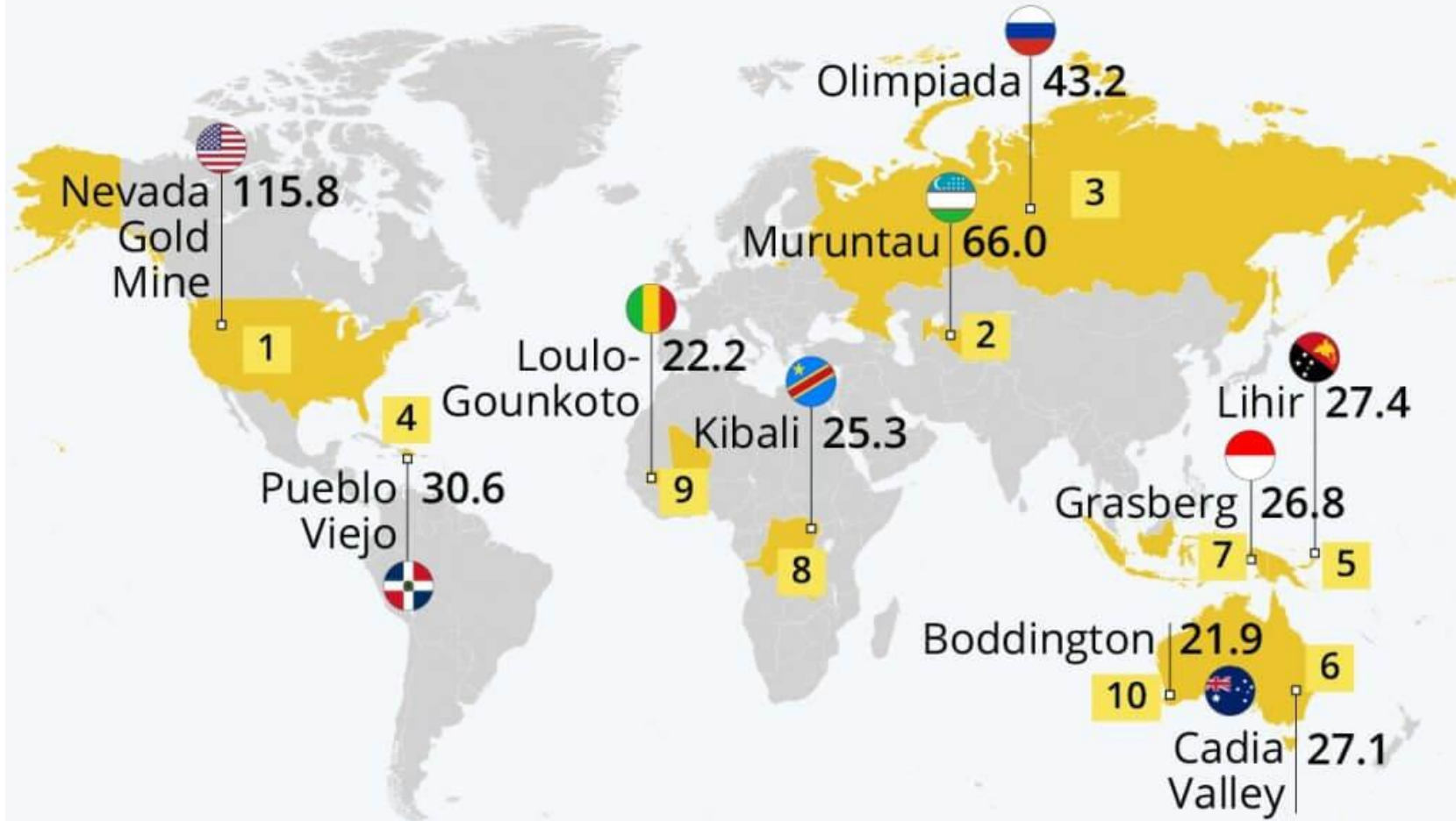
mated that one tonne of dump yields one gram of gold on processing.

A Cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah cleared the proposal submitted to

the State by the Centre under column 17 of the Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation Act, 1957, seeking the State's consent for reviving gold mining at the KGF.

# The World's Biggest Gold Mines

Top gold mines by tonnes of gold produced annually\*



\* Latest available data as of September 2020

Source: World Gold Council via BBC

**Event:** Karnataka government cleared a proposal for reviving gold mining at Kolar Gold Fields (KGF).

**Proposal Origin:** The proposal was from the Centre.

**Mining Location:** Kolar Gold Fields (KGF).

**Responsible Organization:** Bharat Gold Mines Ltd. (BGML), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU).

- 1.BGML Establishment:** Established in 1972.
- 2.Area Covered:** The auctioning involves 13 tailing dumps spread over 1,003.4 acres.
- 3.Waste Estimate:** There are 33 million tonnes of tailing dumps (extraction waste) at KGF.
- 4.Gold Yield:** It is estimated that one tonne of dump yields one gram of gold on processing.
- 5.Government Approval:** The proposal was cleared by the Cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.
- 6.Legislation Reference:** The clearance was sought under column 17 of the Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation Act, 1957.

- Consider the following statements regarding the recent developments at Kolar Gold Fields (KGF):
  - 1.The Karnataka government has cleared a proposal from the Centre to revive gold mining at Kolar Gold Fields.
  - 2.Bharat Gold Mines Ltd. (BGML), established in 1972, is responsible for the KGF.
  - 3.The proposal involves auctioning 33 tailing dumps spread over 1,003.4 acres.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
  - a) 1 and 2 only
  - b) 2 and 3 only
  - c) 1 and 3 only
  - d) 1, 2 and 3

IN BRIEF



Southwest monsoon set to enter south Bengal: IMD

The southwest monsoon is about to enter south Bengal and has advanced in some parts of north Bengal, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Kolkata and adjoining areas were overcast since noon on Thursday and the temperatures went down a few degrees, bringing relief from the sweltering heat and humidity. The usual time for the monsoon to arrive in south Bengal is between June 7 and 10. But it is already 10-15 days late and this has led to extreme humidity and rise in temperatures in Kolkata and adjoining districts.

PMLA court takes cognisance of ED complaint of bank fraud

A special PMLA court on June 13 took cognisance of the complaint filed by the ED's Mumbai zonal office over the alleged bank frauds by Ess Dee Aluminium Ltd., an official said on Thursday. The ED filed the prosecution complaint against 14 accused associated with the company, including its chairman Sudip Datta, Ashish Bhattacharya, Jayesh Shah, Hiren Shah and others. Previously, the ED had provisionally attached proceeds of crime amounting to ₹1.19 crore in the form of immovable properties, such as flats.

EC receives 11 requests for EVM memory verification

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India has received 11 petitions for memory verification of electronic voting machines (ballot unit, control unit and VVPAT) from the recently concluded Lok Sabha and Assembly polls. This will mean checking 5% of EVMs in every Assembly segment of a Lok Sabha constituency listed in the petitions.

This is the first time that such requests have been received since the Supreme Court order of April 24 allowing verification on the request of the runners-up in any election.

The eight requests were received for the Lok Sabha election, including three each from the BJP and Congress, three requests were for the Assembly polls, according to a statement from the EC.

"The technical standard Operating Procedure enumerating the methodology and steps for memory verification of burnt memory/microcontroller of EVM units will be issued," the EC said.

Rain cools down North India, eases heatwave conditions

Dry conditions are expected to resurface over the weekend or early next week, says IMD. The monsoon, stalled over Central India, normally reaches the North between June 25 and July 1

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Heatwave conditions have abated over large parts of North India, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday. But the relief is expected to be short-lived as dry conditions are expected to resurface over the weekend or early next week.

"Heat wave conditions have abated from Punjab, Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi, north Rajasthan and many parts of Uttar Pradesh today, 20th June 2024. Scattered to fairly widespread light/moderate rainfall has been observed over Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, north Haryana-Chandigarh and north Uttar Pradesh during past 24 hours (Thursday). Isolated very heavy rainfall has also been observed over Uttarakhand during this period," the IMD said on Thursday.

