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A silhouette of a woman wearing a cap and a tank top, sitting on a rock and looking out over a dark, hazy landscape. The scene is dimly lit, with the woman's form and the rock she sits on being the primary light sources against the dark background.

Be a voice.
Not an echo.



Teesta-V hydel power station suffers damage
JK ASSEMBLY ELECTION
EC issues notification for first phase of polls
NEWS » PAGE 5



India, Japan hold '2+2' ministerial dialogue
NEWS » PAGE 6



Ex-principal booked on graft allegations
KOLKATA
The Kolkata Police has booked Sandip Ghosh, the former principal, on allegations of corruption and irregularities and sent him a notice to appear before the police allegedly for disclosing the identity of the victim. » PAGE 4



Target Gold Aman wants to win the top prize at LA
SPORT » PAGE 16

INSIDE



Will pursue any complaints of abuse: Kerala CM
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the government would intervene if any of those who deposed before the Hema Committee preferred to come forward with a complaint. » PAGE 3

President Biden passes the torch to Kamala Harris
CHICAGO
U.S. President Joe Biden passed the torch to Democratic nominee Kamala Harris at the party's convention in Chicago on Monday. » PAGE 24

SC forms task force to ensure doctors' safety

Taking up a suo motu case over the rape and murder of a doctor, court asks task force to recommend security measures, safety audits, and enhanced police presence; it gives Centre a month to collate data from States and Union Territories on security and facilities at all government-run hospitals; top court asks CBI to submit its report tomorrow

Krishnanand Rajagopal
NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Tuesday constituted a National Task Force to work out the modalities of safety measures for medical professionals. The NTF will recommend security measures on hospital premises; infrastructure development, including separate restrooms; technological interventions to limit access to critical hospital areas; CCTV cameras; provision of night transport; counselling services; crisis workshops; quarterly safety audits; and enhanced police presence in hospitals.
A three-judge Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, explaining why the court



Doctors of RML Hospital watch a live-stream of the Supreme Court hearing in New Delhi on Tuesday. SHASHI SEKHAR KASHYAP

Redressal Act, 2013, Surgeon Vice-Admiral Arjit Sarin, Director General Medical Services (Navy); D. Nageshwar Reddy, Chairperson and Managing Director, Asian Institute of Gastroenterology and AG Hospital, Hyderabad; M. Srinivas, Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi; Pratima

Paras Health, have been appointed members of the NTF. The Cabinet Secretary; the Union Home and Family Welfare Secretaries; the Chairperson, National Medical Commission; and President, National Board of Examinations will function as its ex-officio members.
"There is a virtual absence of safety for doctors, especially young women doctors. They have 36-hour shifts. We need a national protocol for safe conditions of work for doctors and medical personnel. It is not that every time there is a rape and murder, the conscience of the nation is awakened. We need a protocol not just on paper, but to be actually implemented," Chief Justice Chandrachud said.
The Chief Justice said

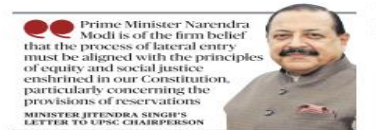
women medical professionals were especially vulnerable to sexual assaults. Gender violence in the medical profession was a matter of very serious concern.
The Chief Justice reached out to the protesting doctors and medical staff to resume work, saying their concerns would be given the highest priority by the Supreme Court. The top court warned the West Bengal government against "sunbathing" its might on protestors.
The Bench directed the CBI, which is currently in charge of the investigation into the crime on the orders of the Calcutta High Court, to submit its report on August 22.
REGRESSIVE MOVE » PAGE 8

After backlash, Union govt. orders + cancellation of lateral recruitment

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

Following a request from the Centre, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Tuesday cancelled the process of lateral recruitment of officials to middle and senior levels in the Union government.

Two days ago, the commission invited applications for the recruitment of "specialists", including from private sector, to 45 posts but this has been withdrawn as the government moved to cancel the recruitments, citing absence of reservation for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh wrote to UPSC Chairperson Priti Sudan on Tuesday to withdraw the process.
This follows protests by



not just the Opposition but also the Lok Janshakti Party, a National Democratic Alliance partner, which declared that recruitment without quotas for SC and ST communities was "unacceptable".
"Transparent process" Mr. Singh's letter said that under the Modi government, what had been an ad-hoc process of lateral entry in the past was being made transparent, a depart-

Opposition parties welcome Centre's decision

NEW DELHI
Opposition parties welcomed the move but said it was a sign of "weak" decision-making of the Modi government, that PM Modi could "no longer act unilaterally". » PAGE 5

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi is of the firm belief that the process of lateral entry must be aligned with the principles of equity and social justice enshrined in our Constitution. The provisions of reservations for the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, which were a cornerstone of our social justice framework, aimed at addressing historical injustices," he wrote.

Healing touch



Royal recourse: Britain's King Charles outside the Town Hall in Southampton on Tuesday during a community visit to remember the victims of a mass stabbing that left three children dead. REUTERS

Polio case in Meghalaya is vaccine-derived, says official

Bindu Shajan Perappadan Bahui Karmakar
NEW DELHI/SHILLONG

A case of vaccine-derived polio is suspected in a two-year-old child at Tikrikilla in West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. A senior Union Health Ministry official said on Tuesday that this was not a case of wild polio but an infection derived from Assam's Goalpara. Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said Health officials in the State said stool and urine samples from the child were sent to testing centres in Kolkata and Mumbai run by the National Institute of Virology. Officials in West Garo Hills are on high alert after the emergence of the case. "The two-year-old child

"This is not a case of wild polio but an infection from people with low immunity acquire"
from Tikrikilla was found to have symptoms of polio myelitis more than a week ago. The child was diagnosed with acute flaccid paralysis at a hospital in Assam's Goalpara. Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said Health officials in the State said stool and urine samples from the child were sent to testing centres in Kolkata and Mumbai run by the National Institute of Virology. Officials in West Garo Hills are on high alert after the emergence of the case. "The two-year-old child

After years of impasse, India, Malaysia raise strategic partnership, discuss entry to BRICS

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India and Malaysia decided to upgrade ties to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" on Tuesday, during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, as part of a visit aimed at moving beyond several years of tensions over a number of issues.
The two leaders announced the decision to upgrade the 2010 Strategic Partnership, which had been made an "enhanced" in 2015, along with a number of agreements and MoUs signed in their presence.
India would also work



Boosting ties: Narendra Modi and Anwar Ibrahim during a meeting at Hyderabad House in Delhi on Tuesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

with Malaysia on its request to join the BRICS grouping — one that Mr. Ibrahim has been pushing for, officials said. The two Prime Ministers also discussed geopolitical challenges, including the current conflicts and tensions

national laws. And, advocate peaceful resolution of all disputes," he added.
At the Indian Council for World Affairs, Mr. Ibrahim praised India's "unique, multi-aligned approach" and "astute and adept compartmentalisation of priorities and challenges".
"Resilient backbone" The Atlantic Ocean must bear the dark history of imperial expansion, gruesome colonisation, and chattel slavery and as the Pacific Ocean world is riddled with tensions and on the epicentre of the renewal of the Cold War, here in the Indian Ocean world, we can create a stable and resilient backbone for the global economy," he said.
Mr. Ibrahim's visit is the first by a Malaysian Prime Minister since 2018, after which ties soured over Malaysia's strong criticism of the Citizenship Amendment Act, the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, India's demand for the extradition of controversial preacher Zakir Naik, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic when hundreds of Malaysians were detained in the lockdown in India.
Calling it "unfortunate" that ties have not progressed in the past few years, Mr. Ibrahim said it was important to note India and Malaysia's similarities as two multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries".

SC forms task force to ensure doctors' safety

Taking up a *suo motu* case over the rape and murder of a doctor, court asks task force to recommend security measures, safety audits, and enhanced police presence; it gives Centre a month to collate data from States and Union Territories on security and facilities at all government-run hospitals; top court asks CBI to submit its report tomorrow

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday constituted a National Task Force to work out the modalities of safety measures for medical professionals. The NTF will recommend security measures on hospital premises; infrastructure development, including separate restrooms; technological interventions to limit access to critical hospital areas; CCTV cameras; provision of night transport; counselling services; crisis workshops; quarterly safety audits; and enhanced police presence in hospitals.

A three-judge Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, explaining why the court

had taken *suo motu* cognisance of the rape and murder of a junior doctor at the State-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, said the case laid bare the systemic failure in providing safety to medical professionals.

The court said the “horrific” crime was the last straw and “the nation cannot wait for another rape and murder in order to bring in safety laws for medical professionals and doctors”.

The Centre was given a month to collate data from States and Union Territories on security and infrastructure facilities at all government-run hospitals. This would include whether they have complied with the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and



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Redressal) Act, 2013.

Surgeon Vice-Admiral Arti Sarin, Director General Medical Services (Navy); D. Nageshwar Reddy, Chairperson and Managing Director, Asian Institute of Gastroenterology and AIG Hospitals, Hyderabad; M. Srinivas, Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi; Pratima

Murthy, Director, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru; Govardhen Dutt Puri, Executive Director, AIIMS, Jodhpur; Saumitra Rawat, Chairperson, Institute of Surgical Gastroenterology and Member, Board of Management, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi; Anita

Ex-principal booked on graft allegations

KOLKATA

The Kolkata Police has booked Sandip Ghosh, the former principal, on allegations of corruption and irregularities and sent him a notice to appear before the police allegedly for disclosing the identity of the victim. » PAGE 4

Saxena, Vice-Chancellor, Pandit B.D. Sharma Medical University, Rohtak; Palavi Saple, Dean, Grant Medical College, Mumbai and Sir J.J. Group of Hospitals, Mumbai; and Padma Srivastav, former Professor, Neurology Department, AIIMS, Delhi, currently serving as Chairperson of Neurology,

Paras Health, have been appointed members of the NTF. The Cabinet Secretary; the Union Home and Family Welfare Secretaries; the Chairperson, National Medical Commission; and President, National Board of Examinations will function as its ex-officio members.

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women medical professionals were especially vulnerable to sexual assaults. Gender violence in the medical profession was a matter of very serious concern.

The Chief Justice reached out to the protesting doctors and medical staff to resume work, saying their concerns would be given the highest priority by the Supreme Court. The top court warned the West Bengal government against “unleashing” its might on protestors.

The Bench directed the CBI, which is currently in charge of the investigation into the crime on the orders of the Calcutta High Court, to submit its report on August 22.

REGRESSIVE MOVE

» PAGE 8

- **Supreme Court's Initiative:**

- The Supreme Court of India has constituted a National Task Force (NTF) to ensure the safety of medical professionals, particularly in the wake of the rape and murder of a junior doctor at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.
- The NTF will recommend security measures, conduct safety audits, and propose enhanced police presence in hospitals.

- **Mandate of the National Task Force (NTF):**
- The NTF is tasked with recommending measures for hospital premises security, infrastructure development (e.g., separate restrooms, night transport, and crisis workshops), and technological interventions (e.g., CCTV cameras and quarterly safety audits).
- The NTF will also address issues related to compliance with existing laws such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013.

- **Composition of the NTF:**

- The NTF includes high-ranking officials and experts from various medical and administrative fields, such as Surgeon Vice-Admiral Arti Saini (Navy), D. Nageshwar Reddy (AIG Hospitals), M. Srinivas (AIIMS), and others.
- The Cabinet Secretary, Union Home and Family Welfare Secretaries, and Chairpersons of the National Medical Commission and National Board of Examinations will serve as ex-officio members.

- **Court's Directive to the Centre:**

- The Centre has been given a month to collect data from all States and Union Territories on security and infrastructure facilities at government-run hospitals.
- This data will include compliance reports on existing safety regulations for women in the workplace

- **Safety Concerns in the Medical Profession:**
 - The Supreme Court expressed concern over the lack of safety for doctors, especially young female doctors, and stressed the urgency of implementing a national protocol for safe working conditions.
 - Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud emphasized the need for action, not just on paper, but in real terms to ensure the safety of medical professionals
-
- **Court's Directive to the CBI:**
 - The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), currently investigating the Kolkata incident, has been directed to submit its report by August 22.

