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A person wearing a blue hoodie and dark pants is walking away from the camera on a path covered with fallen leaves. The background is a blurred natural setting. Overlaid on the image is a quote in white, handwritten-style text.

My life
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Mahatma Gandhi



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Chandrababu Naidu meets Prime Minister
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INSIDE
NEET candidates move SC against cancelling test
NEW DELHI
Over 50 candidates have moved the Supreme Court to stop the Centre and the National Testing Agency from taking any steps to cancel the undergraduate National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test, 2024 which was marred by allegations of paper leaks and other irregularities. ▸ PAGE 6

Will not ally with AAP in Haryana, Delhi polls: Cong.
NEW DELHI
There does not appear to be much scope for an alliance between the Congress and the AAP for the Assembly elections in Haryana and Delhi, but the INDIA bloc will fight polls together in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on Thursday. ▸ PAGE 5

Myanmar moving close to genocide, says UN expert
GENEVA
Myanmar's Rakhine State is facing a terrifying situation similar to the run up to "genocidal violence" eight years ago against the persecuted Rohingya minority, Thomas Andrews, UN's special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, said on Thursday. ▸ PAGE 14

6 held for U.P. stampede; godman left out in FIR

Police announce a reward of ₹1 lakh for information on Devprakash Madhukar, the main accused; probe teams formed to search for persons who were part of the organising committee responsible for all aspects of the religious gathering in Hathras; police say Bhole Baba will be interrogated if required during the course of the investigation

Lidia Mishra
NEW DELHI
The Uttar Pradesh Police arrested six persons, including two women, on Thursday in connection with the stampede at a religious gathering in Hathras that left 121 people dead. The arrested persons were part of the committee that organised the *satsang* of preacher Narayan Sakar Hari, alias Bhole Baba, who was not named in the first information report (FIR). The police also announced a reward of ₹1 lakh for information on

Devprakash Madhukar, the main accused of the incident. He was a follower of Bhole Baba and collected funds for his events, the police said. Speaking about the arrests, Shalabh Mathur, Inspector-General of Police, said police teams have been formed to search for persons who were part of the organising committee of the *satsang*. "Our teams arrested six persons identified as Raghavi Singh Yadav, Bhupendar Singh Yadav, Megh Singh, Manju Yadav, Mukesh Kumar, and Manju Devi, who all were volun-



Devastating tragedy: A forensic expert examines the stampede site on Wednesday. R. V. MOORTHY

teers and fled from the spot after the stampede," Mr. Mathur said. The official said the persons who were arrested had handled all responsibilities for the religious event, including crowd management and collection of funds. "Their job was to manage everything related to *satsang*... The ar-

rested persons told us that the followers of Bhole Baba feel blessed to collect his *chakra raj* [sacred foot under his feet]. On the day of the stampede, volunteers failed to manage the people who pushed their way to collect the soil," Mr. Mathur said. He also said that a non-bailable warrant will be issued against Mr. Madhukar. Mr. Mathur said that all 121 bodies have been identified and handed over to the families after completion of required formalities and post-mortem. When was asked if the preacher, said to be a former policeman whose real name is Suraj Pal, would be interrogated in the case, the official said that interrogation will be done if required during the course of investigation. "We got to know about a criminal case lodged against the preacher in Agra. There was acquittal in that case. We are trying to find out if there are previous criminal cases against him and his followers in different States and cities. We will keep interrogating and arresting people as and when new names and information crop up," Mr. Mathur said.

Sea of fans



Victory lap: The Marine Drive in Mumbai is filled with fans waiting to greet the Indian cricket team ahead of its victory parade after winning the T20 World Cup in Barbados. The team arrived in India on Thursday morning. DWANWALI VOORNI

Amid Bhalari RANCHI
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren was sworn in as Jharkhand Chief Minister for the third time on Thursday. Mr. Soren, who is currently out on bail in a money laundering case, was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan at the Raj Bhavan in Ranchi. "Despite the political ups and downs, Chhampal Soren was running the government because I was in jail. I do not want to discuss why I was in jail because the court's order is already in the public do-

Soren takes oath as CM of Jharkhand for third time

main. It is only because of the court's order that I am out of jail and have resumed my work. Now I will work for the development of the State," the new Chief Minister said after taking oath, as JMM workers burst crackers in celebration outside the Raj Bhavan. The State is expected to head to the polls to elect a new le-

gislative Assembly in October this year. Mr. Soren said that a conspiracy had been hatched to oust him from the State's top post. "I was forced to step down from the post of Chief Minister after a conspiracy was hatched against me. They could not digest the fact that a tribal was leading the State. I have always struggled in my life and tried my level best to work for the people of Jharkhand," he pointed on X before the oath-taking ceremony. Chhampal Soren, who resigned as Chief Minister on Wednesday, was present at the event and congratulated the new Chief Minister.

Labour Party projected to oust Sunak's Conservative government in U.K. polls

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON
Millions went to the polls in the U.K. on Thursday, to vote for 650 MPs in the House of Commons, with the Labour Party projected to win a sizeable, if not historically large majority of more than 400 seats, according to several poll projections. When final results are announced Friday morning, the accuracy of the polls and the fate of Rishi Sunak's government will be known. The 44-year-old British Prime Minister, the first person of Indian descent to hold the position, heads the fifth in a series of Conservative governments that have spanned 14 years. During this period, Britons went by a small margin to elect the European Union and voted through the COVID-19 pandemic with attendant political scandals, including then Prime Minister Boris Johnson breaking lockdown rules. The Conservative years also saw the U.K. economy taking a battering in the



Voters leave a polling station in Belfast on Thursday. AFP

years after Brexit, partly because of it, but also due to global inflationary pressures following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the economic policies enacted during her record short term of 50 days. Britons faced soaring energy bills, inflation and a cost of living crisis, accompanied by a decline in public services including long wait times for doctors' appointments. Consequently, Labour had fashioned its campaign around the theme of "change." "Vote change," Labour leader Keir Starmer said on Thursday. "Today, Britain's future is on

wanting to increase taxes. "You name it, they will tax it," he had said in a tense final debate with Mr. Starmer on June 26. **Foregone conclusion** Conservative politicians have also presented the election as a foregone conclusion, often using the term supermajority. Mr. Starmer had responded accusing the Tories of attempting to "dissuade" people from voting. "The Liberal Democrats, who performed strongly in May's local elections, are hoping to make third place north of Mr. Starmer's London constituency of Holborn and St. Pancras, and other parties in the fray include the Scottish National Party, the Green Party and the nativist and Eurosceptic party, Reform UK. The country's monarch, King Charles III, who was in Scotland on Thursday as expected to return to London to appoint the next Prime Minister during the course of Friday. **'LIMIT LABOUR'S POWER'** ▸ PAGE 14

Jaishankar meets Wang Yi, says AC must be respected and peace ensured

Suhasini Haldar
NEW DELHI
In their first such meeting since the Lok Sabha election, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council meeting on Thursday. Both sides stressed the importance of "mutual respect" in resolving the boundary issues that have frozen ties between them for the past four years. Mr. Jaishankar told Mr. Wang that it was important that the "Line of Actual Control must be respected and peace and tranquillity in the border areas always ensured," according to a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) after the meeting, which lasted about an hour, and was held just before the start of the SCO Summit. "The two Ministers agreed that the prolongation of the current standoff in the border areas is not in the interest of either



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the SCO meet in Astana on Thursday. ANI

side, EAM highlighted the need to redouble efforts to achieve complete disengagement from the remaining areas in Eastern Ladakh and restore border peace and tranquillity in order to remove obstacles towards the return of normalcy in bilateral relations," the MEA said. **Full disengagement** The two Ministers were meeting for the third time in the past 12 months, and have made a push for complete disengagement and the resolution of the military border standoff since April 2020. However, talks between

hand actively resume normal exchanges, promote each other and meet each other half way," a translated version of the MEA statement read. **'Global situation'** The MEA statement also said that the two leaders had "exchanged views on the global situation", and that India had extended its support to China's presidency of the SCO in 2025. Speaking at the SCO Council of the Heads of State, Mr. Jaishankar read out Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address in his absence, reiterating the SCO's "respect for sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity" as a basis for its foreign policy. "We have also agreed not to take any measures contrary to the principles of state sovereignty, territorial integrity," the PM's speech read, signalling China. It added that the "priority must naturally be given to combating terrorism, one of the original goals of the SCO", in a pointed reference to Pakistan.