The forecast for the next five days, however, adds that maximum temperatures were likely to rise by about 2 to 3 degrees Celsius after two days. Delhi reported a fall of nearly 4 degrees Celsius in maximum temperature on Thursday following light rain in the western disturbance. Punjab reported a fall of nearly 6-8 degrees Celsius in maximum temperature from the previous day's high. The monsoon, which



Cool sight: Rain clouds hover in the sky over Noida on Thursday morning (PTI)

has been stalled over Central India since June 12, is normally expected in northern India between June 25 and July 1. While the monsoon system has surged forward, and advanced into Vidarbha during past 24 hours, there is no update regarding its arrival over northern India, which has been in the grip of searing

heatwave conditions for nearly a month, the IMD said.

While there is no single consolidated figure for deaths from heatwaves, the Press Trust of India on Thursday, citing sources, reported data from the Union Health Ministry that estimated at least 10 heatwave-linked deaths from March 1 to June 18. These figures could not be independently corroborated with the Ministry.

Such a box or child-friendly space (CFS) kit containing learning materials and other items for ensuring continuity of education to children will be provided for each of the 167 model relief camps in Assam.

Most administrative circles in Assam have a model relief camp. Some with denser population have two. "Though the kit designed by UNICEF for Assam has been around for some time, the new look and features to the educational needs of children and teenagers aged six to 18. Officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said this was done after assessing the psychological im-

Limbless amphibian found in Kaziranga for first time

The Hindu Bureau GUWAHATI

A limbless amphibian has been added to the fauna in the 1,307.49 sq. km Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Assam's wildlife officials said a team of herpetologists recorded the striped caecilian (*Achlyophis spp*) in the tiger reserve for the first time during a rapid herpetofauna survey conducted from June 14-17.

The survey was conducted with support from Saibal Sengupta of Assam Don Bosco University; Abhijit Das of the Wildlife Institute of India; Rajeev Basumatary and Samrat Sengupta of I.R. College in eastern Assam's Golaghat; Jaydev Mandal of Madhub Choudhury College in western Assam's Bongaigaon; Jayaditya Purkayastha of Guwahati-based Help Earth; Jayanta Kumar Roy of Aranyank; and Sushmita Kar of the Turtle Survival Alliance.

Reptiles and amphibians, collectively called herpetofauna, are the least studied but most vulnerable to climate change. "Caecilians are limbless amphibians that spend most of their lives burrowed under soil. They are, therefore, the least studied of the amphibian species. As they are an ancient species, their presence holds critical linkages to evolution and intercontinental speciation," a statement issued by the Kaziranga authorities said.

The diverse ecosystem of Kaziranga, comprising flood plains, wetlands,



The striped caecilian. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and hill tracts on the periphery provides an ideal habitat for herpetofauna. The tiger reserve houses 24 species of amphibians and 74 species of reptiles. It is also home to 21 of the 29 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles found in India.

Kaziranga's Director, Sonali Ghosh, said, "Training and sensitisation programme was held to enhance the skills of forest personnel in herpetofauna identification and conservation for ensuring better management and protection of these vital species."

IIT-Delhi's project wins joint 2nd prize in global competition

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

A project by the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (IIIT-Delhi), has won the joint second prize in Trinity Challenge's second competition, on tackling the escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a press release said.

The Trinity Challenge is a charity supporting the creation of data-driven solutions to help protect against global health threats.

The project, 'AMRSense: empowering communities with a proactive one health ecosystem', was led by Tapprish Sethi of the IIIT-Delhi in collaboration with CHIRP, IISc, and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

In India, where over 9,00,000 ASHA workers face limited awareness, insufficient training, and low motivation, there is a significant gap in community-

The prize-winning project is on tackling threat of antimicrobial resistance

level AMR data collection and evidence-based management. AMRSense tackles these issues through four major components: community engagement by empowering CHWs with AI-assisted data recording tools for accurate and simplified data collection; data integration by creating a unified AMR data ecosystem through the integration of antibiotic sales, consumption, WHO-compliant surveillance data using open-source tools like APIs; predictive analytics by using federated analytics across the One Health system for integrative insights on AMR; and the AMR Sense Scorecard for monitoring and evaluating AMR trends.

Flood-affected children soon get 'school in a box'

Rahul Karmakar GUWAHATI

Flood-affected children are set to get a 'school in a box' in model relief camps across Assam.

Such a box or child-friendly space (CFS) kit containing learning materials and other items for ensuring continuity of education to children will be provided for each of the 167 model relief camps in Assam. Most administrative circles in Assam have a model relief camp. Some with denser population have two.

Though the kit designed by UNICEF for Assam has been around for some time, the new look and features to the educational needs of children and teenagers aged six to 18.

Officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said this was done after assessing the psychological im-



The box contains learning materials and other items for ensuring continuity of education to children. (PTI/RAJ KUMAR)

pair of displacement on children older than six. The focus of CFS earlier was on children up to six years of age. The 'school in a box' concept covers older children and provides for them notebooks, drawing books, materials and other learning materials to help them overcome the trauma of losing their homes or a parent or a family member."

Mridusmita Borah, a project officer for disaster risk reduction, told The Hindu. The ASDMA began

training officials and field workers of the Women and Child Development and Education Department on maximising the utility of the box for flood-hit children in the model relief camps apart from helping reduce their mental stress. "The training is being conducted at the block and circle levels to equip Anganwadi workers and other grassroots stakeholders with the skill to maintain the education continuity of children in the model relief camps," Ms. Borah said.

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solutions. Clues include: 14 Satisfactory introduction to unconventional movement of Pop Art (2,2,1), 15 A reciting guy smuggling heroin that's going round in American city (7), 16 Caves unusual, having tense buildup of fluid in abdomen (7), 17 Interrupts hard men starting to nastily misbehave (5,2), 18 Rings of gold with covering of brass (4), 19 Most surly fellow fights with couple on street (10), 20 American film director flying into a rage, restrained (8), 21 Taking time, check revolutionary chemical compound in America (9), 22 Erred after casting, on the face of it (2,5,6), 23 Most extensive tutorial on gestation conducted (7), 24 Free from stress, at peace in sanctum finally (10), 25 Foremost of deans, involved in producing rain (10), 26 High charge at entrance to show? Enter without paying (9), 27 Country with poor air quality (4), 28 Link in old network (7), 29 What accomplished dancer might do to never make any mistakes (3,1,4,5), 30 Lower number of men at indoor rave (11), 31 One crushed by mental trauma in a country in Africa (10), 32 Deluge interrupting holidays stops (9), 33 Kinky act featuring strip show (7), 34 Trace of cyanide found in poisoned cynic (7), 35 8's Down, 36 Opposed to ymmature prank (4).

Sudoku puzzle grid with solutions. Clues include: 14 Satisfactory introduction to unconventional movement of Pop Art (2,2,1), 15 A reciting guy smuggling heroin that's going round in American city (7), 16 Caves unusual, having tense buildup of fluid in abdomen (7), 17 Interrupts hard men starting to nastily misbehave (5,2), 18 Rings of gold with covering of brass (4), 19 Most surly fellow fights with couple on street (10), 20 American film director flying into a rage, restrained (8), 21 Taking time, check revolutionary chemical compound in America (9), 22 Erred after casting, on the face of it (2,5,6), 23 Most extensive tutorial on gestation conducted (7), 24 Free from stress, at peace in sanctum finally (10), 25 Foremost of deans, involved in producing rain (10), 26 High charge at entrance to show? Enter without paying (9), 27 Country with poor air quality (4), 28 Link in old network (7), 29 What accomplished dancer might do to never make any mistakes (3,1,4,5), 30 Lower number of men at indoor rave (11), 31 One crushed by mental trauma in a country in Africa (10), 32 Deluge interrupting holidays stops (9), 33 Kinky act featuring strip show (7), 34 Trace of cyanide found in poisoned cynic (7), 35 8's Down, 36 Opposed to ymmature prank (4).