- What is the primary purpose of the National Task Force (NTF) constituted by the Supreme Court?
- a) To recommend new medical treatments.
- b) To manage hospital finances.
- c) To ensure the safety of medical professionals and recommend security measures.
- d) To recruit more doctors for government hospitals.

After years of impasse, India, Malaysia raise strategic partnership, discuss entry to BRICS

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

India and Malaysia decided to upgrade ties to a “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” on Tuesday, during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, as part of a visit aimed at moving beyond several years of tensions over a number of issues.

The two leaders announced the decision to upgrade the 2010 Strategic Partnership, which had been made an “Enhanced Strategic Partnership” in 2015, along with a number of agreements and MoUs signed in their presence.

India would also work



Boosting ties: Narendra Modi and Anwar Ibrahim during a meeting at Hyderabad House in Delhi on Tuesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

with Malaysia on its request to join the BRICS grouping – one that Mr. Ibrahim has been pushing for, officials said. The two Prime Ministers also discussed geopolitical challenges, including the current conflicts and tensions

in the Indo-Pacific region.

“Malaysia is an important partner of India in ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific region,” Mr. Modi said after the meeting. “We are committed to freedom of navigation and overflight in accordance with inter-

national laws. And, advocate peaceful resolution of all disputes,” he added.

At the Indian Council for World Affairs, Mr. Ibrahim praised India’s “unique, multi-aligned approach” and “astute and adept compartmentalisation of priorities and challenges”.

‘Resilient backbone’

“Whereas the Atlantic Ocean must bear the dark history of imperial expansion, gruesome colonisation, and chattel slavery and as the Pacific Ocean world is riddled with tensions and on the epicentre of the renewal of the Cold War, here in the Indian Ocean world we can create a stable and resilient backbone for the global econo-

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Mr. Ibrahim’s visit is the first by a Malaysian Prime Minister since 2018, after which ties soured over Malaysia’s strong criticism of the Citizenship Amendment Act, the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, India’s demand for the extradition of controversial preacher Zakir Naik, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic when hundreds of Malaysians were detained in the lockdown in India.

Calling it “unfortunate” that ties have not progressed in the past few years, Mr. Ibrahim said it was important to note India and Malaysia’s similarities as two “multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries”.



Thailand

South China Sea

Malaysia

Peninsular
Malaysia

★ Kuala Lumpur

Singapore

Brunei

Sarawak

Sabah

Indonesia



- Show globe
- Show map of Southeast Asia
- Show all

Location of Malaysia (dark green)
– in [Asia](#) (dark gray & white)
– in [ASEAN](#) (dark gray)

Capital and largest city [Kuala Lumpur](#)^[fn 1]
3°8′N 101°41′E﻿ / ﻿3°8′N 101°41′E﻿ / 3.133°N 101.683°E

Administrative center [Putrajaya](#)^[fn 2]
2°56′N 101°42′E﻿ / ﻿2°56′N 101°42′E﻿ / 2.933°N 101.7°E

National languages (official) [Malay](#) (*de jure*)
^{[a][b][c]}

Recognized languages [English](#) (*de facto*)^[c]

Ethnic groups (2023)^{[2][3][4]}

- 70.5% [Bumiputera](#)
 - 57.3% [Malay](#)
 - 13.2% indigenous groups of [Sabah](#), [Sarawak](#), [Orang Asli](#) and other
- 22.9% [Chinese](#)
- 6.6% [Indian](#)

Religion (2020)^[6]

- 63.5% [Sunni Islam](#) (official)^[5]
- 18.7% [Buddhism](#)
- 9.1% [Christianity](#)
- 8.1% [Hinduism](#)
- 0.4% [Others](#)

- [Yang di-Pertuan Agong](#) (King) [Ibrahim Iskandar](#)
- [Prime Minister](#) [Anwar Ibrahim](#)
- [President of the Dewan Negara](#) [Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah](#)

Legislature [Parliament](#)

- [Upper house](#) [Dewan Negara](#) (Senate)
- [Lower house](#) [Dewan Rakyat](#) (House of Representatives)

Independence from the [United Kingdom](#)

- [Federation of Malaya](#) 31 August 1957^[7]
- [Sarawak self-governance](#) 22 July 1963
- [North Borneo self-governance](#) 31 August 1963^[8]
- [Proclamation of Malaysia](#) 16 September 1963

Area

- Total [330,803](#)^{[9][10]} km² (127,724 sq mi) (67th)
- Water (%) 0.3

Population

- 2024 estimate [34,564,810](#)^[11] (43rd)
- 2020 census [32,447,385](#)^[12]
- Density [101/km²](#) (261.6/sq mi) (116th)

GDP (PPP) 2024 estimate

- Total [\\$1.306 trillion](#)^[13] (30th)
- Per capita [\\$39,030](#)^[13] (53rd)

GDP (nominal) 2024 estimate

- Total [\\$445.519 billion](#)^[13] (36th)
- Per capita [\\$13,315](#)^[13] (67th)

Trade	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (Apr - Nov)
Export	5.22	5.70	6.43	6.37	6.06	6.99	7.156	4.32
Import	8.93	9.01	10.81	9.78	8.39	12.42	12.734	7.42
Total	14.15	14.71	17.24	16.15	14.45	19.41	19.89	11.74

- **Major Exports:**

- Mineral fuels, mineral oils, aluminum and articles thereof, meat and edible meat offal, iron and steel, copper and articles thereof, etc.

- **Major Imports:**

- palm oil, mineral fuels, mineral oils, electrical machinery and equipment; animal or vegetable fats and oils, etc.

- **Upgrading of Strategic Partnership:**
- India and Malaysia have decided to upgrade their bilateral ties to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."
- This decision was made during talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in New Delhi.

- **Background and Significance:**

- The relationship was previously elevated to an "Enhanced Strategic Partnership" in 2015, building on a Strategic Partnership established in 2010.
- The upgrade in ties is aimed at moving beyond years of tension between the two countries on various issues.

- **Key Agreements and MoUs:**

- Several agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed during the meeting, marking a renewed commitment to bilateral cooperation.

- **Discussion on BRICS Membership:**

- India agreed to work with Malaysia on its request to join the BRICS grouping, a key goal for Prime Minister Ibrahim.
- The two leaders also discussed other geopolitical challenges, including tensions in the Indo-Pacific region.

- **Commitment to Freedom of Navigation:**
- Prime Minister Modi emphasized India's commitment to freedom of navigation and overflight in the Indo-Pacific region, in accordance with international laws.
- **Malaysia's Role in ASEAN and Indo-Pacific:**
- Prime Minister Modi highlighted Malaysia as an important partner in ASEAN and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

- **Addressing Historical Tensions:**

- Anwar Ibrahim acknowledged that ties had been strained due to Malaysia's criticism of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir, and India's request for the extradition of controversial preacher Zakir Naik, among other issues.
- Ibrahim expressed a desire to move beyond these tensions and focus on the similarities between India and Malaysia as multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious societies.

- What was one of the key outcomes of the talks between India and Malaysia as highlighted in the article?
- a) The signing of a defense treaty.
- b) An agreement to reduce tariffs between the two countries.
- c) The decision to upgrade bilateral ties to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."
- d) The announcement of a new trade corridor between India and Malaysia.

Next & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The age at which the oldest woman alive passed away

117 Maria Branyas, the American-born Spaniard who was considered the world's oldest person at 117 years old, has died, her family said on Tuesday. Branyas was one of the few of her age who survived severe symptoms of COVID-19. **AP**

Number of people killed in the recent Israeli strike

12 Gaza's civil defence agency said an Israeli strike on a school-turned shelter killed at least 12 people on Tuesday, while Israel said it struck a Hamas command centre. Thousands of displaced Palestinians had sought refuge in the school. **AP**

Number of cars recalled by BMW due to water pump issue

7.2 lakh. The impacted vehicles have water pumps with insufficient sealing, which could cause short circuiting, and in rare cases, lead to fires, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. **AP**

People who fell ill consuming spurious liquor in Odisha

14 All the affected persons hailed from the Ganjam district, particularly the Karabalu village. Excise commissioner Narasingha Bhol said that stringent action was to be taken against the people undertaking illegal liquor business in the area. **PTI**

Number of patents filed by Chandigarh university student

77 Navjot Singh's patented titles include "Revolutionising Network Security with Sustainability," "Smart Baby Toy Revolutionises Parenting" and "Intelligent IoT-Enabled Library Bookshelves." **PTI**

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On the ethanol blending programme

India is on its way to achieve its target of blending 20% of petrol with ethanol by 2025-26. However, the food versus fuel equation continues to hang over the ethanol economy along with questions regarding fuel efficiency in existing vehicles

ECONOMIC NOTES

M. Kalyanaraman

India is on its way to achieve its target of blending 20% of petrol with ethanol by 2025-26, going by the milestones on blending percentages crossed so far and the increase in ethanol production capacity. However, the food versus fuel equation continues to hang over the ethanol economy as recent events have shown. For example, maize import has increased from April to June of this year compared to last year at a time when maize has been used to produce more fuel ethanol to compensate for restrictions on using sugarcane products. The industry, however, opines India has enough grain and sugar surpluses. Tarun Sawhney, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, Triveni Engineering and Industries, says, "With big food stocks across the country, there is absolutely no concern about food security in the near future. I am concerned the supplies and stocks are so large that it could lead to wastage and spoiling," he said.

All the emphasis has been on first generation (1G) ethanol that is directly made from foodgrains and sugarcane. The government should diversify and move to 2G and 3G that are more benign in terms of impact on food security.

Status of ethanol production capacity Twenty per cent by 2025-26 would mean producing some 1,000 crore litres of ethanol for blending with petrol. "We are now seeing 13% to 15% blending with a sharp increase since 2021," says Sourabh Banerjee, consultant on ethanol and biofuels. In 2021, the blending was around 8%. Deepak Ballani, director general of Indian Sugar and Bio-energy Manufacturers Association, says the sugar industry has invested some 10,000 crore in the last few years in capacity expansion. In just two years, 32 crore litre capacity was added.

The roadmap for achieving ethanol blending targets, prepared by the NITI Aayog, had laid down that the capacity of sugarcane-based distilleries would need to increase from 426 crore litres in 2021 to 760 crore litres in 2026, while grain-based distilleries' capacity should increase from 258 to 740 crore litres. In other words, a lot more of grain-based distilleries were to come up. Besides fuel ethanol, some 30 crore litres would be needed for making ethanol for consumable liquor as well as industrial uses. Taking stock in December 2023, the government said India's ethanol production capacity had already increased to 1,380 crore litres — some 875 crore litres capacity from sugarcane and 505 crore from foodgrains. This means the targeted total ethanol capacity is nearly achieved although policy is that maize as well as surplus rice and damaged grains will be used to feed grain-based distilleries.

India ranks as a major maize producer globally, but domestic consumption consistently outpaces production, says TERI's Bhattacharya. Over the last few years, Indian maize imports have been hovering around 0.4 to 0.5 million tonnes a year. A rapid diversion to ethanol will drive up prices and negatively impact its major uses — the poultry sector by 47%, followed by livestock feed (33%) and starch (4%). At 3 to 4 tonnes per hectare, India's maize yield is much lower than other countries, he adds.

Commerce Ministry data show that in 2023-24, Indian maize (corn) imports were \$39 million. This year, from April to June, the import is already worth \$103

Ethanol for blending

With the government restricting the use of B-heavy molasses and sugarcane juice for ethanol production from December 2023, grain-based ethanol production has increased to maintain blending percentages

Ethanol supplied to oil marketing companies

Year/Period	From sugarcane, million litres	From B-heavy molasses, million litres	Sugarcane juice, million litres	From other sources, million litres	Blending rate	Blending %	Blending %	Total In Disp. capacity, blending % in brackets
2018-20	74	68	15	0	16	0	0	173 (5.00)
2020-21	39	283	39	0	39	0	0	361 (6.10)
2021-22	11	255	85	49	24	0	0	424 (10.02)
2022-23	6	235	128	74	32	32	32	506 (12.06)
2023-24*	39	95	0	0	76	135	135	401 (13.00)

*Supply years are December-November, December to October for 2022-23 and November to October for 2023-24

*Data available only for November-June

Shortage: Sugar mill workers laid harvested sugarcane on a tractor trolley in Sangli district, Maharashtra, in 2022. REUTERS



up fuel ethanol production, the government had started permitting the diversion of the first two away from sugar production to fuel ethanol. Ethanol pricing depends on the sugar content of the input. In 2022-23, 63% of fuel ethanol came from B-heavy molasses and 33% from molasses. In December, 2023, the government restricted the diversion of the first two over fears of falling sugar stocks.