Soren takes oath as CM of Jharkhand for third time

Amit Bhelari

RANCHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren was sworn in as Jharkhand Chief Minister for the third time on Thursday.

Mr. Soren, who is currently out on bail in a money laundering case, was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan at the Raj Bhavan in Ranchi.

“Despite the political ups and downs, Champai Soren ji was running the government because I was in jail. I do not want to discuss why I was in jail because the court’s order is already in the public do-



Hemant Soren

main. It is only because of the court’s order that I am out of jail and have resumed my work. Now I will work for the development of the State,” the new Chief Minister said after taking oath, as JMM workers burst crackers in celebration outside the Raj Bhavan. The State is expected to head to the polls to elect a new le-

gislative Assembly in October this year.

Mr. Soren said that a conspiracy had been hatched to oust him from the State’s top post. “I was forced to step down from the post of Chief Minister after a conspiracy was hatched against me. They could not digest the fact that a tribal was leading the State. I have always struggled in my life and tried my level best to work for the people of Jharkhand,” he posted on X before the oath-taking ceremony.

Champai Soren, who resigned as Chief Minister on Wednesday, was present at the event and congratulated the new Chief Minister.

Jharkhand

State



Baidyanath Temple



Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary



Maa Dewri Temple



Patratu driveway



Panchet Dam



Dassam Falls



Parasnath Hill

Country	 India
Region	East India
Before was	Part of Bihar
Formation	15 November 2000
Capital	Ranchi
Largest city	Jamshedpur
Districts	24 (5 divisions)
Government	
 • Body	Government of Jharkhand
 • Governor	C. P. Radhakrishnan
 • Chief minister	Hemant Soren (JMM)
State Legislature	Unicameral
 • Assembly	Jharkhand Legislative Assembly (81 seats)
National Parliament	Parliament of India
 • Rajya Sabha	6 seats
 • Lok Sabha	14 seats
High Court	Jharkhand High Court
Area	
 • Total	79,716 km ² (30,779 sq mi)
 • Rank	15th
Dimensions	
 • Length	380 km (240 mi)
 • Width	463 km (288 mi)
Elevation	277 m (909 ft)
Highest elevation (Parasnath ^[1])	1,382 m (4,534 ft)
Population (2011) ^[2]	
 • Total	▲ 32,988,134
 • Rank	14th
 • Density	414/km ² (1,070/sq mi)
 • Urban	24.05%
 • Rural	75.95%

Language	
 • Official	Hindi ^[3]
 • Additional official	Angika · Bengali · Bhojpuri · Bhumij · Ho · Kharia · Khortha · Kurmali · Kurukh · Magahi · Maithili · Mundari · Nagpuri · Odia · Santali · Urdu ^{[4][5]}
GDP	
 • Total (2024–25)	▲ ₹4.70 lakh crore (US\$56 billion)
 • Rank	19th
 • Per capita	▼ ₹107,436 (US\$1,300) (30th)
Time zone	UTC+05:30 (IST)
ISO 3166 code	IN-JH
Vehicle registration	JH
HDI (2022)	▲ 0.592 Medium (32nd)
Literacy (2011)	▲ 66.41% (32nd)
Sex ratio (2021)	948 ♀/1000 ♂ ^[6] (26th)
Website	jharkhand.gov.in ↗
Symbols of Jharkhand	
Emblem of Jharkhand	
Bird	Koel
Flower	Palash
Mammal	Indian elephant ^[7]
Tree	Sal

- **Swearing-In Ceremony**

- Hemant Soren of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) sworn in as Jharkhand Chief Minister for the third time.
- Administered the oath of office by Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan at Raj Bhavan, Ranchi.

- **Legal Context**

- Soren is currently out on bail in a money laundering case.
- Attributes his ability to resume office to a court order.

- **Political Dynamics**

- Champai Soren, who was running the government during Hemant Soren's legal troubles, resigned and congratulated the new Chief Minister.
- Hemant Soren claims a conspiracy was hatched to oust him because of his tribal background.

- **Soren's Commitment**

- Vows to work for the development of the state.
- Expressed his struggles and dedication to working for the people of Jharkhand.

1.Upcoming Elections

1. The state is expected to head to the polls to elect a new legislative assembly in October.

- **What significant challenge did Hemant Soren face before resuming his position as Chief Minister of Jharkhand?**
- A) Opposition from political rivals.
- B) Health issues.
- C) A money laundering case and subsequent jail time.
- D) A natural disaster affecting the state.

Sea of fans



Victory lap: The Marine Drive in Mumbai is filled with fans waiting to greet the Indian cricket team ahead of its victory parade after winning the T20 World Cup in Barbados. The team arrived in India on Thursday morning. EMMANUAL YOGINI



Haitians hold placards to welcome the Kenyan police patrolling their capital, Port-au-Prince, on Wednesday. AP

Early days of 'key' Kenyan police duty positive: Haiti PM

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS

Haitian Prime Minister Garry Conille told the UN Security Council on Wednesday that recently deployed Kenyan police will be crucial to helping control the country's gangs and moving toward democratic elections - and he called feedback from their initial days in the capital "extremely, extremely positive."

He said his government will focus on addressing gang violence and food insecurity, ensuring free elections through constitutional and political reform, and rebuilding public trust in the police.

On June 25, the initial contingent of 200 Kenyan police arrived in Port-au-Prince. Kenya has pledged 1,000 police to the international police force and Mr. Conille said the next contingent will be arriving "very soon." They will later be joined by police from the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Chad and Jamaica in the force that will total 2,500 personnel. Haiti asked for an international force to combat gangs in 2022, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed for months for a country to lead the force before the Kenyans came forward.

The gangs have taken in power since the July 7, 2021, assassination of President Jovenel Moise and are now estimated to control up to 80% of the capital. The surge in killings, rapes and kidnappings has led to a violent uprising by civilian vigilante groups. Mr. Conille, a former UN development specialist, took up his post as Prime Minister last month after being voted in by a transitional council. With the help of the international force, he is tasked with stabilising the country in preparation for democratic elections in February 2026.

Women forced to flee Myanmar as junta enforces conscription to bolster troops

Some people have risked their lives to trek through jungles and ford rivers, crossing into neighbouring countries without documentation since the mandatory military service law came into effect in April, the exodus comes as the military regime faces strong challenge from armed ethnic groups

Reuters

Estelle knew she had to flee Myanmar. The military junta had just announced it would introduce conscription to bolster its forces against myriad armed groups challenging its power, and she was terrified she would be forced to fight.

The former government worker, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, is among thousands of people who have decided to leave their homes since the mandatory military service law was announced in February, and then came into effect in April.

Some people have risked their lives to trek through jungles and ford rivers, crossing into neighbouring countries without documentation because the military has made it increasingly difficult to leave through formal channels. Others have fled to areas under the control of ethnic groups fighting against the military, or have joined these groups themselves.

The mass exodus is taking place as the military regime faces its most serious crisis since it took power in a 2021 coup and faced international travel restrictions as a result.

She and a friend paid the equivalent of around \$280 each in Myanmar's kyat currency to travel by car from the city of Mawlamyine to the border with



Fight or flight: UN Special Rapporteur in Myanmar reported that women's rights groups had identified cases of trafficking of women and girls following the enactment of the conscription law. FILE PHOTO

has seen newer anti-coup forces join with many of Myanmar's autonomy-seeking ethnic armed groups, posing the most significant challenge to the military in decades.

The UN Human Rights Office says more than 5,000 people have been killed by the military since the coup, including more than 1,000 women. Around 3 million people have been displaced.

Estelle had to sneak out of the country because she had joined a countrywide Civil Disobedience Movement when the coup and faced international travel restrictions as a result.