FAITH Follow Tukaram's abhangs. Whenever adharma raises its head and wreaks havoc, there is divine course correction in the form of avatara purushas (saints), who live among the ordinary people. The Marathi saint, Sant Tukaram, who was born over 400 years ago was one such saint, said Sri Tukaram Ganapatkar in a mass-anekerthanam. One has 3 daily needs: food, water and the wise words of a sadhu. Just as how one keeps one's person and dwelling clean, so should one cleanse one's inner self with the kirtans of Tukaram. Saints like him discoursed only on their pure experiences. Tukaram's abhangs are not only enjoyable but they also help uplift devotees. There are many well wishers to guide us on worldly matters, from children's education to choosing professional courses and careers. But, very few would care to personify if he has read the Bhagavad Gita. It is not enough to plan for a successful material life, one should also examine the true purpose of life, for an awareness that only the works of saints like Tukaram can provide. Tukaram always emphasised that while one should have the means to live, one should also lead a meaningful life, characterised by thoughts of the Supreme. The ant and the king are alike to my mind and gold and clay too are the same," he said. Kover comfort is God's prasadam and if one lacks in anything, it is God's will. Getting rid of the ego, the "I" is the only worthwhile goal, said the saint whose 4,152 extant abhangs are sung by devotees during abhadi, lakhs of whom undertake padayatra for 20 days, traversing 300 km.

# Limbless amphibian found in Kaziranga for first time

**The Hindu Bureau**  
GUWAHATI

A limbless amphibian has been added to the fauna in the 1,307.49 sq. km Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Assam's wildlife officials said a team of herpetologists recorded the striped caecilian (*Ichthyophis spp*) in the tiger reserve for the first time during a rapid herpetofauna survey conducted from June 14-17.

The survey was conducted with support from Saibal Sengupta of Assam Don Bosco University; Abhijit Das of the Wildlife Institute of India; Rajeev Basumatary and Samrat Sengupta of D.R. College in eastern Assam's Golaghat; Jaydev Mandal of Madhab Choudhury College in western Assam's Barpeta; Jayaditya Purkayastha of Guwahati-based Help Earth; Jayanta Kumar Roy of Aaranyak; and Sushmita Kar of the Turtle Survival Alliance.

Reptiles and amphibians, collectively called



The striped caecilian. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

herpetofauna, are the least studied but most vulnerable to climate change. "Caecilians are limbless amphibians that spend most of their lives burrowed under soil. They are, therefore, the least studied of the amphibian species. As they are an ancient species, their presence holds critical linkages to evolution and intercontinental speciation," a statement issued by the Kaziranga authorities said.

The diverse ecosystem of Kaziranga, comprising flood plains, wetlands,

grasslands, and hill tracts on the periphery, provides an ideal habitat for herpetofauna. The tiger reserve houses 24 species of amphibians and 74 species of reptiles. It is also home to 21 of the 29 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles found in India.

Kaziranga's Director, Sonali Ghosh, said, "a training and sensitisation programme was held to enhance the skills of forest personnel in herpetofauna identification and conservation for ensuring better management and protection of these vital species."

- **Species:** Striped caecilian (*Ichthyophis* spp).
- **Location:** 1,307.49 sq. km area of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.
- **Survey Date:** Conducted from June 14-17.
- **Organizations Involved:** Assam Don Bosco University, Wildlife Institute of India, D.R. College in Golaghat, Madhab Choudhury College in Barpeta, Help Earth, Aaranyak, and Turtle Survival Alliance.



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**Ecological Importance:** Caecilians are burrow-dwelling and least studied among amphibians, vulnerable to climate change, and critical for understanding evolution and speciation.

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**Biodiversity in Kaziranga:** Home to 24 species of amphibians, 74 species of reptiles, 21 of 29 Indian species of tortoises and freshwater turtles.

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**Kaziranga Ecosystem:** Comprises flood plains, wetlands, grasslands, and hill tracts.

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**Conservation Efforts:** Training and sensitization programs for forest personnel on herpetofauna identification and conservation.

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**Challenges:** Herpetofauna, including reptiles and amphibians, are highly vulnerable to climate change.

- Consider the following statements regarding the recent discovery in Kaziranga National Park:
  1. A limbless amphibian, the striped caecilian, was recently found in Manas National Park.
  2. Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve spans over 1,307.49 sq. km.
  3. The discovery was made during a survey conducted in collaboration with several organizations including the Wildlife Institute of India and Assam Don Bosco University.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
  - a) 1 and 2 only
  - b) 2 and 3 only
  - c) 1 and 3 only
  - d) 1, 2 and 3

# IIT-Delhi's project wins joint 2nd prize in global competition

## **The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

A project by the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (IIIT-Delhi), has won the joint second prize in Trinity Challenge's second competition, on tackling the escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a press release said.

The Trinity Challenge is a charity supporting the creation of data-driven solutions to help protect against global health threats.

The project, 'AMRsense: empowering communities with a proactive one health ecosystem', was led by Tavpritesh Sethi of the IIIT-Delhi in collaboration with CHRI-PATH, 1mg.com, and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

In India, where over 9,00,000 ASHA workers face limited awareness, insufficient training, and low motivation, there is a significant gap in community-

## **The prize-winning project is on tackling the escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance**

level AMR data collection and evidence-based management. AMRsense tackles these issues through four major components: community engagement by empowering CHWs with AI-assisted data recording tools for accurate and simplified data collection; data integration by creating a unified AMR data ecosystem through the integration of antibiotic sales, consumption, and WHONet-compliant surveillance data using open-source tools and APIs; predictive analytics by using federated analytics across the OneHealth ecosystem for integrative insights on AMR; and the AMRaura Scorecard for monitoring and evaluating AMR trends.

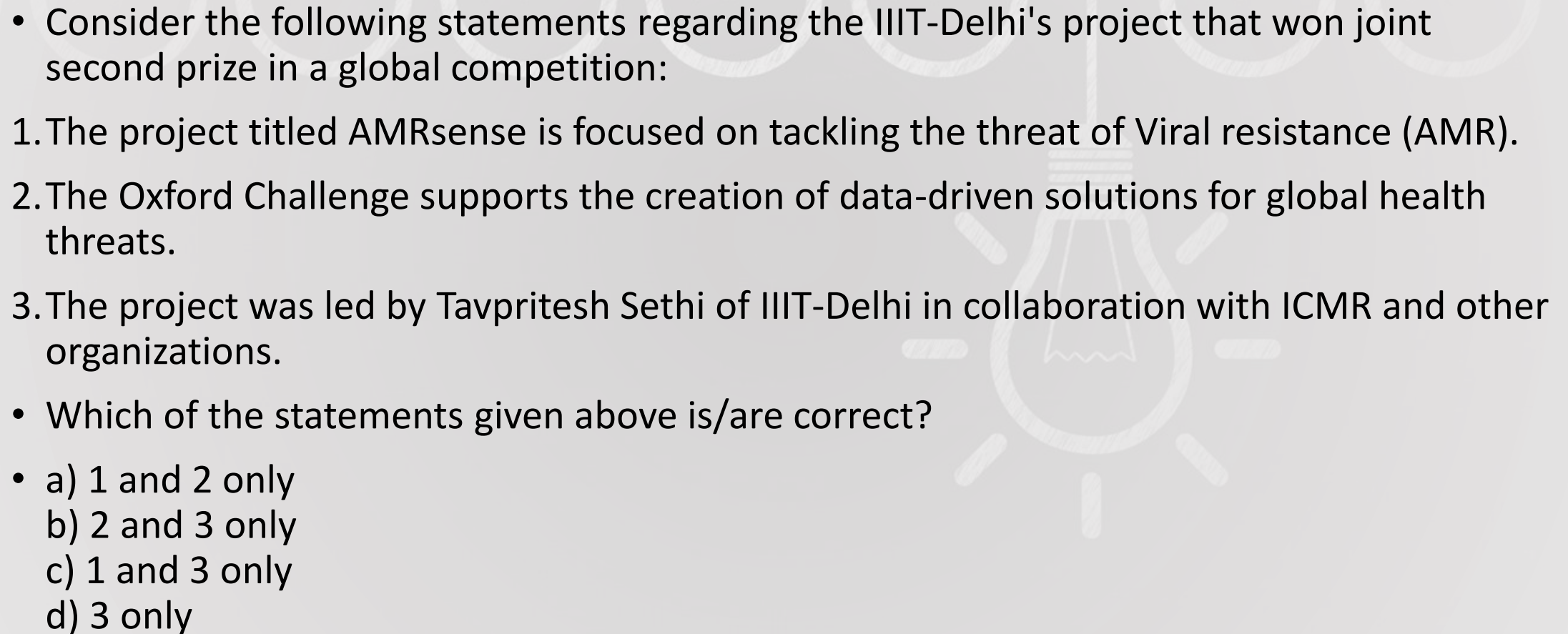
- **Focus:** Tackling the escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
- **Competition:** Trinity Challenge, a charity supporting data-driven solutions for global health threats.
- **Project Title:** AMRsense: empowering communities with a proactive one health ecosystem.
- **Project Lead:** Tavpritesh Sethi of IIIT-Delhi.
- **Collaborators:** CHRI-PATH, 1mg.com, and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- **Context in India:** Over 9,00,000 ASHA workers face limited awareness, insufficient training, and low motivation.