Mr. Ballani, however, believes the restrictions will be removed this year. He says that out of a total production of 340 lakh tonnes of sugar in 2023-24, consumption was only 285 lakh tonnes. Some closing stock is therefore available additionally. Expanding sugarcane production will have to be sustained by higher water use. Souvik Bhattacharya of The Earth Research Institute says to sustain 50% of 1,000 crore litres from sugarcane, 400 billion litres of water would be needed annually. Expanding sugarcane cultivation would redirect irrigation water from essential food-grain crops and exacerbating concerns about agricultural sustainability, he says. To make up for the shortfall due to restrictions on B-heavy molasses, grain-based distilleries, mainly maize, have likely been operating at full capacity to keep up with the blending percentages this year.

The government policy is that maize as well as surplus rice and damaged grains will be used to feed grain-based distilleries. India ranks as a major maize producer globally, but domestic consumption consistently outpaces production, says TERI's Bhattacharya. Over the last few years, Indian maize imports have been hovering around 0.4 to 0.5 million tonnes a year. A rapid diversion to ethanol will drive up prices and negatively impact its major uses — the poultry sector by 47%, followed by livestock feed (33%) and starch (4%). At 3 to 4 tonnes per hectare, India's maize yield is much lower than other countries, he adds.

Commerce Ministry data show that in 2023-24, Indian maize (corn) imports were \$39 million. This year, from April to June, the import is already worth \$103

million. As per NITI Aayog's estimates, some 4.8 million hectares will have to be added to maize cultivation area to meet the 20% target, which is almost half of the typical maize cultivation area.

On fuel efficiency in automobiles Ethanol will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it will also prevent an estimated foreign exchange outgo of some \$4 billion per year, as per Maruti Suzuki company estimates, and bolster the rural economy by promoting the cultivation of various crops through an assured market. Many vehicle makers say the government deadline of E20 (20% ethanol and 80% gasoline) compliance is achievable, but questions remain over existing vehicles whose performance would be affected by higher ethanol content.

The NITI Aayog report notes that ethanol brought down fuel efficiency in vehicles not suited for ethanol by an average of 6%. Many vehicle makers say they are in line with the government deadline of 2025. A Maruti Suzuki spokesperson told *The Hindu* that all Maruti vehicles have been compatible with E-20 fuel since April 2023. Existing vehicles may have to go for an engine retuning and change over to E20 supported material depending on what grade they are.

How different States view the policy Meanwhile, the developing ethanol economy has impacted States differently. While the fuel ethanol pricing is the same across India, States determine the pricing of Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) that goes into making liquor for consumption and other uses. That pricing has been a decider for sugarcane-based distilleries in opting for highly pure fuel ethanol vis-a-vis ENA and other forms of ethanol. In Uttar Pradesh, the government reserves some 25% of the ethanol for ENA. Mr. Sawhney says that ENA is less attractive since it offers lower value. Ethanol made from molasses, especially B-heavy molasses, offers significantly higher value, he adds. U.P. is fully aligned with the central government's mix of ethanol, says Mr. Sawhney. U.P. is the single largest contributor to the ethanol

blending program nationwide, he adds. "Most of the distilleries especially in U.P., as well as new capacity coming up, are multi-fuel, allowing them to process both sugarcane juice and molasses, and grain, including rice and maize. For the upcoming year, it is anticipated that 55% of the national requirement of ethanol will be met from sugarcane and the balance 45% would be met by grain distilleries."

In Tamil Nadu, where liquor is a highly lucrative market for distilleries, fuel ethanol has not yet caught on as much. The State government procures and sells all the liquor. Liquor revenue is one-sixth of all government revenue. An increase in sugarcane cultivation may not be possible because of water requirements, industry sources say. Broken rice may not be made available either. A highly placed government source said it would be bad politics in Tamil Nadu to supply rice, even broken rice, to ethanol since people will relate it to liquor and oppose. M. Ponnuswamy, Chairman and Managing Director of Non Pure Chemicals, advocates that the government should support maize cultivation as an alternative. "Maize is not water intensive. It degrades soil and cannot be the sole crop either. It can be used in rotation with sugarcane to ensure that soil fertility is not degraded," he says.

Some half a dozen distilleries for fuel ethanol are on the drawing boards and at various stages of completion. Assuring feedstock supply can help to promote a non-sugarcane distillery base in the State. Vishal Kamran, Chairman, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Maharashtra, says in Maharashtra it is more profitable to decider for sugarcane-based distilleries for ENA and supply it for other uses such as manufacturing activities, fashion and medicine than for ethanol blending. "All segments besides liquor are experiencing good demand thanks to a vibrant economy. This said, if there is a steady contract for procurement in blending then fuel ethanol can be attractive since additional processing will not be required after purity is ensured," he says.

Many across the industry demand an increase in ethanol pricing.

THE GIST

The roadmap for achieving ethanol blending targets, prepared by the NITI Aayog, had laid down that the capacity of sugarcane-based distilleries would need to increase from 426 crore litres in 2021 to 760 crore litres in 2026, while grain-based distilleries' capacity should increase from 258 to 740 crore litres.

Ethanol will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it will also prevent an estimated foreign exchange outgo of some \$4 billion per year, as per Maruti Suzuki company estimates, and bolster the rural economy by promoting the cultivation of various crops through an assured market.

Meanwhile, the developing ethanol economy has impacted States differently. While the fuel ethanol pricing is the same across India, States determine the pricing of Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) that goes into making liquor for consumption and other uses.

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The age at which the oldest woman alive passed away

117

Maria Branyas, the American-born Spaniard who was considered the world's oldest person at 117 years old, has died, her family said on Tuesday. Branyas was one of the few of her age who survived severe symptoms of COVID-19. AP

Rank ↕	Name ↕	Birth date ↕	Death date ↕	Age ↕	Place of death or residence ↕
1	Jeanne Calment ^[9]	21 February 1875	4 August 1997	122 years, 164 days ^[b]	France
2	Kane Tanaka ^[7]	2 January 1903	19 April 2022 ^[10]	119 years, 107 days	Japan
3	Sarah Knauss ^[11]	24 September 1880	30 December 1999	119 years, 97 days	United States
4	Lucile Randon ^[12]	11 February 1904	17 January 2023 ^[13]	118 years, 340 days	France
5	Nabi Tajima ^[7]	4 August 1900	21 April 2018	117 years, 260 days	Japan
6	Marie-Louise Meilleur ^[14]	29 August 1880	16 April 1998	117 years, 230 days	Canada
7	Violet Brown ^[7]	10 March 1900	15 September 2017	117 years, 189 days	Jamaica
8	Maria Branyas ^[5]	4 March 1907	19 August 2024 ^[15]	117 years, 168 days	Spain ^[c]
9	Emma Morano ^{[7][16]}	29 November 1899	15 April 2017	117 years, 137 days	Italy
10	Chiyo Miyako ^{[7][17]}	2 May 1901	22 July 2018 ^[18]	117 years, 81 days	Japan



Captivated crowd: People watch as a man plays Black Myth: Wukong in Shanghai on Tuesday. AFP

Blockbuster Chinese myth-based game has global fans hooked

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

Shape-shifting monkeys wielding magic staffs battled giant demons as players worldwide dived into Black Myth: Wukong, already hailed as one of the most successful Chinese-made video games. Black Myth was released globally on Tuesday and enjoyed one of the best opening days and sold nearly 1.2 million pre-release copies. More than 1.4 million people were playing Black Myth via gaming platform Steam at around 0900 GMT on Tuesday. That was the fourth-highest number recorded for a game — more than recent blockbuster titles such as Elden Ring and Cyberpunk 2077. Gartner Li Song said from a video shop in Beijing that he bought it as soon as it was available for pre-order. "It feels good," the 41-year-old said as his character scampers around a lush forest, dodging attacks from furry beasts before transforming into an insect. China's first Chinese-developed "Triple A" title, a term used to describe major, high-budget, stand-alone games, it is inspired by the classic 16th-century Chinese novel Journey to the West. Players step into the shoes of a character similar to the Monkey King Sun Wukong, a key figure in the story. A classic role-playing game, it requires players to build an arsenal of magic powers and deadly weapons as they control the "Destined One". Gaming shop owner Yuanyun said she could never have imagined that a Chinese title could enjoy such success. "It presents our myths and stories in a game for the whole world," she said. "As a Chinese person, I feel very proud."

Ministers, diplomats join the race to succeed Kishida as Japan's PM

Premier Fumio Kishida had announced his decision to step down as leader of the ruling party ahead of a party vote; nearly a dozen persons, from experienced politicians to a young gun, are competing to be the next leader and Prime Minister

Agence France-Presse
TOKYO

Nearly a dozen competitors are vying to succeed Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, when he steps down next month as leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) — and therefore Premier — ahead of a September 27 party vote. The liberal Tarō Kono, currently Japan's Minister for Digital Transformation, is an experienced and outspoken reformist who was defeated by Mr. Kishida in the last leadership race in 2021.

U.S.-educated Mr. Kono, 61, has held multiple minister jobs including Defence and Foreign Affairs. Thirteen years after the Fukushima disaster, he has softened his opposition to nuclear power in order to meet growing energy demands from data centres and AI. By LDP standards, he has liberal-leaning views, backing same-sex marriage, more immigration and supporting married women retaining their surnames. He has 2.5 million followers on X, as well as 79,000 on his English-language account. Mr. Kono also donated his kidney to his politician father — a former LDP President. "I have experienced so many Cabinet positions," Mr. Kono told a recent news conference. "I am hoping that one day I can make the most of this experience."



Making way: Japan's PM Fumio Kishida at a party convention in Tokyo. FILE PHOTO

The model maker Shigeru Ishiba is a former Minister whose portfolios include Defence and Agriculture and is popular with voters but less so with LDP lawmakers. Since they have the power when it comes to choosing leaders, this has resulted in four failed attempts by Mr. Ishiba to be party leader. The 67-year-old has questioned Japan's reliance on monetary easing while calling for efforts to shore up the rural economy. He likes making military models — including one of a Soviet aircraft carrier for the visit of a Russian Defence Minister — as well as making 1970s pop idols and trains. Harvard-educated former consultant and current Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa is one of three women reportedly weighing a bid to become Japan's first woman Premier. While holding an earlier post of justice Minister, Ms. Kamikawa, 71, ordered 16 executions, including the head of the Aum doomsday cult responsible for the 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. As Japan's top diplomat, she has won plaudits, including for a visit to Kyiv, Tokyo has strongly backed the Western position on the Ukraine war.

As a rare woman in Japanese business and politics — just 16% of lawmakers are women — Ms. Kamikawa has pushed for more. Her views on the environment, the country will be able to contribute to a peaceful international community more than ever," she said in an interview in March. Sanae Takachi is a vocal nationalist popular with the conservative wing of the LDP. She was close to assassinated former Premier Shinzo Abe whose supporters are still powerful. Ms. Takachi, 63, is a regular visitor to the Yasukuni shrine to Japan's war dead — including convicted war criminals — so her nomination would likely

rile China and South Korea. Like Abe, Ms. Takachi who also ran for the leadership in 2021 — backs aggressive monetary easing, active fiscal spending and nuclear power.

Young gun Surfing, media-savvy Shin-jiro Koizumi is the youthful, photogenic son of a popular former Premier Junichiro Koizumi. As Environment Minister, he backed greater use of renewables.

He makes a point of appearing as a modern father, taking paternity leave while being a Minister. But this does not endear him to LDP elders, who might see Koizumi as too young and too lightweight to be Prime Minister.

With strong English, Abe's former golf partner Takahiro Motegi was dubbed the "Trump whippersnapper" for his deft handling of the former U.S. President in tricky U.S.-Japan relations with the Islamic republic. Following that move, Iran summoned the German Ambassador to condemn what it called the "hostile actions" and called it a "clear example of Islamophobia". Germany's Interior Ministry acknowledged but is reportedly feared for having a short campaign would reportedly told Abe that he thought Motegi was "too tough".