She and a friend paid the equivalent of around \$280 each in Myanmar's kyat currency to travel by car from the city of Mawlamyine to the border with

Thailand and then hired a smuggler to take them across the Moei River. "It was just the two of us girls travelling with a man we didn't know," Estelle said. "We were scared we would be arrested or trafficked."

Worth the risk But they took the risk anyway despite the fact that, at 36, Estelle falls outside the age range for conscription. A few days after its initial announcement, the junta also pledged to exempt women and girls following reports of the trafficking of women and girls.

Women are using dangerous channels to flee the country amid fears of conscription, putting them at high risk of trafficking, and other forms of exploitation. Conscription exemptions for married women also raise the risk of early and forced marriage

for girls and women," Mr. Andrews wrote. Severe hardships The military call-up comes on top of an economic crisis that has sent the currency spiralling lower and caused unemployment to surge. The World Bank says women have been particularly hard hit by the economic downturn that followed the COVID-19 pandemic and the coup.

"There is no safe place for women and girls... they have to survive in risky situations," she said. Women were at the forefront of resistance to the 2021 coup and have also joined armed groups fighting the military. Around one-fifth of the 20,000 political prisoners in Myanmar are female, according to a local rights group.

Women from the Rohingya, a mostly Muslim minority from Myanmar's Rakhine State, have also faced fresh hardships after years of abuses.

Women from the Rohingya are not eligible for conscription under the law because they are denied citizenship, the military has conscription, putting them at high risk of trafficking, and other forms of exploitation. Conscription exemptions for married women also raise the risk of early and forced marriage

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Ukraine's Army retreats from positions as Russia marches into strategically vital town

Associated Press

KYIV

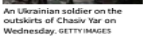
Ukraine's Army has retreated from a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Chasiv Yar, a spokesperson for the Khortytsya ground forces formation, said on Thursday.

A strategically important town in the Donetsk region which has been reduced to rubble under a months-long Russian assault, Chasiv Yar occupies a strategic elevated location. It lies a short distance west of Bakhmut, which was captured by Russia last year after a bitter 10-month battle.

For months, Russian forces have focused on

sitions in the town were "destroyed," the spokesperson said, adding that there was a threat of serious casualties if troops remained in the area and that Russia did not leave "a single intact building."

The intensity of Russian strikes on Ukraine's defensive lines in the area of Chasiv Yar has increased over the last month and the town that once had a population of 12,000 has been left deserted, Mr. Voloshyn said. Other Russian attacks in recent weeks have focused on capturing nearby settlements that would allow them to advance to Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, the biggest cities in the Ukrainian-controlled part of the Donetsk region.



An Ukrainian soldier on the outskirts of Chasiv Yar on Wednesday. GETTY IMAGES

Seeking reform



Poll plot: Women cheer and wave flags during a campaign rally of Iranian reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian, two days before a presidential election run-off following a first round marked by a historically low turnout, at a stadium in Tehran on Wednesday. AP

From Reagan to Biden, the decades-long question of age in U.S. election

Associated Press

The audience roared, even Democratic Vice President Walter Mondale laughed, and Reagan's reelection was back on track.

Today, Democratic President Joe Biden, 81, is struggling for such a reprieve, and in 1984 with a clever joke that reset his campaign from a stumbling debut performance to a 49-State landslide and a second term.

"I will not make age an issue of this campaign," Reagan said to the question he knew was coming in perhaps the most famous mic-drop moment in campaign history. "I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience."

More than two dozen people who have spent time with the President privately described him as often sharp and focused. But he also has moments, particularly in the evening, when his thoughts seem jumbled and he trails off mid-sentence or seems confused, they said. Sometimes he doesn't grasp the finer points of policy details. He occasionally forgets people's names, stares blankly at the room, they said.

But the question facing him in this race to the end and we're going to win." But the question facing him is far more intimate, according to one expert who covered Reagan's health during his presidential campaign. "The most important debate of the campaign is the one taking place right now in Biden's head between the part of mind telling him he's the chosen one, and the more self-aware part," said Rich Jaroslavsky of the University



While Ronald Reagan, left, had pledged to leave office if he became 'impaired,' President Biden affirmed that he is "taking to the end." AP

of California Berkeley, formerly of the Wall Street Journal. "It's heart, the question - how old is too old to be President - is about competence. And Americans have never had wider personal experience with the effects of aging than they do today.

A surge of retiring baby boomers means that millions of Americans now know when they see someone declining. For many, this widespread experience made Mr. Biden's halting performance during Thursday's debate a familiar reality check. Neither Mr. Trump nor Mr. Biden has made similar pledge, and their campaigns did not respond to requests for comment on Wednesday.

Will fight back if assaulted in South China Sea: Manila

Associated Press

MANILA

Philippine forces will defend themselves with "the same level of force" if they come under assault again from China's coast guard in the disputed South China Sea, the Philippine military chief said Thursday.

Chinese personnel armed with machetes and spears injured Filipino navy personnel and damaged two of their boats in a chaotic clash at the second Thomas Shoal last month.

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. asked China to pay 60 million pesos in damages and return seven rifles which he said were seized by Chinese coast guard personnel during the June 17 confrontation. Philippine officials relayed the demands, along with a strong protest, during talks with a Chinese government delegation in Manila. The Chinese delegation did not immediately respond to the demands, a Philippine official said on condition of anonymity.

"What we'd do is we will apply the same level of force that would allow us to defend ourselves," Gen. Brawner said when asked what navy personnel would do in case they are involved in another confrontation. "If a knife is used, for example, our personnel will also use a knife, nothing more, under the concept of proportionality."

"We want to avoid war," Gen. Brawner said, but added that the military would never allow any foreign country to trample on the Philippines' territorial rights.

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From Reagan to Biden, the decades-long question of age in U.S. election

Associated Press

The age question for presidential candidates in the U.S. is more than four decades old. President Ronald Reagan in 1980 answered it with a pledge to resign if he became impaired, and in 1984 with a clever joke that reset his campaign from a stumbling debate performance to a 49-State landslide and a second term.

“I will not make age an issue of this campaign,” Reagan said to the question he knew was coming in perhaps the most famous mic-drop moment in campaign history. “I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent’s youth and inexperience.”

The audience roared, even Democratic Vice President Walter Mondale laughed – and Reagan’s reelection was back on track.

Today, Democratic President Joe Biden, 81, is struggling for such a redemptive moment after a disastrous debate performance against Republican former President Donald Trump, 78. Those 90 minutes last week set off alarms among Democrats hoping Mr. Biden would keep Mr. Trump from returning to the White House – and heightened concern among voters long skeptical of how either elderly man would govern a complex nation of more than 330 million people for four more years.

More than two dozen people who have spent time with the President privately described him as often sharp and focused. But he also has moments, particularly later in the evening, when his thoughts seem jumbled and he trails off mid-sentence or seems confused, they said. Sometimes he doesn’t grasp the finer points of policy details. He occasionally forgets people’s names, stares blankly and moves slowly around the room, they said.

Mr. Biden has vowed to stay in the race, despite signs of eroding support on Capitol Hill.

“I am running ... no one’s pushing me out,” Mr. Biden said on a call Wednesday with staffers



While Ronald Reagan, left, had pledged to leave office if he became ‘impaired’, President Biden affirmed that he is ‘racing to the end’. AP

from his reelection campaign. “I’m not leaving. I’m in this race to the end and we’re going to win.”

But the question facing him is far more intimate, according to one expert who covered Reagan’s health during his presiden-

cy. “The most important debate of the campaign is the one taking place right now in Biden’s head between the part of mind telling him he’s the chosen one, and the more self-aware part,” said Rich Jaroslavsky of the University

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A surge of retiring baby boomers means that millions more Americans know when they see someone declining. For many, this widespread experience made Mr. Biden’s halting performance during Thursday’s debate a familiar reality check.

Mr. Trump seemed more vigorous, even though he lied about or misstated a long list of facts. When he challenged

Mr. Biden to a cognitive test, Mr. Trump flubbed the name of the doctor who had administered his.

“Is this an episode, or is this a condition?” Rep. Nancy Pelosi, 84, wondered on MSNBC, reflecting the question dominating Democratic circles this week. “It’s legitimate – of both candidates.”