## Project Components:

- Community engagement by empowering Community Health Workers (CHWs) with AI-assisted data recording tools.
- Data integration by creating a unified AMR data ecosystem.
- Predictive analytics using federated analytics across the OneHealth ecosystem.
- AMRaura Scorecard for monitoring and evaluating AMR trends.

**Data Sources:** Integration of antibiotic sales, consumption, and WHONet-compliant surveillance data using open-source tools and APIs.

**Outcome:** Addressing community-level AMR data collection and evidence-based management.

- 
- The background features a row of lightbulbs. The top row consists of several unlit lightbulbs. A single lightbulb in the bottom row is illuminated, with rays of light emanating from it, symbolizing an idea or innovation.
- Consider the following statements regarding the IIIT-Delhi's project that won joint second prize in a global competition:
    1. The project titled AMRsense is focused on tackling the threat of Viral resistance (AMR).
    2. The Oxford Challenge supports the creation of data-driven solutions for global health threats.
    3. The project was led by Tavpritesh Sethi of IIIT-Delhi in collaboration with ICMR and other organizations.
  - Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
    - a) 1 and 2 only
    - b) 2 and 3 only
    - c) 1 and 3 only
    - d) 3 only

## HANOI

Putin signs deals with Vietnam  
in bid to shore up ties in Asia

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed at least a dozen deals with a Vietnamese counterpart on Thursday and offered to supply fossil fuels including natural gas to Vietnam for the long-term during a state visit that comes as Moscow is seeking to bolster ties in Asia to offset its international isolation over its actions in Ukraine. AP

## RIYADH

Death count tops 1,000 after  
Haj marked by extreme heat

The death toll from this year's Hajj has exceeded 1,000, a tally said on Thursday, more than half of them unregistered worshippers who performed the pilgrimage in extreme heat in Saudi Arabia. The national meteorological centre reported a high of 51.8 degrees Celsius this week at the Grand Mosque in Mecca. AP

## LOS ANGELES

Golden Globe-winner Donald  
Sutherland passes away at 88

Emmy and Golden Globe-winner Donald Sutherland, the enigmatic actor whose lengthy career encompassed films including "The Dirty Dozen" and "The Hunger Games," has died, his son said on Thursday. He was 88. "With a heavy heart, I tell you that my father, Donald Sutherland, has passed away," his son Niefer wrote on X. AP

## KUALA LUMPUR

China a 'true friend' and not to  
be feared: Malaysian leader Anwar

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Thursday rejected the notion that China's dominance is to be feared, calling China a "true friend" at the end of Premier Li Qiang's visit to mark 50 years of diplomatic ties between their countries. Mr. Anwar said they discussed some contentious bilateral issues as "equal partners". AP

Rutte seals NATO top job  
after lone rival drops out

Dubbed as 'Teflon Mark' for his ability to remain in power for so long in the Netherlands, Rutte will become the fourth Dutchman to lead NATO since it emerged from the ashes of Second World War

Agence France-Presse  
BUCHAREST

Outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Thursday clinched the race to become the next head of NATO at a pivotal time for the alliance, after sole challenger Romanian President Klaus Iohannis pulled out.

The veteran politician, 57, is expected to be formally named by NATO's 32 nations in the coming days and should take over when current chief Jens Stoltenberg's term ends on October 1.

Mr. Rutte will come in at a perilous moment for the Western allies as Russia's war in Ukraine drags on and Donald Trump battles to reclaim the presidency



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg at the alliance's headquarters in Brussels. REUTERS

in the United States come November.

After staking his claim for the job last year following the collapse of his coalition, Rutte quickly won the support of heavyweights in the United States, Britain, France and Germa-

ny. But he had to use all the diplomatic skills gleaned during almost 14 years in charge of the Netherlands to win over hold-outs led by Turkey and Hungary.

Mr. Rutte overcame Turkish resistance with an April visit to Istanbul, before finally sealing a deal

with Hungary's Viktor Orban at a European Union summit this week.

That left the last sticking point as Mr. Iohannis, whose surprise bid had ruffled feathers among allies banking on a smooth appointment for Mr. Rutte ahead of a NATO summit in Washington next month.

Romania's security council on Thursday announced Mr. Iohannis had formally withdrawn and that the country backed Mr. Rutte.

Dubbed "Teflon Mark" for his ability to remain in power for so long in the Netherlands, Mr. Rutte will become the fourth Dutchman to lead NATO since it emerged from the ashes of Second World War to confront the Soviet Union.

Russia hits  
Ukraine's  
power grid  
yet again

Associated Press  
KYIV

Russia resumed its aerial pounding of Ukraine's power grid and Kyiv's forces again targeted Russian oil facilities with cross-border drone strikes, seeking to curb each other's ability to fight in a war that is now in its third year, officials said on Thursday.

Russia fired nine missiles and 27 Shahed drones at energy facilities and critical infrastructure in central and eastern Ukraine two days after a Ukrainian strike started a huge blaze at another refinery.

Air defences intercepted all the drones and five cruise missiles, it said. In Russia, meanwhile, authorities in two regions reported fires at oil storage depots after drone attacks, two days after a Ukrainian strike started a huge blaze at another refinery.

In Sri Lanka, Jaishankar  
reviews energy projects

Meera Srinivasan  
COLOMBO

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday undertook a day-long visit to Colombo and discussed progress on key energy sector initiatives that India and Sri Lanka have agreed to jointly undertake. Participating in a ceremony with President Ranil Wickremesinghe, he commissioned a Maritime Rescue Centre in the eastern district of Trincomalee in a virtual ceremony.

In his first bilateral visit abroad after being re-appointed to the post in the newly installed coalition government, Mr. Jaishankar focused mostly on progress made in the implementation of ongoing India-backed projects across the island nation, sources said, in addition to meeting the Sri Lankan leadership and senior politicians from the ruling and Opposition camps.

"Significant attention was given to plans for a supply, a proposed petroleum pipeline linking the two countries, and advancing oil and gas exploration projects. Additionally, it was announced that construction of the Sampur Solar Power Plant is set to commence in July 2024," Mr. Wickremesinghe's office said, following his one-on-one meeting with Mr. Jaishankar.

They also discussed ways of enhancing efficiency of India-backed projects aimed at bolstering Sri Lanka's liquid milk industry and fertiliser production. Talks covered projects under India's support for developing Indian House-lee and expanding the Kankesanthurai port, the statement said.

Turning the launch of



S. Jaishankar meets his Sri Lankan counterpart Ali Sabry during a meeting in Sri Lanka on Thursday. PTI

the MRCC a "highlight", Colombo-based the eastern district of Trincomalee in a virtual ceremony.

In addition to a short review meeting with his counterpart Ali Sabry, Mr. Jaishankar called on Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena to meet talks with Leader of Opposition Sajith Premadasa, along with leaders representing the Muslim and hill country Tamil community, who are part of the Opposition alliance. Mr. Jaishankar met hill country politicians who are part of President Wickremesinghe's government.