Iran shuts down cultural centres linked to Germany

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran shut two offices linked to Germany's government on Tuesday, the judiciary said, nearly a month after the closure of religious centres in Germany over ties to the Islamic republic.

"Two branches of illegal centres affiliated with the German government, which violated Iran laws, were closed on Tuesday by order of the judicial authority," the judiciary's Mizan Online website said. It added that "reports of violations by other German-affiliated centres" in Iran had been received and that investigations were ongoing. Iran's Nour news agency said the two establishments that were closed were offices of the Goethe Institute, Germany's government-funded cultural outreach organisation.

On July 24, 2023, Germany banned the Islamic Centre over its alleged support for Lebanon's Hezbollah group, and its relations with the Islamic republic. Following that move, Iran summoned the German Ambassador to condemn what it called the "hostile actions" and called it a "clear example of Islamophobia". Germany's Interior Ministry acknowledged but is reportedly feared for having a short campaign would reportedly told Abe that he thought Motegi was "too tough".

Mr. Motegi, 68, is respected for his policy knowledge but is reportedly feared for having a short campaign would reportedly told Abe that he thought Motegi was "too tough".

Pak. province orders probe into monsoon child brides

Agence France-Presse
KARACHI

A Pakistan provincial government has ordered an inquiry into child marriages in areas affected by floods in 2022. Pakistan's high rate of marriages for underage girls had been inching lower in recent years, but after unprecedented floods in 2022 rights workers warned that such weddings were on the rise due to climate-driven economic insecurity. In a report published on August 16, AFP spoke to girls married at the ages of 13 and 14 in exchange for money at villages hard hit by the floods in Sindh province.

Sindh Chief Minister Muralidhar Shah has ordered an inquiry into the matter, his spokesperson Rashed Channa said. "My personal opinion is that there has always been this tradition of early marriages, but the floods have made people very desperate." In the village of Khan Mohammad Mallah, 45 unmarried girls have been married since last year's monsoon rains hit them in May and June this year, the NGO Sujag Sansar said. The summer monsoon between July and September is vital for the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security, scientists say climate change is making them heavier and longer, raising the risk of landslides, floods and longer-term crop damage. "This has led to a new trend of 'monsoon brides'," said Masood-ul-Birhmani, the founder of Sujag Sansar, which works with religious scholars to combat child marriage.

Moonlit midnight



Luna luminosa: A supermoon, also known as blue moon or 'Sturgeon Moon', rises over the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France on Monday. AFP/LEA

Taiwan conducts live-fire missile drills as China ramps up military threats

Associated Press
TAIPEI

Taiwan's military launched surface-to-air missile drills on Tuesday in response to growing military pressure from China. The exercises took place at the Jupeng Military Base in a remote area in southern Taiwan. Among the missiles launched were Taiwan's domestically made Sky Bow III anti-ballistic missiles along with the U.S.-made Patriot PAC-3 and surface-to-air Standard missiles. China claims the democratically ruled island of Taiwan as its own territory, and has been bringing under its control by force if necessary, said Masood-ul-Birhmani, the founder of Sujag Sansar, which works with religious scholars to combat child marriage.

Beijing in particular dislikes Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te, who took office earlier this year on Tuesday, hit their target. Beijing has boosted its deterrence capabilities in response. Missiles, both domestically built and U.S.-made, are key to its defence strategy. Defence Ministry spokesperson Sun Li-fang said



A missile fires off a surface-to-air missile system during the military drill in Pingtung, Taiwan on Tuesday. REUTERS

all the missiles launched on Tuesday hit their target. Beijing has boosted its deterrence capabilities in response. Missiles, both domestically built and U.S.-made, are key to its defence strategy. Defence Ministry spokesperson Sun Li-fang said

Philippines set to host visa processing centre for Afghans resettling in U.S.

Associated Press
MANILA

The Philippines has agreed to a request by the United States to temporarily host a U.S. immigrant visa processing centre for a limited number of Afghan nationals aspiring to resettle in the U.S., the treaty allies announced on Tuesday.

The Philippine government's approval of the request, which initially faced local concerns over potential security and legal issues, reflects how relations between Manila and Washington have deepened under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who took office in 2022.

The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said the agreement was undergoing final domestic procedures and needs to be finally ratified by Mr. Marcos before it takes effect. It did not provide other details, including how many Afghans would be allowed to temporarily stay in the Philippines at any time while their special immigrant visas for resettlement to the U.S. are being completed.

A senior Philippine official, however, said that only 150 to 300 applicants would be accommodated in the Philippines under the one-time deal. The official who had knowledge of the negotiations said the Philippines' provision of anonymity because of a lack of authority to speak publicly. Department of Foreign Affairs said Afghan nationals should secure a visa under the Philippines' laws and would be subjected to a security screening. Each visa applicant can stay not more than 90



Growing closer: U.S. President Joe Biden with Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in Washington. FILE PHOTO

days. The U.S. government will shoulder the costs for the stay of the Afghan nationals, including food, housing, security and medical and transportation expenses, Ms. Daza said. She added that the U.S. government and the State Department are supporting Afghan allies of the United States" and added that the Philippines' long and positive history of bilateral cooperation with the Philippines.

The Afghan nationals to be considered for resettlement primarily worked for the U.S. government in Afghanistan or were deemed eligible for U.S. special immigrant visas but were left behind when Washington withdrew from the country last year. The Philippines' military service from four months to one year. The U.S. is bound by its own laws to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself and considers all threats to the island as a matter of great concern.



Growing closer: U.S. President Joe Biden with Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in Washington. FILE PHOTO

laid the request to his Philippine counterpart in 2022, and President Joe Biden discussed the request when Mr. Marcos visited the U.S. last year, Philippine officials said. Mr. Marcos said last year that he was told by U.S. officials that a maximum of 1,000 Afghan nationals would be allowed to stay in the Philippines at any time while their special immigrant visas are being processed. He said at the time there were difficult legal and logistical issues to address for the programme to run as hoped.

Some Philippine officials have expressed fears the Afghan nationals could become targets of attacks while in the Philippines. Others said legal questions about an arrangement where U.S. authorities would have a say in vetting who could enter the Philippines. One prospective problem is what to do with Afghan nationals whose U.S. special visa immigrant application was indefinitely stalled or rejected, Mr. Marcos said and expressed concern that thousands of Afghan nationals could be stranded in 2022. China sends military threats to the island as a matter of great concern.

Moonlit midnight



Luna luminous: A supermoon, also known as blue moon or 'Sturgeon Moon', rises over the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France on Monday. REUTERS



- A "supermoon" appears to us as a larger-than-usual Moon in our night sky. A supermoon looks larger just because it's a bit closer to Earth. "Supermoon" is actually just a nickname for what astronomers call a perigean full moon – a moon that is full and at its closest point in its orbit around Earth.

-



- One meaning of a "blood moon" is based on its red glow. This blood moon occurs during a total lunar [eclipse](#). During a total lunar eclipse, Earth lines up between the Moon and the Sun. This hides the Moon from the sunlight.
- When this happens, the only light that reaches the Moon's surface is from the edges of the Earth's atmosphere. The air molecules from Earth's atmosphere scatter out most of the blue light.

- The remaining light reflects onto the Moon's surface with a red glow, making the Moon appear red in the night sky.
- The name "blood moon" is also sometimes used for a Moon that appears reddish because of dust, smoke or haze in the sky. And it can be one of the full moons of autumn when the leaves are turning red.

IN BRIEF



SC seeks Odisha's reply for early release of Staines' killer

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the Odisha government's response to a petition for premature release filed by Ravindra Pal, alias Dara Singh, who is serving a life sentence for the murders of Australian missionary Graham Stuart Staines and his two minor sons in Keonjhar in 1999. A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud issued notice to the State. They noted that the crime was serious. Singh has sought a more liberal remission policy to secure premature release. A mob led by Singh attacked Staines and his two sons — 11-year-old Philip and 8-year-old Timothy — while they were sleeping in their station wagon.

Protest erupts over sexual abuse of two girls in school

After thousands of angry parents staged a rail roko protest at the Badliapur railway station in Thane district of Maharashtra on Tuesday over the alleged sexual abuse of two four-year-old girls in a nursery school, an SIT has been formed to look into the issue. Promising action against the culprits, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said, "We are in the process of fast-tracking the case, and the offenders will not be spared." He instructed the officials to probe a "Sakshi Samiti" Committee had been established in the school. He emphasised following the standard operating procedures (SOPs) to prevent such incidents.

Ration shops to be named Jan Poshan Kendras

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Fair price shops (FPS), known as ration shops, will soon have a new name as the Centre launched a pilot project to rename 60 of them in various parts of the country as Jan Poshan Kendras. Union Food Minister Pralhad Joshi said the selected shops in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh will provide solution to the demand of ration dealers to raise their income level. "The kendras will offer a diverse range of nutritious food items to consumers as well as provide an additional source of income to the FPS dealers," he said on Tuesday. The kendras will have provision for storing 50% products under the category of nutrition while the rest for keeping other household items, the Centre said.

SC says no to euthanasia for aged couple's comatose son

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to grant an aged couple's plea to allow "passive euthanasia" for their 30-year-old son, who has been lying comatose at home for the fourth floor of a building.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud was visibly moved by the plight of the parents, who said they had exhausted both their savings and will power taking care of their son. "This is a very, very hard case," Chief Justice Chandrachud said.

He said that the man, Harihar Kania, was lying on a ventilator or any kind of life support. Letting him go would not amount to passive euthanasia, as he was not dependent on any external device to stay alive. "In this case, it would amount to active euthanasia, which is not legal," the Bench said.

The court had moved the top court after the Delhi High Court had refused to constitute a medical board to consider their plea for euthanasia for their son. "No doctor would agree to do that," the Chief Justice said.

India, Japan conduct '2+2' dialogue with focus on Indo-Pacific

Two sides hold discussion on defence cooperation, significance of open Indo-Pacific; Rajnath says partnership is based on democratic values

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The India-Japan partnership is set against a larger context of a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific and it will continue to grow, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday as both sides held a fresh edition of "2+2" dialogue amid China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region.



Japan's Minister of Defence Minoru Kihara receives the guard of honour in the presence of Rajnath Singh. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

and unpredictable world, there is a need for reliable partners with whom there are substantial convergences," he said.

"As a result, we have consciously sought to facilitate each other's efforts, strengthen each other's positions and work with other nations of shared comfort," he added.

In his remarks, Mr. Singh said the India-Japan special strategic and global

partnership is based on democratic values and the rule of law.

He said India has set a goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047 and building domestic defence capabilities is one of the significant aspects of this vision.

"The India-Japan partnership in the defence sector will be an important aspect to realise our goal. Let us make a vision for this partnership," the Defence Minister said.

SC slams HC 'suggestions' given to adolescent girls

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed "unwarranted" suggestions made by a Calcutta High Court Bench in a judgment last year, including that the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, must be amended to decriminalise consensual sexual acts involving adolescents above 16 years of age.

A Bench headed by Justice A.S. Okar also slammed the High Court Bench for "surprisingly carving out a non-existing category of romantic cases in rape cases". The case in question concerned the sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl by a 25-year-old man in 2018. She was compelled to marry him and have a child.

The POCSO court had sentenced the man to 20 years' imprisonment for aggravated sexual assault under the POCSO Act and

High Court judgment as "unwarranted". Judges, the top court said, should avoid expressing their personal views in judgments.

The High Court was not dealing with the sexual acts involving adolescents above 16 years, as the age of the victim was 14 years at the relevant time... The court said it would write a separate judgment on the face of the judgment," Justice Okar wrote.

The Supreme Court reviewed the conviction of the man for aggravated sexual assault under POCSO Act and rape.

The court directed the West Bengal government to constitute a committee of three experts, including a clinical psychologist and a social scientist, to meet with the woman and help her make an informed choice as to whether she would want to continue with the man or come out and avail State benefits promised for her welfare.

Trade, defence, cultural ties to be in focus during PM's visit to Poland

Dinakar Perai
WARSAW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Poland and Ukraine will be high on symbolism, even as geopolitical issues, trade, and defence aspects will be discussed at the highest levels. Mr. Modi is scheduled to be in Warsaw on August 21 and 22, the first by an Indian PM in 45 years, and the shared cultural ties will be in focus.