Reagan faced the same questions even before he was elected as the oldest President to that point.

That didn’t happen. Reagan served two full terms, leaving office in 1989.

Neither Mr. Trump nor Mr. Biden has made a similar pledge, and their campaigns did not respond to requests for comment on Wednesday.

- **Age Question in U.S. Presidential Elections**The issue of age for presidential candidates in the U.S. has been ongoing for over four decades.
- President Ronald Reagan addressed this issue during his 1980 campaign and a debate in 1984.
- Reagan deflected concerns with humor and assured voters of his competence, pledging to resign if he became impaired.

- **President Joe Biden**

- At 81, Biden faces scrutiny and concerns over his age and cognitive abilities.
- Struggled during a debate with former President Donald Trump, setting off alarms among Democrats.
- Has moments of confusion and forgetfulness, particularly in the evenings.
- Despite concerns, Biden is determined to continue his re-election campaign.

- **President Donald Trump**
- At 78, Trump also faces questions about age but appears more vigorous.
- Has a history of misstating facts and has faced his own scrutiny regarding age and competence.

1. Public and Political Reactions

1. Concerns over the competence of elderly leaders are growing among voters.
2. Representative Nancy Pelosi, at 84, reflected on the legitimacy of these concerns for both candidates.
3. The question of age in leadership is linked to a broader debate on competence and the impact of aging.

- **Broader Implications**

- 1. Impact on Elections**

1. The age question plays a significant role in voter perceptions and campaign strategies.
2. Americans' personal experiences with aging contribute to the heightened focus on this issue.

IN BRIEF



Security of Maratha activist Jarange-Patil increased

The security of Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil has been increased with the addition of four armed personnel...

HC reserves verdict on MP Ansari's plea against sentence

The Allahabad High Court on Thursday reserved its judgment on a criminal appeal filed by Ghazipur MP Afzal Ansari...

Bhim Army chief accuses Chhattisgarh govt. of targeting Satnamis, threatens stir

Shubhomoy Sikdar RAIPUR

Addressing a rally in Chhattisgarh's Bhatgaon on Thursday, Bhim Army chief Chandrabekhar Azad...



Chandrabekhar Azad has demanded a CBI probe into desecration of sacred Jaitkham pillars in Balodabazar district. FILE PHOTO

with the case, including some of his Bhim Army colleagues. 'Selective action'...

After Mizoram and Nagaland, Meghalaya declines 'mandir' tag for Ayushman health centres

Rahul Karmakar GUWAHATI

After Mizoram and Nagaland, Meghalaya has refused to rename the health and wellness centres in the State as Ayushman Arogya Mandirs...

the Centre says, 'Meghalaya's Health and Family Welfare Minister, Manoj Amparen Lyngdoh...

LS poll over, NC off the blocks for Assembly polls with structural rejig plan

Two-day meeting deliberates on improving outreach, collating suggestions for party's manifesto...

Peercada Ashiq SRINAGAR

The National Conference's (NC) two-day marathon meeting in Srinagar, the first since the party won two out of three Lok Sabha seats in the Valley...



National Conference leaders Omar Abdullah and Farooq Abdullah at the party meeting in Srinagar on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ty president Farooq Abdullah and vice president Omar Abdullah. The party has a multi-tier system, with district-level delegates, district-level leadership...

said. The party is also in the process of bringing about structural changes and changes to its constitution to enhance its public outreach...

Jailed youth Party sources told The Hindu that the structural changes, likely to be rolled out soon...

Senior leaders as well as the newly-elected MPs also discussed the means and ways to ensure that jailed youth, especially those who were arrested after August 5, 2019...

Swearing-in row: West Bengal Speaker calls special session of House; MLAs-elect continue sit-in

Shrabana Chatterjee KOLKATA

West Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee on Thursday called a special session of the House on July 5...

'We are not helpless.' Speaking to reporters, Mr. Banerjee said the Business Advisory Committee meeting has been scheduled for Friday noon...

Kirodi Lal Meena steps down as Rajasthan Minister

The Hindu Bureau JAIPUR



Kirodi Lal Meena

Keeping his vow to step down if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost any of the seven Lok Sabha seats under his responsibility...

Mr. Meena, 72, holds the Agriculture, Rural Development, Disaster Management and Relief, and Public Grievances portfolios as the Cabinet Minister...

Senior leaders as well as the newly-elected MPs also discussed the means and ways to ensure that jailed youth, especially those who were arrested after August 5, 2019...

represented once as a Lok Sabha MP. Mr. Meena was in the reckoning for the Chief Minister's post after the BJP's victory in the 2023 State Assembly election...

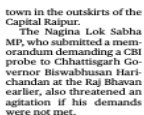
'No resentment' The septuagenarian, BJP leader said he had "no resentment" with the party organisation...

Submit report on Bhojshala by July 15, HC directs ASI

Press Trust of India INDORE

The Indore Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday granted 10 more days to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to submit its survey report...

The court ordered the ASI to present the complete report of the nearly three-month-long survey on the premises of the disputed 18th-century monument...



town in the outskirts of the Capital Raipur.

The Nagina Lok Sabha MP, who submitted a memorandum demanding a CBI probe to Chhattisgarh Governor Bishwanath Hari-chand...

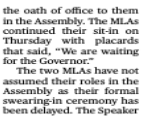
'Satanmis not helpless' 'They (the Satanmis) are not helpless. Release the innocent, people treated without any conditions. It will be good for everyone, otherwise there will be an agitation,' Mr. Azad said...



Speaker Biman Banerjee

mor. You can't just force everything down our throats; there are rules, regulations, and constitutional norms. All of us must abide by them,' he added.

Governor C.V. Ananda Bose had earlier invited Bha-banganga legislator Kayat Hussain to Raj Bhawan to take the oath, which they declined, citing procedural norms...



Governor C.V. Ananda Bose

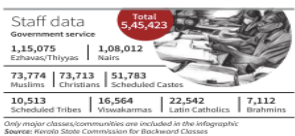
'Governor's ego battle' 'The Governor is deliberately creating an impasse. He has turned it into an ego battle. This matter should be resolved so that the MLAs can take oath,' Mr. Banerjee said.

Ezhavas, Nairs account for 41% of govt. staff in Kerala

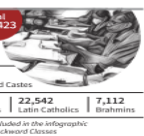
K. S. Sudhi KOCHI

Members of the Ezhava and Nair communities, the two major Hindu communities of Kerala, together account for about 41% of the government employees in the State...

'Hidden agenda' Regional political parties in Meghalaya snuffed a "hidden agenda" of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre...



The data attain significance in the wake of allegations from the Backward Classes Commission that 1,15,075 Ezhava and 1,08,012 Nair community employees are employed in government service...



ally Natarajan recently stirred up a controversy by stating that both the groups are appealing the minorities. He also stated that the Ezhava community has abandoned the LDF in the Lok Sabha elections in protest against the appointment of the minorities.

voor, leader of the Kerala Naduvathil Mujahideen, from the post of vice-chairperson of the Navadhana Samrakshana Samithi (Re-naisance Protection Forum), a collective of various religious organisations supported by the State government, which has Mr. Natesan as its chairperson.

Submit report on Bhojshala by July 15, HC directs ASI

Press Trust of India

INDORE

The Indore Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday granted 10 more days to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to submit its survey report of the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex in the State's Dhar district.

The court ordered the ASI to present the complete report of the nearly three-month-long survey on the premises of the disputed 11th-century monument, the subject of a wrangle between Hindus and Muslims, by July 15.

According to the previous order of the High Court, the ASI was required to submit its complete survey report of the complex by July 2, but the agency moved a plea on the last day seeking another four weeks for the report submission.