He also met former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. His brother and former Minister Basil Rajapaksa was also present, sources said. Mr. Jaishankar met a delegation of politicians representing Tamil people of the north and east.

According to sources familiar with the discussions, the pending political solution to the national question, ongoing land grabs in the north and east by state agencies, the election strategy of Tamil parties were among the issues that came up. Mr. Jaishankar did not meet the leader, or representatives of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) or People's Liberation Front-led National People's Power, which has emerged a strong oppositional voice in Sri Lanka.

President Wickremesinghe and Mr. Jaishankar jointly unveiled a digital plaque commemorating the inauguration of 106 houses constructed under the ongoing Indian House-lee Project in the central Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, and Vavuniya districts and handed over houses built as part

South Korea  
may supply  
weapons  
to Ukraine

Associated Press  
SEOUL

South Korea said on Thursday that it would consider sending arms to Ukraine, a major policy change suggested after Russia and North Korea rattled the region and beyond by signing a pact to come to each other's defence in the event of war.

The comments from a senior presidential official came hours after North Korea's state media released the details of the agreement.

## Silencing protest



Kenya police officers surround a protester during a demonstration against tax hikes as Members of the Parliament vote the Finance Bill-2024 in downtown Nairobi, on Thursday. Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets to protest contentious tax hikes. AFP

Myanmar armed groups accuse  
military of breaking ceasefire

Agence France-Presse  
YANGON

An alliance of Myanmar ethnic armed groups have accused the junta of repeatedly violating a China brokered ceasefire in the north of the country this month and causing civilian casualties.

Beijing brokered a truce between the junta and the so-called "Three Brotherhood Alliance" in January after months of fighting that displaced more than half a million people near China's southern border.

The ceasefire allowed the alliance — made up of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Arakan Army (AA) — to hold

swathes of territory it had seized in northern Shan state.

Junta troops on Wednesday launched an air strike on territory the TNLA holds near the ruby and gem-mining hub of Mogoke.

"In this incident, one civilian was killed and 3 year-old child," the TNLA said.

TNLA member and seriously wounded four others, the TNLA added. It said the attacks were the latest violation this month by the junta, which it said had shelled TNLA positions and cut roads and restricted the flow of goods to TNLA-controlled towns.

In October last year, the alliance launched a surprise offensive across northern Myanmar, seizing several towns and lucrative border hubs that are vital for trade with China, dealing a blow to the cash-strapped and isolated junta.

Border trade with China during April-May was down by almost a third compared to the same period last year, junta-controlled media reported last week.

Hamas cannot be eliminated, says  
Israel's top Army spokesperson

Agence France-Presse  
JERUSALEM

Israel's top Army spokesman said on Wednesday that Hamas cannot be eliminated, prompting a knee-jerk reaction from the government which quickly reiterated it remains committed to the Palestinian militant group's destruction.

More than eight months of war, sparked by Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel, have failed to oust the Islamist militants from Gaza but have brought widespread devastation.

"To say that we are going to make Hamas disappear is to throw sand in people's eyes. If we don't provide an alternative, in



Palestinians make their way past destroyed buildings in Khan Yunis on Thursday, amid the ongoing war. AP

the end, we will have Hamas," Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari told Israel's Channel 13 news.

"Hamas is an ideology, we cannot eliminate an ideology." His comments were quickly rebuffed by the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

his office said in a statement.

"The IDF is of course committed to this."

In a separate statement on Thursday, Israel's military clarified that Mr. Hagari had addressed Hamas as an ideology, and his statement were clear and explicit.

"Any other claim is taking the statement out of context."

The October 7 attack that triggered the war resulted in the death of 1,594 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to a tally based on Israeli official figures.

Israel's retaliatory offensive aimed at eliminating Hamas has killed at least 37,396 people in Gaza, according to Health Ministry.

Kenia Karellina, a 32-year-old dual U.S.-Kenyan citizen accused of donating around \$50 to a pro-Ukrainian charity, was on trial for treason in the Russian city of Yakutsk on Thursday, a regional court said.

Prosecutors accused her of "providing transferring funds to a Ukrainian organisation". U.S. media reported that she donated around \$50 to a New York-based Ukrainian charity in February 2022, shortly after Russia launched its military offensive.

Ms. Karellina faces up to 20 years in prison if found guilty.

# Rutte seals NATO top job after lone rival drops out

Dubbed as ‘Teflon Mark’ for his ability to remain in power for so long in the Netherlands, Rutte will become the fourth Dutchman to lead NATO since it emerged from the ashes of Second World War

**Agence France-Presse**

BUCHAREST

**O**utgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Thursday clinched the race to become the next head of NATO at a pivotal time for the alliance, after sole challenger Romanian President Klaus Iohannis pulled out.

The veteran politician, 57, is expected to be formally named by NATO’s 32 nations in the coming days and should take over when current chief Jens Stoltenberg’s term ends on October 1.

Mr. Rutte will come in at a perilous moment for the Western allies as Russia’s war in Ukraine drags on and Donald Trump battles to reclaim the presidency



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg at the alliance’s headquarters in Brussels. REUTERS

in the United States come November.

After staking his claim for the job last year following the collapse of his coalition, staunch Ukraine backer Rutte quickly won the support of heavyweights the United States, Britain, France and Germa-

ny. But he had to use all the diplomatic skills gleaned during almost 14 years in charge of the Netherlands to win over hold-outs led by Turkiye and Hungary.

Mr. Rutte overcame Turkish reticence with an April visit to Istanbul, before finally sealing a deal

with Hungary’s Viktor Orban at a European Union summit this week.

That left the last sticking point as Mr. Iohannis, whose surprise bid had ruffled feathers among allies banking on a smooth appointment for Mr. Rutte ahead of a NATO summit in Washington next month.

Romania’s security council on Thursday announced Mr. Iohannis had formally withdrawn and that the country backed Mr. Rutte.

Dubbed “Teflon Mark” for his ability to remain in power for so long in the Netherlands, Mr. Rutte will become the fourth Dutchman to lead NATO since it emerged from the ashes of Second World War to confront the Soviet Union.



**Event:** Mark Rutte, outgoing Dutch Prime Minister, clinched the race to become the next head of NATO.

**Context:** Rutte will be the fourth Dutchman to lead NATO since its inception after WWII.

**Rival:** Romanian President Klaus Iohannis withdrew from the race.

**Timeline:** Jens Stoltenberg's term ends on October 1, and Rutte will formally take over in November.

**Support:** Rutte secured the backing of key NATO members including the United States, Britain, France, and Germany.

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**Diplomacy:** He utilized his diplomatic experience from his 14-year tenure as the Netherlands' leader to gain support.

**Ukraine Support:** Rutte is a staunch supporter of Ukraine.

**Challenges:** He takes the position at a critical time with ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and internal disputes in the US.