Poland can be a gateway to India to Europe and there is lot of potential to expand trade, but there is not enough clarity on how the system works in India, an Indian businessman based here noted.

Defence ties are also on the upswing with India recently posting a defence attaché at its embassy here and some Polish companies securing orders and looking to set up joint ventures in India.



Poland helped in the evacuation of 4,000 Indian students from Ukraine at the onset of the Russian invasion in 2022. R.V. MOORTHY

Poland has an Indian population of 25,000, out of which around 5,000 are students. Poland played a pivotal role in helping India evacuate its 4,000 Indian students from Ukraine during the onset of the Russian invasion in early 2022. Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs Tanmaya Lal noted.

One of the unique bonds between our countries relates to the time in the 1940s during the Second World War

Sikkim landslide damages building of NHPC project

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A landslide damaged six houses and a building of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) at the site of its Teesta-V hydro-dropper station in Gangtok district of Sikkim on Tuesday.

The power station, damaged by the glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) in October 2023, has been under construction. Officials said the incident occurred at about 7.30 a.m. at Bahatur, the site of the 510 MW Teesta Stage V project near Singtam town.

"The landslide damaged a structure they the NHPC call the GIS building and six houses, whose occupants were evacuated to safety. The Singtam-Dikchu road was cut off but an alternative passage has been cleared for communication," Gangtok District Collector Tushar G. Nikhare told The Hindu.

The evacuees were shifted to the NHPC's guest house, designated as a relief camp.

"We have asked the Border Roads Organisation to start restoration work on the damaged road, and the



A section of the Teesta power plant damaged by a glacial lake outburst flood in October 2023.

Department of Mines and Geology to study the landslide, a fresh one, and suggest short-term and long-term solutions," Mr. Nikhare said.

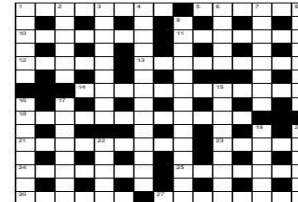
A spokesperson of the NHPC said a technical team from Delhi was expected to reach the landslide spot, assess the damage and recommend restoration measures. At least 40 people were killed and more than 75 went missing in the GLOF-induced flash flood in 2023. A few soldiers were among the dead and missing. Apart from affecting almost 90,000 people living along the banks of the Teesta, the flood damaged the 1,200 MW Teesta-II dam downstream.

investments in IT, pharmaceuticals, farm vehicles, electronics, steel and chemicals. Similarly, nearly 30 Polish companies have presence in India.

An Indian businessman established in Poland, Amit Lathi says that India had to showcase itself better and educate Polish businessmen on how to work in India. "In fact, Polish entrepreneurs are quite keen to develop business with India, but there is no road map, a clear road map for them on how to actually navigate within India. India has not promoted the way it should be promoted, especially when I see other countries the way they are actively, aggressively promoting themselves, we need to do the same," he told The Hindu.

"India has got a great image, but that image has to be enhanced by India in terms of promoting and putting it in a right sense."

THE CROSSWORD



To solve this puzzle online, get access to our crossword site at <https://www.thehindu.com/crossword>

- 14/20 How one might play blind men's buff easily (A.A.G.)
 - 18 Reckless venture involving immorality on VMCA ground (3-3-4)
 - 21 Alarming signs with poor prospect of recovery (9)
 - 22 Turn to right about catching husband with lady (5)
 - 23 Annoying start to squoorn with money stolen by brute (7)
 - 25 Links up fuss in building, checks current (7)
 - 26 Well informed can enjoy conducting classes at centre (6)
 - 27 Sought escort to entertain roughish director (8)
- Down
- 1 Craving extremely rare honour (6)
 - 2 Conservative member conducts a little religious ceremony finally in the church (6)
 - 3 Knowing trouble follows, recklessly not taking oral contraceptives (2,3,4)
 - 4 Sad dame wishes to overcome depression after special therapy providing relaxation (7,7)
 - 6 Joint, ecstasy and booze - primarily for star (5)
 - 7 Yachmen worked on setting out many mythical songs (8)
 - 8 Item served with main course in shed is dish, extremely fresh (6,4)
 - 9 Travelling to beach? Must pick up stylish good swimsuit (7,7)
 - 15 Cold and sore in restraints, turning more emaciated (9)
 - 16 Doctor is said to conduct revolutionary operation for obesity (8)
 - 17 Electronic systems are a reach in Nicotina required - maddening velocity (8)
 - 19 Luscious houses, Long Island's perfect (6)
 - 20 See 14 Across
 - 22 Sound in casino is ear-splitting (5)

SUDOKU

1	6	3	8					
5			4	2		9		
6	1		4		9		5	6
2						5	6	8
4		6	3					9
9				1	8			2

Solution to previous puzzle

5	3	9	6	7	1	8	4	2
6	4	8	2	3	7	9	5	1
8	7	2	4	9	5	1	6	3
6	9	8	7	3	2	5	1	4
3	5	7	1	9	4	6	2	8
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	3	4	5	6	2	8	9
9	8	6	2	1	7	4	5	3
2	4	5	3	8	9	1	7	6

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	3	9	6	7	1	8	4	2
6	4	8	2	3	7	9	5	1
8	7	2	4	9	5	1	6	3
6	9	8	7	3	2	5	1	4
3	5	7	1	9	4	6	2	8
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	3	4	5	6	2	8	9
9	8	6	2	1	7	4	5	3
2	4	5	3	8	9	1	7	6

FAITH

Learning and wisdom

Thiruvalluvar said those who have wisdom, but nothing else, may be said to possess everything. But the man who has no wisdom, even if he were to have all the riches in the world, is one who has nothing. But even the best among the wise may have some shortcomings, said Malayalam in a discourse.

They may still be ignorant in some respects. Light a small lamp, and you will notice that while the little lamp provides light for the whole room, there is a small area beneath the wick that is dark.

In the same way, a man may be learned and wise, but may still be lacking in knowledge about some things. Sadly, even among the wise, there are those who are not even aware of the gaps in their learning.

They do not analyse themselves to know how many of the ideas they hold are right.

If they resort to self-analysis, they will become aware of their ignorance. Buddha pointed to the leaf of a samsara tree and said his knowledge was as small as that leaf. His ignorance was as large as all the leaves in all the trees put together.

Thiruvalluvar says that if we check the knowledge of the learned, we will find that there are some things they do not know.

Kamban says that the wise are few in number. The Jain work Naladyar says that our lifespan is limited, but what we need to study is vast like the ocean. So ignorance is inevitable.

India, Japan conduct '2+2' dialogue with focus on Indo-Pacific

Two sides hold discussion on defence cooperation, significance of open Indo-Pacific; Rajnath says partnership is based on democratic values

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The India-Japan partnership is set against a larger context of a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific and it will continue to grow, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday as both sides held a fresh edition of "2+2" dialogue amid China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region.

The Japanese delegation at the talks in Delhi was headed by Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Defence Minister Minoru Kihara. Mr. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh headed the Indian team.

"In the last decade, our relationship has assumed the form of a special strategic and global partnership. The logic of this evolution is our expanding interests and growing activities," Mr. Jaishankar said.

"As we both step forward into a more volatile



Japan's Minister of Defence Minoru Kihara receives the guard of honour in the presence of Rajnath Singh. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

and unpredictable world, there is a need for reliable partners with whom there are substantial convergences," he said.

"As a result, we have consciously sought to facilitate each other's endeavours, comprehend each other's objectives, strengthen each other's positions and work with other nations of shared comfort," he added.

In his remarks, Mr. Singh said the India-Japan special strategic and global

partnership is based on democratic values and the rule of law.

He said India has set a goal of becoming a developed country by 2047 and building domestic defence capabilities is one of the significant aspects of this vision.

"The India-Japan partnership in the defence sector will be an important aspect to realise our goal. Let us make a vision for this partnership," the Defence Minister said.

India and Japan Vision 2025: Work together for peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and the world

Relationship elevated **to Special Strategic and Global Partnership** (2014)

“2+2” Dialogue

Inclusive and Rule-based International order in Indo-Pacific

FOIP (Free and Open Indo-Pacific).

Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement with India

Military exercises: Dharma Guardian (army), Veer Guardian (Air Force), MILAN, JIMEX (Navy), and Malabar

Japanese help during India's Balance of Payments (BOP) crisis in 1991

Bilateral trade over US \$20 billion (2022)

Japan was the 4th largest investor in India in FY2020.

Industries Competitiveness Partnership

Comprehensive and Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) since 2011

Narrative of AHWIN (Japan's) for AYUSHMAN Bharat.

Investment and ODA

India has been the **largest recipient of Japanese Official Development Assistance** (ODA) Loan for decades (e.g., Delhi Metro, Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, High-Speed Railways).

Global Partnership

Both are members of G4, Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, Supply chain resilience initiatives, and QUAD.

LUPEX Mission (India's lunar lander and Japanese rover will explore the moon).

Nuclear Cooperation

India-Japan Nuclear Deal 2016 will help India build six nuclear reactors in southern India.

Digital Infrastructure Cooperation

Cooperation in promoting joint projects for digital transformation (5G, Open RAN, Telecom Network Security, submarine cable systems, Quantum Communications).

Challenges

Climate change and WTO talks (Japan siding with developed countries). Japan's frosty relations with Russia (Kuril Island dispute).

- **India-Japan "2+2" Dialogue:**
- India and Japan conducted the latest edition of their "2+2" dialogue, which includes discussions between the Foreign and Defense Ministers of both countries.
- The dialogue focused on defense cooperation and the significance of a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific, especially amid increasing military activities by China in the region.

- **Participants in the Dialogue:**

- The Indian side was represented by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh.
- The Japanese delegation was led by Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Defense Minister Minoru Kihara.

- **Strategic Partnership and Shared Values:**
- Minister Jaishankar highlighted that the India-Japan partnership has evolved into a special strategic and global partnership over the past decade.
- He emphasized the need for reliable partners in the current volatile and unpredictable global environment, with India and Japan sharing substantial convergences based on democratic values and the rule of law.

- **Defense Cooperation and Future Vision:**
- Defense Minister Rajnath Singh reiterated that the India-Japan partnership in the defense sector is crucial for India's goal of becoming a developed country by 2047.
- Singh underscored the importance of building domestic defense capabilities and creating a vision for future cooperation between India and Japan in the defense sector

- What was a key focus of the "2+2" dialogue between India and Japan as mentioned in the article?
- a) Trade and economic cooperation
- b) Environmental issues
- c) Defense cooperation and the significance of a free Indo-Pacific
- d) Cultural exchanges and tourism

Ration shops to be named Jan Poshan Kendras'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Fair price shops (FPS), known as ration shops, will soon have a new name as the Centre launched a pilot project to rename 60 of them in various parts of the country as Jan Poshan Kendra. Union Food Minister Pralhad Joshi said the selected shops in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh will provide solution to the demand of ration dealers to raise their income level.

“The kendras will offer a diverse range of nutrition-rich food items to consumer as well as provide an additional source of income to the FPS dealers,” he said on Tuesday. The kendras will have provision for storing 50% products under the category of nutrition while the rest for keeping other household items, the Centre said.

How blood-based tests for cancer screening could save lives

A multi-cancer early detection test detects cancer signals such as circulating tumour DNA or circulating tumour cells – released by cancerous cells into the blood – at early stages, when treatment is most effective. But these tests are not yet approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Vid Karmarkar

Cancer is responsible for 18% of deaths from non-communicable diseases, making it the second leading cause of mortality in India. In 2022, around 14 lakh new cancer cases were recorded in India, a number expected to rise by 12% by 2025. According to the World Health Organization, breast, cervical, ovarian, and colorectal cancers are most common among women while lung, esophageal, colorectal, and stomach cancers dominate among men.

The importance of cancer screening

When cancer is detected late, survival rates plummet while the cost of care skyrockets. On the other hand, early detection makes cancer easier to treat and causes less suffering. This is why many countries have set ambitious targets to ensure no cancer goes undetected. For instance, the U.K. National Health Service plans to increase the proportion of people diagnosed at an early stage from 50% to 75% by 2028. Early detection through screening is a cornerstone of an effective national cancer strategy.