THE BHOJSHALA DISPUTE

► In 1997, entry to Bhojshala complex was banned by the district administration, triggering resentment in the Hindu community

► On Basant Panchami in 2002, the Dhar collector ordered a lathicharge on devotees who gathered for puja at Bhojshala and demanded the gates to be opened. About two dozen injured

► The lathicharge sparked a movement throughout to 'free Bhojshala'

► On April 7, 2003, ASI issued an order, permitting Hindus to worship inside Bhojshala every Tuesday, and Muslims to offer namaz on Fridays

► The same year 1 lakh devotees gathered at the gate on Basant Panchami. When the administration refused to open the gates, they tried to force in. Police lathicharge; 200 people injured

► Devotees set police vehicles on fire and beat cops. Govt estimates say public property worth Rs3 crore was destroyed



Pravin Barmate

Bhojshala complex in Dhar

► Then CM Digvijaya Singh ordered action; 1,400 booked for beating cops and arson. Many booked under NSA or or extorted. Govt passes gazette notification to attach property to recover the loss

► After BJP's Uma Bharti became CM, all cases were withdrawn, gazette notification cancelled

► In 2006, a similar situation arose when Basant Panchami fell on a Friday, when namaz is offered at Kamal Maula Mosque. Hundreds injured in clashes. Riots broke out in town. Over 200 booked

► In 2013, Basant Panchami was again on a Friday. Police were strict. People were controlled with a show of strength

- **Hindus consider Bhojshala, an ASI-protected 11th-century monument, to be a temple dedicated to Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), while the Muslim community call it Kamal Maula Mosque.**
- **As per an arrangement made by the ASI on 7th April 2003, Hindus perform puja in the Bhojshala premises on Tuesdays, while Muslims offer namaz in the complex on Fridays.**
- **The high court had on 11th March 2024 ordered the ASI to conduct a "scientific survey" of the Bhojshala-Kamal Moula mosque complex within six weeks.**
-

- **Who was Raja Bhoj of Gurjara-Pratihara Dynasty?**
- **Bhoja was the Pratihara dynasty's greatest emperor and the actual founder of the empire.**
 - **The Gurjara-Pratiharas came to prominence in the second quarter of the 8th century, when they offered successful resistance to the Arabs.**
 - **The Pratiharas who ruled over Kannauj for a long time are also called Gurjara-Pratiharas. The meaning of the word Pratihara is "doorman."**

- **He defeated the Pala king Devapala and the Rashtrakuta king Amoghavarsha, establishing the Gurjara-Pratiharas as the dominant power in northern India during his reign.**

- **Bhoja I /Mihir Bhoja (836 – 885 AD):The best-known Gurjara-Pratihara king was Bhoja, grandson of Nagabhata II.**
- **A glorious chapter of the history of the Pratiharas begins with the accession of Mihirabhoja.**
- **Mihirabhoja ascended to the throne in 836 AD. He ruled the Pratiharas for more than 46 years and is regarded as their most popular king.**
- **He reorganized and consolidated the empire inherited from his ancestors and ushered in an era of prosperity for the Pratiharas.**
-

Prelims

Q. With reference to the history of India, consider the following pairs: (2020)

	Famous Place	Present State
1.	Bhilsa	Madhya Pradesh
2.	Dwarasamudra	Maharashtra
3.	Girinagar	Gujarat
4.	Sthanesvara	Uttar Pradesh

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 2 and 4 only

After Mizoram and Nagaland, Meghalaya declines 'mandir' tag for Ayushman health centres

Rahul Karmakar

GUWAHATI

After Mizoram and Nagaland, Meghalaya has refused to rename the health and wellness centres in the State as Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. About 75% of the population in Meghalaya follows Christianity. The percentage of Christians in Mizoram and Nagaland is about 90%.

“We decided not to issue any notification to change the names of the health and wellness centres after receiving the advisory from the Centre [in November 2023]. Since health is a State subject, we have the right not to do as

the Centre says,” Meghalaya’s Health and Family Welfare Minister, Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh told presspersons in the State’s capital Shillong.

Ms. Lyngdoh is a senior leader of the Conrad K. Sangma-led National People’s Party, which heads the coalition government in Meghalaya. The BJP is a minor partner in this government.

Less than a year ago, the Union Health Ministry decided to rename its flagship Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres as Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM) with the tagline ‘Arogyam parmam dhanam’ (health is the

greatest wealth). There are 1.6 lakh such centres across the country.

‘Hidden agenda’

Regional political parties in Meghalaya sniffed a “hidden agenda” of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre behind the renaming of the health and wellness centres. “Why, then, should a government-run centre bear the name of a Hindu place of worship?” Titosstarwell Chyne, the working president of the United Democratic Party said. The Voice of the People Party also said the bid reflected a ‘Hindutva’ design.

PM AYUSHMAN BHARAT HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE MISSION

Largest Ever Scheme to Scale-up Health Infrastructure



Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ensured a transformation in healthcare in the past seven years

Ayushman Bharat PMJAY & Ayushman Bharat Health & Wellness Centers brought scale while **Ayushman Bharat - Digital Mission** brings technology to healthcare

“Every Indian deserves accessible, affordable and high-quality healthcare. We have worked to ensure this through multi-dimensional interventions.”
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi



Rs 64,000 crore to be invested in building healthcare infrastructure

PM AYUSHMAN BHARAT HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE MISSION

Multi-dimensional and Multi-modal Interventions

- Focus on critical and primary care
- Network of 29,000 Health and Wellness Centers
- Specialized Critical Care Hospital Blocks in all districts with 37,000 beds with ICUs, ventilators and oxygen support
- Over 4,000 Block & District level Public Health Units & Labs
- Full range of diagnostic services in all districts
- IT-enabled disease surveillance system

Institutional Approach to Holistic Healthcare

- National Institution for One Health
- 4 New National Institutes for Virology
- Regional Research Platform for WHO South East Asia Region
- 15 Biosafety Level 3 Labs
- 5 New Regional National Centre for Disease Control
- Public health units at 50 international entry points preventing public health emergencies and disease outbreaks

A HEALTHY FUTURE BECKONS!



Ministry of Health and Family Welfare



Know about PM Modi's transformative vision for healthcare in his own words by scanning this QR code



आरोग्य केन्द्र
HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTRE
स्वास्थ्य केन्द्र, सोनभद्रपुर
जयपुर - बीकानेर
जयपुर - इलाहाबाद



आयुष्मान भारत





Related Initiatives

- PM Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Scheme.
- Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana.
- Jan Aushadhi Yojana.



Key Features

- Health and Wellness Centres
- Integrated public health labs
- Exclusive Critical Care Hospital Blocks
- Disease surveillance system
- Integrated Health Information Portal

Objectives →

- To ensure a robust public health infrastructure in both urban and rural areas.
- To establish an IT-enabled disease surveillance system.



'Brain-eating amoeba' claims Kerala boy's life

The Hindu Bureau

KOZHIKODE

A 12-year-old boy from Feroke who had been undergoing treatment for primary amoebic meningoencephalitis at a hospital in Kozhikode city died on Wednesday. This is the third death due to the rare infection in the past two months in Kerala.

According to sources, E.P. Mridul, a Class 7 student, was first taken to government taluk hospital at Feroke after he complained of headache and vomiting last month. Mridul had taken bath in a local pond earlier.

He was later referred to the Government Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode, and then to the private hospital. Mridul had

been in a critical condition since June 24.

V. Dakshina, 13, of Kanur died of a similar infection at a private hospital in Kozhikode on June 12. Fadva, 5, of Munniyur, died at the Government Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode, on May 20.

The infection is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, also called 'brain-eating amoeba', which lives in fresh warm water. It infects people when it enters their body through the nose. The symptoms include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, altered mental status, and seizures.

The Health Department is planning to issue special guidelines for the treatment of the infection against the backdrop of these deaths.

- **Fatal Infection**

- A 12-year-old boy from Feroke, Kerala, died of primary amoebic meningoencephalitis in Kozhikode.
- Third death due to this infection in Kerala in the past two months.

1. Medical History

1. E.P. Mridul, a Class 7 student, first experienced symptoms like headache and vomiting after bathing in a local pond.
2. Initially treated at the government taluk hospital, then referred to the Government Medical College Hospital, and finally to a private hospital where he remained in critical condition since June 24.

- **Previous Cases**

- 1. Other Victims**

1. V. Dakshina, 13, of Kannur died on June 12 at a private hospital in Kozhikode.
2. Fadva, 5, of Munniyur died on May 20 at the Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode.