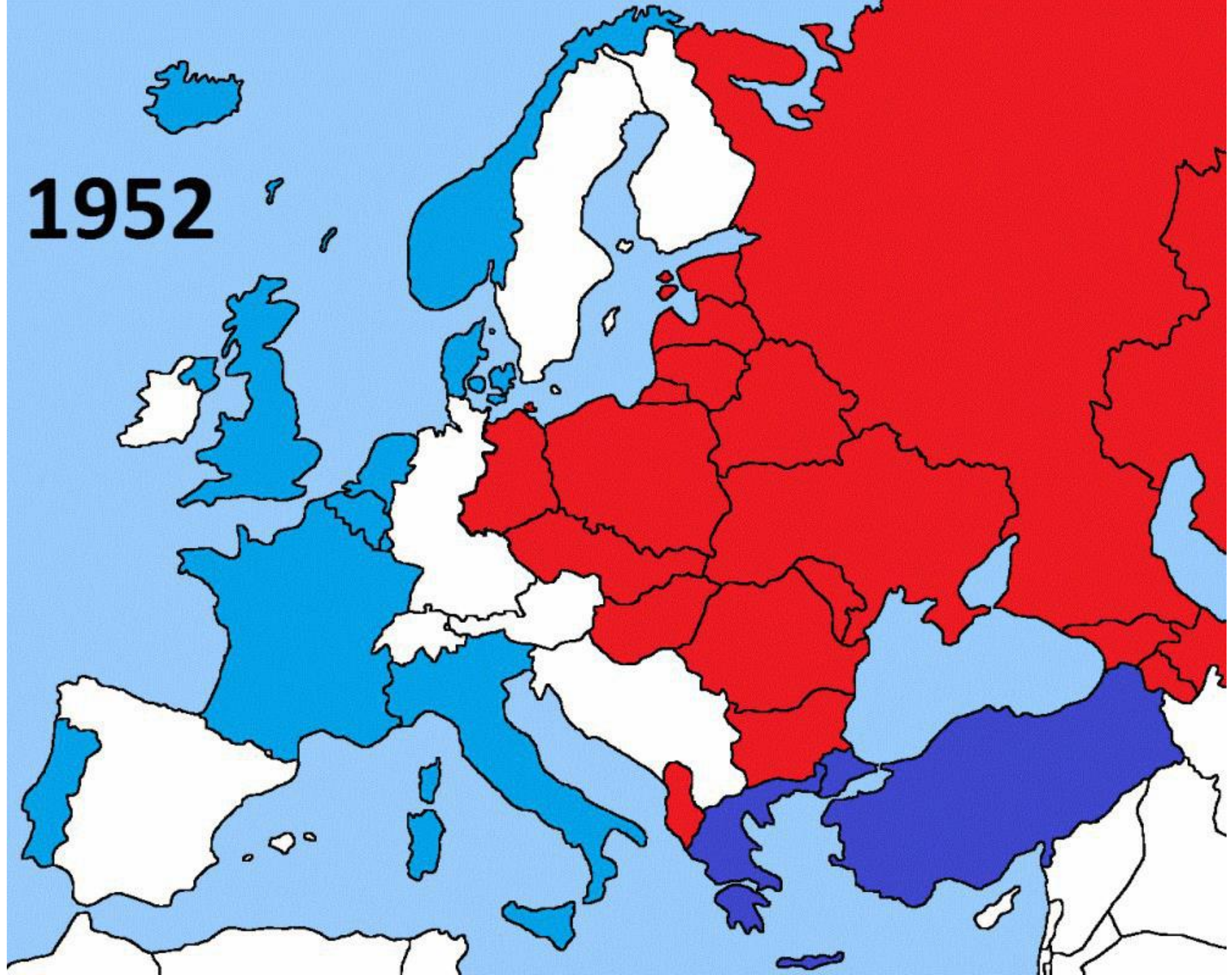
**Diplomatic Efforts:** Rutte had to negotiate with Turkey and Hungary to secure his position.

**NATO Summit:** A NATO summit is scheduled to take place in Washington next month

- **Consider the following statements regarding Mark Rutte's appointment as the next head of NATO:**
- 1. Mark Rutte will become the next head of NATO after Romanian President Klaus Iohannis withdrew from the race.**
- 2. He will be the fourth Dutchman to lead NATO since its inception after the Second World War.**
- 3. Mark Rutte's appointment is expected to be formally confirmed after Jens Stoltenberg's term ends in October.**
- **Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**
- **a) 1 and 2 only**
- **b) 2 and 3 only**
- **c) 1 and 3 only**
- **d) 1, 2 and 3**