On the back of evidence that organised cancer screening reduces mortality, many countries have established national screening programmes for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers. Lung cancer screening is expanding worldwide, while prostate cancer screening is available but not widely recommended as a formal programme.

Most European countries, North America, Australia, and parts of Asia have adopted organised cancer screening, but

such programmes are still uncommon in India. According to the fifth National Family Health Survey, cancer screening in India is limited to cervical, breast, and oral cancers, with only 0.2-2% of people having been screened.

The success of any cancer screening programme turns on the percentage of people who complete a screening test and receive their results within a set time after being invited. High uptake is essential to detect cancers early enough to reduce deaths and ensure that the programme is cost-effective. Its barriers include anxiety about test results, embarrassment, and lack of support (especially for women) from family members. Structural barriers such as limited health infrastructure and access to screening facilities further hinder the effectiveness of screening programmes, exacerbated by disruptions like a pandemic. Campaigns to increase uptake have shown only modest impact over time, highlighting a need for more innovative solutions.

How blood tests can help

Blood-based tests offer one way forward. These tests can be adapted for cancer screening with high specificity and reasonable sensitivity at an affordable price. A multi-cancer early detection (MCED) test detects cancer signals such as circulating tumour DNA or circulating tumour cells – released by cancerous cells into the blood – at early stages, when treatment is most effective. If a signal is found, the test can often pinpoint the cancer's location and help doctors plan. The test can detect up to 50 cancer types, including ovarian, liver, stomach, pancreatic, and esophageal cancers,

which currently lack reliable early-screening tests. It can also alert individuals to aggressive cancers.

MCED tests are not yet approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). A few tests have received a 'Breakthrough Device Designation', but this doesn't mean they have gone through the FDA's rigorous premarket review process.

In India, MCED tests are still new and are not yet in the approved Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation list. Some companies are currently offering them to doctors and consumers as Laboratory-Developed Tests (LDTs), that is they are created, manufactured, and used within a single lab. They cost up to ₹15,000 per test. While labs must prove these tests perform their intended function, regulations don't require them to prove the tests actually benefit patients, such as by diagnosing cancer early.

MCED tests are also not without their challenges. One significant risk is when a test indicates cancer when there is none. When multiple tests are used for screening, the false positive rate can be as high as 50%. But combining traditional screening with an MCED test can significantly reduce this rate. A 2021 study in the *British Journal of Cancer* estimated that such a combination could reduce the rate from 43 false positives for every true positive to 14 for breast, lung, cervical, and colorectal cancers. Studies have demonstrated that with 25-100% uptake, MCED tests can detect up to 4,00,000 additional cancer cases that traditional methods might miss. While MCED tests generally report high specificity (>96%), their sensitivity remains variable and

influenced by study design, population, reference standard test used, and the follow-up duration.

They also carry risks of overdiagnosis and overtreatment, which can lead to unnecessary physical, psychological, and financial strain.

The FDA thus recommends patients and clinicians receive quick, comprehensive instructions on diagnostic evaluations required to confirm and understand a suspected cancer after a positive result.

Since MCED tests are still mostly LDTs in India, post-test support is crucial to alleviate the anxiety of a positive result. To address this, clear patient information guides should be provided to explain the results, outline the next steps, and set expectations for further diagnostic procedures. Decision support tools can help evaluate the benefits and risks of additional testing or treatments, especially considering the potential for overdiagnosis and overtreatment.

Access to counselling services, such as genetic counsellors or oncologists, can help patients understand their results and manage the psychological impact. Interactive digital platforms can offer personalised education, track patient progress, and send reminders for follow-up appointments. Healthcare providers would also benefit from specialised training modules focused on interpreting MCED results, effective patient communication, and managing the diagnostic process.


Vid Karmarkar is the founder and CEO of Canseva Foundation, a section 8 non-profit company on a mission to reduce financial toxicity in cancer care in India



- **Cancer Detection and Mortality:**

- Cancer accounts for 18% of deaths from non-communicable diseases in India, making it the second leading cause of mortality.
- In 2022, approximately 1.4 lakh new cancer cases were recorded in India, with an expected rise to 1.92 lakh by 2025.
- Common cancers in India include breast, cervical, ovarian, colorectal, lung, esophageal, and stomach cancers.





- **Importance of Early Detection:**



- Early detection of cancer significantly increases survival rates, while late detection leads to poor prognosis and reduced chances of successful treatment.
 - Many countries have established national screening programs for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancers to detect cancer at an early, more treatable stage.
- 

- 
- **Blood-Based Tests for Cancer Screening:**
 - Multi-cancer early detection (MCED) tests use blood samples to detect cancer signals such as circulating tumor DNA or tumor cells at early stages.
 - MCED tests have the potential to screen for multiple types of cancer simultaneously, offering a non-invasive and cost-effective option for early detection.
- 

- **Current Status and Challenges:**

- MCED tests are new and not yet approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for widespread use.
- They are categorized as Laboratory-Developed Tests (LDTs) and are available in limited settings, with costs up to ₹15,000 per test.
- There are concerns about overdiagnosis, overtreatment, and false-positive results, leading to unnecessary physical, psychological, and financial strain.

- 
- **Barriers to Screening in India:**
 - Cancer screening programs in India are limited and face barriers such as lack of awareness, embarrassment, and inadequate infrastructure.
 - Low participation rates in screening programs hinder the effectiveness of early detection efforts
- 

- 
- What is the primary advantage of Multi-cancer early detection (MCED) tests mentioned in the article?
 - a) They are cheaper than traditional cancer screening methods.
 - b) They can detect multiple types of cancer simultaneously using a blood sample.
 - c) They are widely available and approved by the U.S. FDA.
 - d) They eliminate the need for follow-up testing.
- 

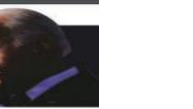
'CLOSE EYE ON GROWTH' Inflation must slow to 4% for a rate cut, says RBI governor



FOXCONN TO ASSEMBLE DEVICES Apple's made-in-India iPhone Pro models coming this year



TAKING CENTRE STAGE Tearful Biden talks legacy and Harris at Chicago convention



NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2024

FINANCIAL EXPRESS logo and market data including SENSEX, NIFTY, and various international indices.

IN THE NEWS

LATERAL HIRING PLAN SHELVED AMID OPPOSITION THREE DAYS after it invited applications for lateral entry posts in the bureaucracy, the government announced on Tuesday that the advertisement was being withdrawn, reports Liz Mathew. The Opposition had slammed the move as another step by the Centre to undermine reservations, with NDA allies also expressing their concern over it. Sources in the BJP admitted that the party did not want to risk the charge sticking. PAGE 7

HORRIFIC, WHY WAS FIR DELAYED: SC SLAMS BENGAL GOVT SAYING THE "brutality of the sexual assault and the nature of the rape and murder of a junior doctor at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata on August 7" have shocked the conscience of the nation", the Supreme Court on Tuesday slammed the West Bengal government over the incident and subsequent mob violence, reports Ananthakrishnan G. PAGE 7

What is the MUDA scam in Karnataka PAGE 9

Mega media merger to hurt competition in cricket broadcasting: Watchdog CCI poser for Reliance, Disney

Regulatory nod may be delayed by four months MANU KAUSHIK New Delhi, August 20 THE COMPETITION COMMISSION of India (CCI) has raised queries on the proposed merger of media assets of Reliance Industries and Walt Disney in India, after a preliminary assessment that the \$8.5-billion deal could hurt competition. The regulator's concerns are mainly regarding the potential dominance of the merged entity in the cricket broadcasting market, said a source

FLAGGING CONCERNS In Feb, Reliance, Viacom 18 Media and Disney announced signing of binding definitive pacts to form a JV Reliance to combine businesses of Viacom18 and Star India

Combined entity to have near-monopoly power over digital and TV cricket rights

The person said if the antitrust watchdog is still not satisfied with the modifications submitted by Reliance and Disney, it will ask them to furnish fresh modifications. Given the procedure, the deal will likely be delayed by at least 3-4 months, he said. As per the Competition (Amendment) Act 2023, when the CCI is of the opinion that a merger is likely to have an appreciable adverse effect on competition (AAEC), it will issue a statement of objections to the parties and direct them to explain within 25 days of receipt as to why such merger should be allowed. If the CCI does not accept the modification submitted, the parties will be asked to furnish revised modification within 12 days.

Sebi proposes easier rights issue norms

AKSHATA GORDE Mumbai, August 20 IN ORDER to promote rights issue as a preferred mode of fundraising, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on Tuesday proposed a plethora of measures, including the removal of the requirement of filing a draft document and the need to appoint a merchant banker to speed up the process. The regulator has also suggested doing away with the different types of rights issues - less than 5% crore, fast-track and non-fast-track - and introduced a simplified letter of offer with fewer disclosures such as the object of the issue, price, record date, and entitlement ratio. "It can be inferred that investing in a company by way of rights issue is more or less akin to a secondary market purchase. Hence, in case of rights issue, there seems to be no requirement for aggregating the information which is already available in the

MAKING IT SIMPLER Proposed changes include removal of requirement of filing draft paper, need to appoint merchant banker

Introduces simplified letter of offer with fewer disclosures

Markets regulator also proposes faster processing



E-gaming FDI rules set to be eased

Distinction likely between game of skill & chance MUKESH JAOGTA New Delhi, August 20 THE GOVERNMENT is planning to liberalise and promote foreign direct investment (FDI) in the fast-growing online gaming industry, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to make India a "global gaming hub" by putting local talent

ON THE BOARD New proposals for e-gaming differentiate between games of chance & skill Indian gaming has raised \$2.8 bn from domestic & global investors in last 5 yrs VC and PE funds invested close to \$85 mn in Indian gaming sector last fiscal

GST norms have stopped differentiating between games of chance & skill

However, the changes would come with a rider, restricting the proliferation of "games of chance", which is perceived to include indiscriminate betting and gambling, according to the sources. The circulars are circulated by the department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) among different ministries also seeks to distinguish between "games of skill" and "games of chance" for the purpose of FDI.



SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FOR VISIT BHARAT

Excerpts from the Chairman's Speech at the 55th Annual General Meeting



Our strategic objective is to scale our loan book to ₹10 lakh crore by 2030 and we are targeting to achieve a renewables loan book portfolio of ₹3 lakh crore by 2030.

Dear Stakeholders, Welcome you all to the 55th Annual General Meeting of REC Limited. Creating history seems to be a new habit of REC and I am again happy to share that during FY24, REC delivered an outstanding performance across all fronts.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS FY24 Operations & Finance Highest ever yearly sanctions: ₹3,58,816 crore (A 34% YoY) Highest ever yearly Disbursements: ₹1,61,462 crore (A 67% YoY) Renewable energy sanctions: ₹1,36,516 crore (A 59% YoY) Total Income: ₹27,214 crore (A 20% YoY) Net Profit: ₹14,019 crore (A 27% YoY) Loan book: ₹5,09 lakh crore (A 17% YoY) Capital Adequacy Ratio: 25.82% well above the minimum requirement of 15% No New NPLs during last 9 quarters

DIVIDEND As one of the highest dividend-paying companies among its peers, the Board has recommended a final dividend of ₹5 per equity share, subject to your approval for the financial year 2023-24. The total dividend for the financial year, including the proposed final dividend, amounts to ₹16 per share i.e. 18.67% of the paid-up share capital, compared to ₹12.60 per share i.e. 12.6% of the paid-up share capital, for the previous year. The total dividend payable for the financial year 2023-24, including the proposed final dividend, will be ₹433.18 crore.