- **Causative Agent**The infection is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, known as the 'brain-eating amoeba.'
- Lives in fresh warm water and infects people through the nose.

1.Symptoms

1. Symptoms include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, altered mental status, and seizures.

• Health Department Response

1.Preventive Measures

1. Planning to issue special guidelines for the treatment and prevention of the infection.

- **What is the cause of the fatal infection mentioned in the article?**
- A) Bacterial contamination in drinking water.
- B) *Naegleria fowleri*, known as the 'brain-eating amoeba.'
- C) Viral encephalitis.
- D) Fungal infection in contaminated food.

THIS TITLE IS FOR THE COUNTRY: CAPTAIN ROHIT SHARMA

A billion-plus welcome



Home after lifting the T20 cricket World Cup, the Indian team heads to the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai for a felicitation ceremony on Thursday. (Deepak Joshi)

As Kohli tears up, SKY soaks it in, Team India get a Mumbai Salaam

MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, JULY 4

WHAT MUST it feel like to be Rohit Sharma tonight? To hear his name reverberating at the Wankhede Stadium in the same rhythm as "Sachin, Sachin"? To receive a standing ovation from his own T20 World Cup-winning teammates.

Or to be Virat Kohli. On the ground where he carried Sachin Tendulkar on his shoulders 13 years ago, the chants of fans were enough for Kohli to tear up. Or even Hanvik Pandy. Bowed reverently in Mumbai Indians' hues of blue just three months ago. Tonight, they couldn't stop singing his name. Pandya smiled and waved back; almost

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



EXPRESS NETWORK

HATHRAS STAMPEDE: 6 'SEVADARS' HELD, MAIN ACCUSED ON THE RUN PAGE 8

NRI sponsors, live broadcasts and a murder: Punjab's world of pigeon racing

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL
LUDHIANA, JULY 4

LAST MONTH, an argument between two friends over who to invite for a pigeon racing event that they were jointly hosting in the Bholaha village of Punjab's Ludhiana district ended in the death of one. Born Gurddeep Singh, 22, and his friend Kuldeep Singh alias Vicky Aujla, 44, co-owned a flock of over 100 pigeons and would frequently or-

ganise such events in the village. The friends had got into an argument over Kuldeep inviting a rival to the June 21 racing event. The argument ended with Kuldeep and his son Daman, 20, bludgeoning Gurddeep with an iron rod, police said. Gurddeep was a favourite of his minor brother and their grandmother Mukhtiar Kaur. Inspector Hardeep Singh, SHO, Sadar Khanna police station, said, "Kuldeep and Daman went to Gurddeep's house after the event. When Gurddeep came out, Daman hit him on the head with an iron rod. Gurddeep died of a head injury at a Chandigarh hospital. Kuldeep is in custody

but Daman is on the run." The death, over a seemingly innocuous issue, has put the spotlight on the high-stakes world of *kubutarbazi* (pigeon racing). Thought to have been popularised in the Mughal era, when pigeon-keeping was a favourite pastime of the elite, the folk sport of *kubutarbazi* still resides in parts of India and Pakistan. What sets the Punjab races apart is the race variations — which involves keeping the birds in the sky for as long as possible and the prestige and money associated with winning. Manjir Singh Deepa, the former sarpanch of Bholaha village,



Victim Gurddeep Singh's grandmother Mukhtiar Kaur at Ludhiana's Bholaha village. (Gurpreet Singh)

What went on in your mind... How does mud taste? PM posers to team

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JULY 4

"HOW DID the mud taste, Rohit?" "What was going on in your mind in your final over, Bumrah?" "What were you thinking during that game-turning catch, Suryu?" These were some of the questions that Prime Minister



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an interaction with the Indian team, in New Delhi on Thursday. (PTI)

Narendra Modi is learnt to have asked the T20 World Cup-winning India team when he met them at his residence in the Capital on Thursday morning after their return from Barbados. Seated between captain Rohit Sharma and coach Rahul Dravid, with the rest of the players completing the circle, Modi's meeting with the team lasted

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

India & China agree: Situation at LAC not in each other's interest

Both to redouble efforts to resolve issues at LAC

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JULY 4

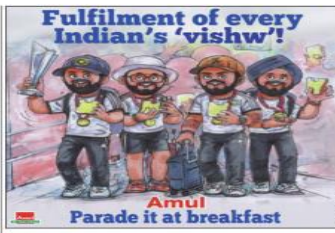
IN THEIR first meeting after the return of the BJP-led NDA to power, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi agreed Thursday that the "prolongation of the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side". The military standoff along



Jaishankar with Wang Yi in Astana on Thursday. (AP)

the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, which began in May 2020, is now in its fifth year and

has soured relations between the two countries. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



PILOT RUN DONE LAST WEEK For integrity of exams, Centre asks states to help in security

States told to appoint one civil, one police observer for each exam centre

RITIKA CHOPRA & MAHENDRA SINGH
MUMBAI, JULY 4

THE UNION government has reached out to the states for help in ensuring the integrity of its entrance tests. Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla held a meeting with all state Chief Secretaries and DCPs last week to seek their assistance in overseeing the conduct of upcoming tests including the All India Ayush Postgraduate Entrance Test (AIAPGET) and the Foreign Medical Graduate Exam (FMGE) in July.

The AIAPGET, conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for the Ayush Ministry, is for admissions to MD/MS programs in Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy. The

FMGE, conducted biannually by the National Board of Examination (NBE) under the Health Ministry, screens overseas medical graduates seeking to practise medicine in India. Just under one lakh candidates appeared for the two tests last year. Both are computer-based exams. During the meeting, sources said, Bhalla requested the states help introduce an additional layer of oversight for the exams by appointing one civil and one police observer for each exam centre in their respective states. An observer is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the exam is fair and free of any malpractices. In addition to this, states were also asked to appoint one state-level nodal officer to coordinate with the exam conducting agency. Currently, there is usually one observer appointed to each test

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Before Budget, DPIIT backs India Inc's call to remove angel tax

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, JULY 4

AHEAD of the Union Budget presentation expected later this month, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has backed the industry's demand to remove angel tax that the policymakers introduced to deter the use of unaccounted money but was viewed by startups as an impediment to much needed capital raising. DPIIT Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh told the press Thursday that the department has reiterated its recommendation to remove angel tax based on the discussions with the startup ecosystem. This comes after the Confederation of Indian Industry

has levered on the difference between issue prices of unlisted securities and its fair market value as has hurt funding as investors fund startups based on their future potential and it may be incorrect to see it as a sign of money laundering. (CI) in its Union Budget recommendation last month sought the removal of the tax stating that such a move would "greatly aid capital formation in the country". "Based on consultations with the startup ecosystem, we have recommended the removal of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SCO

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has been projected as an alternative to West-led groupings

RISHIKA SINGH
NEW DELHI, JULY 4

ON THURSDAY, the last day of the two-day Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Later, while delivering remarks on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Jaishankar said, "The SCO occupies a prominent place in our foreign policy." He also extended his wishes to Belarus, which has become the grouping's latest member.

What is the SCO?

SCO comes from the earlier "Shanghai Five" grouping, formed in 1996, comprising China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

With the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, there were concerns about extremist religious groups and ethnic tensions flaring up in the region. The organisation was thus created primarily for cooperation on security matters.

Building on this, SCO was established in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, as an international organisation. Before Belarus joined, it had nine members: India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Why is the SCO significant?

SCO is one of the few international organisations which deal with security issues. It primarily has Asian members, and Russia and China have stressed it as an alternative to a "Western" order. Commenting on Iran's inclusion in the SCO last year, Chinese state media outlet

Global Times said in 2023, "For Iran, it is an important step in breaking the US diplomatic blockade".

But despite declarations of a "limitless friendship" between China and Russia of late, there is a sense of competition between them over influence here.

The Central Asian republics have traditionally been viewed as part of Russia's backyard, but of late, China has also sought to leverage the oil and gas-rich nations by investing in infrastructure projects under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The inclusion of India and Pakistan in 2017 also reflected this jostling. While

Russia supported India's entry as a longstanding strategic partner, China backed its ally Pakistan to prevent the balance of powers from tilting in Russia's favour.