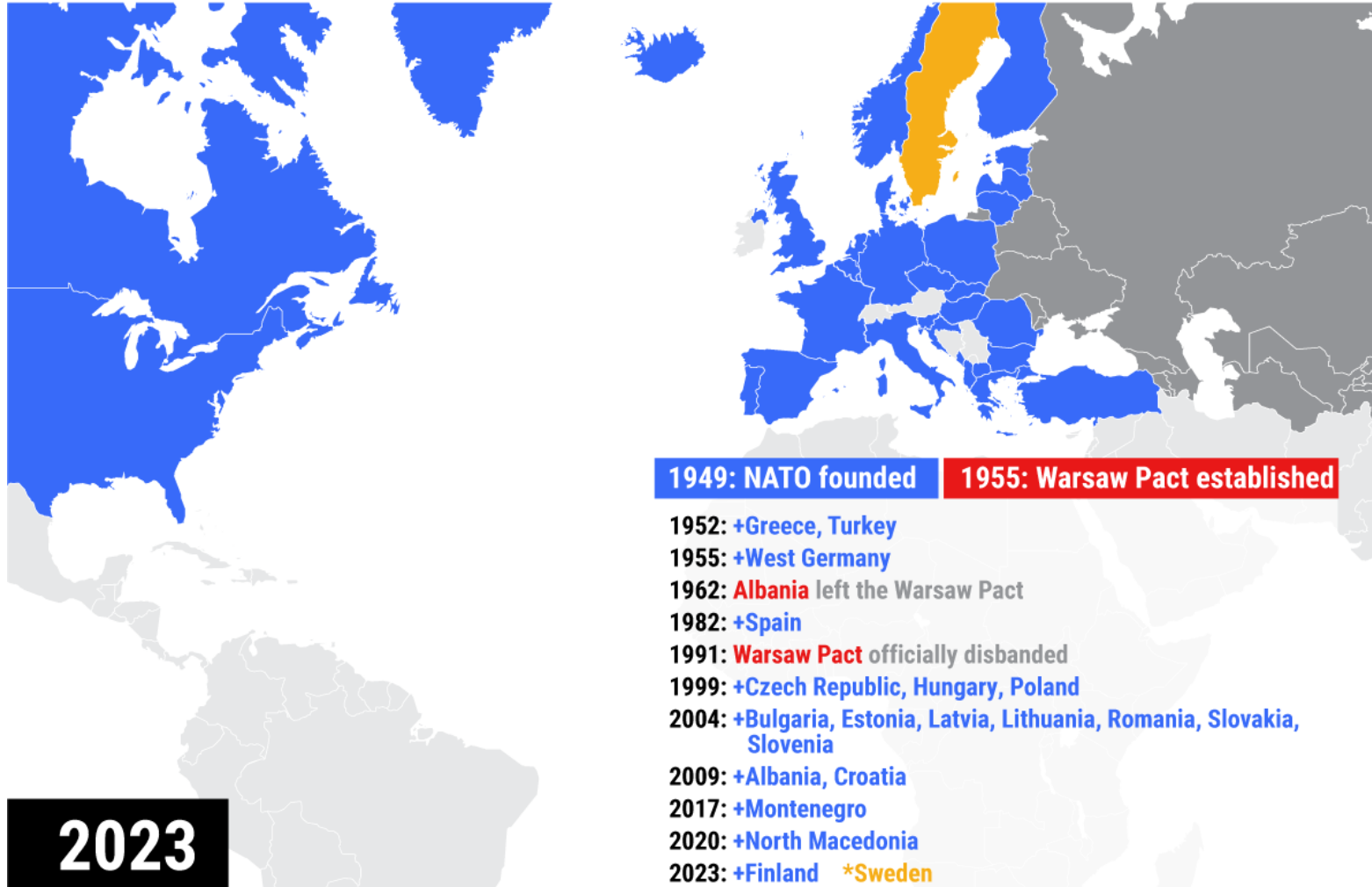
1952





# How NATO absorbed its old foes

Europe's evolving military alliances 1949-2023



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Source: NATO

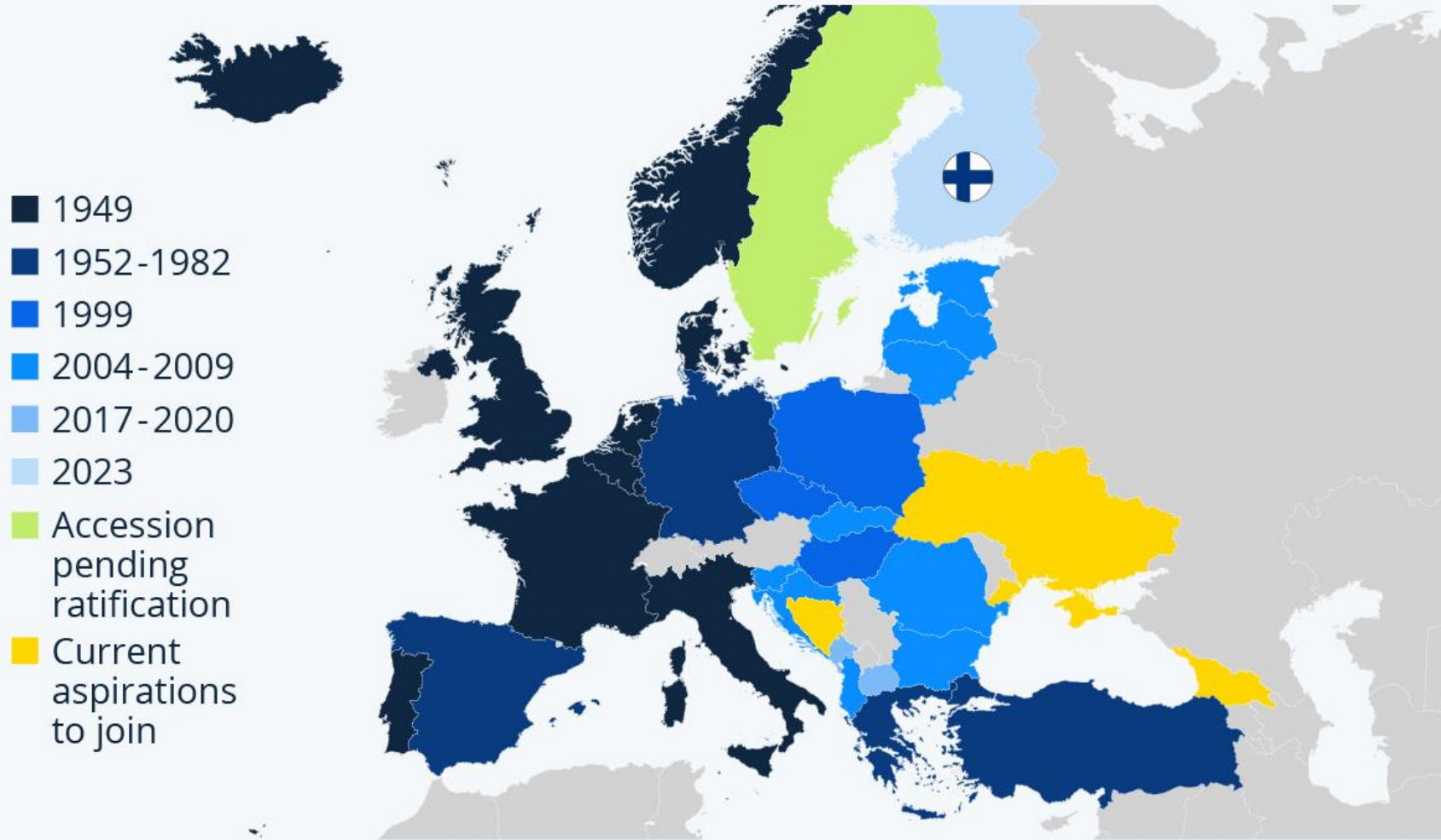
# RING AROUND RUSSIA

■ NATO members



# Finland Becomes 31st Member of NATO

European countries by year they joined NATO



Map excludes the United States and Canada, both founding members of NATO.



# What is Nato Plus?

The Nato Plus 5 is a security arrangement of 31 member countries with five aligned nations — Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel and South Korea — to address the rise of China. It was formalised in 2019

## **The committee's recommendation**

The Select Committee has said that including India will build upon US-India ties to strengthen global security and deter the aggression of the CCP across the Indo-Pacific region



The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) came into existence on April 4, 1949



# THE BIRTH OF NATO

Formed on the basis of the North Atlantic Treaty **signed by 12 member nations**, that also became its founding members

Was the **first peacetime military alliance** the United States entered into outside the Western Hemisphere

Aimed at **strengthening the Western Allies' military response** to a possible invasion of western Europe by the Soviet Union & its Warsaw Pact allies

**Was strongly opposed by the Soviet Union**

.....

Currently, comprises **28 member nations**

The 32 NATO members are:

-  Albania
-  Belgium
-  Bulgaria
-  Canada
-  Croatia
-  Czech Republic
-  Denmark
-  Estonia
-  Finland
-  France
-  Germany
-  Greece
-  Hungary
-  Iceland
-  Italy
-  Latvia
-  Lithuania
-  Luxembourg
-  Montenegro
-  Netherlands
-  North Macedonia
-  Norway
-  Poland
-  Portugal
-  Romania
-  Slovakia
-  Slovenia
-  Spain
-  Sweden
-  Turkey
-  United Kingdom
-  United States





# UN Sustainable Development Report 2024

- **Recently, the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Sustainable Development Report released by UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) has highlighted that the world is significantly behind schedule in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations in 2015.**

- 



## UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)

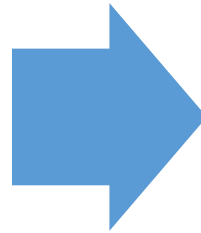


It is a global network established in **2012** by the **United Nations (UN)**.

It aims to promote practical solutions for achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** at national and international levels.

---

It focuses on **mobilising expertise** by connecting universities, research institutions, and national laboratories to identify and **develop solutions for tackling critical sustainability challenges.**



The Secretariat of the SDSN is located in Paris, France; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and New York, US.




## What are the Key Findings of the Sustainable Development Report 2024?



### Global SDG Progress:

- **Only 16%** of SDG targets are on track to be achieved by 2030, with **84%** showing **limited or reversed progress**.
- Since 2020, global SDG progress has **stagnated**, particularly for **SDGs 2 (Zero Hunger), 11 (Sustainable Cities), 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**.

Significant reversals in progress is observed in obesity rates (SDG 2), press freedom (SDG 16), red list index (SDG 15), sustainable nitrogen management (SDG 2), and life expectancy at birth (SDG 3), influenced by Covid-19 and other factors.



Progress towards SDG9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), is showing **slightly positive trends**.

- 
- **Regional and Country Group Variations:**
  - **Nordic countries lead in SDG achievement, with Finland (score 86.4) ranked first, followed by Sweden (85.7), Denmark (85.0), Germany (83.4), and France.**
  - **BRICS and BRICS+ countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE) have shown faster-than-average SDG progress since 2015.**
  -
- 

- 
- **Bottom 3 Countries: South Sudan, Central African Republic and Chad.**
  - **East and South Asia are the regions with the most SDG progress since 2015.**

-

# SDG DASHBOARDS AND TRENDS



- Major challenges
- Significant challenges
- Challenges remain
- SDG achieved
- Information unavailable
- ↓ Decreasing
- Stagnating
- ↗ Moderately improving
- ↑ On track or maintaining SDG achievement
- Information unavailable



According to the World Bank, about 10% of the world's population lives in extreme poverty, surviving on less than USD 1.90 a day.



It also reports that only 43% of adults in low-income countries (LICs) have access to formal financial services, limiting their ability to invest and save for the future.

---

## What is the Performance of India in SDG Index?

**Ranking:** India secured **109th rank** with the overall score of **64.0**.

**Status of SDG Targets:** Only around **30% of SDG targets** are on track or have been achieved.

- There is limited progress in the other 40% of the targets and in around 30% of targets the situation is worsening.