GOVERNMENT'S PARTNER IN VISIT BHARAT VISION REC continues to play a pivotal role in the Government's major schemes and has been appointed as the nodal agency for several States and Union Territories under the Revamped Distribution Scheme (RDS). REC is also the National Program Implementation Agency for the PM Surya Ghar, Muft Bijli Yojana with a total budget of ₹75,021 crore. This initiative aims to install rooftop solar panels and provide free electricity up to 300 units per month for one crore households. During FY24, Government of India has allocated 3.3% of GDP to infrastructure sector, with a strong focus on transport and logistics and REC being accorded the Maharatna Status, is now CSR Symposium cum Interaction with Stakeholders for discussing pivotal initiatives aimed at community welfare.

authorized to lend to both logistics and non-power infrastructure sectors. In FY24, REC sanctioned ₹40,569 crore to non-power infrastructure projects.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY During FY24, REC sanctioned projects around ₹667 crore and incurred the highest ever expenditure of ₹235 crore on various thematic areas surpassing minimum statutory requirement. Some of the major initiatives are:

- REC Foundation organised a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Symposium bringing together key stakeholders from social sector
- Various athletes supported through ₹1.00 crore pledge to National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) who are now excelling on the global stage
- Launched scheme to deploy mobile medical units for primary health care in underserved districts across India
- Recognized "Excellence" for MoU signed under DPE guidelines of Government of India
- Dun & Bradstreet Award-2023 for "Best Central PSU" in the Financial Services category
- Golden Peacock Award by the Institute of Directors (IoD) in the Risk Management category
- First prize among power PSUs for implementing the official language policy
- Issuer of the Year award at the 6th National Summit for the Corporate Bond Market by Association
- Best Green Bond - Corporate Award at the Asset Triple A Awards for Sustainable Finance
- "Sustainability Champion - Editor's Choice Award" at the Outlook Planet Sustainability Awards 2024
- SKOCH ESG Award 2024 for "Renewable Energy Financing"

REC Limited assets green loan facility of JPY 31.96 Billion (USD 200 Million) from Deutsche Bank AG, GfK City Group

Floor price cut likely for basmati exports

THE CENTRE is considering a proposal to reduce the minimum exports price (MEP) of ₹950 per tonne imposed last year on shipments of basmati rice, as global prices of some varieties have already fallen below the floor, reports Sandip Das. Prices have declined amid expectations of a harvest this year that is smaller than last year's and high carry-over stocks. P2



THE PATH AHEAD

The Government of India is diligently addressing the dual objectives of ensuring energy security and facilitating an energy transition towards cleaner and sustainable sources. REC is determined to play its part in contributing to country's energy transition goals by continuing as Government's strategic partner to finance entire power sector value chain and by capitalising on the new thrust areas by the Government which includes upcoming renewable energy projects, Pumped and battery energy storage, EV's / charging infrastructure, smart metering, green hydrogen, green ammonia etc. Our strategic objective is to scale our loan book to ₹10 lakh crore by 2030 from the current loan book of ₹5,09 lakh crore. We are targeting to achieve a renewables loan book portfolio of ₹3 lakh crore by 2030 from the present level of about ₹36,971 crore.

Further, our foray into non-power infrastructure & logistics sectors adds diversification and complements our core focus areas. As we advance towards the vision of "Visit Bharat", REC continues to be a beacon of progress and sustainability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Hon'ble Minister of Power, the Hon'ble Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy, the Secretary (Power) and all esteemed officials of the Ministry of Power for their steadfast support and visionary guidance. I also thank our holding company, Power Finance Corporation Limited, for their continued cooperation.

I am immensely grateful for the unwavering support from all eminent professional bodies and other stakeholders of the Company. I extend my deepest thanks to all shareholders, bondholders, investors, lenders, business partners, and all related stakeholders of the Company including the visionary State Governments, State PSUs, and private industry sector entrepreneurs. With your invaluable support, we will embark on a thrilling journey to elevate REC to unprecedented heights.



With warm wishes, V.K. Murugeshan Chairman & Managing Director



Hayflick limit



The recent death of **Leonard Hayflick**, a prominent biomedical researcher has brought renewed attention to his groundbreaking **discovery, known as the Hayflick limit.**

This discovery fundamentally altered the **understanding of ageing, challenging the previous belief that ageing** was solely influenced by external factors such as disease, and environmental conditions.

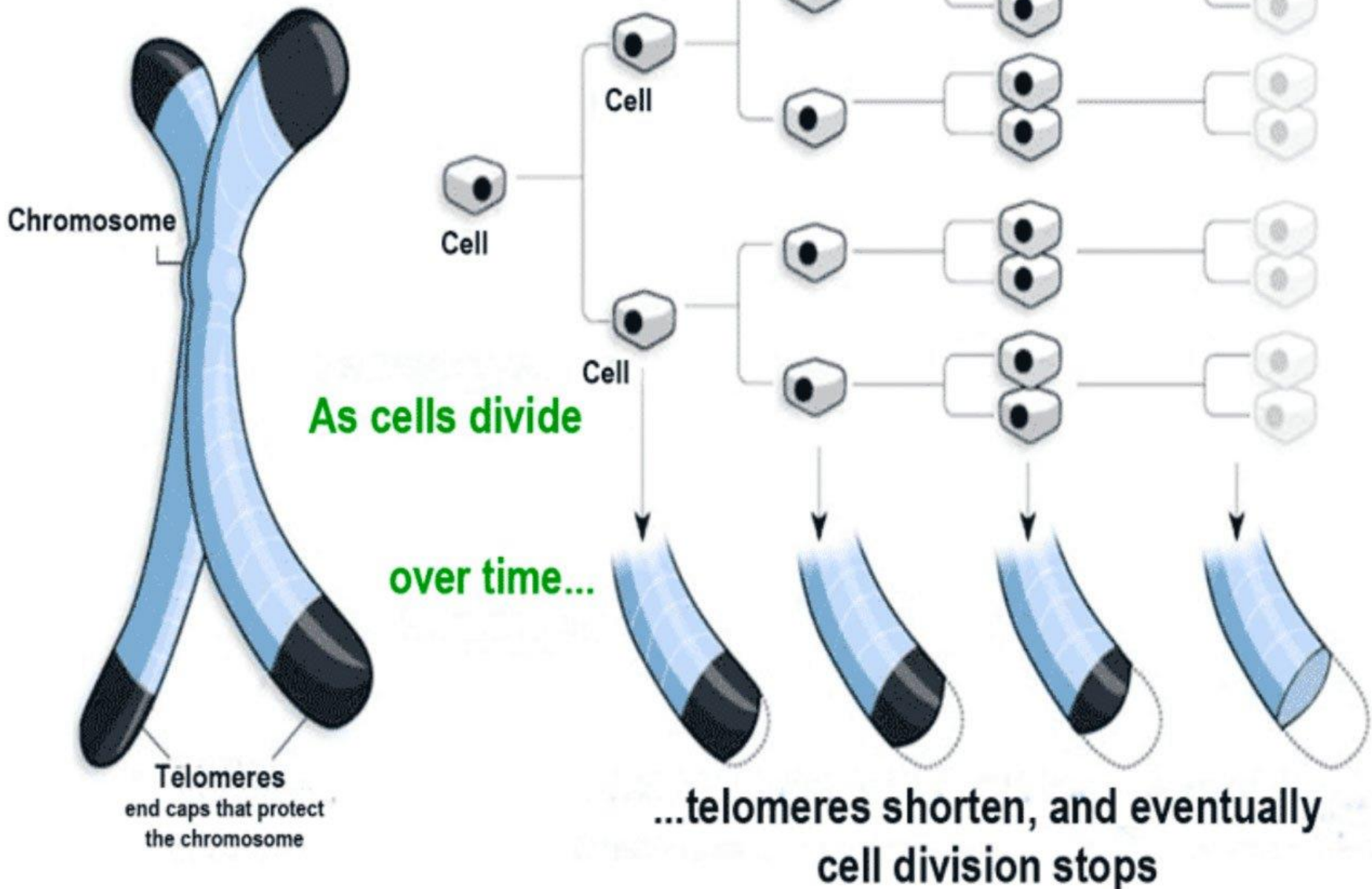
- 
- What is the Hayflick Limit?
 - About: Leonard Hayflick, in the 1960s discovered that somatic (non-reproductive) cells can only divide approximately 40-60 times before they stop dividing, a phenomenon known as cellular senescence (those that have stopped dividing).
- 

This cessation (ceasing) of cell division, which leads to the **accumulation of senescent cells**, is posited to be a key factor in ageing. As more cells stop dividing, the **body begins to age and experience decline**.

The Hayflick limit suggests that there is an inherent cellular clock in organisms, including humans, **determining the maximum lifespan**.

- 
- For humans, this limit is estimated to be around 125 years, beyond which no external factors or genetic modifications can extend life.
 - **Comparison of Species:** Hayflick and other scientists documented the Hayflick limits in various animals.
 - For example, cells of **Galapagos turtles**, which can live for over 200 years, divide approximately **110 times before reaching senescence.**
- 

What We Lose With Age



Chromosome

Telomeres
end caps that protect
the chromosome

Cell

Cell

Cell

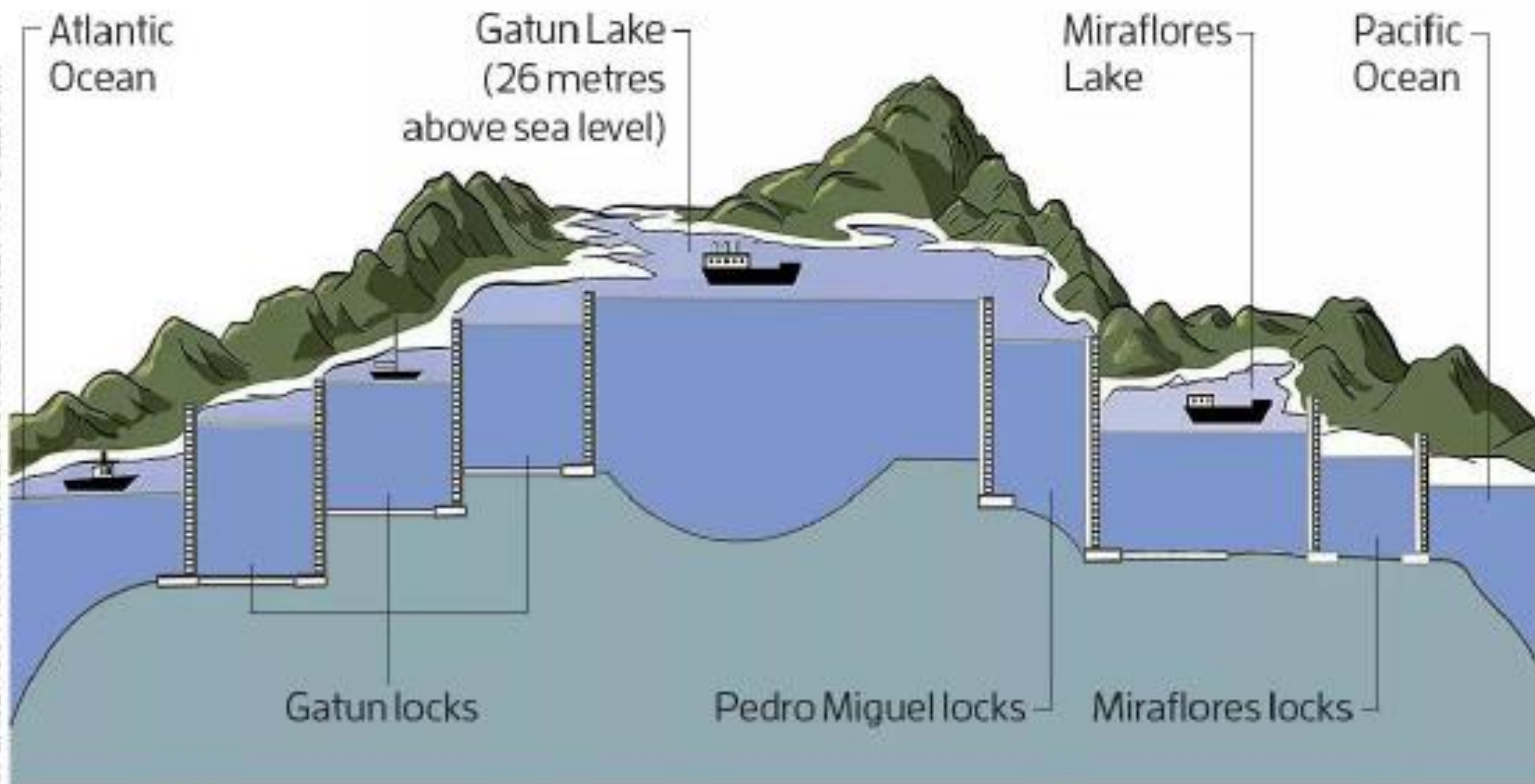
As cells divide

over time...