SCO's recent expansion also comes amid the United States' deteriorating ties with Russia and China after the 2022 Russia-Ukraine War and trade tensions with China.



EAM Jaishankar and Chinese FM Wang Yi at the SCO summit in Astana. X/DrSJaishankar

What is its relevance for India?

On one level, SCO membership allows India a forum to cooperate with Central Asian countries, which have not had particularly close relations with India since their formation in 1991.

But there are clear roadblocks, with the current state of India's relations with fellow members China and Pakistan. The New Delhi Declaration, issued at the end of the 2023 summit, saw India refuse to sign off on a paragraph supporting the BRI. India's opposition comes from its constituent China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is proposed to pass through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. India sees it as a violation of its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

- **Formation and Purpose of SCO**

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) originated from the "Shanghai Five" group formed in 1996, consisting of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.
- Established in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, with an aim to address security concerns post-USSR dissolution, particularly extremism and ethnic tensions.
- Initially focused on cooperation in security matters.

- **Current Membership**

- SCO now includes India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus (latest member).

- **Role and Importance**

- SCO is an important forum for non-Western countries to cooperate on security and economic issues.
- Seen as an alternative to Western-led organizations, particularly by Russia and China.

- **Strategic Moves**

- China and Russia have historically viewed Central Asia as their sphere of influence, but China is increasing its investments through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- Inclusion of India and Pakistan in 2017 reflects geopolitical jostling.

- **Iran's Inclusion**

- Iran's membership in 2023 is seen as a step to counter US diplomatic pressure.
- Chinese state media emphasized its importance for breaking the US diplomatic blockade.

- **India's Position**

- India leverages SCO to strengthen ties with Central Asian countries.
- However, India opposes the BRI, particularly due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, seen as a violation of India's territorial integrity.

- **2023 Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan**
- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar engaged with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.
- Emphasized SCO's importance in India's foreign policy.
- Highlighted the ongoing competition between China and Russia despite their strategic partnership.

- **What is the primary focus of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)?**
- A) Promotion of Western democratic values.
- B) Economic development through Western partnerships.
- C) Cooperation on security matters among member states.
- D) Military alliances against non-member countries.

Producer Price Index in the works, to replace WPI

Industry ministry to get the draft vetted by statistical commission

MUKESH JAGOTA
New Delhi, July 4

THE COUNTRY WILL have a Producer Price Index (PPI) to gauge the price pressures in the next few months, in addition to the extant consumer price index. The wholesale price index (WPI) may be on its way out.

The model for the proposed PPI is being worked upon and thereafter it would be examined by the National Statistical Commission (NSC), following which it will be placed before higher authorities for approval, a senior official said on Thursday.

“Consultations with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) have been done. It has to go through a process..we are on the job,” secretary in the department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said.

“The model from our side is final and we have taken expert advice from International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the methodology. The procedural clearances required will be worked on. That process is on but

IN A TRANSITIONAL PHASE

■ The Producer Price Index has been discussed for the past 20 years when the idea was first mooted

■ In 2019, the government had constituted a working group for revision of the current series of WPI that has 2011-12 as its base year



■ India is one of the few countries that still uses WPI. All members of the G-20, including China, have PPI

■ The CPI is the yardstick relied on by the Reserve Bank of India and the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) under the inflation targeting framework

cannot give the timeline,” he added.

The PPI has been discussed for the past 20 years when the idea was first mooted. While the need to move to PPI from WPI was expressed in 2003 it was only in 2014 that a working group was set up to determine the methodology and data requirements to move ahead. The report of the group came in 2017 but no decision was taken on it.

In 2019, the government had constituted a working group for revision of the current series of WPI with 2011-12 as its base year. The task before the group was to suggest a new base year for WPI and suggest additions and deletions of com-

modities in the basket of goods whose prices are tracked to draw the index. The working group was also empowered to recommend a roadmap for moving to the Producer Price Index (PPI) from WPI.

“That (revision of WPI base year) is also one of the issues that the government is considering. I suppose you can expect some sort of an update of the base year eventually, but whether there will be one particular base year or different... because our studies show that other countries have multiple base years for different types of indices,” Singh said.

On whether the WPI will be discontinued after the PPI is rolled out,

the secretary said, “There will be a transitional phase where both will be there. It (WPI) should go but a call will have to be taken.”

The CPI is the yardstick relied on by the Reserve Bank of India and the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) under the inflation targeting framework. However, the WPI has a larger *de facto* weight in the GDP deflator than CPI, which explains the unusually narrow gap between the nominal and real GDP growth rates seen in recent quarters.

India is one of the few countries that still uses WPI. All members of the G-20, including China, have PPI. PPI globally tracks price movements in both goods and services.

PPI is different from WPI in the way that it measures the average change in prices received by producers and excludes indirect taxes. WPI captures the price changes at the point of bulk transactions and may include some taxes and transportation costs. PPI also removes multiple counting bias inherent in WPI. The shedding of additional costs on products imposed by taxes and transportation makes it a more accurate gauge of price movements.

Weightage of an item in WPI is based on net traded value whereas in PPI weights are retrieved from Supply Use Tables. PPI also includes services while WPI only has goods.

- **Introduction of Producer Price Index (PPI)**
- India is set to introduce a Producer Price Index (PPI) to measure price pressures, replacing the Wholesale Price Index (WPI).
- The PPI will be an addition to the existing Consumer Price Index (CPI).

- **Development and Approval**

- The model for the proposed PPI is being developed and will be reviewed by the National Statistical Commission (NSC).
- The final draft will be submitted to higher authorities for approval.

- **Historical Context and Consultation**

- The idea of PPI has been discussed for over 20 years, with initial assessments made in 2003.
- In 2019, a working group was established to suggest a roadmap for implementing PPI.
- The working group consisted of experts from various fields, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

- **Comparison with WPI and CPI**

- PPI measures the average change in prices received by producers for their output, excluding indirect taxes.
- WPI includes changes at the point of bulk transactions and factors in taxes and transportation costs.
- CPI is the primary index relied upon by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) under the inflation targeting framework.
- WPI has a larger weight in the GDP deflator than CPI, explaining discrepancies between nominal and real GDP growth rates.

1.Global Context

1. Most G-20 countries, including China, use PPI.
2. India is one of the few countries still using WPI.

2.Implementation Challenges and Expectations

1. A transitional phase is expected where both WPI and PPI will coexist.
2. The new index will draw from a broad range of goods and services, aiming to provide a more accurate measure of price movements.

- **What is the main difference between the Producer Price Index (PPI) and the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)?**
- A) PPI measures price changes at the retail level, while WPI measures price changes at the producer level.
- B) PPI measures the average change in prices received by producers excluding indirect taxes, while WPI includes taxes and transportation costs.
- C) PPI includes price changes of goods and services, while WPI includes only goods.
- D) PPI is the primary index used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for inflation targeting, while WPI is used by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).



Death Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

- Every year, 4th July is observed as the death anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.
- He is considered as the father of modern Indian nationalism and is also credited with raising interfaith awareness and bringing Hinduism to the status of a major world religion in the late 19th century.

- What are the Key Points About Swami Vivekananda?
- About: Vivekananda was born as Narendranath Datta on 12th January 1863 in Calcutta.
- In 1893, upon the request of Maharaja Ajit Singh of the Khetri State, he took the name 'Vivekananda.'
- He is credited for introducing yoga and Vedanta to the West. He died at Belur Math (1902) in West Bengal.
- It is the headquarters of Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission.
- National Youth Day is held every year on 12th January to observe the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

- **Spiritual Contribution:**
- **He was one of India's greatest spiritual leaders and intellectuals and was the chief disciple of the Ramakrishna Paramhansa.**
- **Vivekananda's message to the world about human values is rooted in the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita, as well as the examples set by the Buddha and Jesus.**
 - **His mission was to bridge the gap between paramartha (service) and vyavahara (behavior), as well as between spirituality and daily life.**
 - **He advocated the doctrine of service. Serving jiva (living beings) is considered worship of Siva.**



Windfall Tax

- Recently, the Indian government has increased the windfall tax on domestically produced crude oil from Rs 3,250 per tonne to Rs 6,000 per tonne.
- A Windfall Tax is a type of tax that is levied on companies or individuals who have unexpectedly and/or dramatically gained large profits, often due to external factors beyond their control.
- It is commonly levied on industries such as oil, gas, and mining.