- **Average Performance of SDGs: Highest performance is observed in achieving SDG 1, SDG 4, SDG 12 and SDG 13.**

▼ SDG DASHBOARDS AND TRENDS

10      SDG 9  
8



■ Major challenges   
 ■ Significant challenges   
 ■ Challenges remain   
 ■ SDG achieved   
 ■ Information unavailable  
↓ Decreasing   
 → Stagnating   
 ↗ Moderately improving   
 ↑ On track or maintaining SDG achievement   
 ● Information unavailable





- **Consider the following statements: (2016)**
  - 1. The Sustainable Development Goals were first proposed in 1972 by a global think tank called the 'Club of Rome'.**
  - 2. The Sustainable Development Goals have to be achieved by 2030.**
  - 3. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**
- **(a) 1 only**
- **(b) 2 only**
- **(c) Both 1 and 2**
- **(d) Neither 1 nor 2**





# Russia Ships Equipments to Kudankulam NPP

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Russia has shipped the first batch of 26 **turbine hall pipeline valves** (High-pressure and low-pressure gate valves) for the **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project's (KNNP)** reactors 5 and 6



Their key function is a **tight shut-off of the fluid or gas flow** to ensure **reliable operation of the system**.

It currently has 2 x 1,000 MWe WWER reactors generating power, with 4 more reactors of similar capacity under construction.

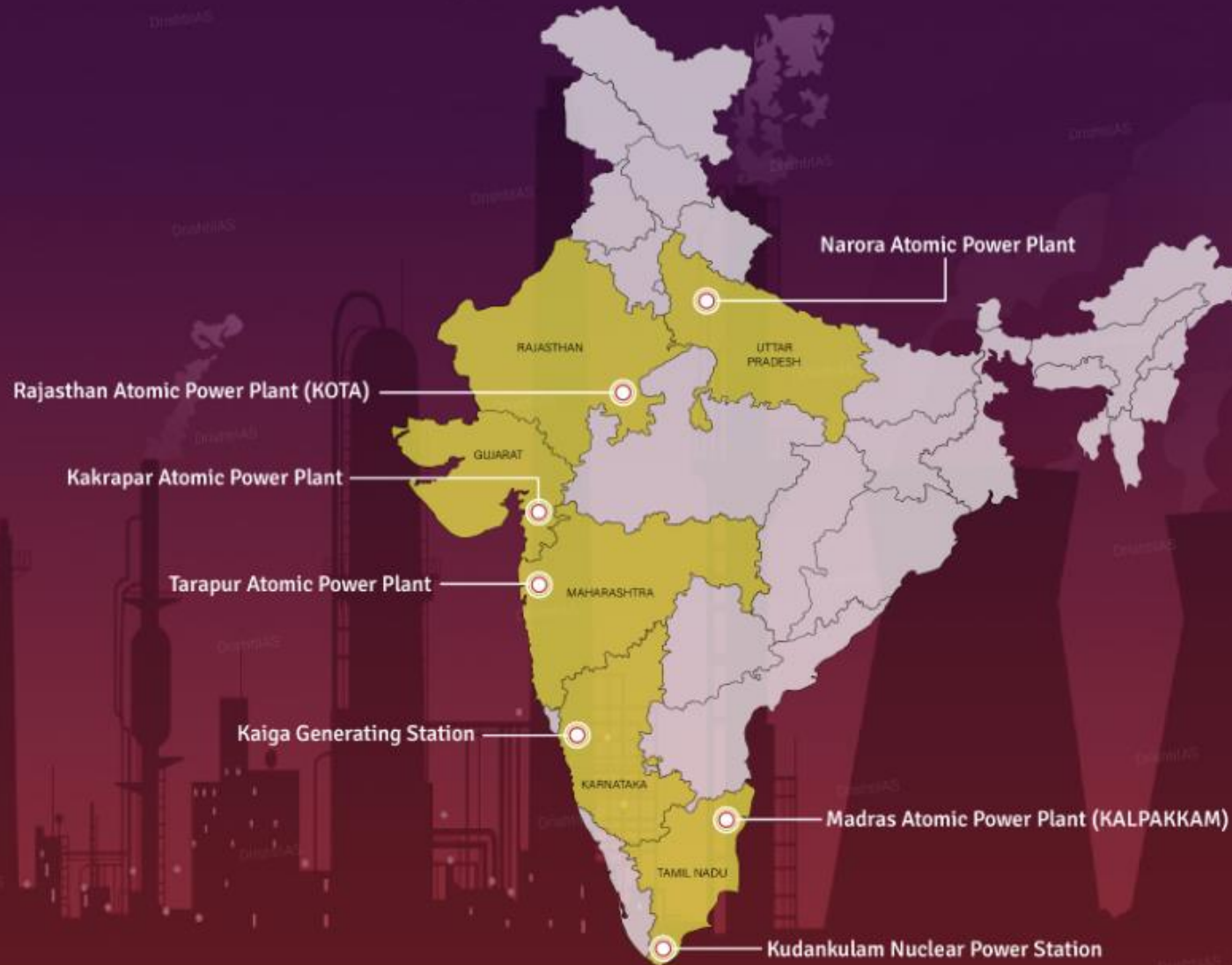
- 
- **WWER are "Water-Water Power Reactor". These reactors use water as both the coolant and the moderator for the nuclear reactions that produce energy.**

- 



- 
- **KNNP has been modernised jointly by Russia's Rosatom and the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL). It is the largest nuclear power plant in India.**
    - **It is India's first nuclear plant to use imported PWR (Pressurised Water Reactor) technology.**
    - **Its construction began in 2002 and it is expected to operate in full capacity by 2027.**
  - **The share of nuclear power in the total electricity generation in the country was about 2.8% in the year 2022-23.**
- 

# Operational Nuclear Power Plants in India





# India's First Joint Doctrine for Cyberspace Operation

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In military terms, cyberspace  
refers to the domain where  
operations involving computers,  
networks, and electronic  
systems occur.



It encompasses activities such  
as cyber warfare, cyber defence,  
and information operations  
conducted by military forces in  
both offensive and defensive  
capacities



## 7 Types of Cyberwarfare Attacks



Espionage



Sabotage



Denial-of-service  
(DoS) Attacks



Electrical  
Power Grid



Propaganda  
Attacks



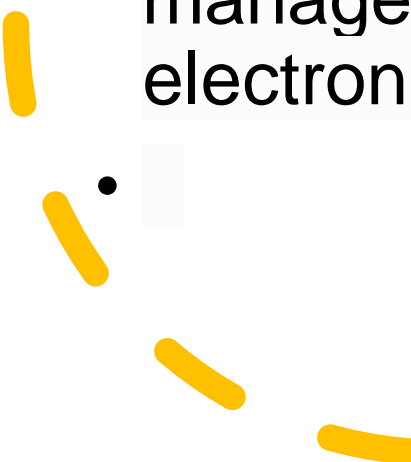
Economic  
Disruption



Surprise  
Attacks



- **What is Doctrine for Cyberspace Operation?**

- A doctrine for cyberspace **operations is a set of principles, guidelines, and strategies developed by military organizations** to govern their activities in the cyberspace domain. It outlines how military forces should plan, execute, and manage operations involving computers, networks, and electronic systems.
- 

## Comparison with China:



China has developed significant capabilities in cyberwarfare, including cyberweapons designed to disrupt or incapacitate an adversary's military assets and strategic networks. In contrast, India has been slow to develop similar capabilities, approving only the creation of a limited tri-service Defence Cyber Agency in 2019, instead of the fully-fledged Cyber Command requested by the armed forces.

- **With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following? (UPSC 2020)**
  1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
  2. Create meaningful short stories and songs
  3. Disease diagnosis
  4. Text-to-Speech Conversion
  5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 4 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5



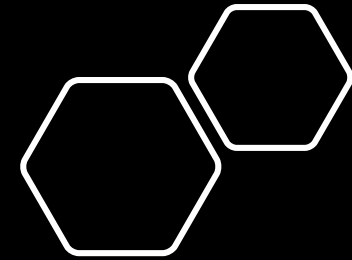
Fun fact



SPORTS

## SPORTS FACT

The longest cricket match took place in 1939 between England and South Africa, after 14 days it ended with a tie.



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# Word of the day

## **Dulcify:**

make sweeter in taste

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**Synonyms:** sweeten, edulcorate

---

**Usage:** *He used honey to dulcify his tea.*

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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 in the foreground and some blurred in the background. The lighting is soft and moody, with a blueish tint. In the top left corner, there is a solid orange horizontal bar.

Thank you  
guys.

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