...telomeres shorten, and eventually
cell division stops



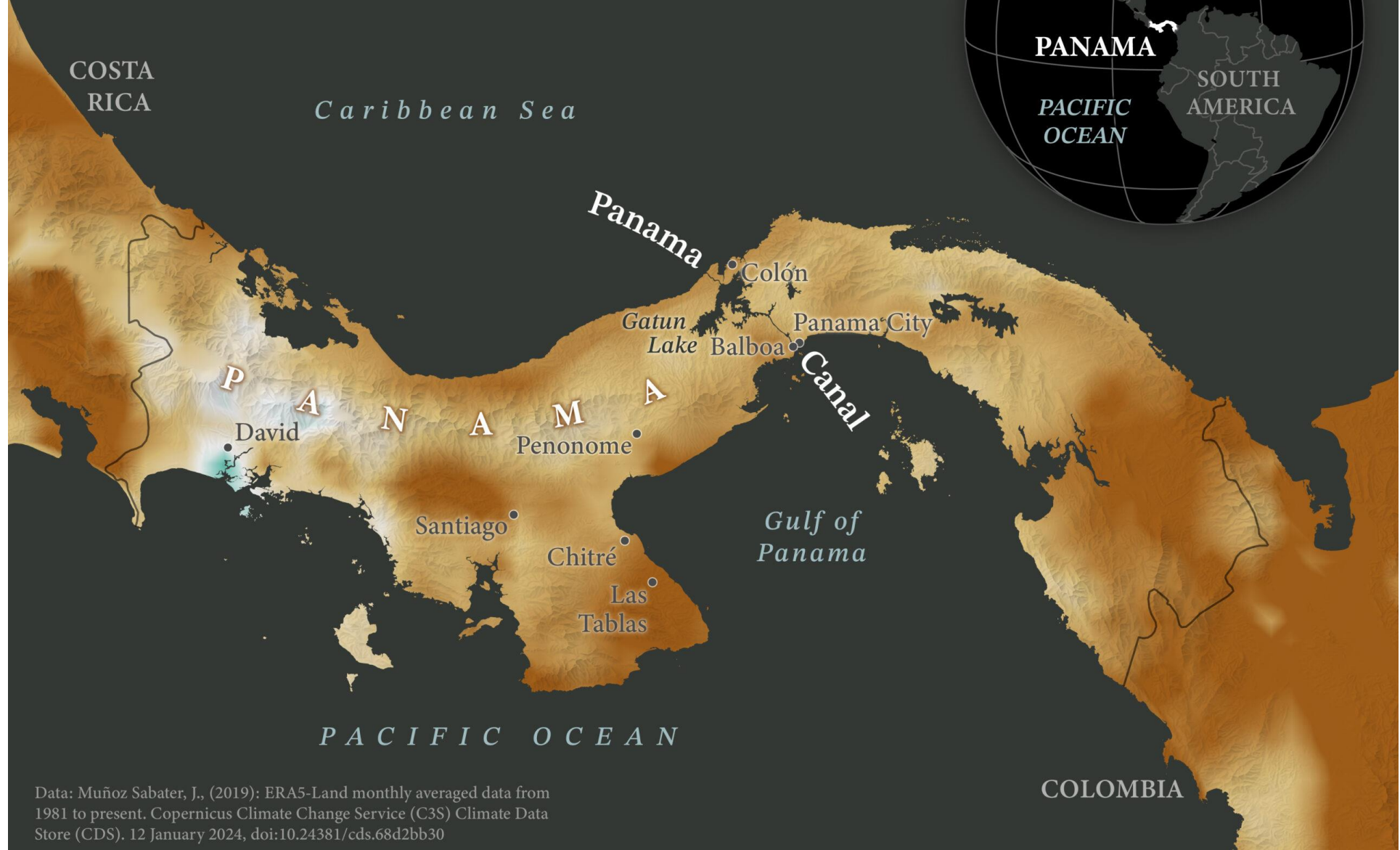
Climate Change Impact on Panama Canal



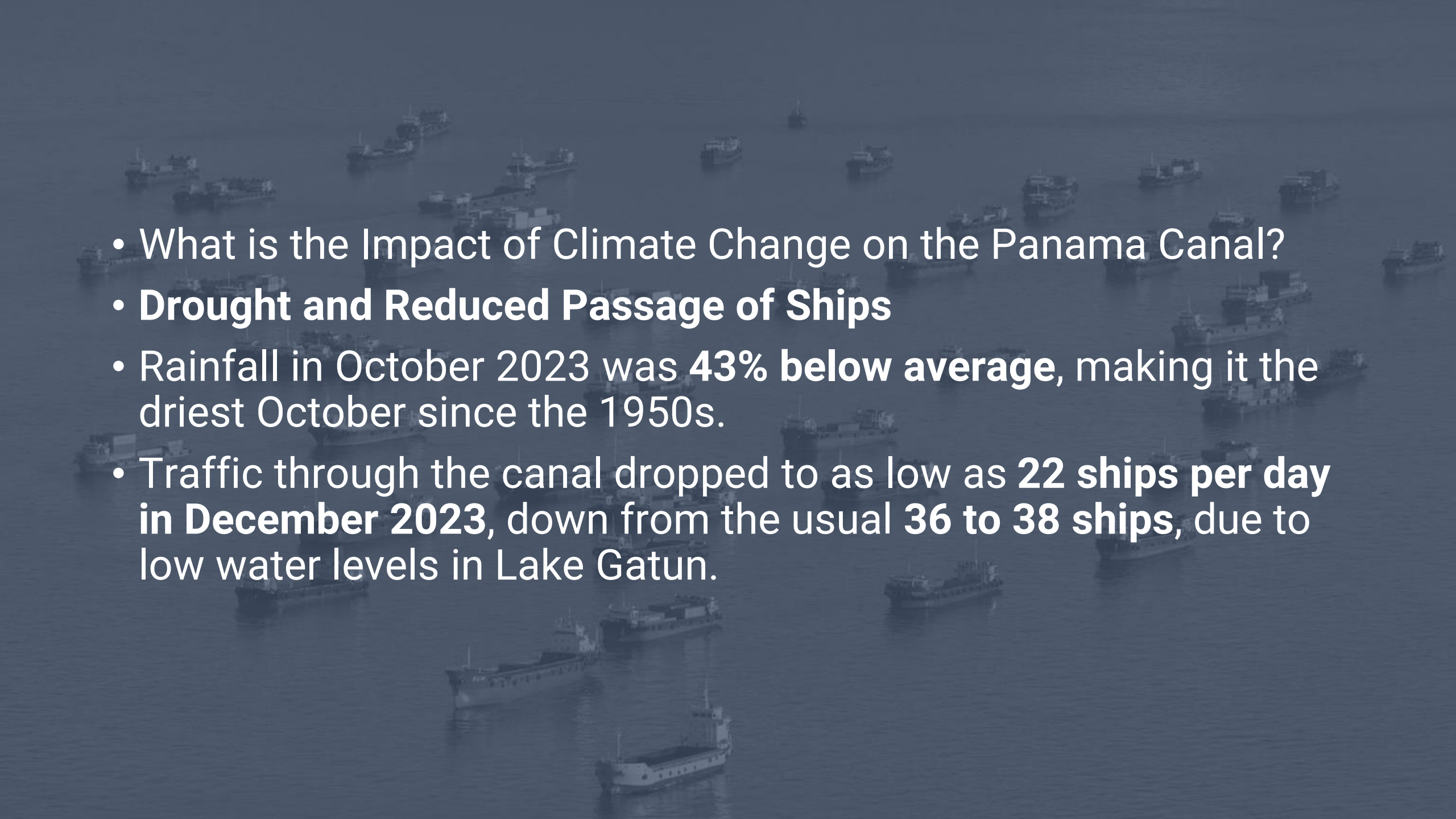


Precipitation Anomaly

2023 vs Historical (1963 - 2011)



Data: Muñoz Sabater, J., (2019): ERA5-Land monthly averaged data from 1981 to present. Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) Climate Data Store (CDS). 12 January 2024, doi:10.24381/cds.68d2bb30

- 
- An aerial photograph of the Panama Canal, showing a long line of large cargo ships waiting to pass through the locks. The water is a deep blue, and the ships are densely packed in some areas, particularly in the locks. The sky is clear and blue.
- What is the Impact of Climate Change on the Panama Canal?
 - **Drought and Reduced Passage of Ships**
 - Rainfall in October 2023 was **43% below average**, making it the driest October since the 1950s.
 - Traffic through the canal dropped to as low as **22 ships per day in December 2023**, down from the usual **36 to 38 ships**, due to low water levels in Lake Gatun.

Restriction on Size of Ships:

Effect on Global Trade: The Panama Canal accounts for 5% of global shipping,

- About Panama Canal:
- It is an artificial 82 kilometers waterway in Panama that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean.
- It cuts across the Isthmus of Panama, and is a conduit for maritime trade.
- It saves approximately 12,600 km in a trip between New York and San Francisco. The first ship passed through the Panama Canal on 15th August 1914.

- **Functioning of Panama Canal:**

It is a sophisticated, highly-engineered system which uses a system of **locks and elevators** to take ships from one end to the other.

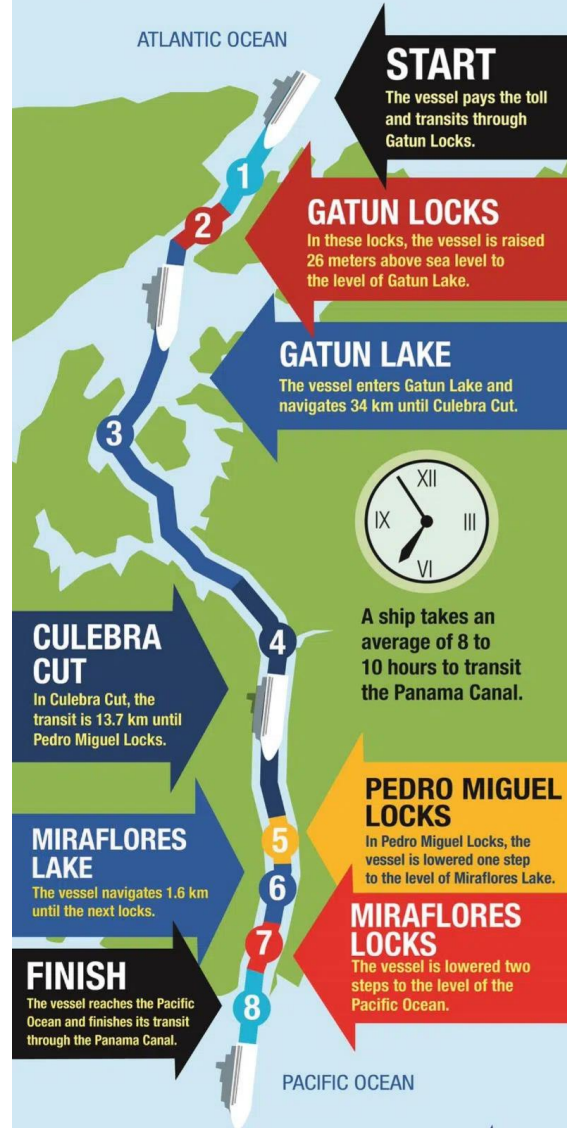
- This is needed because the **two oceans that the Panama Canal connects do not lie at the same elevation**, with the Pacific slightly higher than the Atlantic.





- For a ship entering the canal through the Atlantic, it **needs to gain elevation during its journey to the Pacific**. This is achieved using a **lock system** that lifts and drops vessels to the required sea level at either end of the canal.
- Locks are either **flooded (to gain elevation)** or **drained (to lose elevation)**, and act as water elevators.
 - In total, the system comprises **12 locks in total** which are serviced using artificial lakes and channels.

A PANAMA CANAL TRANSIT



Word of the day

Subvention:

grant of financial aid as from a government to an educational institution; the act or process of providing aid or help of any sort; guarantee financial support of

Synonyms: subvent, underwrite

Usage: *The orphanages here are aided by a state subvention.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/subventionpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /sʌb'venʃ(ə)n/

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• **LIVE**
DOUBT SESSION



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 and a cluster of small, faint red dots.

Thank you
guys.