- **The purpose is to capture a portion of the extraordinary profits that companies make and redistribute it for public good.**
- **It is a strategic measure to promote transparency and fairness and responsible economic practices in the energy industry.**

-

- **This hike will impact the profits of oil companies operating in India and reduce their earnings.**
- **India first implemented windfall profit taxes on 1st July 2022, aligning with other countries that tax excessive profits of energy companies.**
- **The tax rates are reassessed every 2 weeks, taking into account international crude prices from the preceding fortnight.**

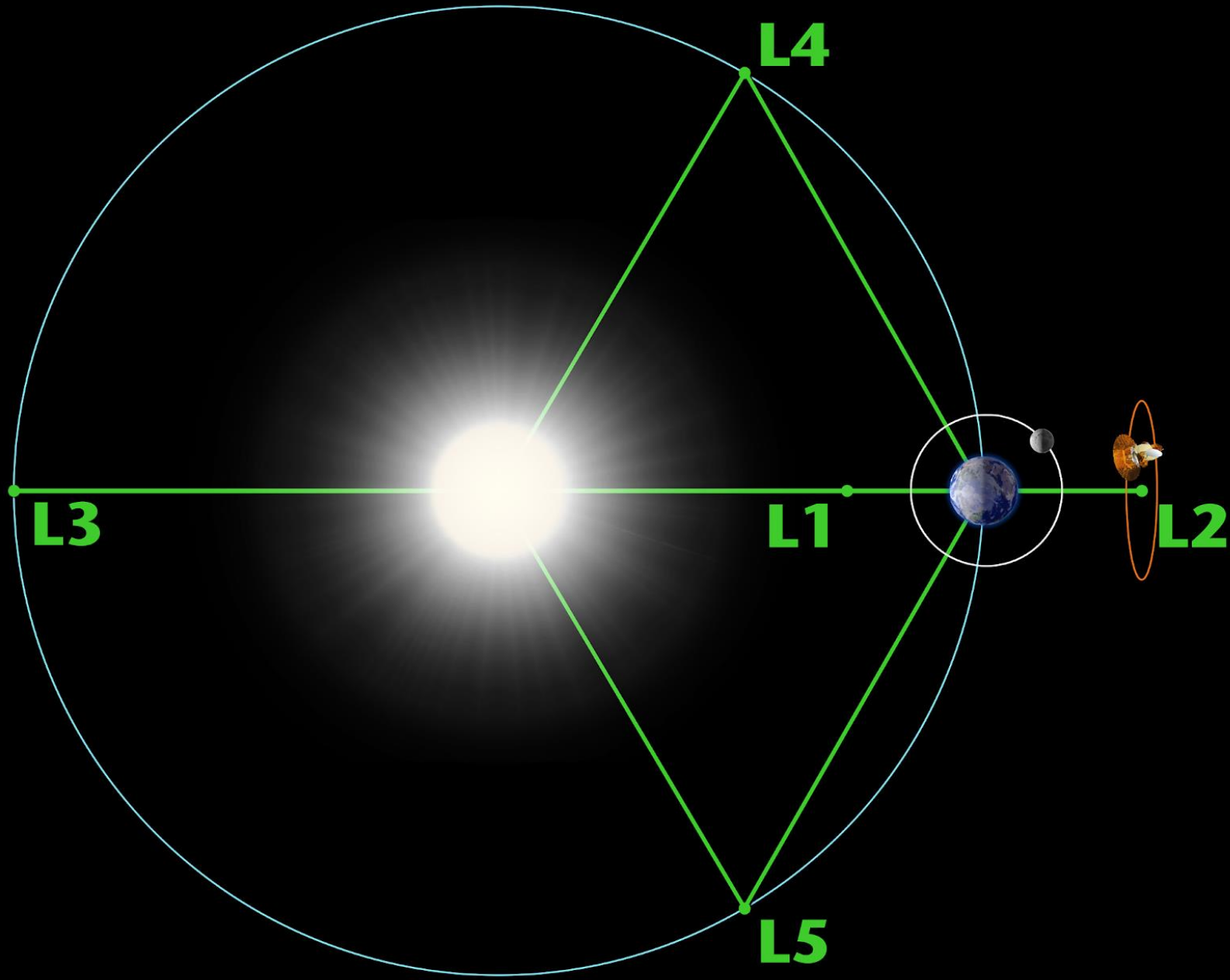


Aditya-L1 Spacecraft Completed First Halo Orbit



- India's first solar mission, the **Aditya-L1 spacecraft**, has completed its **first halo orbit around the Sun-Earth L1 point**.
- **About**
- The Aditya-L1 mission was launched in **2023**, and was inserted in its **targeted halo orbit on January 6, 2024**.
- The Aditya-L1 spacecraft in the halo orbit takes **178 days to complete a revolution around the L1 point**.
-

- **What is the Aditya-L1 mission?**
- **Aditya-L1** is the first space-based Indian observatory to study the Sun. It was launched on September 2, 2023 by the **PSLV-C57**.
- Solar observatory is placed at Lagrangian point **L1** for “Observing and understanding the chromospheric and coronal dynamics of the Sun” in a continuous manner.



- **Other missions to Sun**
- **NASA's Parker Solar Probe**, launched in 2018, has already gone far closer — but it will be looking away from the Sun.
- **Helios 2 solar probe**, a joint venture between NASA and the space agency of erstwhile West Germany, was launched to investigate solar processes of the Sun's surface in 1976.

Sampoornata Abhiyan

- Recently, **NITI Aayog** has launched the ‘Sampoornata Abhiyan’ with the aim of achieving saturation in key indicators across Aspirational Districts and Blocks.
- **About the Sampoornata Abhiyan**
- It is a **three-month campaign**, running from July to September 2024, seeking to uplift the relatively backward and remote areas of the country.

- It focuses on **six critical Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** in both Aspirational Districts and Aspirational Blocks.
- NITI Aayog collaborates with Central Ministries, State Governments, and Union Territories to ensure effective development. The focus lies on improved planning, capacity building, and sustainable service delivery.

Aspirational Blocks	Aspirational Districts
<p>Percentage of pregnant women registered for Antenatal Care (ANC) within the first trimester; Percentage of persons screened for Diabetes and Hypertension; Percentage of pregnant women receiving Supplementary Nutrition under the ICDS Programme regularly; Percentage of Soil Health Cards generated; Percentage of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with a Revolving Fund; Percentage of schools with functional electricity at the secondary level and providing textbooks promptly;</p>	<p>Percentage of pregnant women registered for Antenatal Care (ANC) within the first trimester; Percentage of pregnant women taking Supplementary Nutrition under the ICDS Programme regularly; Percentage of children fully immunised (9-11 months) (BCG + DPT3 + OPV3 + Measles 1); Number of Soil Health Cards distributed; Percentage of schools with functional electricity at the secondary level, and providing textbooks to children within 1 month of the start of the academic session.</p>

Word of the day

Imperative:

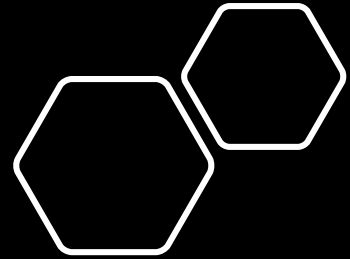
a mood that expresses an intention to influence the listener's behaviour; some duty that is essential and urgent; requiring attention or action

Synonym: important

Usage: *It was imperative that he act as naturally as possible.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/imperativepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪm'pɛɹ.ə.tɪv/



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A group of people are shown in a dimly lit room, clapping their hands. The focus is on the hands in the foreground, with some people in the background also clapping. The lighting is soft and moody, creating a warm and appreciative atmosphere. An orange horizontal bar is located in the top left corner of the image.

Thank you
guys.
